

# COUNTRY IN THE HEART OF EUROPE

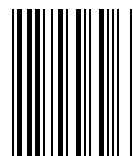


**Magazine for those  
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# BELARUS

Politics. Economy. Culture

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## FOR WHOM THE BELL OF KHATYN TOLLS...

The village of Khatyn can no longer be found on the maps of Belarus. The Nazis burned it on March 22nd, 1943, along with 149 residents, of which 75 were children.







The popular science, illustrated environmental journal

**"Rodnaya Priroda"** is:

- information about the natural potential of Belarus;
- reflection of the state policy in the field of environmental protection and rational use of natural resources;
- technologies and innovations for solving environmental problems;
- issues of environmental education and upbringing;
- the best photographs of the animal and plant world from professionals and amateurs.



"The Birth of an Idea"



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Recognizable futuristic body lines, panoramic windshield, ergonomics... Due to all this, autonomous trams, electric buses and trolleybuses organically fit into the transport life of cities not only in Belarus, but also in the CIS countries, as well as far abroad. They are made at the BKM Holding enterprise, known under the more familiar name Belkommunmash.



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The effective development of the country's economic potential is facilitated not only by the modern level of organisation of production, but also by continuous technical re-equipment. For example, the work of the Belarusian nuclear power plant today contributes both to the accelerated transition of industry to a new stage of energy efficiency and helps to reduce dependence on hydrocarbon fuel supplies.

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### **His canvases could illuminate the hall of the museum in the absence of electricity**

Some believe that Belarusian painting is restrained, but the artist Nikolai Bushchik asserts with his works that real art can be festive, bright, sublime



# HIGH LEVEL OF ORGANISATION

THE CENTRAL ELECTION COMMISSION APPROVED THE  
RESULTS OF THE REPUBLICAN REFERENDUM





# T

**Thus, 82.86% of the voters who took part in the referendum (or 65.16% of the citizens included in the voting lists) voted for the new version of the Basic Law of the country. It should be reminded that one question was submitted to the referendum: do you accept amendments and additions to the Constitution of Belarus?**

As Igor Karpenko, Chairman of the Central Commission for Elections and Republican Referendums, said during the meeting, the referendum was held in an organised manner, in accordance with the current legislation. “We received the conclusion of international observers who worked quite actively within the framework of the referendum,” he noted. “The well-coordinated work of all showed that the referendum was held at a high organisational level. The turnout of citizens was quite high. This is the work of the Constitutional Commission, and numerous meetings, dialogue platforms, appeals of citizens.”

The head of the Central Election Commission noted that after the adoption of amendments and additions to the Constitution, serious painstaking work will be carried out on the legislative and regulatory framework. The Electoral Code will also undergo corresponding changes.

Summing up the results of an important socio-political event, Igor Karpenko said that there were facts of pressure on members of commissions for holding a referendum, an attempt to disrupt the referendum by falsely informing about the postponement of voting, putting numerous inscriptions on buildings and pasting leaflets that put pressure on the will of citizens. “Clear, organised interaction with the internal affairs bodies and departments of the Ministry of Emergency Situations ensured security during the referendum and did not allow destructive forces to fulfil their plans,” emphasised the head of the CEC.

Secretary of the Central Commission for Elections and Republican Referendums Yelena Baldovskaya announced the following data regarding the referendum. The total number of citizens entitled to participate in the referendum amounted to 6 million 815 thousand 635 people.



5 million 359 thousand 403 people took part in the voting. Thus, the turnout was 78.63% of the total list of citizens eligible to participate in the referendum. Of these, 2 million 922 thousand 738 people voted early. 336 thousand 159 voters participated in the referendum at the place of residence. 2 million 100 thousand 506 people voted at the polling station on the day of the referendum.

4 million 440 thousand 830 citizens voted for the adoption of amendments and additions to the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus, which amounted to 82.86% (or 65.16% of those included in the voting lists). 684 thousand 946 participants of the referendum voted ‘against’ the adoption of amendments and additions, which is 12.78%. According to the Central Election Commission, 4.36% of ballots were declared invalid.

Veronika **Kaniuta**



***THE NEW CONSTITUTION  
IS THE CONSTITUTION  
OF THE FUTURE***







**Aleksandr Lukashenko signed the Decision of the republican referendum on the Constitution. The updated Basic Law has already entered into force on March 15th — the Day of the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus. In fact, new pages of the annals of the country and nation have begun. This is a very important period, as the President of Belarus spoke about at the solemn ceremony of signing the Decision of the republican referendum.**





### Dear compatriots,

The people of Belarus have made their choice. Choice in favour of evolutionary transformations of the political system. Democratically, in accordance with our Belarusian laws. The people showed wisdom and national maturity.

In the context of a tense international situation and threats to our traditional way of life, we have taken a serious step towards strengthening the country's sovereignty. They made it based on their own experience of constitutional reform, taking under the protection of the primordial values accumulated over the centuries-old history of the Belarusian people. The people, which, at turning points, have always made a choice in favour of peace, the creation and strengthening of the foundations of our statehood.

Evidence of this is the results of previous referendums. With the Constitution that we wrote and improved at the dawn of the formation of sovereign Belarus, we have achieved a lot. But most importantly, the adoption of the current Constitution marks the construction of a sovereign and independent Belarusian state for the first time in the history of our people.

We have achieved a lot against the backdrop of the most complicated geopolitical transformations of the world. We created a balanced and efficient vertical of management almost from scratch. Taking into account the public demand, new structures were formed, obsolete institutions were abolished and the state apparatus was optimised more than once.

In the shortest possible time, we managed to establish diplomatic and trade relations, strengthen the defence of the





**We not just strengthened, I would say, we cemented our principles: sovereignty, preservation of historical memory, patriotism, protection of the traditional family as a union of a woman and a man, and much more. Yes, these norms do not fit into the legal trends of the global liberalist ideology. But this is our path, our civilizational and moral choice.**

Motherland, which, in the face of unprecedented external pressure on Belarus, is the guarantor of a calm and secure life.

Our country has become an initiator and an active participant in the Eurasian economic integration, the CSTO, and other interstate entities. Today, we are improving our alliance with Russia on an equal footing and are engaged in a dialogue with international partners. We take a firm stand on issues of sovereignty and security.

Investors and domestic businesses are offered fair and favourable conditions for conducting economic activities. A number of parks with special preferential regimes have been created and are functioning in the republic. Entrepreneurs can be calm for an honest and responsible business to the state and people.

The institution of the family as a value, as well as children, youth, the elderly and the disabled are under the special care of the state.

All this is the unshakable foundation of our statehood, built by our hands. And those norms that have worked effectively so far have remained on the pages of the updated Basic Law. We helped the elderly, people with disabilities, large families. We will always do this. Let them not worry that, by adopting a new Constitution, we will deviate from our policy in this area.

### **However, it is time to look beyond the horizon.**

You know, lawyers say, that the Constitution is an agreement between the government and the people. That's right, it's an agreement. And this Constitution reflects the main aspirations and desires of our people.

Nevertheless, I will say frankly: if we stopped at the desires and aspirations of only our society and people, we would at best slow down our development, we would not develop.

Therefore, any government is granted powers, and the people in power are called the elite of society, because they are a little ahead of the people and show the path along which this very people, together with this government, should move. And for this we need to look a little ahead, beyond the horizon.

The history of the world is measured in periods. And we caught our moment in time — the moment of a consistent transition to a new level of development of society and our political system. The large-scale, resonant nature of the nationwide discussion of amendments to the Constitution confirms this thesis. Belarusians were active, argued a lot, worried. In a word, there were no indifferent people!

...Without exaggeration, the new edition is a people's document. No wonder people supported it. Most importantly, together we have strengthened the most important ideas, principles, and goals for the further development of the country. In other words, together we determined the contours of the ideology of the Belarusian state, the source of which is our Basic Law. Remember, we talked for a long time about the development of the ideology of the state, the state ideology. Let's consider that the current Constitution, which we wrote together, the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus is our ideology.

Pursuant to the national interests, we have given impetus to new promising areas. They include the development of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, the introduction of innovations, and the protection of personal data. During the pandemic,





citizens were guaranteed the right to healthcare, including free treatment, and a favourable environment. Responsible concern of citizens for the preservation of their health was recognised as the norm. The people need not worry: education, healthcare, culture, and sports will, as before, be available to everyone.

We have placed emphasis on a peace-loving policy. We improved the system of public administration. We did this carefully and thoughtfully, taking into account the fact that the Belarusian management model has repeatedly proved its effectiveness in practice. So why break something that worked well?

In difficult socio-political and economic situations, it helped to bring the country back from the brink. Therefore, from the very beginning there could be no question of its drastic breakdown.

Belarus was and remains a republic with strong state power. The Head of State will have enough opportunities to exercise the powers of the political leader of the country. However, other institutions of power should perform their functions more boldly and independently.

...I have already said that our life of reforming legislation will not stop with adopting the Constitution. On the contrary, the period of the most difficult, painstaking creative work begins. In two years, we must align all legislative acts with the Constitution. We have to rebuild the hierarchy of normative legal acts, weave them naturally into it the decisions of the Belarusian People's Congress.

Granting the constitutional status to the Belarusian People's Congress was an act of historical justice. Since ancient times, on the Belarusian land, the people's council has been at the forefront of making the most important state decisions. In our time, for more than a quarter of a century, the Congress has been approving programs for socio-economic development for a five-year period, participating in making crucial decisions in the life of the country. We have simply

legalised the ancient tradition of our Slavic democracy.

The Belarusian People's Congress in its modern, now legal status will perform stabilising and consolidating functions in society, acting as insurance against unforeseen events. To do this, it is endowed with a wide range of real power powers, from the approval of the Military Doctrine to the adoption of decisions on the legitimacy of elections. As the highest body of democracy, it will have the right to impeach the President, but according to rules predetermined by law.

In fact, any issue significant for the state can be submitted for consideration by the Congress. And I will note, not only in those areas that are defined in the Constitution. The law on the Belarusian People's Congress should also provide for other possible powers of this body. Therefore, it is important that, despite its impressive composition of 1,200 delegates, the Congress remains mobile. Presence of 1,200 delegates does not mean that they will gather and sit, and do nothing else. These are people who will always work at their jobs in labour collectives.

...As you can see, we have created and adopted a unique legal document. It combines traditions and innovations, democracy, unity of management. Without false modesty, it can be called the Constitution of the future. And we must take into account the readiness of society to be more actively involved in the political life of the country. We saw it from the first days of the collection of proposals for the Constitution until the voting day.

I urge you to maintain the degree of creative initiative. This is a signal for the heads of higher authorities, parliamentarians, civil servants on the ground to more open interaction with citizens, labour collectives and the public. As you understand, even time does not give us the opportunity to relax.

We are all interested in the successful development of our native Belarus, in strengthening national security. We must protect our land, our state. And this will be our contribution to the security of our continent. And maybe today the planet as a whole.

Director of the Institute of Economics of the  
National Academy of Sciences Vasily GURSKY,  
“The referendum was a triumph of true democracy”

# THE MOST IMPORTANT MILESTONE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIETY

**In our country, the referendum passed calmly and peacefully. Its importance for Belarus can hardly be overestimated, because every citizen had the opportunity to touch the state administration and determine the future of our country.**



In our country, the referendum passed calmly and peacefully. Its importance for Belarus can hardly be overestimated, because every citizen had the opportunity to touch the state administration and determine the future of our country.

It is good that we ensured food

security, preserved and developed the real sector and our own science, created a nuclear power plant, built friendly, partnership relations with Russia, China and other countries. It is important that we adapt the Constitution in time. All this is now working for us.

Not just more than half, as required by law, but more than three-quarters of the citizens included in the voting lists took part in the referendum. Of these, over 82 percent supported the additions and changes. The referendum that took place was a triumph of true democracy



in our country. We, the people of Belarus, have demonstrated national unity, commitment to order, responsibility and peace. They told the whole world that we have our own understanding of democracy. Not the one that they tried to impose on us in 2020, not the one that they managed to impose on Ukraine in 2014. Our country has shown that the dictate of responsibility, law and order does not contradict freedom of expression. Freedom should not be confused with permissiveness. Stop praying for Western 'values', we have our own worldview, our own interests and our own understanding of what is happening. We will live with our mind. We do not need someone else's, but we will protect our own.

A high turnout at polling stations

a response to the challenges and threats that are manifested in modern public relations at the international and national levels. Threats are multiplying at an ever-increasing rate. In the context of growing conflict in international economic relations, the role of the state as a force that ensures security and social justice in society is significantly increasing. Today it is already obvious that if the state does not manage its economy, then someone else does it (another state, international corporations, oligarchs, crime). In order for a country to successfully counter hybrid aggression, an orgy of sanctions, a pandemic, and other challenges and threats, a strong state is needed. The source of state power is the people. The strength of the state rests on the unity

of human values, the substitution of concepts, lies and fakes have led to the fact that many people are completely confused. Aggressive information impact has led to a change of orientation, imperceptible in form, but violent in its content. Many lies clouded the brains. Now the Constitution fixes those guidelines that we must not lose.

At the same time, the adoption of amendments and additions to the Constitution is only the beginning, the foundation of a new stage in the construction of our society. There is a lot of painstaking work to be done to form specific mechanisms for the implementation of the principles that are laid down in the updated

**It is very important that the referendum was preceded by a nationwide discussion, which means that the vote was conscious, balanced, with an understanding of what is happening. The discussion was attended by representatives of the general population from all regions of Belarus, political and state figures of the country, the leadership of organizations at all levels, representatives of public associations, youth.**



indicates support for the President's initiative to amend the Constitution, trust in the state, and consolidation of society. It is very important that the referendum was preceded by a nationwide discussion, which means that the vote was conscious, balanced, with an understanding of what is happening. The discussion took place throughout the country in labour collectives, state, scientific and educational institutions. The discussion was attended by representatives of the general population from all regions of Belarus, political and state figures of the country, the leadership of organisations at all levels, representatives of public associations, youth.

The discussion of amendments and additions to the Constitution showed that they are extremely relevant, they are

of the people. National unity is fuelled by historical memory. This formula is simple and understandable, but for its implementation it is necessary that everyone feel their responsibility for the fate of the country.

It would seem that responsibility for the fate of one's country, love for one's land is completely natural for any person, as is the responsibility for raising their children, maintaining their health, like the marriage of a man and a woman, like a feat of our people in the Great Patriotic War. Well, who would have thought a few decades ago that such natural things should be enshrined in the Basic Law? This, even without the Constitution, everyone knew at the level of his or her conscience. The purposeful destruction

Constitution. It lays the foundations for the regulation and functioning of the legal, political and economic systems of the state. The introduction of amendments and additions to the Basic Law to a large extent determines the directions for improving the current legislation, which are carried out by state bodies on an ongoing basis. The adopted changes and additions give rise to a new stage of state building and constitutional development, which will allow a new formation of legal culture and legal consciousness in society, especially among young people. The renewal of the Constitution is an important milestone in the development of the entire Belarusian society and each of us!



**First Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Court Valery KALINKOVICH, “Amendments to the Constitution will create the basis for further promotion of the institutions of the judiciary in strategic directions”**

# WE VOTED FOR A STRONG BELARUS!

**The results of the republican referendum show that our nation has healthy roots, believes Valery Kalinkovich, First Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Court. It is important that people understand the processes that are now taking place both around Belarus and within it. This will allow our country to progressively move forward, regardless of external challenges and attempts to lead us astray from the path of effective development.**

Valery Kalinkovich is sure that every citizen should express his or her opinion, especially when it is necessary to make a decision about the further development of the country, the improvement of the institutions of power, the principle of governing the country. People should speak out on issues that affect the quality of their lives. Therefore, as a responsible citizen of his country, he voted for the changes that were needed.

“During the years of independence, our judicial and legal systems

clarity of judicial decisions, as well as the transparency of legal proceedings. And the amendments to the Constitution will create the basis for further advancement of the institutions of the judiciary in such strategic areas as accessibility, openness and fairness of justice.”

There are fundamentally new moments, such as the concept of a constitutional request and a constitutional complaint. In short, the request delimits the competence of the courts, the complaint is the basis for checking the constitutionality of laws.

is determined. This is the practical completion of the process of unification of the system of courts of general jurisdiction, which began in 2014. Today we can say that it has received its constitutional design. For an ordinary person, changes in the Basic Law of the country mean that justice will continue to develop, the requirements for candidates for the position of judges, for the work of the judiciary and the apparatus of the courts will not decrease. They will only increase so that every person who needs judicial protection can receive it.



**Most of the legal institutions that we inherited from the USSR have undergone a serious transformation. For citizens — in terms of ensuring the availability of judicial protection and justice, the clarity of judicial decisions, as well as the transparency of legal proceedings. And the amendments to the Constitution will create the basis for further advancement of the institutions of the judiciary in such strategic areas as accessibility, openness and fairness of justice.**

have changed drastically,” clarifies Valery Kalinkovich. “Most of the legal institutions that we inherited from the USSR have undergone a serious transformation. For citizens — in terms of ensuring the availability of judicial protection and justice, the

Furthermore, in the text of the Constitution adopted at the referendum, the legal regulation of the institutions of the judiciary has been completed. That is, for the first time in history, at the level of the Constitution, the status of the Supreme Court in the system of state authorities

For an ordinary person, changes in the Basic Law of the country mean that justice will continue to develop, the requirements for candidates for the position of judges, for the work of the judiciary and the apparatus of the courts will not decrease.

# ALLIES VERIFY POSITIONS AND COORDINATE APPROACHES



## Conversation on current topics

Before turning to the main topics of negotiations, Vladimir Putin congratulated Aleksandr Lukashenko on the successful holding of the referendum which resulted in amendments to the Constitution.

"I know that the turnout was very high and the support by the citizens of Belarus is quite solid."

"It is by one and a half percent higher than in the presidential election," Aleksandr Lukashenko commented.

"And this is good," Vladimir Putin continued. "I think that the political process you have initiated, the dialogue you maintain with the people is extremely important for the situation to be sustainable and stable. And only in such stable and sustainable situation, economic development can be spoken of."

In that regard, the President of Russia noted that last year, the Belarusian-Russian trade turnover increased by more than a third. At the





## Sanctions pressure on Belarus and Russia and joint opposition to it was one of the central topics of the March meeting between Aleksandr Lukashenko and Vladimir Putin in Moscow

same time, Vladimir Putin did not deny certain problems associated with sanctions pressure, but emphasized, “As we said before, there have always been made attempts to limit our development, to hamper it, and they are being made — now, they are on a larger scale, of course, obviously. I am sure that we will get through these difficulties and, on the contrary, acquire more competencies, more opportunities to feel independent and self-sufficient.”

There are resources for development

In his turn, the President of Belarus confirmed his Russian colleague's words that they are working in constant contact. Aleksandr Lukashenko proceeded to sanctions-related problems.

“I have told you not once on the phone that the Russian Federation, let alone us, is always under sanctions. They are on a larger scale now, but we are already used to this, sorry, piggishness of the West. Why piggishness? Because this is all illegitimate, as they like to say, this is all illegal, this is all in violation of international agreements and treaties. So, once again, for the third time, this is mere piggishness, from my point of view. I have been through enough, and you are already fed up.”

At the same time, the President of Belarus recommended

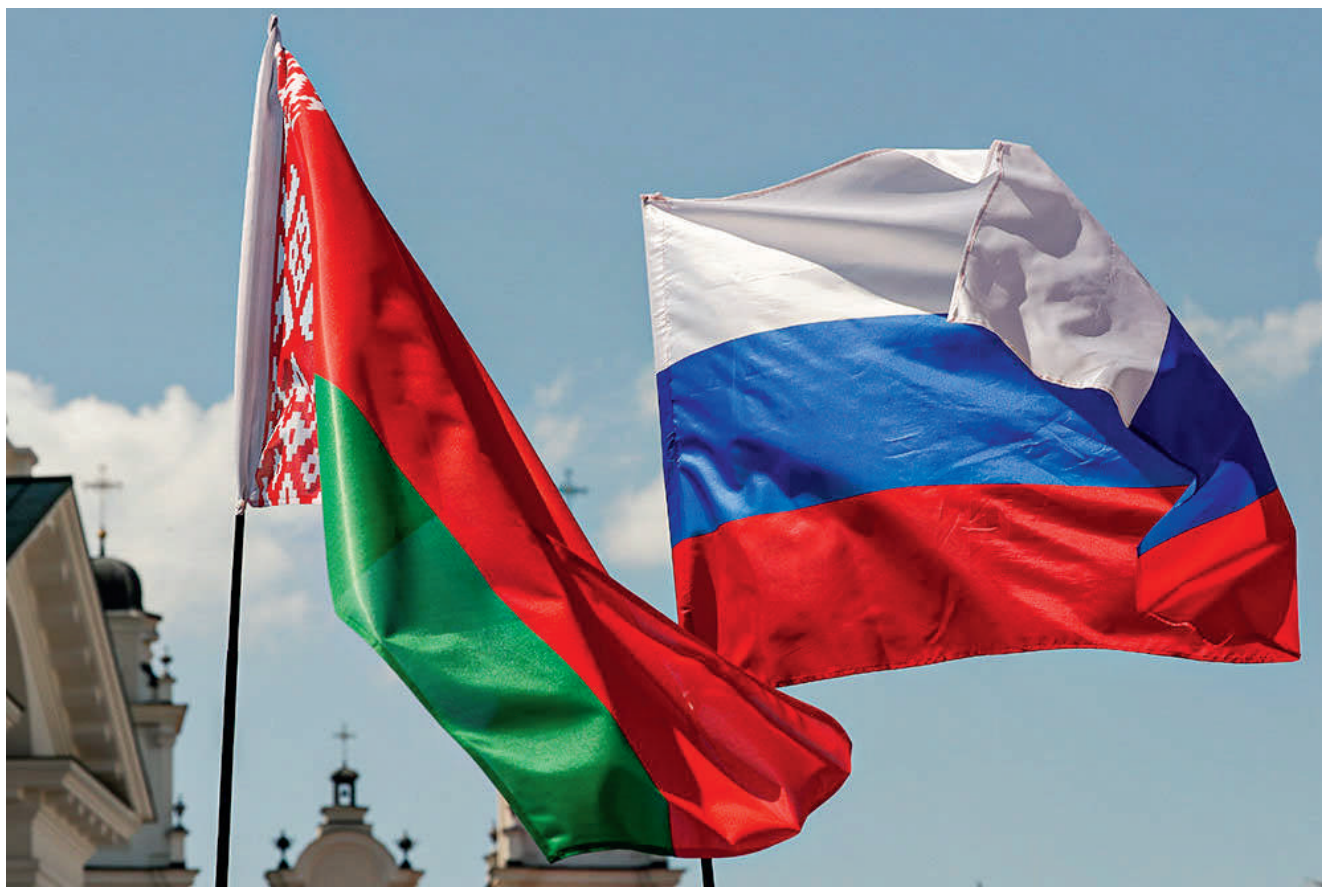
not to consider the sanctions-related problems in the context of the simplified question ‘will we survive this or will we not’.

“Today, sanctions for us are a time of opportunity. I am a Soviet person, you are from the Soviet period, and you know well that we were always under sanctions then but we lived and developed normally. Just due to the current situation (not even in connection with sanctions, just too little time has passed), our people are concerned. And there is no need to speak whether ‘we will survive sanctions or we will not’. Listen, we have survived them in any quantity. We need to rebuild our economy. We can do without them; we have everything in order to live and work normally.”

### Accenting is important

The conversation naturally turned to the military topic. In the current agenda, it is objectively in the foreground. The President of Belarus drew attention to the essence of some aspects.

“Fortunately, the further, the more people understand. We did not attack them. Not us! The Armed Forces of Ukraine began to shoot preventively when we were at your place two days before. You and I were sitting in a helicopter (after negotiations in the Kremlin on February 18th during



**VLADIMIR PUTIN, "I AM SURE THAT WE WILL GET THROUGH THESE DIFFICULTIES AND, ON THE CONTRARY, ACQUIRE MORE COMPETENCIES, MORE OPPORTUNITIES TO FEEL INDEPENDENT AND SELF-SUFFICIENT."**

Aleksandr Lukashenko's last visit to Russia, the presidents went to a country complex where they continued to communicate in an informal setting [Ed.], they constantly reported. They started. And now I will show you where an attack on Belarus had been prepared from. And had there been no pre-emptive strike at the positions (four ones, I will show you — I have brought the map) six hours before the operation, they would have attacked our troops — Belarusian and Russian, that were at the exercises. Therefore, we did not unleash this war, our conscience is clear."

Aleksandr Lukashenko winded up, "It is good that they started. Biological weapons, the largest nuclear power plants... And all this was ready — to explode. Now we see what is happening in Chernobyl, you asked me to supply electricity..."

"Thank you," Vladimir Putin thanked.

"But they do not need it," the President of Belarus continued to inform his colleague, drawing attention to the attitude of the

Ukrainian party to this act of goodwill. "Do you understand? They do not need it! And let anything be happening there, they are pushing back, but we brought electricity there by force, as I promised, to the Chernobyl station."

Aleksandr Lukashenko is convinced that now, when many of the true goals of enemies are becoming apparent, an understanding of the state of affairs is coming to many people.

"What is what and who has the truth. Had we not done it a day before, believe me, in a few days, we would have drunk this whole cup with huge losses. Once again I say, they were preparing to strike not only in the Donbass. They lined up positions to attack Belarus."

Aleksandr Lukashenko drew his interlocutor's attention to an alarming circumstance the existence of which he publicly announced the day before.

"Foreign mercenaries go along the border of Belarus to



ALEKSANDR LUKASHENKO,

**"... AND IT IS NOT NECESSARY TO SAY 'WE WILL SURVIVE, WE WILL NOT SURVIVE THE SANCTIONS.' LISTEN, WE'VE BEEN THROUGH THEM AS MUCH AS WE WANT. WE NEED TO REBUILD OUR ECONOMY. WE WILL DO WITHOUT THEM, WE HAVE EVERYTHING TO LIVE AND WORK NORMALLY"**

the Chernobyl station. Three points. They want to cut off the movement of Russian troops, to strike in the back, as I said. This is the first point. Secondly, they want to strike at the positions of the troops reminding after the Belarusian-Russian exercises. And they do not lose hope to directly draw us into this massacre so that we expose the western sector. They are not so simple. And we still have to figure out what they want to do in Chernobyl."

The President of Belarus summed up, "So, we do not have to justify ourselves to anyone. I see the way some people of ours and yours behave: they, you see, did 'wrong things'. They would drink this cup more than in the middle of the last century, when fascists advanced towards us. Thus, we do not have to justify ourselves to anyone."

### **Partnership must be tangible**

Obviously, it is easier to face global challenges together. In addition to Russia and Belarus, there are also the EEU and the CSTO. Hence, the President of Belarus put forward an initiative.

"I want to suggest to you: listen, you have always helped your allies. You helped Kazakhs. You helped all. For some, you opened the market. I will not name them, they get offended. So, we need to somehow get together in the CSTO, get together in the EEU, really stand together. After all, everyone says that we need to be together. Then let us do this. And, believe me, by adding these markets, we will forget in a month that we have sanctions. Therefore, I suggest to the CSTO and the EEU that we need to get together in Moscow, sit down at the negotiating table and agree: we sell this to you, you sell this to us, and we build our common economic policy."

Aleksandr Lukashenko came to an optimistic conclusion.

"Therefore, I came to Moscow in a normal mood, confident that we would do better than after the collapse of the Soviet Union and even in the Soviet Union. The situation is for us not to sweat or worry about some events. What we need is just time; big things are always seen from a distance."

### **Time for new opportunities**

Vladimir Putin supported his colleague in that sanctions are not a new phenomenon but almost a historical tradition.

"Even after 1990, in relation to Russia, sanctions from the Soviet Union period were preserved and then transited into new ones, in modern times. I mean the so-called 'CoCom lists' and high technology restrictions. It was and still is."

The President of Russia emphasized that today a continuation of such a policy is evident.

"Now, a massive blow to the economy is dealt. The practice of recent years has shown that where Westerners have imposed restrictions against us, we have acquired new competencies and restored old ones at a higher technological level. And it all works. Of course, we have become stronger in this sense, you are right. It is just, we might say, a time of opportunity in order to move towards strengthening our technological and economic sovereignty. This is what we met for."

There is no doubt that the usefulness of the top-level meeting will be confirmed by concrete actions and the implementation of the coordinated approaches that the President of Belarus and the President of Russia spoke about in Moscow.

Aleksei Fedosov

# ADAPTING TO NEW CONDITIONS WITHOUT DELAY

## **Prime Minister of Belarus Roman Golovchenko promptly held talks with Prime Minister of Russia Mikhail Mishustin**

As a result of the meeting between Aleksandr Lukashenko and Vladimir Putin, it was decided that in the development of the presidents' agreements, negotiations in Moscow would also be held by government delegations. And they will work out concrete decisions on all the issues discussed.

### **Substantial conversation**

Recall that, conceptually, the heads of state agreed on joint steps for mutual support in connection with the sanctions pressure, including on energy prices. In the financial sector, the leaders also reached mutually beneficial agreements. Russia took the most serious and unprecedented steps to support the Belarusian economy. At the beginning of the meeting, Roman Golovchenko said that Belarus was counting on Russia's support in difficult times, "We reaffirm our readiness to

implement all agreements on economic integration within the framework of the Union State. However, in the current conditions, due to the changing situation, there is an urgent need for the prompt implementation of support measures that were for later."

Roman Golovchenko noted that we are talking about the restructuring of credit debt on state loans from the government and financial institutions of Russia, "This is a transition to a new pricing system for Russian oil supplied, which would ensure the stable operation of Belarusian refineries with minimal profitability. This includes our proposals to fix natural gas prices for Belarus in Russian roubles with reference to the current wholesale gas prices for nearby Russian regions. This includes increasing the supply of engineering products to the Russian market, including through the removal of the remaining administrative

restrictions."

Roman Golovchenko considers it important to participate in the implementation of import substitution programmes. According to him, the coordinated work of the sectoral ministries is to be done to maximise the use of the mutual potential to replace the falling import supplies, "This is the full participation of the defence sector of the economy of Belarus in the implementation of measures of the state defence order of Russia, the removal of administrative barriers in the field of military-technical cooperation. We didn't really discuss this area. But I think that we should have."

The Prime Minister drew attention to the fact that recently Belarus has been hit by Western sanctions, which were allegedly imposed because of complicity in the Russian military operation in Ukraine. He noted that an embargo was





During negotiations

imposed on the supply of almost all export-oriented sectors of the country's economy.

"We are working on reorienting some of our export products to other markets. The purpose of all sanctions is to cause a crisis in the economy and an attempt to undermine the current government, increase the number of dissatisfied people and bring an anti-Russian regime to power on the basis of a fugitive opposition. Therefore, we need to act quickly and in concert," Roman Golovchenko is sure.

### Despite sanctions

Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin assured his Belarusian counterpart that no sanctions would interfere with the promotion of integration in the Union State:

"They will not be able to interfere with the further development of our brotherly

relations. We are ready to discuss the most pressing issues of economic cooperation between Russia and Belarus, which were raised by the heads of state."

He recalled that this meeting is taking place following the negotiations between the heads of the two states, "We need to coordinate actions to implement the decisions that were taken at the highest level. We in Russia sincerely value our partnership and allied relations with Belarus. Our fraternal peoples are united by bonds of friendship."

Mikhail Mishustin expressed gratitude to Belarus for its constructive position on the situation around Ukraine, "Western countries are exerting large-scale sanctions pressure on Russia and Belarus today. Their goal is to undermine economic potentials, ruin financial systems, break production chains and ultimately worsen the quality of life of our citizens. In this situation, we are taking

coordinated measures to protect our economic security and the technological sovereignty of Russia and Belarus."

The Prime Minister of Russia believes that it is necessary to strengthen integration in the Union State. According to him, a reliable basis for this is created by the 28 union programmes approved by the Supreme State Council in November last year, "They provide for the creation of a single economic and social space, deep cooperation in industry, energy, agriculture, and the transport industry."

Mikhail Mishustin recalled that the countries are actively engaged in the convergence of regulations in various areas, "General rules for the work of the financial and banking areas are also being formed. It is important to ensure the further growth of trade through joint efforts. Most importantly, we will determine new points of growth for the economies of Russia and Belarus."

### Fruitful negotiations

After the statements in the presence of the media, the negotiations continued behind closed doors. The head of the Belarusian Government shared their results with journalists, “We decided to get rid of the dollar in settlements regarding energy supplies. We will operate in Russian roubles. As for energy sources, we agreed to work out a new pricing formula for oil purchases. A decision was also made to restructure instalment plans for Russian loans. A large block of issues is cooperation in connection with the imposition of sanctions. A decision was made to replace imports as much as possible. Everyone who left the Russian market will be very sorry. Mutual plans for the supply of equipment are being worked out. We will be funded. Belarus has been granted the maximum preference treatment since today. This is a two-way road.”

### Minister of Finance of Belarus Yuri Seliverstov and Deputy Minister of Finance of the Russian Federation Timur Maksimov during the signing of documents following the meeting

**Yuri Seliverstov, Minister of Finance,** “Many mutual settlements between countries were carried out in relation to foreign currency. And you have to get away from this. Given the restrictions that appear, this must be done very quickly. One of the issues that was discussed was the avoidance of converting through the dollar when distributing import customs duties on the territory of the EAEU. I am sure that in the near future we will switch to either national currencies or Russian roubles as a means of conversion. In addition, Russia has set more comfortable terms for payments on state loans provided to Belarus.”

**Aleksandr Chervyakov, Minister of Economy,** “During the talks, several issues were raised that we consider extremely important for the development of the economies of our countries. These are issues of cooperation and import substitution. In conditions when markets are closed for us, import substitution is extremely important. The potential is huge. This is a window of opportunity. And it must be used very quickly.”

**Dmitry Kharitonchik, First Deputy Minister of Industry,** “We have agreed on the maximum preference regime for the development of our cooperation. We will develop so-called industry maps. They will allow us to identify positions where there is a shortage in the market, and then make agreed decisions on how to work with this.”

During the talks, the topic of participation of Belarusian enterprises in the Russian import substitution programme was also raised. For Belarus, the Russian market is also interesting from the point of view of the reorientation of export flows.



Vsevolod Yevseyev





# RESTRICTION POLICY IS LIKE A BOOMERANG

The collective West is beginning to feel the consequences of the sanctions policy. In Europe, the price of gas on the stock exchange is confidently holding on to \$1,600 per thousand cubic meters. Protests have begun in France against high gasoline prices. There, people have to pay almost 2.5 euros for a litre of gasoline at a number of gas stations. Analysts say this is just the beginning. The sowing campaign is just around the corner, and Western farmers will transfer all their fuel costs to the final cost of production. And this is hyperinflation, for which neither European officials nor taxpayers are ready. How else will the policy of restrictions come back to haunt the West? Here's what the experts say about it.

## Focusing on national interests

**Tatiana**

**Runets,**

Chairwoman of the Standing Committee of the Council of the Republic on Economy, Budget and Finance,



“Economic sanctions

are, of course, an unpleasant thing. But let's be honest: the Belarusian economy has been subjected to sanctions pressure more than once, while demonstrating resilience to external shocks. We have chosen such a vector of development, the path of an independent and sovereign state, ourselves. A small but proud country that never danced to someone else's tune and focused solely on its own national interests.

And in today's world it is very difficult to be independent. We have to constantly face challenges and outright threats in various fields. Sometimes it seems that someone would be glad to see our native Belarus as a classic banana republic in the centre of Europe. Under the pretext of 'noble' goals, serious efforts are being made to de-industrialise our economy, break effective supply chains, and limit access to external financial resources. At the same time, I am convinced that even in such difficult conditions, our main enemy is our own panic, which often generates rush demand in the consumer market, leads to irrational decisions, and leads to a shortage of goods.

We need to calm down. Today, the entire vertical of power is working with a single goal - to minimize the impact of sanctions on the Belarusian economy, the social sphere, and the daily life of our citizens. In the near future, a number of specific measures will be taken to support domestic demand, the real sector of the economy, and business. Even in the most difficult times, the social obligations of the state were fulfilled in full.

Of course, the unconditional priority is the preservation of jobs, wages and, as a result, the importance of effective

demand. We simply must do this, because the share of final consumption in GDP is about 70 percent. I am sure that we will adequately pass all the tests, strengthening the economy and our own sovereignty. As the Head of State rightly noted in the conclusion of his address to

the Belarusian people and the National Assembly this year, the truth — and there is strength in it — is on our side.”

## Deep import substitution and sovereignisation of the economy

**Petr Petrovsky,** political scientist,

“For the West, the sanctions policy has already backfired. First of all, a sharp jump in prices for those goods that are produced in Russia. These are commodities. Not only oil and gas, but also

prices skyrocketing for some foodstuffs as well. This is both vegetable oil and wheat. France is already trying to adjust the work of farmers to expand the area of wheat. This will affect the price of meat as well, because wheat is also used as feed. Now we see strong price volatility, a sharp jump, we can expect a decrease in the population's income and solvency. And this will greatly affect comfort, which will become less and less for residents of Western countries.

It must be understood that if the Ukrainian crisis is resolved in a short time, then there will be fewer consequences for everyone. If it drags on — and this is facilitated by the supply of weapons to Ukraine by various Western countries — we will get an increase in risks and costs. A sufficiently large amount of gas today passes through the territory of Ukraine. And if the special operation is delayed, the pipeline may be put out of action. And this technically cuts off the West from gas.

And a few more words about the energy aspect. When the United States

says that they are refusing Russian oil, then there should be an amendment that only 10 percent of the oil they consume comes from Russia. It is technically possible for the States to do this. But we are already seeing a record increase in the price of fuel in the US market — up to \$ 7.5 per gallon of gasoline. And of course, first of all, American farmers are shocked. Now the sowing campaign is starting, and this will affect the entire food chain.

Wherever there is logistics, prices will skyrocket. As for the EU, the situation is different for it. 25 percent of the oil consumed by the Union comes from Russia, and 45 percent of the gas is also from Russia. It will not be possible to replace them in a short time. For this, at least, technological capacities are needed, which simply do not exist in Europe.

Therefore, despite the radical statements of individual EU leaders, oil and gas from Russia continue to flow there.

Now with regard to the indiscriminate withdrawal of Western companies from the Russian and Belarusian markets. It must be understood that this is all done primarily to fulfil the political decrees of their own governments. But at the same time, their revenue decreases, and their influence on the markets decreases. This frees up a niche for their competitors. For example, companies in the catering and food industries are replaceable. The productions that were available can also be quickly replaced. Including in the field of heavy automotive industry. This is exactly what we have been actively talking about lately — deep import substitution and sovereignisation of the economy. At the same time, it is necessary to quickly reorient the economies of Belarus and Russia towards friendly countries that do not politicise economic relations.

In such conditions, the foundation of any sovereign society can only be a clear ideology — a system of value principles and views on the socio-political structure.







And this is, first of all, our Constitution, which in an updated form entered into force on March 15 this year.”

### Be able to readjust in time

**Sergei Stelmashok**, member of the Standing Committee on Budget and Finance of the House of Representatives,

“If we talk about sanctions in general, then in the autumn of 1997 our country began to feel them on itself. Moreover, from both the United States and European countries. At the same time, some countries in the world have been living under various restrictions for decades. Nevertheless, they are quite successfully conducting their economic activities and the well-being of their citizens is at a good level. Therefore, everything related to the current wave of external pressure is in the interests of the United States. This country is now aggravating the situation both in Europe and in the world. It is this



country, which is interested in both the political and economic crisis in order to expand its influence on others. And in this case — on Russia and Belarus. But there is a very curious pattern. The states limit imports from Russia to only non-essential items, and left what is important to them. These are uranium and rare metals. Something without which US industry simply cannot exist. And the fact that they loudly announced the rejection of Russian energy resources is not significant for them. At the same time, the United States is forcing European countries to abandon Russian gas and oil, for which this is essential. This policy has led to an increase in the price of automotive fuel. As a result, Western sanctions pressure affected the end consumer of energy resources both in the US and in Europe. In the latter, by the way, the price of gasoline already reaches 2.5 euros per litre. And it turns out that, on the one hand, they

harm their consumers, and on the other hand, they dominate and increase their influence in Europe. Therefore, I am sure that European politicians will not dance to the tune of the United States for long, and will soon reconsider their sanctions approaches. These countries are too dependent on Russian energy resources. Plus, do not forget about cooperative ties. For example, a popular fast food chain has announced the termination of its work in the Russian market. And today they estimate their losses at 50 million dollars a month.

As for the impact of sanctions on Belarus, then, of course, it is felt. But today there is an understanding of how to live and develop further. Europe and the USA are not the whole world. We know where to redirect our commodity flows. And with their withdrawal from the market of Belarus and Russia, Western companies open the way for the Asian ones. Domestic producers will begin to feel more confident. Plus, I’m sure the import substitution programme will work to its full potential.”

合作  
呈上  
升趋  
势 —  
这是  
客观  
现实

# COOPERATION IS ON THE RISE — THIS IS THE OBJECTIVE REALITY

The significance of the partnership between Belarus and China, which has looked nothing but exemplary for a long time from all points of view, can hardly be overestimated. However, even with such a high status of bilateral relations, especially in the year of the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the countries, and taking into account the realities of today, it is not out of place to compare positions, assess the results achieved and outline plans for the future. This is exactly what Aleksandr Lukashenko emphasised when he hosted Xie Xiaoyong, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the People's Republic of China to Belarus.







白俄罗斯和中国之间伙伴关系至关重要，从各方面来看，中俄关系长期以来一直是典范。考虑到双边关系重要性，正值两国建交30周年之际，结合现实情况，值得我们商榷讨论，评估所取得的成果，并为未来制定计划。亚历山大-卢卡申科在其官邸接待中国驻白俄罗斯特命全权大使谢小用时强调说。

#### There is a good basis

It would not be an exaggeration to say that in thirty years Minsk and Beijing have gone from friendly relations to trusting all-round strategic partnership and mutually beneficial cooperation. Moreover, there is direct documentary evidence of this. Indeed, literally in December last year, Aleksandr Lukashenko signed another directive on the development of

**Despite the huge distance between the countries, China is consistently among the top three trade and economic partners of Belarus. Last year, for example, mutual trade exceeded five billion dollars. A record amount in the history of relations. But far from extreme.**

#### 基础好

可以毫不夸张地

说，三十年来，明斯克和北京已经从友好关系走向了全面战略伙伴关系和互利合作关系。有相关文件证明。事实上，就在去年12月，亚历山大·卢卡申科再次签署了发展对华关系的指示。原则上，已经达成协议，两国关系提升为铁腕友爱、堪称典范的全面战略合作和全天候伙伴关系。外交辞令的背后是简单的日常，重点是白俄罗斯和中国对彼此的重视程度。亚历山大·卢卡申科再次强调，重中之重首先发展同中华人民共和国的关系：

— 对外经济、外交政策方面发挥着至关重要的作用。近年来，我们做了很多工作，特别是在习近平成为主席后仍在担任主席期间。他是白俄罗斯人民的重要朋友。我们与他有非常好的关系。

在他担任总统期间，白俄罗斯人民了解了什么是中国，什么是中国人。我们的人民已经知道谁是我们的朋友，包括中国人民。

众所周知，亚历山大-卢卡申科和习近平在今年1月建交30周年前夕的电话交谈中讨论了广泛的双边合作。两位领导人详细谈论了正在进行的项目和在许多领域扩大合作的可能。

尽管两国相距甚远，但中国在白俄罗斯的贸易和经济伙伴中稳居前三。例如，去年的相互贸易额超过了50亿美元。在整个关系史上，这是一个破纪录的数额。然而，这还远远不够。

以下是亚历山大-卢卡申科在考虑到当今困难的现实情况下谈及双边关系的前景：

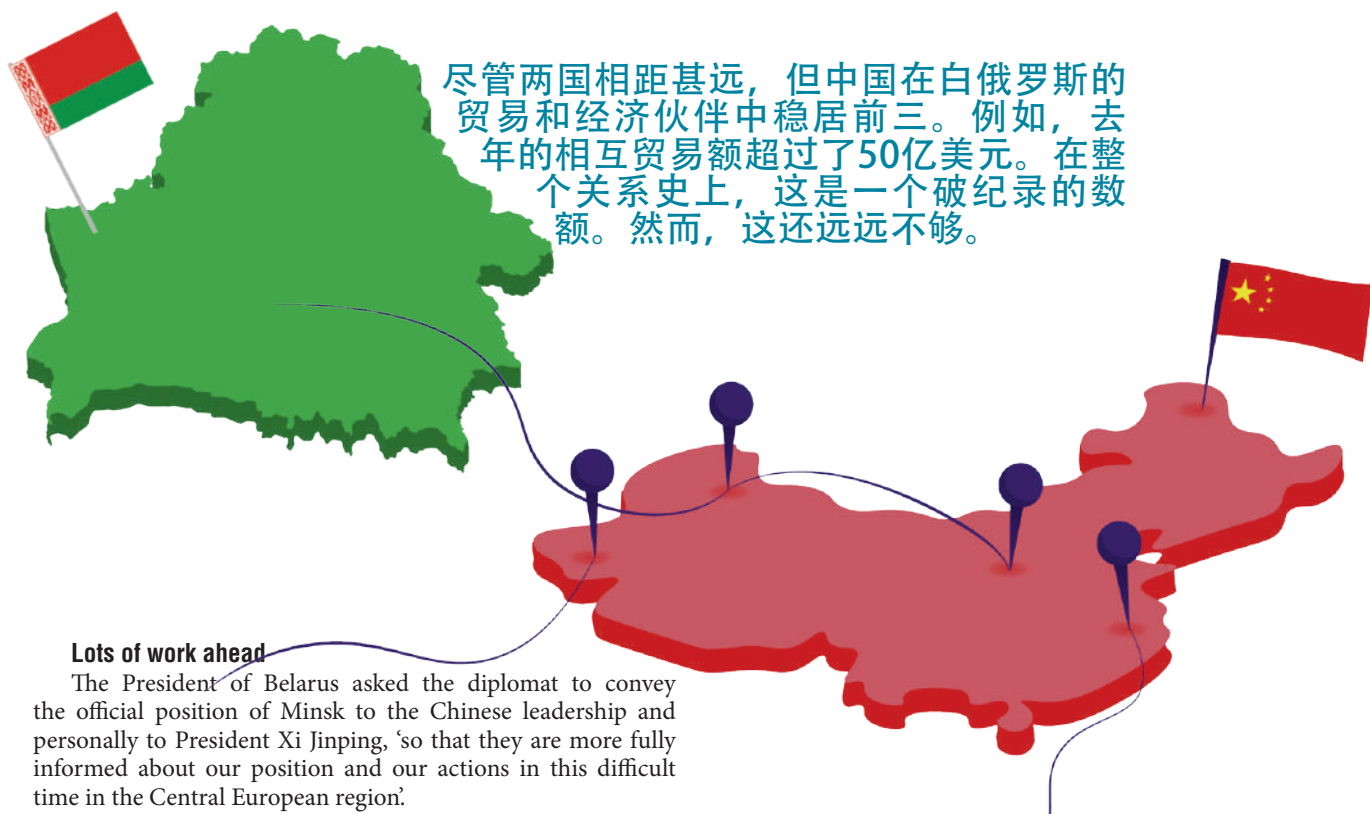
— 结合我们地区的发展，我们应该确定与中华人民共和国合作的其他方式。然而，我想强调的是：我并不坚持认为中国应该承担任何责任，应该在对俄罗斯和白俄罗斯的制裁中失去什么。在这种情况下，我们需要建立和寻找一种符合两国的利益的关系和合作模式。这是我们的目标，是我们国家领导人的目标。它一直是这样一个目标。但现在有些事情需要更加具体化。

relations with China. A major agreement was reached to raise their status to the level of ‘iron brotherhood, exemplary all-round strategic cooperation and all-weather partnership’. Behind the ornate diplomatic wording there are simple worldly truths that emphasise the value of Belarus and China for each other. Aleksandr Lukashenko once again stressed that the development of relations with China is a top priority for Belarus, “Foreign economy, foreign policy aspects play a major role. We have done a lot in recent years, especially since Xi Jinping became and still is Chairman. He is a very great friend of the Belarusian people. We have a very good relationship with him.”

During his presidency, the Belarusian people truly learned what China, the Chinese people are. Our people have learned who our friend is, including the Chinese people.

As you know, Aleksandr Lukashenko and Xi Jinping discussed a wide range of bilateral cooperation during a telephone conversation in January this year, on the eve of the 30th anniversary of diplomatic relations. The leaders of the two countries spoke in detail about ongoing projects and opportunities for expanding cooperation in many areas.

And this is how Aleksandr Lukashenko talks about the prospects for bilateral relations, taking into account today’s difficult realities, “In connection with the events that are taking shape in our region, we should outline additional ways of cooperation with the People’s Republic of China. At the same time, I would like to emphasise that I do not insist that, in connection with the sanctions imposed against Russia and Belarus, China bears some liability and loses something. In this situation, we need to build and find the model of relations and cooperation that would meet the interests of the two countries. This is the goal of the leadership of our country. It has always been like this. But now some things need to be specified.”



### Lots of work ahead

The President of Belarus asked the diplomat to convey the official position of Minsk to the Chinese leadership and personally to President Xi Jinping, 'so that they are more fully informed about our position and our actions in this difficult time in the Central European region.'

"We had a very good conversation," this is how Chinese Ambassador Xie Xiaoyong assessed the essence of the meeting with the President of Belarus, talking to journalists.

According to him, the emphasis was placed on issues of business cooperation in the economic and trade spheres, political interaction and joint fight against the pandemic. Answering a question about China's attitude to the sanctions pressure on Belarus from Western countries, the diplomat noted that China's position is extremely clear, "We oppose these unreasonable sanctions. I think that in all actions it is necessary to observe the basic principles of the UN Charter and the norms of international law."

The Chinese Ambassador drew attention to the difficult situation in the world economy, caused, among other things, by the epidemic situation, and added that, despite this, the Chinese-Belarusian cooperation maintains a very good development momentum. Xie Xiaoyong called the export of Belarusian agricultural products to China, which grew by 44 percent compared to the previous year, most striking.

Actually, the successful interaction of our countries in the format of the One Belt, One Road initiative, the activities of the Great Stone Industrial Park, the construction of the National Biotechnology Corporation, a number of socially-oriented facilities, cooperation in the field of mechanical engineering — these and other facts indicate that Belarus and China has great potential for developing cooperation in many areas and intends to use it to the fullest.

### 未来还有很多事情要做

白俄罗斯总统要求外交官向中国领导人并亲自向中国国家主席习近平传递明斯克的官方立场，以便他们能够更好地了解我们在中欧地区这个复杂时期的立场和行动。

— 会谈很顺利，"中国大使谢小用在向记者谈及与白俄罗斯总统的会晤时说。

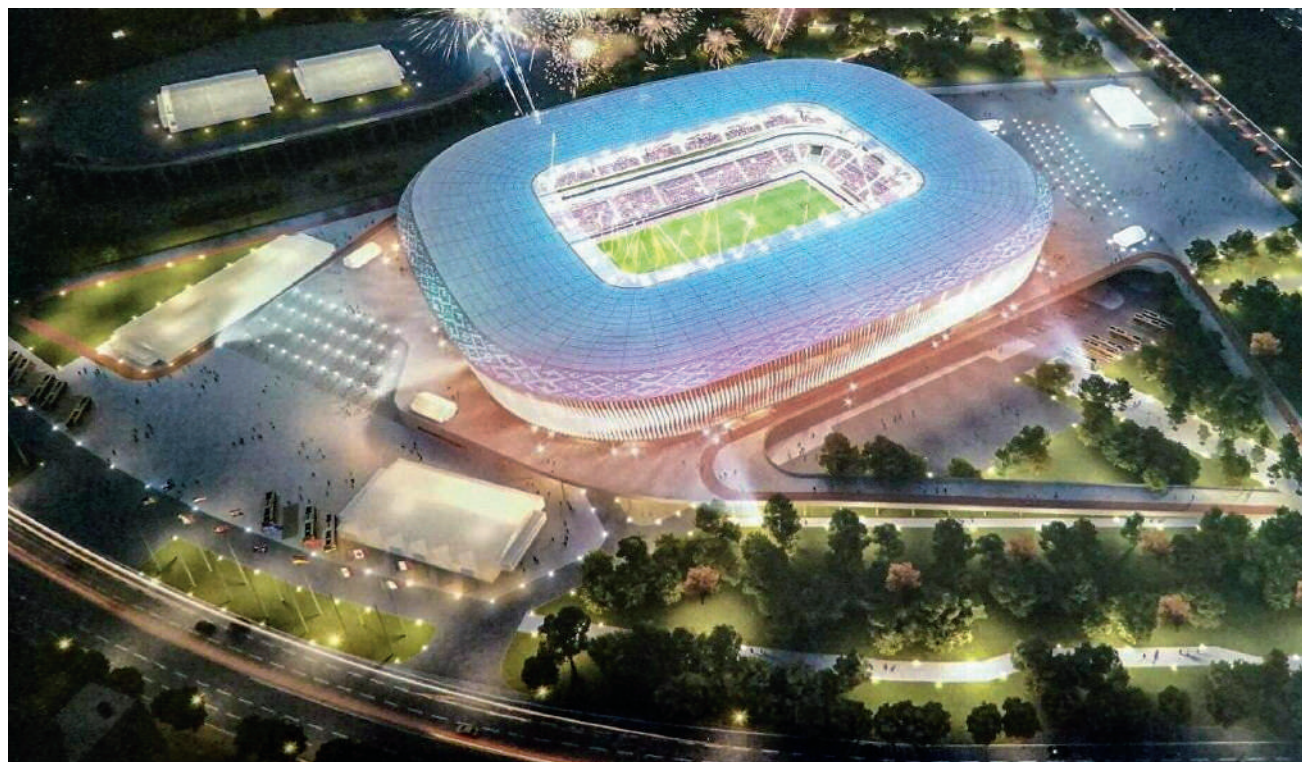
用他的话说，重点是在经济、贸易、政治互动和共同抗击大流行病方面的商业合作。在回答关于中国对西方国家对白俄罗斯实施的制裁的态度问题时，这位外交官说，中国的立场非常明确。

— "我们反对这些无理的制裁。我认为所有的行动都应该遵守《联合国宪章》的基本原则和国际法的规范"。

中国大使提请注意世界经济的复杂形势，包括流行病形势，并补充说，尽管如此，中白合作仍然保持着非常好的发展势头。谢小用说，最引人注目的指标是白俄罗斯对中国的农产品出口增加，与前一年相比增加了44%。

事实上，我们两国在"一带一路"倡议形式下的成功合作，包括巨石工业园，国家生物技术公司的建设，一些社会设施，机械制造领域的合作 — 这些和其他事实表明，白俄罗斯和中国在许多领域有巨大的合作潜力。





# COMPONENTS OF MUTUAL BENEFIT

## 互惠互利

毫不夸张地说，白俄罗斯与中国的关系在现代国家间关系体系中称之为典范。两国之间的合作在几乎所有领域都在持续和系统地发展。亚历山大-卢卡申科总统在其讲话中多次表示，中国是白俄罗斯的主要贸易伙伴之一。经济指标也证实了互利伙伴关系的结果。因此，自1992年以来，我们国家之间的贸易额增长了130多倍，达到了破纪录的51.152亿美元。来自中国的投资总额超过了26亿美元。

It can be said without exaggeration that Belarusian-Chinese relations are very indicative in the modern system of interstate relations. Cooperation between countries is developing consistently and systematically in almost all areas. President Aleksandr Lukashenko has repeatedly stated in his speeches that China is one of the main trade partners of Belarus. Economic indicators also testify to the results of mutually beneficial partnership. Thus, since 1992, the trade turnover between our countries has increased by more than 130 times and reached a record \$5,115.2 million. The total investment from China exceeded \$2.6 billion.

### New points of growth

Additional opportunities for Belarusian-Chinese cooperation were opened by the mega-project for the construction of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the Maritime Silk Road of the 21st century. Dozens of states have joined the implementation of the One Belt, One Road project. Belarus was the first European country to join this initiative. There is every reason to say that the One Belt, One Road project has become a real alternative to the negative trends on the world stage. It not only redraws the economic map of the world, creates new points of growth, but also forms international relations of a new type. This is integration on top of blocks, designed to harmonise all economic institutions and remove barriers to the free movement of goods, investments and people.

The Chinese-Belarusian project Great Stone Industrial Park is being actively implemented. Today it has already registered 85 residents from 15 countries. The Park accounts for the main

inflow of investments.

To improve the legal regulation and improve the investment climate of the Park, last year the Decree of the President of Belarus was adopted, which provides for the expansion of activities, support for start-ups and the creation of preferential conditions for large investment projects.

### Key areas

Twenty-five projects totalling about \$4.73 billion have been implemented through government loans from the PRC under existing loan agreements. More than 1.5 billion yuan (about \$243 million) of technical and economic assistance has been disbursed for 14 projects. The main ones are the support of the Great Stone industrial park, the construction of municipal housing, as well as a student hostel in Minsk and a therapeutic building of the Minsk Central District Hospital.

In the mid-term horizon, three key areas of cooperation in the field of technical and economic assistance until 2025 have been identified: the implementation of the National Football Stadium and International Standard Swimming Pool projects, support for the development of the Great Stone industrial park, promoting stability and security, projects of the State Border Committee, State Customs Committee.

The project of the innovative future — the National Biotechnology Corporation — is being actively implemented. Belarus was the first in the Eurasian region to start production of traditional Chinese medicine.

In 2021, 4.5 million doses of vaccine against coronavirus infection were supplied to Belarus. In January of this year, 3 million doses of the vaccine were delivered (1.5 million doses as humanitarian aid and 1.5 million doses as part of commercial procurement).

It is safe to say that the cooperation between the two countries has passed all the tests of time. Relationships are based not only on mutual benefit, but also on mutual respect, sincerity and friendship.

Vladimir Velikhov



### 新的增长点

丝绸之路经济带和21世纪海上丝绸之路大项目为白俄罗斯和中国的合作提供了新的机会。几十个国家已经加入了“一带一路”项目。白俄罗斯是第一个加入这一倡议的欧洲国家。我们完全有理由说，“一带一路”项目已经成为全球舞台上负面趋势的真正替代方案。它不仅重塑了世界的经济版图，创造了新的增长点，而且还塑造了一种新型的国际关系。它是在集团之上的一体化，旨在协调所有经济机构，消除货物、投资和人员自由流动的障碍。

巨石中国-白俄罗斯工业园项目正在积极实施。目前，这里已经有来自15个国家的85名居民。园区是投资的主要流入地。

为改善园区的法律监管和投资环境，去年通过了一项总统令，以扩大活动类型，支持初创企业，并为大型投资项目创造优惠条件。

### 关键领域

根据现有的贷款协议，利用中国政府的贷款实施了25个项目，总额约为47.3亿美元。已为14个项目支付了超过15亿元人民币（约2.43亿美元）的技术和经济援助。主要包括支持巨石工业园，在明斯克建造社会住房以及学生宿舍和明斯克中心区医院的治疗区。

根据中期展望，确定了2025年前技术和经济援助的三个关键合作领域：实施“国家足球场”和“国际标准游泳馆”项目，支持巨石工业园的发展，促进稳定和安全 - 国家边境委员会、国家海关委员会的项目。

一个创新的未来项目——国家生物技术公司——正在积极实施。白俄罗斯是欧亚地区第一个生产传统中药的国家。

2021年，向白俄罗斯提供了450万剂预防冠状病毒感染的疫苗。今年1月，交付了300万剂疫苗（150万剂为人道主义援助，150万剂为商业采购）。

人们可以自信地说，两国合作经受住了时间的考验。这种关系不仅建立在互利的基础上，而且也建立在相互尊重、真诚和友谊的基础上。

弗拉基米尔-韦利霍夫



# COINCIDENCE OF VIEWS ON BURNING ISSUES

Western sanctions are aimed at undermining the statehood of Belarus.

Belarusian Foreign Minister Vladimir Makei stated this in an interview with China Central Television. In particular, he recalled that Belarus faced sanctions pressure after the 2020 presidential elections, and subsequently this pressure increased even more,

“Western countries are absolutely not interested in observing at least some minimum limits of decency by imposing these sanctions. Laws change just to punish this or that country. They declare that they support the sovereignty and independence of Belarus, but in fact, all these sanctions are aimed at the total destruction of the sovereignty and independence of Belarus, at undermining the statehood of Belarus. Naturally, we will develop an adequate response... We will create a circle of like-minded states, we will raise these issues at all international platforms. Because these measures are absolutely illegal, these measures are not sanctioned by either the UN Charter or other international agreements.”

Vladimir Makei called China's position on the events in Ukraine very balanced and restrained, “Those statements made by the Chinese leadership, starting from the President of the PRC, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and official representatives of government departments, are aimed at finding a solution to this conflict in a peaceful, calm way at the negotiating table as soon as possible. This coincides with the approaches of the Belarusian side.”

Speaking about the resolution of the UN General Assembly on the situation in Ukraine, the head of the Belarusian Foreign Ministry noted, “The resolution calls for compliance by all parties with the Minsk agreements, although it is well known that one of the parties clearly did not comply with these agreements. Neither the UN Security Council, nor the UN General Assembly, nor other structural divisions of the UN, have taken care of this issue over the past 6-7 years since the Minsk agreements were concluded.

As for Belarus, the resolution contains absolutely groundless, far-fetched, politicised accusations against our country, as Vladimir Makei stated, “At the same time, the positive role of Belarus, connected, among other things, with the organisation of the activities of the trilateral contact group, has been forgotten. The role of Belarus associated with the development of comprehensive cooperation with our southern neighbour has been forgotten.”

Vasily Kharitonov

## 对紧迫问题的 看法趋于一致

西方制裁的目的是破坏白俄罗斯的国家地位。

这是白俄罗斯外交部长弗拉基米尔·马凯在接受中国中央电视台采访时所说的。他特别回顾说，白俄罗斯在2020年总统选举后面临制裁压力，随后压力甚至进一步加大：

### 新的增长点

丝绸之路经济带和21世纪海上丝绸之路大项目为白俄罗斯和中国的合作提供了新的机会。几十个国家已经加入了“一带一路”项目。白俄罗斯是第一个加入这一倡议的欧洲国家。我们完全有理由说，“一带一路”项目已经成为全球舞台上负面趋势的真正替代方案。它不仅重塑了世界的经济版图，创造了新的增长点，而且还塑造了一种新型的国际关系。它是在集团之上的一体化，旨在协调所有经济机构，消除货物、投资和人员自由流动的障碍。

巨石中国-白俄罗斯工业园项目正在积极实施。目前，这里已经有来自15个国家的85名居民。园区是投资的主要流入地。

为改善园区的法律监管和投资环境，去年通过了一项总统令，以扩大活动类型，支持初创企业，并为大型投资项目创造优惠条件。

### 关键领域

根据现有的贷款协议，利用中国政府的贷款实施了25个项目，总额约为47.3亿美元。已为14个项目支付了超过15亿元人民币（约2.43亿美元）的技术和经济援助。主要包括支持巨石工业园，在明斯克建造社会住房以及学生宿舍和明斯克中心区医院的治疗区。

根据中期展望，确定了2025年前技术和经济援助的三个关键合作领域：实施“国家足球场”和“国际标准游泳馆”项目，支持巨石工业园的发展，促进稳定和安全 - 国家边境委员会、国家海关委员会的项目。

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弗拉基米尔·韦利霍夫





# WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO HAVE **PEACE**

## **ALEKSANDR LUKASHENKO GAVE AN INTERVIEW TO THE JAPANESE TV CHANNEL TBS**

The conversation of the President of Belarus with the host of the Hodo Tokushu ('Special Report') programme of the TBS TV channel Shigenori Kanehira turned out to be quite frank. Much was spoken about, but the cross-cutting theme was peace. Not in Ukraine only. Aleksandr Lukashenko declared a fundamental aspect, "We advocate for negotiations. We want peace there. If there is no peace there, there will be no peace in Belarus over time. This is our position."



### A fundamental aspect

Shigenori Kanehira is known for having interviewed the first President of the USSR Mikhail Gorbachev, President of Russia Boris Yeltsin, US Secretary of State Colin Powell, President of the Republic of Korea Kim Dae-jung and President of Afghanistan Hamid Karzai. The interview of the President of Belarus to the Japanese journalist lasted about an hour and a half. It is symbolic that the meeting was held in the Green Hall of the Palace of Independence, where in 2015 the Normandy Four negotiated and developed the Minsk agreements to resolve the conflict in Ukraine.

Most of the interview was dedicated to the situation in the region, events in Ukraine and security issues. The possibility of a peaceful settlement of the conflict and the role of Belarus in this process were discussed. Commenting on the situation in Ukraine, Aleksandr Lukashenko drew the guest's attention to a fundamental aspect, "In this situation, not a single Belarusian soldier is fighting in Ukraine. Despite their hostile attitude towards Belarus, urged on by the West (we have turned this page), I called Zelensky and offered to immediately start negotiations with Russia. Literally on the third or on the fourth day of this war. And he accepted the offer."

The President of Belarus told the TV presenter that three rounds of negotiations had been organized in Belarus, and now the negotiation process continued via videoconference.

"That is, we do not attack Ukraine, we do not bomb Ukraine. We advocate for

negotiations. We want these negotiations to end in this hall. It is symbolic. At their time, agreements on Ukraine were signed in Minsk."

No way to be drawn into the conflict "In future, will Belarus take part in these actions?" Shigenori Kanehira asked.

Answering this question, Aleksandr Lukashenko recalled what provocations the Ukrainian party had arranged.

"If Ukraine continues to escalate against Belarus, we will respond. What I mean: at the time of the conflict, on 23—24 (February [Ed.]), they planned to strike at the territory of Belarus. I have spoken about that. From four points. We prevented it. They violate our state border — their aircraft, helicopter and so on.

The President of Belarus emphasizes, "I am practically convinced that we will not have to fight with Ukraine. The West will not be able to draw us into this conflict. We are smart enough not to be drawn into it, just the way the Americans and their partners are forcing us today. I am convinced that in the near future this conflict — Russia's operation — will end in peace."

### Ceasefire conditions

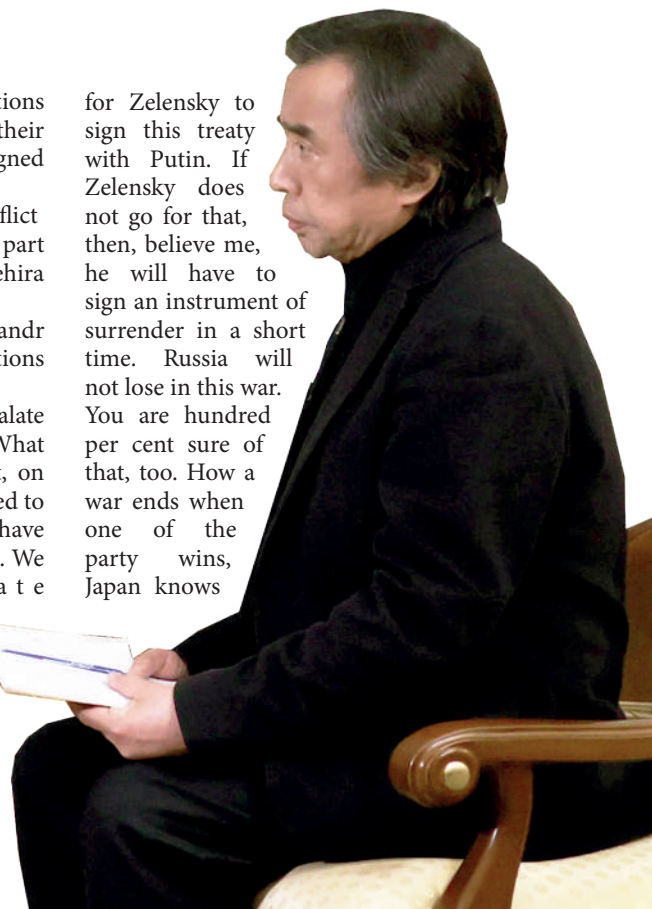
Touching upon the possibility of resolving this conflict, the President explained, "For the first time, I will tell you the main thing: Russia is offering Ukraine (Putin to Zelensky), I know exactly, an absolutely acceptable version of a treaty. And today it is still possible for Ukraine and Russia to agree and

for Zelensky to sign this treaty with Putin. If Zelensky does not go for that, then, believe me, he will have to sign an instrument of surrender in a short time. Russia will not lose in this war. You are hundred per cent sure of that, too. How a war ends when one of the party wins, Japan knows

better than I do."

"Is it a ceasefire Russia offers to the Ukrainian party?" the journalist wanted to know.

"As soon as the treaty, which is developed based on the negotiations that are under way in Belarus, is initialled... As soon as the foreign ministers initial this treaty, a ceasefire is possible. But I am absolutely convinced that Russia will not stop or suspend the operation



**I am practically convinced that we will not have to fight with Ukraine. The West will not be able to drag us into this conflict. We have enough intelligence not to get involved in this conflict, as the Americans together with their partners are pushing us to this conflict today. I am convinced that in the near future this conflict — Russia's operation — will end in peace.**

**No United Nations Organization has stopped a single war. It won't stop this one either. Similarly, other states. Russia and Ukraine can stop the war by agreeing and signing an agreement. Or the Americans, who will give the command to the leadership of Ukraine to stop the war. If the Americans do this, the European Union and others will quickly line up behind the United States of America and support their decisions. Therefore, two forces. Russia and Ukraine. Or America.**

until the treaty is initialled,” Aleksandr Lukashenko shared his vision. He also added that in this matter Russia, among other things, proceeded from the recent past.

“In 2014, the fire was ceased based on the Minsk agreements; the armed forces were separated. And how did it end? It ended in the current war. Therefore, Russia has every reason not to trust the today leadership of Ukraine. Plus, Russia has set certain goals for itself in this operation, and it will definitely achieve them.”



### The parties need to agree

Shigenori Kanehira also asked the President of Belarus who, in his opinion, can stop the conflict in Ukraine. In particular, can it be the UN, China or someone else?

Aleksandr Lukashenko voiced his point of view.

“Everyone you mentioned influences the situation around Ukraine in one way or another. But no more than that. No United Nations Organization has stopped a single war. Neither will it stop this one. Similarly, other countries. The war can be stopped by Russia and Ukraine, through agreeing and signing a treaty. Or by the Americans who will command to the leadership of Ukraine to end the war. If the Americans do this, the European Union and others will quickly line up behind the United States and support their decisions. Therefore, two forces. Russia and Ukraine. Or America.”

### Accents in the dialogue

After the interview, Shigenori Kanehira shared his impressions of the conversation with Aleksandr Lukashenko with Belarusian journalists. He admitted that the very fact of meeting with the President of Belarus was a significant event for him.

“We have been preparing for this interview for a very long time — a year and a half. It was a direct conversation;

we had a frank dialogue that satisfied me.”

Speaking about relations between Belarus and Japan, Shigenori Kanehira noted that they are very close, especially considering that our country suffered from the Chernobyl disaster and Japan faced the Fukushima tragedy.

“If we talk about the interaction between our countries and peoples, I really hope for further deepening of relations at the level of ordinary people, at the level of professionals,” Shigenori Kanehira emphasized.

As for the full format of the interview, in addition to assessment of the situation in Ukraine, the Japanese journalist was also interested in other points. In particular, the prospects for the deployment of nuclear weapons in Belarus and the role of journalism in today's world. Freedom of speech and freedom of action. The personal view of the President of Belarus on the collapse of the Soviet Union — was it a fatal mistake or a natural turn of history? Questions about Aleksandr Lukashenko's personal and professional relationships with Vladimir Putin and Vladimir Zelensky were raised. Of course, the topic of relations between Belarus and Japan was discussed — why today they have, to put it mildly, taken on a not very friendly overtone in a political sense. All questions were answered without exception.

Vsevolod Yemelyanov







The modern times have posed a long-standing debatable question point-blank: what should be the structure of a modern economy. It used to be fashionable to focus on services. In the expert community, many doubted such a concept. However, the pandemic, the global economic crisis, the parade of protectionism and sanctions, the disruption of supply chains have brought new challenges to the fore and forced to reconsider a number of approaches, considering them through the prism of economic security. It is obvious that today the states that will be able to provide an innovative development strategy will pull out of the world economic dive. We are talking not just about the production of know-how, but their implementation into final technologies and products. How to achieve this and effectively distribute labour resources between different industries? Valery Goncharov, Director of the Centre for System Analysis and Strategic Studies of the National Academy of Sciences, answers the questions.







### There are always subtleties

The 'service economy' slogan came from the West, was picked up by some domestic experts. And often with an incorrect, simplified interpretation. The 'classics' of post-industrial themes focused on the quality of the changes taking place, without denying the fundamental

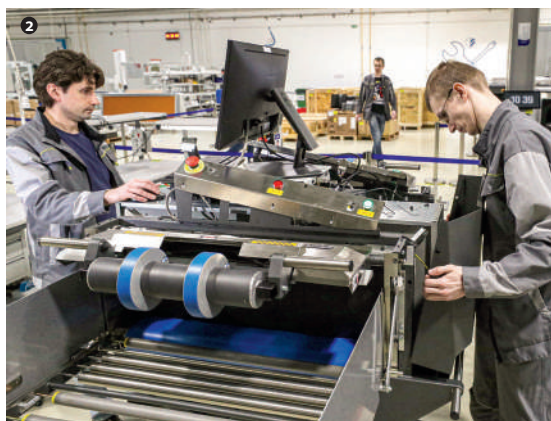
industrial basis of the economy, but the translation of these ideas to the east led to absolutisation: 'if the society is informational, then production is secondary, rudimentary'. And the consequence of such a bias in understanding is calls for the closure of our own enterprises, they say, we will earn money on something else (only they will decide later how). I want to make a reservation: I deliberately exaggerate in order to articulate my opinion more clearly. Although in any economic issue there are many subtleties.

Looking ahead, as a kind of announcement of future discussions, I will say that the concepts of the information, service economy have been replaced by green, circular, and digital ones. The latest trend is the decarbonisation of

production. However, truly qualitative changes in the technological core have not yet occurred. Yes, it is appropriate to talk about the fourth industrial revolution. But the fact that a person has an advanced smartphone, the power of which exceeds the performance of computers that occupied entire rooms 30-40 years ago, is no reason to consider it an intellectual resource of a new formation. Indeed, to be honest, new gadgets are a high-tech way to bring down an information wave on a person, from which it is no longer possible to swim to the surface of the ocean of life. It is sad to hear from teachers that schoolchildren no longer run around during breaks, as we once did, but stand, buried in phone screens. Having information and being able to use it are two very different things.

### Mindless copying is a dead end

It is the presence of the real sector, its development that is the basis for increasing the volume of services. Of course, there are some kind of exceptions, such as travel services. Nevertheless, countries that live only at their expense, in general, are rare. It is the growth of labour productivity in classical industries that ensures the prosperity of people on the basis of an increase in the production of material resources, which makes it possible to release and redirect/retrain the employed, give a person more free time for additional education, self-care, entertainment, sports, travel, and the growth of cultural potential. This means



creating demand for services in these areas, which by and large are not included in the range of vital ones. Although now many of them have become attributes of modernity and allow us to judge a person through the prism of the prestige of consumption.

I think that the mindless copying or adapting the Western model of the service economy is a dead end. Firstly, it began to take shape several decades ago and has largely outlived its usefulness. Evidence of this is the reindustrialisation of states that previously exported their production to the 'third world'. The pandemic has shown even more clearly: only

a country, society, individuals who, roughly speaking, know how to do something with their hands, can feel comfortable. These skills allow you to survive in any situation and withstand the risks that the modern world is too saturated with. Secondly, in the Western economy, at a certain moment, the development of the service sector was one of the forms of increasing employment, including migrant workers. For us, this problem as such is irrelevant. Thirdly, the caste component manifested itself to a certain extent in the formation of the service economy. In the USA and a number of other states, the professions of a psychoanalyst, a lawyer, and so on are popular (and highly paid). And some areas have become self-contained. Thus, within the framework of case law, the specificity is so high that only specially trained and narrowly 'sharpened' lawyers can understand it and interpret the norms.

### Focus on the output

Some disproportions on the path of saturating the economy with the 'service component' arise in Belarus as well. This was recently noted by the Head of State during his Address. Why do programmers are paid much more than doctors, engineers, technologists? Although the training of all these specialists takes approximately the same effort and time. It is obvious that higher salaries have developed in the IT sector due to a number of factors, including significant preferential conditions. Undoubtedly, some special incentives for some industries are needed if we want them to develop more dynamically, ahead of world rates. It must be understood that, despite the upcoming change in globalisation trends, capital continues to move quite freely around the world. Therefore, the economic conditions in different countries are comparable in the same industries. Only for a narrow range of positions are certain unique conditions created. Undoubtedly,





- ❶ Meeting with representatives of a public group at the battery plant in Brest
- ❷ Scientific and production private enterprise "Adani"

Belarus also needs to use different tools to intensify investment. But the issue of return on preferences should always be on the agenda. It includes the evaluation of the work of certain sectors in a comprehensive manner, and not only in terms of export volumes or some other individual indicators by which it is impossible to judge the effectiveness of a particular direction for the country as a single complex.

It is possible to show significant dynamics of production volumes or deliveries abroad, but how positively do these successes affect budget revenues? How do they influence the development of the public sector, the social sphere, and the improvement of the welfare of the population? A separate question is how are export earnings spent? I don't want to look into someone else's pocket, but if the salary goes to the purchase of imported goods (both for personal consumption and for business development, including computing power, networks, software), then the merits in terms of exports are

not so great. We shouldn't forget about the trade balance.

### Quality work is...

Therefore, if the state grants preferences to some spheres of activity, then it has the right to expect a corresponding return, moreover, in the system of the national economic complex, and not its individual elements. And the return should be assessed primarily through the volume and dynamics of budget revenues. Our country is small, centralised, manageable, so the budget channel is significant for the development of the economy and for society. In our conditions, this is an understandable and calculated criteria base. In contrast to the ephemeral indicators advocated by the 'apologists' of the market. Let me emphasise that success is determined not by the rights to property, but by the ability to manage it, to work efficiently and with full effort. Of course, such tension must be paid for. And the employee, it seems, should not care whether the director of a

state-owned enterprise or a top manager of a private company signed his or her payroll. What matters is the high salary.

In my opinion, it is obvious that clear rules of the game should be spelled out in the country: industries and enterprises that bear a higher burden (fiscal, social, investment) for the country and society should receive the most preferential treatment. Not only in terms of taxes, but also in terms of priority access to resources, distribution channels (for example, in the retail chains), in the field of construction and others. Unlike those who want to work exclusively on commercial terms, focusing on achieving their goals and interests. There is, in fact, nothing wrong with this, but such entities and owners must bear all the risks. That would be fair, I think, including within the framework of the thesis about the equality of economic conditions for all forms of ownership. Everyone should both receive assistance from the state and bear the burden of developing the country and society in fair proportions.





# GROWTH RATES ARE BASED ON ACCELERATION

**Last year, the Belarusian economy showed its resilience. Despite the sceptical forecasts given by various international organisations, it continued to develop.**

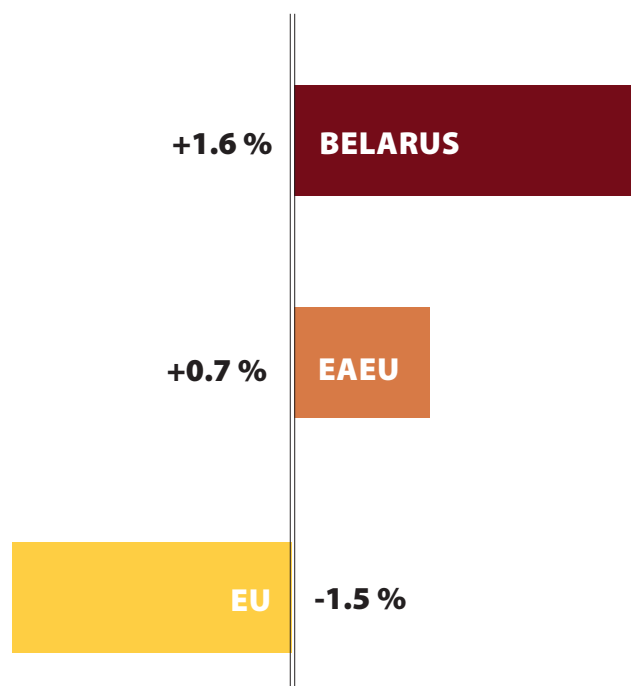


**As a result, at the end of the year, GDP grew by 2.3 percent. The country, unlike many states, did not go into lockdown, and production did not stop. Moreover, the enterprises worked more efficiently than ever. This helped to achieve an annual export rate of just over 130 percent and a record foreign trade balance (plus \$3.8 billion), primarily due to industry and services.**

#### Developing priority areas

Experts are sometimes sceptical about the words of officials that another year turned out to be special. However, according to the Minister of Economy Aleksandr Chervyakov, there is no other way to say about 2021. Although, in the global context, of course, there have been major changes. And this should definitely be taken into account, the minister believes, “The changed rules of the game have de facto simplified the world market with a complex architecture of economic interrelations. Country selfishness, protectionism and neo-isolationism have become a natural way of thinking. And it’s not just the pandemic. There are other long-term trends that can change the architectonics of global trade and investment flows. These are the climate agenda, the digitalisation of all spheres of life, the geopolitical confrontation between large economic blocs, the practice of sanctions pressure in order to lobby their interests and discriminate against competitors on a national scale. As a result, it has become much more difficult to plan development at the inter-level.” According to Aleksandr Chervyakov, the accuracy of forecasts of even the most reputable organisations has fallen sharply. These objective factors are exacerbated by the lack of pragmatism in actions and, consequently, the predictability of partners. That is why the focus of attention of managerial elites and ‘think tanks’ of large economies is shifting to narrower, regional issues. Businesses respond subtly to these signals, adapting their models and behaviours accordingly. From a practical point of view, this is a prerequisite for an increase in the trend towards the isolation of economies, which, in turn, leads to an increase in the degree of localisation of production and logistics. Aleksandr Chervyakov is sure that this development of events will benefit mainly local suppliers of raw materials and components. And this redistribution of income and the development of the domestic market has certain advantages, “Belarus, as a small open economy, certainly takes into account the above when planning its development. In developing the priority areas of the five-year plan, we will make maximum use of our own resources, competencies and potential. And, of course, we will intensify work in the capacious and familiar markets for our manufacturers of the near, reliable circle of partners, such as Russia,

#### GDP growth



China, the Eurasian Economic Union. And of course, we will develop new areas. In the past year, we were generally successful in accomplishing this strategic task.”

Thus, according to statistics, the country’s economy grew by 2.3 percent last year. This is higher than previously accepted forecast. But how should this result be evaluated? Aleksandr Chervyakov believes that, at first glance, the dynamics seem to be moderate, especially compared to what was observed in the first half of the year. However, it should be recalled here that, unlike the neighbouring countries in the region, Belarusian enterprises continued to work and produce

1 BELGEE is one of the two enterprises for the assembly of passenger cars in Belarus

products despite the surge of COVID-19 in 2020. That is why the fall in GDP in our country, compared with other states, was minimal. Our economy, even taking into account the base of comparison, has added more than others in the region following the results of two pandemic years. The GDP of Belarus grew by 1.6 percent, the EAEU countries — by 0.7 percent. The EU economy shrank by 1.5 percent.

#### Performance markers

How did the Belarusian economy manage to work so well? According to Aleksandr Chervyakov, the successful adaptation of business models to the ambiguous external environment became the foundation for the efficient operation of industries in 2021. This result, as the minister emphasises, was also due to a systematic approach in development planning in recent years. Firstly, the established management system made it possible to quickly mobilise resources and implement effective export strategies. Secondly, the channel created in 2020 to support business by the state during the pandemic positively influenced the mood of entrepreneurs. Its effective performance reduced the level of anxiety in the business environment. Thirdly, what Aleksandr Chervyakov notes is that the economy was literally helped by doctors and a stable healthcare system. They restrained the avalanche-like pressure of the pandemic and levelled its impact on the economy. As a result, there was no need to impose restrictions on the operation of enterprises. Fourthly, the



**As you know, the marker of economic efficiency is the financial condition of business entities. Last year, according to statistics, net profit increased almost three times compared to the previous year.**

saved production pace made it possible to master the vacated niches without build-up, “With ready-made volumes of products, well-developed logistics and payment schemes, we were able to quickly enter new markets and expand our presence in traditional ones through real sales.”

Well, this is clearly evidenced by the dynamics of exports of goods and services, an increase of more than 32.5 percent. It increased in all commodity aggregates, including due to trucks, cars, furniture, woodworking products, and foodstuffs. According to the results of the year, a historically record value of the positive balance was reached — plus 3.8 billion dollars. In many ways, the growth

in deliveries was due to the support of trusted partners from the Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China, who opened their markets wider for our products. As a result, exports to Russia increased by almost a quarter, amounting to more than \$16 billion, and to China by 17.5 percent, approaching \$1 billion. These areas will continue to develop actively.

As you know, the marker of economic efficiency is the financial condition of business entities. Last year, according to statistics, net profit increased almost three times compared to the previous year. The economy has earned more than 16 billion roubles. Return on sales reached more than eight percent. The number





2 Krasny Borets  
Machine-Tool  
Plant

of unprofitable enterprises decreased by almost twenty percent. In short, there is a significant improvement in the situation in the real sector.

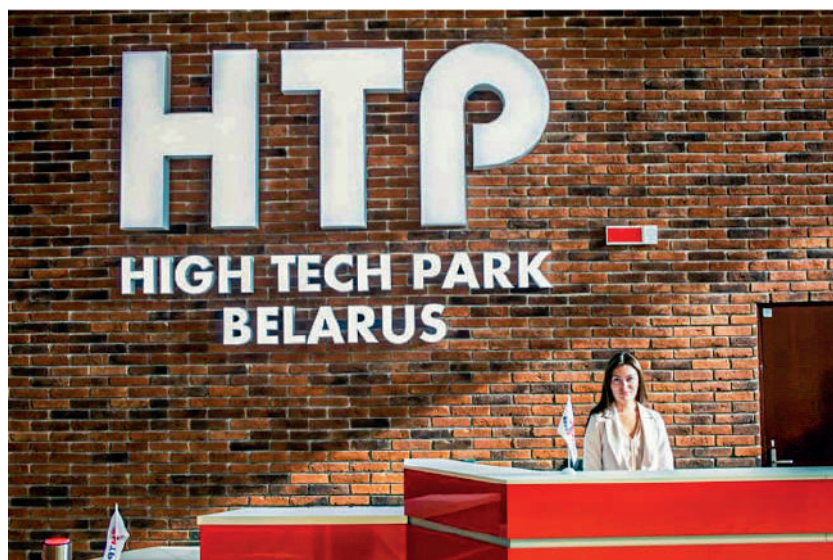
#### Optimism indexes

The surveys conducted also showed that the management of the companies is optimistic and the growth trend will continue. The heads of enterprises are planning to increase demand and output, and increase employment. The integral index, the index of industrial optimism, was positive in January and continued to grow. It is nine points higher than in December. And taking into account seasonality, its value reached a maximum for more than twenty years of observation history.

If we evaluate the results of the year in terms of industries, then it should be noted that industry has always been the driving force in achieving good results. It provided more than seventy percent of GDP growth. The main contribution was made by the chemical industry, woodworking, mechanical engineering, and energy.

If we talk about the development of services, then the potential here has not yet been fully used. Despite the fact that this is an area where small investments and efforts can quickly achieve great results. However, on the other hand, it is more susceptible to restrictions for the consumer. The 2020 pandemic proved this convincingly. Even though Belarus did not introduce strict bans on

**The leaders are industry and the IT sector saw an increase of about 7-8 percent, transport — over 5 percent, trade — 2.5 percent.**



visiting places of recreation and sights, COVID fears themselves kept people and tourists from such activity. Of course, this behaviour has had a negative impact on many service sectors. In order to prevent crisis phenomena in the industries, the state promptly adopted a package

of support measures. They allowed businesses to mitigate costs and for most organisations to survive the peak of the pandemic. In 2021, it was necessary to win back the fall, ensuring an increase in the contribution of the service sector to GDP. In general, this task was completed.

❶ Gomselmash JSC is one of the largest manufacturers of agricultural machinery

❷ Modern factory Belshina JSC

It is important that not only IT was a plus, but also other sectors: trade, healthcare...

An indicator of a significant improvement in the situation is usually the dynamics in public catering. Thus, the trade turnover in this area has grown by almost 15 percent. Sectors related to tourism have added up comparably. These are temporary accommodation services, sports, recreation, entertainment, passenger transportation.

The efficient operation of industries has become a reliable foundation for an economically justified growth in real incomes of the population. It amounted to 102 percent, which is also higher than the forecast. The increase was provided by increasing wages in the real sector and additional state support for state employees, in particular doctors, with COVID payments, as well as the support of socially vulnerable citizens. As a result, doctors, along with IT specialists, miners and bankers, entered the top highly paid activities. It is also important that the government also took a number of measures to increase the incomes of low-paid categories of workers. For example, in May last year, a new procedure for determining the minimum wage was established at the legislative level — not less than thirty percent of the forecast value of the nominal average wage in the country.

Thus, we can say with confidence that the economy developed steadily, enterprises worked with a profit, all social obligations were fulfilled in full, concludes Aleksandr Chervyakov and notes a new trend, “We see that the drivers of growth that contributed to the achievements of 2021 remain in effect. In January, GDP grew by 2.7 percent. The leaders are industry and the IT sector

saw an increase of about 7-8 percent, transport — over 5 percent, trade — 2.5 percent. Further dynamics depend on whether breakthrough points of growth appear in other industries. Together with regulators and local authorities, we will actively work on this this year and in the future.”

#### Demand for ideas

Let's ask ourselves this question: what areas should be singled out as promising in order to maintain and increase the successes achieved this year?

“The main direction of work is set by the priority of the five-year plan — strong

regions, which implies a decrease in inter-regional differentiation,” notes the Minister of Economy. “Achieving it will require effective investment in promising projects in specific areas, taking into account their potential.”

Theoretically, the formula for investment success is as follows. First of all, we need fresh, well-developed ideas that can become profitable projects in the future. Without them, even in the most favourable conditions, it will not be possible to quickly launch the investment cycle. In addition, it is necessary to adapt the product to the needs of potential growing markets — the countries of Asia







**There is an understanding of supporting business in the implementation of its own ideas and proposals. As well as the understanding that this requires infrastructure and promotion mechanisms.**



and Africa. Russia has been and remains a priority for us: Belarusian goods and services have a reputation and demand there. And the third component of our formula is affordable financing and long-term money.

In practice, to fill the investment cycle with specific projects, it is necessary to additionally use several tools. First, actively implement import substitution. In the context of external restrictions, this direction acquires special significance. The task is to organise the production of components and substitute goods with characteristics no worse than imported ones. This will ensure the stability of

supplies and increase the competitiveness of the real sector as a whole. Systematic approaches to import substitution are accumulated in a comprehensive action plan. At the level of industries and regions, work is planned for a year. In real terms, about three thousand types of products will be produced for more than \$25 billion. A list of several hundred import-substituting export-oriented projects has been compiled. In general, the network of such projects will cover the entire country, not only regional centres, but also districts. Their implementation will be an additional contribution to the very development of the regions.

Of course, it is planned to modernise the enterprises. In addition, the five-year plan set out a rather ambitious task of increasing wages and labour productivity. Obviously, without technical re-equipment based on digital technologies, it is difficult to achieve planned indicators. There is an understanding that 'digital' should cover every technological process, introducing robotic systems into tool and welding production, metal cutting, painting and other manufacturing processes. Business models need to be adapted to it. In such an enterprise, workers and equipment are used with maximum efficiency. For example, the use of a welding robot in the manufacture of the same type of products can increase labour productivity by five or even more times. That is why today the supervisory boards, primarily at state-owned enterprises, are recommended to revise, take inventory of development plans and determine the degree of modernisation of production in order to achieve an appropriate level of labour productivity and wages.

In addition, today more than ever it is important to ensure the transfer of technologies and new products from science to production. Right now, it is necessary to improve and more actively apply the tools of the State Program for Innovative Development for the Five-Year Period. Minister of Economy Aleksandr Chervyakov also noted that it will be necessary to strengthen the existing mechanisms for the commercialisation of scientific and technical developments at the stage of transfer to specific industries and copyright protection. For a closer



alliance of scientists and industrialists, it is planned to work out a mechanism for supporting and engineering scientific developments into prototypes for subsequent mass production on a commercial basis at the premises of one of the institutes of the National Academy of Sciences.

There is an understanding of supporting business in the implementation of its own ideas and proposals. As well as the understanding that this requires infrastructure and promotion mechanisms. Ready-made industrial sites with engineering, energy and transport infrastructure according

to the 'last mile' principle are what you need to have in every region and where we want to attract investors.

#### Lessons for the future

If there are successes, then they cannot be hushed up — they need to be talked about. Each region has examples that businesses should be aware of. Acquaintance with positive experience often becomes a decisive argument for people who have not yet decided to plunge into this element. This is especially true for young people who need to be involved in the economy through the start-up movement. It is in the minds of young

people that fresh, ambitious ideas are born. Hence the conclusion: it is necessary to support start-up entrepreneurs, making wider use of grant and financial incentive instruments. In general, it is necessary to systematically improve the conditions for business. The main issue is to reduce the costs of entrepreneurs. For this, by the way, the country has launched a comprehensive work of authorities, businesses, experts, scientists to simplify administrative procedures and transfer them to an electronic format. Moreover, a number of fundamental optimisation decisions have already been made. Recently, a third of the total number





- ❶ Belmedsteklo JSC
- ❷ Krasny Borets Machine-Tool Plant plans to increase export supplies by 50%

## The main issue is to reduce the costs of entrepreneurs. For this the country has launched a comprehensive work of authorities, businesses, experts, scientists to simplify administrative procedures and transfer them to an electronic format.

of administrative procedures has been reduced. As Aleksandr Chervyakov said, there are two more stages of reform ahead. The main task is to reduce the time of administrative procedures and paperwork by 75 percent. And for the widespread introduction of digital tools in the processes of interaction between the state and business, a service and reengineering agency appeared in the structure of the Development Bank.

And further. To fill the investment cycle with specific projects, it is planned to expand opportunities for access to long-term financial resources. In the short term, the state solves this problem through

the available tools. In particular, at the suggestion of the Ministry of Economy, business support by banks through credit lines has increased five times as part of the Small and Medium Enterprises state programme. In the current five-year plan, small and medium-sized businesses can count on thirty billion roubles, including six billion this year.

It is also possible to receive support for an investment project at the expense of the Development Bank, subject to certain criteria. However, such a volume of resources is objectively not enough, it will be necessary to look for additional opportunities to attract 'long-term'

money. Banks, government agencies, experts and scientists are actively working on this task today. The parties proceed from the fact that in the future the needs of all market participants in capital for the implementation of their investment projects should be satisfied by the market itself, without attracting preferential state support. The activation of long-term savings will revive investment activity, which, in turn, will contribute to the growth of the economy and the well-being of citizens.

Of course, the above list of common tasks is not limited. Aleksandr Chervyakov drew attention to the fact that it is necessary to deepen cooperation with the Russian Federation within the framework of the Union State, with partners from the EAEU, China and countries of the far arc. To create conditions for increasing the export of domestic goods to traditional and new markets. Use the tools of state programmes and reserves to improve the efficiency of the public sector to increase the competitiveness of the economy. Together with scientists and industries, to fill the projects of the future with concrete content. And, ultimately, to propose new and coordinate the implementation of already existing measures in order to ensure the successful achievement of priorities and the fulfilment of the tasks of the five-year plan.

Aleksandr Pimenov

# TO BE ABLE TO OVERTAKE TIME IS AN ACHIEVEMENT



**Recognizable futuristic body lines, panoramic windshield, ergonomics... Due to all this, autonomous trams, electric buses and trolleybuses organically fit into the transport life of cities not only in Belarus, but also in the CIS countries, as well as far abroad. They are made at the BKM Holding enterprise, known under the more familiar name Belkommunmash.**



Highly qualified personnel, a powerful production base, and its own design centre allow the holding to keep pace with the times, or even get ahead of it. Meanwhile, the products of the enterprise can be safely called piecework, because even in Belarus there are no two cities that would be supplied with vehicles of the same technical characteristics.

### World problems make adjustments

Large industries around the world are now having a hard time: they are tested either by COVID lockdowns or by a

difficult geopolitical situation.

“Because of the unpredictable conditions in the world, we are not working as efficiently as we could,” admits Oleg Bytsko, General Director of Belkommunmash Holding Management Company OJSC. “For example, last year a number of contracts with Ukraine and Moldova were not concluded on time — customers were waiting to see if our enterprise would fall under the direct effect of economic restrictions. We planned to conclude a contract with Chisinau in May last year for 25 vehicles, but they signed it only in September and only for 20



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vehicles. Broken contracts had to be urgently replaced with others. However, our industry has its own specifics: it is not enough to enter the market with an offer, it is necessary to participate in competitions, to perform certain procedures in advance. The sanctions imposed on the bank that serves the company complicate the work: the banks cannot issue guarantees for European contracts. Echoes of the problems caused by the coronavirus pandemic are still being felt. Thus, we signed a contract with Sarajevo for the supply of 25 self-driving trolleybuses and planned to manufacture the first of them in September last year. However, due to closed borders, components were not delivered on time, which means that the terms of production and certification of products were shifted. The first trolleybus left for its destination not in December, as we had planned, but only at the end of February. So the pandemic and economic restrictions had a serious impact on our work, despite the fact that we were not directly affected.

The problem of timely delivery of the necessary components could be solved by import substitution, however, the development of our own components and assemblies is a slow process. Each product here is specific. In terms of their configuration, they can differ by 10-15 percent in different positions. Much depends on which countries the cars will go to. Nevertheless, localisation is at least 55 percent. The main assembly set, which is the body, as well as electronic and electrical components, is produced in-house, however, some of their components must be purchased. For example, electric battery cells come from China. The manufacture of the batteries themselves for vehicles supplied to the markets of the post-Soviet space and many other countries, where European standards do not directly apply, was localised at the enterprise: on the basis of the purchased cells, they make the battery necessary for each specific project. As for European projects, they buy assembled batteries, since they require special





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European certification. Taking into account the number of machines manufactured for Europe, there is no economic feasibility in carrying out this procedure yet. Even if the batteries are certified, it is not a fact that they will be accepted with open arms in Europe, and this is not always connected with objective issues.”

### **The equipment does not stay in the warehouse for too long**

Nevertheless, the enterprise managed to increase output volumes: compared to 2020, they amounted to 107 percent last year. In addition, investments in production have increased significantly.

“There were very serious investments in the modernisation of the plant,” notes the General Director of the holding. We have completed the construction of a new spray booth. The structure of manufactured equipment has changed: it has

become more complex and, accordingly, more expensive. So, trolleybuses with autonomous running and an articulated body (accordion-type connection) are popular.”

Since BKM Holding works mainly to fulfil the concluded contracts, passenger vehicles do not stay in the warehouse for a very long time. The assembly area operates according to the principle: the closer to the exit, the higher the degree of readiness of the vehicle. Work on it begins with the manufacture of a metal frame, which at the initial stage resembles, to be honest, rather the skeleton of a greenhouse in a summer cottage. Then the car takes on a more perfect shape, and some technical features are already added at this stage. The finished frame is sent for painting, and then returned to the assembly site. Here, its internal and external cladding takes place, filling with electrics, electronics, then glass, doors, seats, mirrors and everything else is installed, without which operation is impossible. By the way, up to 4 kilometres of electrical



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harnesses are hidden under the skin of each passenger car, which actuate systems, control doors, and allow validators and other devices to work.

“We are constantly looking for new sales markets, we take part in procurement biddings,” assures Oleg Bytsko. “We have always successfully cooperated with Ukraine, Tajikistan, Moldova, Russia. In order to diversify the markets, we once carried out certification of equipment in the European Union and now we supply our electric vehicles to Bulgaria and Bosnia. At least 25 high-capacity trolleybuses with an autonomous run of up to 20 kilometres will go to Sarajevo. Such transport is not afraid of traffic jams or interruptions in power supply, and new routes can be organised without a contact network at all. There were deliveries to Argentina and Colombia, but they still preferred transport on an internal combustion engine.”

By the way, the company supplies all electric buses immediately with electric charging stations of its own production. At the same time, the localisation of the devices that make them up is constantly deepening and now it is about 35 percent.

### What is it, a modern truck?

Everyone knows Belkommunmash as a manufacturer of passenger transport, and it recently surprised the general public by presenting the first VITOVIT TRUCK ELECTRO PRIME electric truck with a payload capacity of 7,800 kilograms and a van body volume of 44 cubic meters, or 18 Euro pallets, which is a dream of a retailer who needs to deliver goods to many shopping points. What is the reason for this shift in focus?

Electric transport at the enterprise, in principle, is not new. In addition, global trends are constantly monitored here. The development of electric buses was taken up when the world was still distrustful of this type of electric passenger transport. The topic of battery-powered cars was more difficult for customers. However, with the development of the necessary infrastructure, they are convinced that this is the future. The operation of electric vehicles is cheaper both in terms of maintenance and energy. But initially these vehicles are more expensive. A middle ground should be found where the difference in expenses covers the difference in cost. The task now facing Belkommunmash is to reach a price that will allow potential customers to operate their equipment with maximum





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economic effect. It is not for nothing that a prototype was created here, on the example of which they tried to show how a modern truck can and should be. Its cost will depend on the volume of production.

### Compete smartly

Belarus is implementing a state programme for the development of electric transport until 2025, according to which it is planned to increase the share of public transport to 30 percent over the five-year period. For its implementation, an innovation-industrial cluster "Electrotransport" was created. It included such companies as Minsk Automobile Plant, Belarusian Automobile Plant (BELAZ), Minsk Tractor Works, the Joint Institute of Mechanical Engineering of the National Academy of Sciences and, of course, Belkommunmash.

"In order to successfully compete in foreign markets, coordinated actions are needed between various manufacturers, primarily in their own country," explains Oleg Bytsko. "When enterprises are part of the same structure, subordinate to one ministry, unhealthy competition

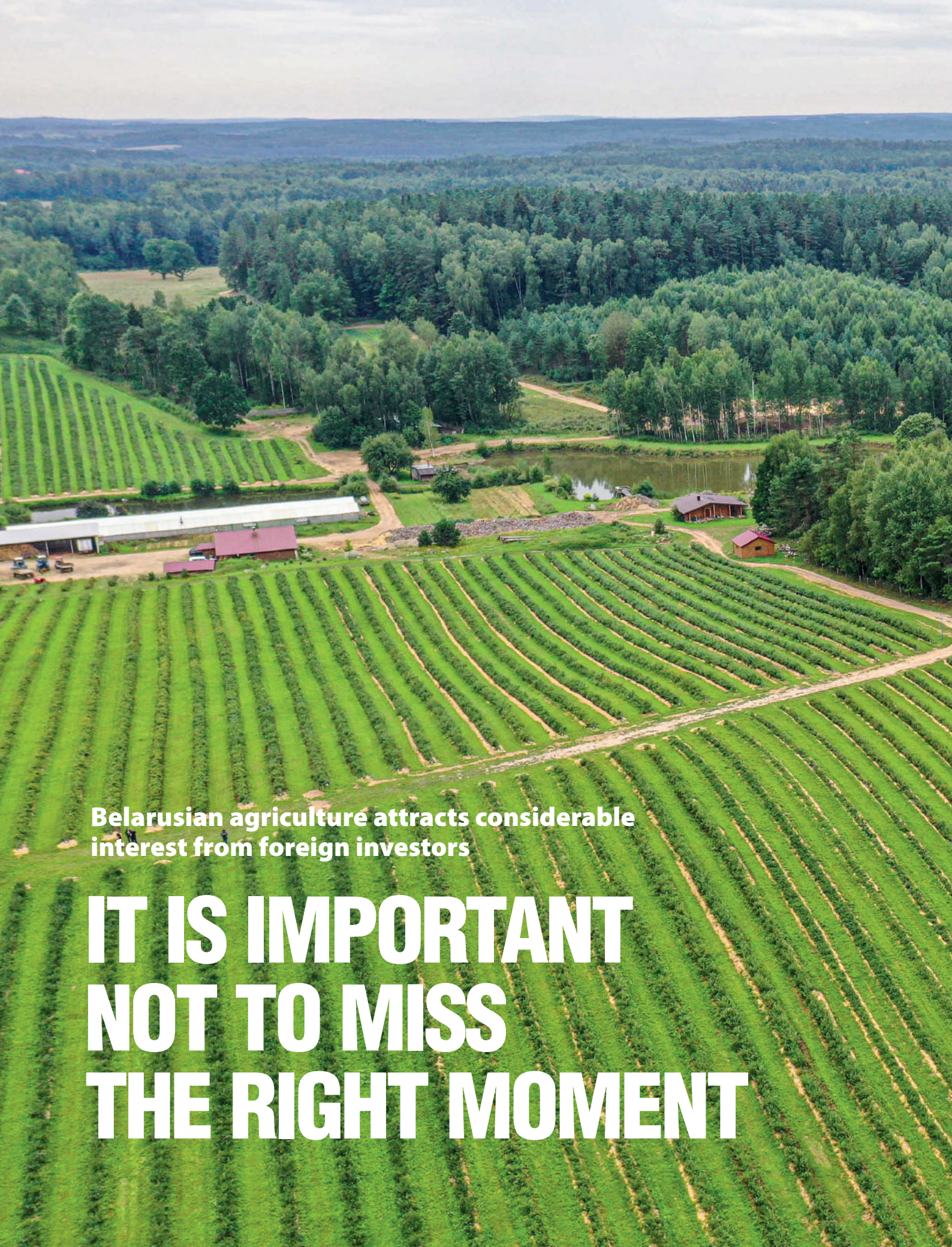
disappears, funds are not spent on identical developments."

The task of the cluster is to coordinate effective interaction in the scientific, technical, educational and industrial fields. In other words, to make sure that the activities of various enterprises are not duplicated, but that they most effectively solve the tasks set. For example, Minsk Automobile Plant OJSC also created its own electric truck together with the National Academy of Sciences. However, it has a different carrying capacity and is designed to perform other tasks. After all, the main thing is not to create a sample of possibilities, but a viable and competitive car that will be in demand and will be sold well. That is why there is a cluster work plan, the nuances of cooperation between enterprises are defined.

Catching up is always more difficult than running on par, and this is how the policy of BKM Holding is built. Sometimes it even manages to be ahead of its time. So it was with electric buses and it can become so with electric trucks, the production niche of which is still almost free. But this is the car of the future.

Arseny **Tabolich**





**Belarusian agriculture attracts considerable  
interest from foreign investors**

**IT IS IMPORTANT  
NOT TO MISS  
THE RIGHT MOMENT**



**Whatever industrial and technological revolutions the world experiences, agriculture will always remain the basic branch of the economy. There will always be a demand for food. Moreover, the former overproduction has long been forgotten due to the pandemic: the world's population is growing, and the amount of land that can be given for arable farming is declining. Moreover, climate change and water scarcity in densely populated regions add drama to food markets. The**



**issue of food security has become urgent for many states in recent years. Today, agriculture is one of the most attractive sectors for international investment. Investors also pay special attention to Belarusian agricultural enterprises. Which regions are most interested in cooperation with Belarus in the field of agriculture, which areas are key for investors and what successful projects with foreign capital have already been implemented in the country? Let's try to answer these questions.**

### **Ensuring food security**

"The interest of foreign investors in agricultural production is observed all over the world," says Vitaly Zholnerovich, Deputy Head of the Investor Support Department of the National Investment and Privatisation Agency.

One of the leaders in terms of investment and the number of projects implemented abroad, including in the areas of agriculture and the food industry, is China. Due to population growth, the demand for food in this country is constantly growing. And the state leadership is pursuing a systematic policy of ensuring food security, including through investment in foreign agricultural assets.

It turns out that Chinese investors in the field of agriculture are most active in Africa and Russia, primarily in the regions of the Far East and Eastern Siberia. The bulk of Chinese foreign direct investment is concentrated in

a relatively small number of African countries: Nigeria, South Africa, Sudan, Algeria and Zambia. These countries account for more than 70 percent of China's foreign direct investment. Others have joined the list in recent years, such as Guinea, Ghana, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Ethiopia.

The second major investment donor in agriculture are the countries of the Persian Gulf, primarily the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia. Due to the presence of natural resources, arable land in these states is practically absent. Agriculture focuses on growing vegetables and fruits in oases or irrigated plantations. At the same time, 90 percent of the Gulf states depend on imported food supplies. Given the numerous risks in supplies, including due to the pandemic, these states have in recent years stepped up the implementation of programmes for their own food security and are investing in

foreign food production, most actively in Ethiopia due to the proximity of this country geographically. Nevertheless, they are considering cooperation with states from other regions.

In the Gulf countries, there are already quite a few agricultural companies that do business in one or more foreign countries. In 2020, the National Investment and Privatisation Agency, with the assistance of the Belarusian Embassy in the UAE, held a webinar with such companies, where they presented the possibilities of Belarus in the field of agriculture and the food industry. In the format of a videoconference, representatives of Arab companies were told about the country, its business climate, opportunities for agriculture and processing. All the questions were answered.

"As far as we understand, partners in this region are not very interested in projects from scratch, the so-called



**Our country is almost completely self-sufficient in mineral fertilizers.**



greenfield, they prefer to acquire a ready-made business or become shareholders,” says Vitaly Zholnerovich. “When an enterprise is already operating, it is more understandable for an investor: there is a specialisation, certain sales markets, and potential. And if the expansion of production requires technical re-equipment and modernisation, then Arab investors are ready to invest.”

### Potential remains high

Meanwhile, Belarus has many investment advantages. Firstly, the geographical position. The country is located between two large sales markets — the EU and the EAEU. For many investors, the opportunity to diversify sales markets is fundamental, even if their key goal is to ensure the food security of their own countries. Nevertheless, they always want, under favourable conditions, to profitably

sell products in other regions, if prices in them are higher than at home. Secondly, Belarus has good transport links with China — a container arrives in 12-14 days by rail. Thus, agricultural companies have the opportunity both to receive equipment and raw materials from the Asian market, and to sell products to China. By the way, Belarusian farmers have made a breakthrough with China over the past three years in the supply of meat and dairy products.

Thirdly, Belarus has a developed agriculture, so there are specialists, technologies, scientific and educational bases, and international relations have been developed. We have developed agricultural engineering, the country is almost completely self-sufficient in mineral fertilizers. Fourthly, the threshold for entering the agricultural business in Belarus is low by international standards. At the

same time, we have quite productive agricultural land and relatively good climatic conditions.

From the point of view of investors, one can note the low popularity of Belarus as a promising platform for the implementation of projects in the field of agriculture and the food industry. First of all, these are the countries of the far arc.

“They know more about our engineering products, while little is known about Belarusian agriculture in the world,” notes Vitaly Zholnerovich. “Right now, it is important to focus efforts on the presentation of our country as having, among other things, a high agricultural potential.”

The second point that raises doubts among investors is the state ownership of agricultural land.

Almost all investors ask: under what conditions can one acquire land as a property?



“We have to explain to them that we have private agricultural companies that lease land from the state under a contract for 99 years” Vitaly Zholnerovich shares his experience of communicating with representatives of foreign companies. “That such a management principle does not carry any risks, since if an enterprise fulfils all the conditions of the contract and complies with the law, then no one will ever take the leased land from it, such precedents are unknown to the agency. However, many investors are accustomed to working with private land ownership. It cannot be said that this issue is absolutely critical for everyone, but it requires additional clarification.”

### Interesting success stories

“Meanwhile, over the past two years, we have managed to attract several serious investors to our agriculture, who have already acquired assets and are purposefully developing them. A serious project is being implemented by a farmer from Western Europe. Initially, he focused on Kazakhstan, but Belarus is a neighbouring country, and he decided to take a closer look at the possibilities of doing business with us.”

“First, he wrote a request to our agency, and we quickly provided all the requested information,” Vitaly Zholnerovich tells the details of the case. “Then I came personally, we travelled around the Brest and Grodno Regions for several days, examined the farms. We presented the potential investor with the selection of farms that were in the process of liquidation or

bankruptcy, and were also undergoing a financial recovery procedure. It should be noted that he was impressed both with the technical equipment and with the lands. A month later, he came again and examined other farms. As a result, he made a decision and acquired three agricultural production cooperatives with a total area of agricultural land of more than 19,000 hectares.

The farmer especially liked the price. The farms were in the process of liquidation, they had already gone through several stages of bidding, so they were sold at a very significant discount. As a result, each venture cost about a million dollars. It is very cheap by European standards. According to the investor, in the EU a hectare of arable land costs about 10,000 euros for a bare plot. The farmer claimed that in order to get land of the same area in his homeland, he would have to spend about 200 million euros for the land





alone. Therefore, he was not distracted by the fact that the enterprises were implemented with certain conditions: the obligation to invest certain amounts in the development of enterprises, to maintain the number of dairy herds and jobs at the established level. By the way, initially the investor focused on crop production, but the agricultural production cooperative had dairy farms with a total livestock of over a thousand. And today he is very successfully developing dairy farming.

The second investor is from Kazakhstan. He rented about a thousand hectares of arable land from a farm in the Krugloye District of the Mogilev Region. He has an agricultural business in his homeland, and Belarus attracted him with its compactness and geographical position. His current business has key sales markets in Moscow and St. Petersburg. And logistics costs in the vast expanses of Kazakhstan can eat up all the profits. Therefore, he decided to develop his business in Belarus. And he is very pleased, he is considering options for increasing the size of the land plot to five thousand hectares in the near future.

Another very interesting project: in August 2020, a request from New Zealand came to the National Investment and Privatisation Agency. The entrepreneur wanted to know if it were possible to grow such an exotic crop as quinoa in Belarus. It originates from South America, but is now very popular with adherents of a healthy diet. The businessman already had an operating enterprise in Georgia. The project was not the easiest in terms of implementation. The fact is that no one has grown quinoa in Belarus before, so there was no such crop in the register of agricultural plants. We found a partner for the investor in the Mogilev region, who allocated 10 hectares of land for crop testing, an agreement was concluded with the Inspectorate for Testing and Protection of Plant Varieties under the Ministry of Agriculture

1 The first crop of cucumbers was harvested in the greenhouses of Rasvet in the Kirovsk District



and Food. All legal procedures were followed. The crop showed itself well in Belarus, so the tested variety of quinoa flava was included in the register.

Meanwhile, the New Zealander plans to develop a diversified business here. He acquired several facilities in the Vitebsk Region. He intends to use

them both as an office for his company and for tourism: he wants to create a museum of quinoa, to establish the production of whiskey from it, such a drink is becoming fashionable in the West, there are distilleries in the USA, Canada, Western Europe, but not in Eastern Europe. Belarus can become a





**Belarus has a fairly developed agriculture: there are specialists, technologies, scientific and educational bases, and international relations have been developed.**

② The first sprouts in the fields

③ The Research Centre for Potato and Horticulture of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus develops new varieties of Belarusian potatoes

regional pioneer in this direction. The main markets for quinoa and quinoa products are Europe and China. The New Zealand farmer was captivated by the country's logistical capabilities. He noted that there are no such business opportunities in New Zealand and Australia. There are lands, qualified

personnel, but everything is very, very expensive. Therefore, it is quite difficult to produce competitive products. He sees the development of his business in Belarus.

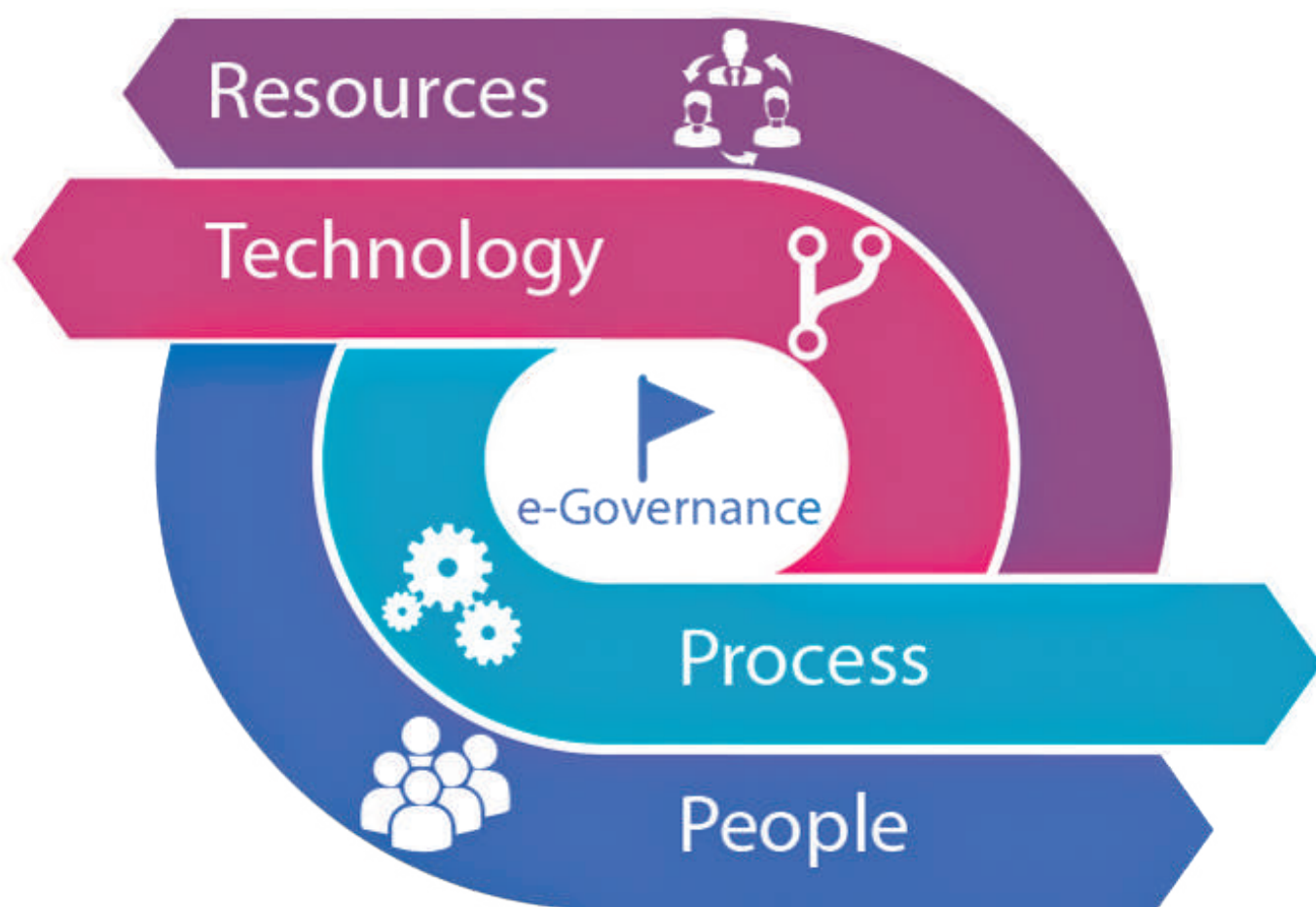
Thus, it is easy to conclude that our country has a very significant investment reserve. And it needs

to be used to the best advantage. Systematically attracting investors to increase the efficiency and competitiveness of entire industries. For example, domestic agriculture, which still retains large investment resources."

Aleksandr **Pimenov**

# INNOVATION IN DIGITAL WRAPPING

OR HOW E-GOVERNMENT HELPS MAKE LIFE BETTER







The position of Belarus in the top 40 states in terms of readiness for e-government indicates that most of the management processes across the country have been digitised. Today, in order to apply to a bank, a cadastral agency, a number of ministries and departments, as well as other authorities, it is not at all necessary to leave the house, stand in a long queue. More than 200 services have been automated for citizens and businesses. Behind this large-scale work is the National Centre for Electronic Services. What electronic services are available to us, how do they work for the country's economy? We talked to Roman GRADUSOV, Director of the National Centre for Electronic Services about these issues.

### Innovative state element

**“Is it correct to call the e-government project an element of an innovative state?”**

“Absolutely. Innovations are aimed at digitising our communication with government agencies, making it as comfortable as possible. Organise the receipt of various services online, without leaving home, when there is such a need. The task of the NCES in this process is to keep the infrastructure that ensures this digital dialogue up to date, carry out work on its modernisation, improve and improve so that the service mechanisms are as comfortable as possible.

After all, if we recall the beginning of the 2000s, when this work was just beginning, there was even no talk of interaction between departments. Now a lot has changed. For example,

today, within the framework of a nationwide automated information system, we have access to 43 databases owned by various government agencies and organisations. For example, databases of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection on the registration of the unemployed, families with multiple dependent children, social benefits. Often, dozens of different services are provided based on the information of each of them. For example, the Unified State Register of Real Estate of the National Cadastral Agency provides access to almost 30 services for individuals and legal entities. In total, today more than 200 services are available on the single portal of electronic services portal.gov.by, the provision of

**Roman Gradusov, “The main result of our work is the creation of a basis, a strong developed infrastructure, using which you can create and string new services like beads.”**



which is regulated by the system owners.

The next goal is to build a digital state based on the provision of proactive services. Until recently, electronic cooperation between a person and the state was based on the declarative principle: a service in response to an appeal. In the future, for example, when a child is born, a person will not need to register him or her, enroll in

a kindergarten, as this will be done by the state based on the data entering the databases.”

**“If we compare similar structures in other states, what is the difference between our e-government system?”**

“Of course, before creating our e-government, we studied international experience. However, this does not mean at all that we blindly copied someone else’s path. We took the best, such as a single point of access to services, the use of an electronic digital signature, the transition to Open Source technologies, but at the same time proceeded from the peculiarities and needs of our state. By the way, in this year’s world ranking in terms of readiness of countries for e-government, we hope to improve the position of the country, since during this time a new format of the main

document of a citizen, the ID-card, has been introduced and implemented.”

### **From multiple services to unity**

**“As they say, there is no limit to perfection. What else is planned to be improved in the e-government system?”**

“Without a doubt, there is always room for improvement. For example, the accumulation of all services on a single platform. So far, we have a whole list of autonomous sites, sites that provide certain electronic services. For example, we look for medicines on *tabletki.by*, make an appointment with a doctor through *talon.by*, pay taxes through the taxpayer’s personal account on the website of the Ministry of Taxes and Duties, etc. It’s complicated.

The policy of the state and the

organisation is aimed at ensuring that the platform is eventually unified, as is the personal account of a citizen. Now we are negotiating to transfer the personal accounts of users registered on departmental information resources to the single portal of electronic services *portal.gov.by*. We hope the ministries will meet us halfway. In general, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the State Customs Committee, the Ministry of Taxes and Duties, the Social Protection Fund, and the National Bank are conducting the most productive dialogue with us today on the transfer and provision of electronic services. We look forward to the emergence of new services from the database of talented youth of the Ministry of Culture and other departments.”

**“What do you think are the difficulties in this process?”**

“There may be various organisational, technical, and financial difficulties. However, the most important are the psychological ones, the mentality of leaders, the unwillingness to share their own developments, to open access to departmental databases. We need a change of mind. After all, access to such information expands the possibilities in interaction between departments! We hope this issue will be resolved over time.”

**“Surely there are reasons for pride?”**

“We are extremely proud of all our results. More than 15,000 organisations work in the system of interdepartmental electronic document flow today, exchanging hundreds







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of thousands of electronic documents per month. Systems are developing, and there are more and more 'digital' citizens ready for electronic interaction with the state.

An important feature of the Belarusian e-government is the presence of our national cryptography, mechanisms and algorithms that are embedded in the electronic digital signature. Only a few countries have national cryptography, since it is labour-intensive and knowledge-intensive. This is an absolute plus and a great pride for the country, although it is associated with some difficulties in interstate interaction. Nevertheless, we have found a way to 'harmonise' electronic documents of different countries with each other by creating the Trusted Third Party service, which confirms the legitimacy of the electronic digital signature of foreign states."

### On the international level

**"Does the service facilitate cooperation in a cross-border context? For example, within the EAEU?"**

"At one time, business itself became the driver for the development of interstate electronic interaction, as it is much more convenient for business entities to work within the framework of international trade, to exchange shipping documents in electronic format. The pilot project for the recognition of the Belarusian electronic digital signature involved our EDI providers that interact in a cross-border context.

In addition, the NCES is the operator of the Belarusian segment of the integrated information system of the EAEU, participates in the implementation of common processes, including international operations and procedures that apply to several EAEU member states in various fields: medicine, trade, veterinary medicine, customs, agriculture, taxes and others."

**"Can we say that the development of digitalisation in the field of e-government helps the country save money?"**

"Yes, sure. The obvious benefits include saving the main resource, which is time, for managers, employees

of organisations, as well as citizens in general. This means quick and impartial management decision-making in the provision of services, easy but controlled access to reference sources of information (always up-to-date and complete state databases). In addition, for example, saving paper when switching to paperless workflow means the elimination of postage expenses. As a result, we see an increase in the standard of living due to the convenience of using a variety of electronic services."

**"Belarus occupies a rather high place in the world ratings in terms of the level of e-government development. What's next?"**

"The main result of our work is the creation of a basis, a strong developed infrastructure, using which you can create, like a string of beads, new services. Now we are talking about increasing the number of services. Especially for citizens who today have access to services requiring strict identification using an ID-card with an electronic digital signature."

NEW TRENDS

# HEAT FROM THE OUTLET OR ELECTROHOUSES ARE GETTING MORE AND MORE POPULAR





**T**he effective development of the country's economic potential is facilitated not only by the modern level of organisation of production, but also by continuous technical re-equipment. For example, the work of the Belarusian nuclear power plant today contributes both to the accelerated transition of industry to a new stage of energy efficiency and helps to reduce dependence on hydrocarbon fuel supplies.

#### **When the benefits are clear**

Clean energy is needed everywhere. The commissioning of the Belarusian nuclear power plant when it reaches its full capacity will save more than five hundred million dollars a year on natural gas imports. World experience shows that as the capacity of nuclear power plants grows, the share of use of natural gas and oil products in industry is gradually decreasing. However, clean energy is needed not only for traditional plants and factories. Energy-intensive industries, such as metallurgy, petrochemistry and others, win.

The flagship energy project not only contributes to the widespread introduction of modern technologies in production, but also ensures the creation of new jobs and provides additional opportunities to increase the level of comfort for the population. For example, the volume of electricity consumption for heating and hot water supply in Belarus increased 2.5 times last year compared to the previous year.

The construction of electric houses continues in the country. The advantages in such new buildings are obvious: when it gets colder outside, the consumer can set the desired mode and select the optimal temperature. Individual space heating in a smart house will make it possible to calculate payments honestly: apartment residents will pay exactly as much as they used themselves. Now in Belarus, work is underway to transfer individual housing stock to electricity for heating, water heating, and cooking.

According to Deputy Energy Minister Mikhail Mikhadyuk, electric houses will be built throughout the country. An experiment on the construction and operation of housing with autonomous heating in each apartment

began in 2018. Then they erected about six thousand 'squares'. During the current five-year plan Belarus plans to build two million square meters of electric houses.

#### **Modernisation in all areas**

The foundation for a more advanced industry in engineering is being formed in the country. The global trend is the transition to electric transport. Belarusian scientists are not far behind and are actively working on the creation of a compact electric car. It is already clear today that it will be in demand. After all, a year ago there were only about four hundred electric vehicles in the country, but now the figure is close to five thousand. This growth trend is largely facilitated by the comprehensive state programme for the development of electric transport for 2021-2025. It is safe to say that the number of electric cars will continue to increase. Actually, as well as the development of infrastructure, including charging stations.

Passenger electric transport, such as electric buses, trolleybuses, trams and electric trains, is also becoming more convenient, profitable in operation and environmentally friendly.

As you know, the International Energy Agency predicts that by 2030 the global fleet of electric vehicles could grow to 150 million. The largest automakers have already announced their intention to abandon the production of cars with an internal combustion engine. The fleet of urban electric transport is also being dynamically updated, and these are qualitatively new opportunities in the field of consumer service and reduction of harmful emissions into the environment. According to forecasts by international research centres, the share of electric buses will grow to 30 percent by 2030.

**A rational approach is a priority**

One of the priority areas for improving the country's energy security is to increase the use of local energy resources: peat, wood fuel and biogas. According to Minister of Energy Viktor Karankevich, up to 2 million tons of peat are mined annually in the country, 1.2 million peat products are produced, "Twenty percent is exported, the rest is consumed domestically. This makes it possible to replace about 450 million cubic meters of natural gas annually. Peat occupies about 15 percent of the use of local fuels."

In the current five-year period, it is planned to modernise fixed production assets, introduce new technologies and equipment, expand the range and increase the volume of products. There are two key directions. The first is an increase in the use of peat in boiler houses of the housing and communal services when they are transferred from natural gas to milled peat. Three such projects are already being implemented in the Minsk Region, and eight more have been taken into consideration until 2025. This will increase the share of peat in the total volume of fuel use. The second direction is the use of peat in cement production.

"Our task for the five-year period is to reach the

involvement of about 3.3 million tons of standard fuel in the form of peat into the country's fuel balance," said Viktor Karankevich.

Many countries have been relying on environmentally friendly energy sources in recent years. Attempts are being made to abandon the use of coal, peat, oil, gas and switch to wood. Belarus has established an efficient use of timber resources. For example, in 2020, our forestries sold almost 83 thousand cubic meters of pellets, the bulk of which was produced at new factories. Export brought about 9 million dollars.

Of course, the transition to local fuels is a long process, and somewhere it is really more expedient to use natural gas, but it is not rational to tie all energy supply to it. Therefore, over time, the number of energy sources on local fuels will only grow. But they will not indiscriminately transfer all energy sources to wood chips, pellets and peat. First of all, we are talking about small settlements. In the near future, it is planned to put into operation new power generating facilities using wood fuel. This will reduce the consumption of imported natural gas by more than one hundred million cubic meters per year.







**In the first half of 2021 alone, 2,112 electric vehicles were imported into our country, which is more than in the entire previous year. At the same time, not only citizens, but also industrial enterprises are switching to electric cars. The economic effect has already been felt by Gomelenergo, which was one of the first to implement a pilot project to upgrade the fleet with electric vehicles.**

### **Ecology first**

Belarus has recently begun to develop its own nuclear power industry. BelNPP helps to reduce dependence on hydrocarbons, and also significantly reduces the cost of domestic products and thereby increases its competitiveness in world markets.

Both reactors of the station are capable of covering up to forty percent of the country's electricity needs. A project has been implemented to ensure the output of power from the station and its connection with the country's energy system. More than one and a half thousand kilometres of high-voltage power lines have been built and reconstructed, four substations have been modernised, and a new backbone substation Postavy is operating. This made it possible to

ensure the supply of electricity from the BelNPP to all regions of the country.

Experts believe that in the future it will be possible to put almost a third of the capacities of thermal power plants into reserve. It is these stations that burn coal, and for the most part natural gas, that produce the main emissions of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Stopping them will be a significant contribution to the fight for the environment.

Actually, we can expand the scope of application in electric transport, from utility service vehicles and buses to cars. Moreover, technologies should be developed based on the scientific and technological base of domestic scientists.

Aleksei **Fedosov**

# HEALTHY PEOPLE – A HEALTHY COUNTRY



For more than two years, Dr. Gumen has been spreading medical knowledge and giving advice on the pages of the Zvyazda newspaper and in the online publication [zviazda.by](http://zviazda.by). Finally, a book, where the most popular interviews of the doctor are collected under one cover, came out. The release of a book is a milestone event for every author. We met with the doctor to congratulate him on this occasion, get an autograph and talk not only about medicine.

**“Dr. Gumen, you are a researcher, a person who, above all, has academic medical knowledge. However, you talk about medicine in a popular language in the Zvyazda newspaper. What is your goal?”**

“I have been a doctor for over 20 years. I communicate with a lot of different people. If a person is faced with some kind of illness, then during a consultation I often hear: ‘Doctor, if I had been told this 20 years ago, maybe I would have avoided this problem now!’ In fact, there are obvious things. For example, everyone knows that smoking is bad, but they still continue to smoke, hoping that the disease due to smoking will not touch them. There are people who get sick because they did not know something or did not understand the elementary medical principles that should be basis of life. And if we create such books, we provide information to people who are not medical professionals.

As a result, we get fewer serious diseases. This is a kind of prevention: professionally speaking to people without a medical education about health in a simple language.”

**“The extensive topics of your interviews cannot but impress: from Alzheimer’s disease to choosing the best time of the year for weight loss. How do you explain such diverse interest yourself?”**

“The doctor should look at this or that illness broadly. In our body, all processes are interconnected, so it is not surprising that a topic that at first glance has nothing to do with neurosurgery is covered by a doctor of this specialisation. The more comprehensive the views, the better!”

**“Your book is titled Doctor Gumen’s Advice. To what extent do you consider your advice is the most correct?”**

“In giving advice, we proceed from the level of medicine





a n d  
that exists  
Science does not  
Medicine is also developing, and every year there are new discoveries, new medicines appear, methods of treating diseases are improved. Our body is a chart that we continue to study today. In the book, we tried to collect the latest, most reliable information about how modern medicine copes with certain problems."

**"Where do you get this valuable information?"**

"First of all, this is a long-term experience as a doctor. In addition, I take part in many conferences, study modern medical research. There is another direction of my activity, which is teaching at Belarusian Medical Academy of Postgraduate Education. I think if you want to constantly add to your knowledge, start teaching. This activity keeps me on my toes, because students may have different questions during class."

**"To what extent do you follow the advice given in the book?"**

"If an oncologist operates on patients with lung cancer, and after the surgery he smokes to relieve stress, the patient will have no one who could set an example, to say the least. Of course, the doctor must have a healthy lifestyle. However,

if you live by the rules, it becomes boring. The most important thing is not to exaggerate. Don't cross the line. If during the New Year's Eve, you open champagne, drink a glass, and then consume food high in cholesterol, it is nothing serious, if it is only this one time. Nevertheless, if this happens constantly, the body's resources gradually wear out, it ceases to resist such systematic stress and begins to get sick."

**"For more than two years you have been giving advice to people on how to maintain health. And now I hold in my hands a book with a lot of useful information. What is more important for you in this activity: the process or the result?"**

"I don't think they can be separated. It must be both. When you stop, you fall, while you move, you walk. When you walk, you reach the goal. Life evolves, goals change. The fact that we are carrying out disease prevention today is a very important goal. We are for people to get sick less."

**"How much do you agree with the idea that a person's health is in his or her own hands?"**

"I would like to agree, but in fact it is not entirely true. There are certain factors that affect human health and, unfortunately, are often beyond the control of a person. This is the geographical location of the country in which he or she lives, genetics, the circumstances of the birth. In addition to these factors, there is the person himself/herself and his/her efforts in maintaining health. It would be great for people to follow a healthy lifestyle. After all, healthy people mean a healthy country, a healthy country means a healthy economy. The less people get sick, the less money will be spent on healthcare. The less health problems a person has, the more time he or she has to live fully and engage in self-development."

**"What do you see as your mission?"**

"If someone chooses the profession of a doctor, he or she must know for sure: this is something that is connected with human health. And this is the most valuable thing in our life. Each doctor bears a great responsibility for his or her work. Our core business is helping people!"

**"Will there be continued cooperation with Zvyazda, despite the release of the book?"**

"There will definitely be a sequel. Science develops, new information appears in the field of medicine. We keep our finger on the pulse and we will definitely tell our readers about the most important things."

Yekaterina Tumas-Tishkevich

# A HOSPITABLE INVITATION TO TRY THE NATIONAL CUISINE

Indeed, food used to be only one of the components of certain tourist programmes, but now they have learned to use it as a motivation for traveling. In the era of the experience economy, culinary traditions are becoming more and more in demand as an element of learning about the country. Today, travellers are ready to go to places where cooking traditions have been passed down through generations.





### Coffee house with a medieval menu

Certainly, Belarusian cuisine is rich and interesting. The only problem, perhaps, is that this layer of national culture is still little known even to the Belarusians themselves. This means that gastronomic secrets could become a chic resource for the development of domestic tourism as well. For example, potatoes began to be used in Belarusian lands only from the middle of the 18th century. The cuisines of peasant, bourgeois and noble families had their own peculiarities. Culinary traditions have been formed over the centuries. The most authentic information about the eating habits of Belarusians is stored in the inventories of the 16th century.

Obviously, gastronomic tourism is at the intersection of ecology, culture and production. In our country, this direction is just beginning to develop, and, nevertheless, a lot has already been done. Today, acquaintance with national cuisine occurs not only during trips to restaurants and cafes, but also during festivals, master classes, tastings, and exhibitions. Minsk and the regions are working on culinary calendars, which include significant events during which Belarusians and foreign guests get acquainted with culinary traditions. Domestic products are advertised. The mobile applications are created that will guide you to places where you can try the Belarusian cuisine.

Today, travel companies, when they generate routes, can set their programmes in such a way that the participants of the tour cannot get bored for a minute. And, of course, they even try to choose lunches and breakfasts in such a way as to amaze tourists. The programme includes unique items. You can find information, for example, about which architectural, historical or cultural sites you can visit on the Internet, but it is rather difficult to stumble upon information about a mini-bakery, a cheese factory or a cafe with a medieval menu.

Over time, people who travel a lot in Belarus discover places that they are ready to visit during their next trip to try their favourite dish or buy groceries. For example, it can be a cafe near Mogilev, where several types of smazhenka (meat pie) are prepared, the Palyushki tavern in Turov, where the hostess treats her guests with dishes from the oven, including with the home-made pastries. In the Berezinsky Biosphere Reserve, you should taste game and cranberry juice, in the Logoysk Region, the agroestates Gayenskiye Istoki, Malinovka conjure recipes of Belarusian cuisine and boast of beekeeping products. In the eco-tourist complex Nikolaevskiye Prudy in the Krugloye District, they started their own farm to make dishes from pure local products, they can cook fish caught right there in the lake.

Gastronomic tourism is actively developing due to various holidays and events. The regions are involved in the development of new culinary festivals. Specialised gastronomic tours offer to visit ethnographic complexes. For example, during the weekend tour Beauty of Naroch Nature and Hospitality, you can visit a dairy plant, the tourist complex Nanosy-Novoselye with product tasting, drink tea from the Aptekarsky Sad (Apothecary Garden).

Industrial tourism, where you can see how Belarusian products are produced and taste them, is also developing. Even a corporate holiday is no longer complete without culinary 'propaganda', such a service as a banquet in the national style is becoming popular.

One should not forget about a healthy lifestyle. Products under the brands 'eco' or 'bio' are trending. There are five eco-farms, farmsteads and entire tourist clusters in Belarus that can present environmentally friendly natural products to guests. Fairs with such products are often included in tourist programmes.

## Delicious food means a lot

Gastronomic tourism can also be one of the country's trademark, contribute to the socio-economic development of the regions, their branding and attracting tourist flows there. There is an awareness that it is necessary to develop its various types: food, tasting, wine, beer, culinary. And you can talk not only about the gastronomic heritage of the regions, but also introduce food innovations.

By the way, foreign guests who often visit Belarus have already noticed that the gastronomic industry in the country is actively developing. There is a positive trend in the expansion of the network of public catering enterprises. Last year alone, almost 23,000 catering facilities functioned in the territory of the republic. Moreover, over the past year, the number of entities that are ready to feed people has increased by 722 units. And this despite the fact that the pandemic has not been defeated yet. In 2020 the catering industry faced serious challenges due to the epidemic, but now it feels more confident, systematically reviving. For example, the standard for the availability of places in public catering facilities per thousand people is already even higher than was set in the plans. True, due to the change in the level of purchasing power of the population and the reorientation of demand, the development of public catering infrastructure today is due to the opening of quick service facilities that allow the client to save time and money. However, this year, measures will be taken to reverse this trend and stimulate the opening of facilities specialising in traditional cuisine. Particular attention will be paid to those who introduce Belarusian dishes.

By the way, today there are about four hundred gastronomic tourism facilities in the country, of which almost half are catering facilities for almost 15,000 places where you can taste Belarusian cuisine.

**Zhurek**



Very interesting and unusual soup, which has its history since the time of Monks of the few Belarusian dishes where there is no potato in the recipe?

The secret of the unique taste of soup in its leaven, prepared from oats and black bread. The leaven is placed in a warm place for 2-3 days. Then the leaven is stirred and mixed with fatty meat, vegetables and garlic, after which it should be languished on fire. Having tried this unique soup, you would definitely want to cook it yourself, even if you do not like cooking.

**Karavai**



"Karavai, Karavai, choose the one you want!" — it's the well-known children's game, familiar to all Belarusians since childhood. For the Belarusian culture, the Karavai is not just a kind of bread.

It is a symbol of hospitality and respect for those people for whom this loaf has been baked. The loaf has a rich, very mild taste, which is achieved by adding a large number of eggs and milk. Another feature of the Karavai is its unique appearance. And it's not surprising!

After all, the tradition of giving a Karavai to a newly-married couple is still strong in Belarus. If you were given a Karavai, you must break off a piece, dip it in salt and try it.



Kietaki are jokingly called Belarusian fast food, and all thanks to their unconditional popularity and simplicity of cooking. Traditional kietaki are flour balls, quickly boiled in boiling water, or, optionally, in milk.

Over time, the people started adding meat filling or even use kietaki to make soups, but their taste from this only worsens. This dish is popular not only in Belarus, but also in many countries of Eastern Europe.

Kietaki can be served as an independent dish with sour cream and fried onions, or you can add a little roasted chicken and complement the dish with fresh herbs from the garden.

Bon appetit!

## Panem et circenses!

Meanwhile, work is still being actively carried out to create domestic brands in the catering network. Many of them specialise in Belarusian national cuisine. Furthermore, a lot of efforts are being made to promote the national gastronomic flavour by farmsteads, hotels and cultural institutions. Tour routes with a gastronomic component are being created. Last year there were already more than sixty of them in the country.

Today, out of three thousand catering facilities in the capital, about two hundred specialise in national cuisine. Tourist companies of the city are actively working on the development of routes that include tastings or traditional dinners. Culinary master classes are organised for children and adults, for example, on cooking potato pancakes and baking bread.

According to Aleksey Rusakevich, Director of the Minsk Information and Tourist Centre, an innovative strategy is being developed in the capital to form its own style, within the framework of which it is planned to create a Belarusian folklore centre where you can enjoy national dishes and





watch theatrical programmes.

The restaurant at the Nesvizh Palace and Park Complex also plans to launch the Belarusian Gatherings project, where tasting of national dishes can be combined with spectacles.

The owners of the farmsteads prove that gastronomy can be a good opportunity to talk about the traditions of our ancestors and launch interesting programmes for tourists. Thus, in the Ganka farmstead, guests will even have to grind grain to bake bread. In the Koni-Pony farmstead you can see how cheeses are made, and the hosts from the Honey Queen will treat you to the ancient honey drink. Master classes on cooking regional delicacies are held at the Zastenok Skriplevo. The owner of the farmstead resumed the local tradition of Kapysiki — a kind of gastronomic joint

enterprise. Traditionally, neighbours and relatives helped the owner to slaughter livestock, dismantle the carcass and make dishes from meat and offal, and then they gathered at a common table with songs and wishes to the owner.

In the Volozhin District, a tourist route Panem et Circenses: the Origins of Belarusian Opera, Literature and Cuisine has been developed, which takes tourists to the 19th century, introduces them to the life of the gentry's estate, Belarusian culture and the secrets of cooking traditional dishes.

Perhaps the future of gastronomic tourism lies precisely in such searches in our past for ideas, recipes, and even rituals for preparing and consuming food. At least researchers have already found many original recipes.

Yelena **Dedkova**







# НАГЛЯДНЫ ЎРОК ГАНЧАРНАГА МАЙСТЭРСТВА A LESSON IN POTTERY

Убачыць сёння сапраўднага майстра за ганчарным кругам - вялікі шанец. Такіх умельцаў, захавальнікаў спрадвечнай традыцыі, засталася зусім няшмат. Аднаго з іх, Віталія Шэпелевіча, народнага майстра Беларусі з невялікага палескага гарадка Ганцавічы, ведаюць не толькі знатакі вытанчанай керамікі і калекцыянеры ў многіх краінах, але гаспадыні, якія разумеюць толк у кулінарыі. Ім вядомы сакрэт смачнай ежы: калі страва рыхтавалася ў чыгуне з асабістым кляймо Шэпелевіча, госьця ад далікатэсу за вушы не адцягнуць. Мы ўзялі ў майстра ўрок ганчарнага рамяства і выведалі таямніцу вырабу «смачных» гаршкоў.



**To see a real master at the potter's wheel today is a great luck. There are very few such craftsmen, keepers of the original tradition. One of them, Vitaly Shepelevich, a folk craftsman of Belarus from the small town of Gantsevichi in Polesie, is known by name not only by connoisseurs of fine ceramics and collectors in many countries, but also by housewives who understand a lot about cooking. They know the secret of delicious food: if a dish was cooked in a pot with Shepelevich's personal brand mark, its taste will be irresistible. We took a lesson in pottery from the master and found out the secret of making 'delicious' pots.**

### Пачалося ў Міры

У родзе ў Віталія ганчароў ніколі не было, а да гэтага рамяства ён, як сам прызнаецца, прыйшоў па закліку сэрца. Пасля службы ў арміі паступіў у мастацкае вучылішча ў гарпасёлку Мір, якое скончыў у 1997 годзе па спецыяльнасці «ганчар». Затым год адпрацаваў на мастацкім прадпрыемстве на Гродзеншчыне і яшчэ тры — у мінскай майстэрні вядомага беларускага спецыяліста па кераміцы Алеся Косткі.

У пачатку двухтысячных ганчар-пачатковец вярнуўся ў родныя Ганцавічы. Работы па спецыяльнасці не знайшлося, і ён асвоіў будаўнічую прафесію. Але цягнула да любімай справы. У 2011 годзе Віталь зарэгістраваўся рамеснікам і стаў працаваць на сябе. Абсталяваў майстэрню прама на прысядзібным участку. Пачынаў з сувенірнай прадукцыі, якую прадаваў на кірмашах. Затым перайшоў на посуд: гаршкі, збаны, талеркі. Неўзабаве з'явіліся сур'ёзныя кліенты (кафэ, рэстараны, спецыялізаваныя крамы ў сталіцы і абласных цэнтрах). Дзякуючы высокаму мастацкаму ўзроўню і якасці яго кераміка карысталася добрым попытам. У год майстар прадаваў каля тысячы сваіх керамічных вырабаў.

— У апошні час рынак апанавала кераміка нізкай якасці, — распавядае, звыкла круцячы ганчарны круг, Віталь Шапелевіч. — А некаторыя мясцовыя гора-умельцы яшчэ і падрабляюць працы вядомых ганчароў. Не ведаючы ўсіх тонкасцяў тэхналогіі, сваім невуцтвам наносзяць шкоду рэпутацыі майстра. Адночы да мяне на кірмашы падыйшла жанчына з прэтэнзіяй на якасць гаршчка, які, як ёй казалі нядобрасумленныя прадаўцы, нібыта зрабіў я. Зірнуўшы на яго, адразу ўбачыў, што гэта паддробка. Пра гэта казалі і адсутнасць майго кляйма, і некаторыя асаблівасці вырабу, якія далёкія ад традыцыйных.





- ❶ Potter's works
- ❷ Vitaly Shepelevich with his wife



## Як дзяды рабілі

Віталь прыныпова прымяняе толькі тэхналогіі, правяраныя многімі пакаленнямі беларускіх ганчароў.

— Мой падыход да вырабу керамікі такі ж, як і стагоддзі таму, — кажа майстар. — Перш за ўсё падбіраю патрэбную гліну. Здавалася б, у Беларусі гэтага матэрыялу хоць адбаўляй. Але для якаснай керамікі неабходная гліна з пэўнымі ўласцівасцямі, перш за ўсё высокай вогнетрываласці. А такая ёсць толькі ў некалькіх месцах. Самая лепшая — у Гарадной і Радашковічах. Там і купляю яе пад заказ. Калі ў цябе ўжо ёсць гліна, тады можна садзіцца і за ганчарны круг. Звычайна, каб вылепіць на ім невялікі гаршчок або збан, мне патрэбна хвілін 20. Далей посуд адпраўляю ў печ для абпалу, а затым на размалёўку. Для нанясення малюнка ўжываю некалькі тэхнік, у асноўным «малачэнне» або «абвар». У якасці фарбавальнікаў выкарыстоўваю толькі натуральныя рэчывы. Так, для надання

## It all started in Mir

Vitaly never had potters in his family, and, as he himself admits, he came to this craft at the call of his heart. After serving in the army, he entered an art school in the town of Mir, from which he graduated in 1997 with a degree in pottery. After that, he worked for a year at an art enterprise in the Grodno Region and then three more in the Minsk workshop of the famous Belarusian ceramics specialist Ales Kostko.

At the beginning of the 2000s, the novice potter returned to his native Gantsevichi. There were no jobs in his specialty, and he mastered the construction profession. But he was drawn to his favourite work. In 2011, Vitaly registered as a craftsman and began to work for himself. The workshop was arranged right on his plot. He started with souvenirs, which he sold at fairs. Then he switched to crockery: pots, jugs, plates. Serious clients soon appeared (cafes, restaurants, specialised stores in the capital and regional centres). Due to the high artistic level and quality, his ceramics were in good demand. In a year, the master sold about a thousand of his ceramic products.

“Recently, the market has been flooded with low-quality ceramics,” says Vitaly Shepelevich, while habitually turning the potter’s wheel. “And some local ‘unfortunate’ craftsmen also forge the work of famous potters. Not knowing all the intricacies of technology, their ignorance damages the reputation of the master. One day a woman came up to me at a fair claiming the poor quality of a pot that unscrupulous sellers told her was supposedly made by me. Looking at it, I immediately saw that it was a fake. This was evidenced by the absence of my brand, and some manufacturing features that are far from traditional.”

## As grandfathers bequeathed

Vitaly basically uses only technologies that have been proven by many generations of Belarusian potters.

“My approach to making ceramics is the same as it was centuries ago,” says the craftsman. “First of all, I select the right clay. It would seem that there is more

**Менавіта за сваю аўтэнтычнасць і цэнніца аўтарская кераміка. Але, як адзначае Шэпелевіч, у апошнія два гады попыт на яе моцна ўпаў. Прычына таму — кавідная пандэмія, з-за якой стала менш замежных турыстаў.**

кераміцы прыемнага карычневага адцення, што і называецца «малачэннем», бяру выключна каровіна малако. А вось хітрыя дзялкі, якія займаюцца падробкай, для размалёўкі ўжываюць оксідат торфу. З-за яго пры награванні з'яўляецца непрыемны пах, і ўжываць ежу, прыгатаваную ў такім посудзе, не варта.

Праўда, калі вы не спецыяліст, заўважае Віталь, то наўрад ці зможаце адрозніць, якія матэрыялы выкарыстоўваліся ў працы. Тым больш што "малачэнне" цяпер у модзе і посуду, выкананага ў гэтым стылі, прадаецца процьма. А вось керамікі, пры вырабе якой выкарыстоўваўся "абвар", на рынку значна менш. Гэта ўнікальны і складаны спосаб.

### Сакрэтны настой

— На Беларускім Палессі тэхніка "абвару" здаўна лічылася традыцыйнай і была вельмі распаўсюджанай, — пасвячае ў тонкасці справы ганчар. — Але сёння ёй карыстаюцца лічаныя майстры. Пры "абвары" гаршчкі або збаны абмакваюць ў спецыяльную сумесь, зробленую на аснове расола, брагі, сыроваткі і іншых інгрэдыентаў. Рэцэпт прыгатавання сумесі ў кожнага ганчара свой, і гэта ў некаторым родзе фірмовы сакрэт. Але агульнай умовай з'яўляецца тое, што настой абавязкова павінен быць з кіслым асяроддзем. Ад судотыку з ім на распаленым керамічным посудзе, які з печы дастаюць абцугамі, узнікаюць непаўторныя ўзоры, а таксама ўтворацца ахоўная глазураваная паверхня.

Менавіта за сваю аўтэнтычнасць і цэнніца аўтарская кераміка. Але, як адзначае Шэпелевіч, у апошнія два гады попыт на яе моцна ўпаў. Прычына таму — кавідная пандэмія, з-за якой стала менш замежных турыстаў.

— Каб пракарміць сям'ю, а ў мяне сямёра дзяцей, трое з якіх студэнты, прыйшлося з посуду перайсці на выраб керамікі для інтэр'ераў і ландшафтнага дызайну, — кажа майстар. — Асноўныя заказчыкі — уладальнікі аграсядзібаў. Неяк выкручваюся. Мае знаёмыя ганчары таксама чакаюць лепшых часоў. Усе мы спадзяемся, што каранавірусныя праблемы неўзабаве скончацца і кераміка зноў пачне масава разыходзіцца па дамах беларусаў і турыстаў, якія прыязджаюць у нашу гасцінную краіну.

Генадзь Паплаўскі







1 2 3

Potter at work



**It is for their authenticity that such branded ceramics are valued. Unfortunately, as Shepelevich notes, the demand for it has fallen sharply in the last two years. The reason for this is the COVID pandemic, due to which there are fewer foreign tourists.**

than enough of this material in Belarus. However, for high-quality ceramics, clay with certain properties, primarily high fire resistance, is required. Only few places can provide such clay. The best one is in Gorodnaya and Radoshkovichi. That's where I order it. When you have clay, then you can sit down at the potter's wheel. Usually, it takes me about 20 minutes to mould a small pot or jug on it. Then I put the dishes to the kiln for firing, and then they are coloured. To draw a picture, I use several techniques, mainly 'milking' (soaking in milk with the subsequent firing) or 'scalding' (kiln treatment with the subsequent soaking in milk). I use only natural substances as dyes. Thus, to give ceramics a pleasant brown tint, which is called 'milking', I take exclusively cow's milk. Some cunning dealers involved in forgery use peat oxidate for colouring. Because of it, an unpleasant odour appears when the dishes are heated, and you should not eat

food cooked in such crockery."

True, if you are not an expert, as Vitaly notes, you will hardly be able to distinguish what materials were used in the work. Moreover, 'milking' is now in vogue and a lot of dishes made in this style are sold. At the same time, there is not much crockery, in the manufacture of which the 'scalding' method was used. This is a unique and complex way.

### Secret mixture

"In the Belarusian Polesie, the 'scalding' technique has long been considered traditional and was very common," says the potter sharing with us the subtleties of the matter. "Today, however, only a few masters use it. When 'scalded', pots or jugs are dipped in a special mixture made on the basis of brine, mash, whey and other ingredients. Each potter has his own recipe for preparing the mixture, and this is in some way a corporate secret. The general condition is that the infusion must be with an acidic environment. Contact with it causes unique patterns to appear on red-hot ceramic dishes, which are taken out of the oven with tongs, and a protective glazed surface is also formed."

It is for their authenticity that such branded ceramics are valued. Unfortunately, as Shepelevich notes, the demand for it has fallen sharply in the last two years. The reason for this is the COVID pandemic, due to which there are fewer foreign tourists.

"In order to feed my family, and I have seven children, three of whom are students, I had to switch from dishes to making ceramics for interiors and landscape design," says the master. "The main customers are the owners of farmsteads. I cope somehow. The potters I'm familiar with are also waiting for better times. We all hope that the coronavirus problems will end soon and ceramics will again begin to massively disperse to the homes of Belarusians and tourists coming to our hospitable country."

Gennady **Poplavsky**

# ТОЙ САМЫ ГЕНЕТЫЧНЫ КОД



Народны майстар Ірына Смірнова стварае сапраўдныя цуды з саломкі

Работы Ірыны Смірновай з Іўя пакараюць з першага погляду. Са звычайнай саломкі яна стварае паветраныя кветкавыя кампазіцыі, конікаў, лебедзяў, лялек, шкатулкі і сумачкі. Нядаўна Ірына стала лаўрэатам абласной прэміі ў намінацыі «Народны майстар года».

## Саламяныя кветкі ў беларускіх "капляюшах"

Загадчыца аддзела рамёстваў і традыцыйнай культуры Іўеўскага цэнтра культуры і вольнага часу Ірына Смірнова — чалавек рэдкага абаяння, таму цалкам нядзіўна, што прыкладное народнае рамяство яна ператварыла ў вытанчаную паветраную творчасць. Дзякуючы яе фантазіі і любові да прыгожага «дзядулявы» традыцыі знаходзяць новае, сучаснае вымярэнне.

— 3 чаго ўсё пачыналася? — усміхаецца майстар. — У 2000-м нашаму пасёлку прысвоілі статус горада, неабходна было павялічыць колькасць гурткоў. У той час я працавала намеснікам дырэктара Цэнтра культуры. Паехала на курсы па саломаліценні ў Гродна. Памятаю, як зрабіла першую ў сваім жыцці саламяную кветку,

адчуўшы сябе сапраўдным прафесіяналам. Сёння гэта выклікае ўсмішку, бо чым больш вучуся, тым больш адкрываецца новага і нязвяданага. Калі тут, у Іўі, адкрыўся Дом рамёстваў, папрасілася туды кіраваць кружком. Увогуле працую ў сферы культуры ўжо 33 гады.

3 дня ў дзень Ірыне Смірновай даводзіцца сумяшчаць мноства розных амплуа: кіраваць клубам раённых майстроў "Скарбніца", дзіцячым аматарскім аддзяленнем "Крынічка", выконваць галоўныя ролі ў народным тэатры "Зялёны фургон". 3 лютага 2020 года разам з майстрамі Іўеўшчыны па саломаліценні з'яўляецца носьбітам творчасці, якая мае статус гісторыка-культурнай каштоўнасці, — «Беларускія мастацкія практыкі саломаліцення». Яе працы даўно ве-



# THE SAME GENETIC CODE

The works of Irina Smirnova from Ivye, in the Grodno Region, captivate at first sight. She creates airy flower arrangements, horses, swans, dolls, boxes and handbags from ordinary straw. Recently, Irina became the laureate of the regional award in the People's Craftsman of the Year nomination.



Folk craftswoman Irina Smirnova creates real miracles from straw

## Straw flowers in Belarusian 'kapyalushs' (head coverings)

Irina Smirnova, Head of the Department of Crafts and Traditional Culture of the Ivye Centre for Culture and Leisure, is a person of rare charm, so it is not surprising that she turned applied folk craft into sophisticated aerial art. Thanks to her imagination and love for the beautiful, 'grandfather's' traditions acquire a new, modern dimension.

"How did it all begin?" smiles the craftswoman. "In 2000, our village was given the status of a town, it was necessary to increase the number of studios. At that time, I worked as the deputy director of the cultural centre. I went to a straw weaving course in Grodno. I remember how I made the first straw flower in my life, feeling like a real professional. Today it causes a smile, because the more I study, the more new and unknown things are revealed. When the House of Crafts opened here, in Ivye, I asked to organise a studio there. In total, I have been working in the field of culture for 33 years."

Day after day, Irina Smirnova manages to combine many different roles: to lead the Skarbnitsa club of regional craftsmen, the Krynichka amateur department for children, to play the main roles in the Zelyony Furgon (Green Van) folk theatre. Since February 2020, together with the straw weaving masters of the Ivye Region, she has been the bearer of creativity that has the status of historical and cultural value, i.e. 'Belarusian artistic practices of straw weaving'. Her work has long been known to participants and guests of the Slavianski Bazaar in Vitebsk, the holiday in Alexandria, the Republican exhibition-fair Kazyuki, the Republican Festival of



KEMBY

даюць удзельнікі і госці "Славянскага базару" ў Віцебску, свята ў Александрыі, Рэспубліканскай выставы-кірмашу "Казюкі", Рэспубліканскага фестывалю нацыянальных культур і многіх іншых брэндавых мерапрыемстваў.

— Не магу не згадаць візіт да нас Кіраўніка дзяржавы ў 2019 годзе, — успамінае майстар. — Прэзідэнт жыва цікавіўся ўсім, задаваў пытанні. Такія сустрэчы не забываюцца! Не ўяўляю, у якой іншай краіне свету надаецца столькі ўвагі захаванню традыцый. Гэта дарагога варта, бо, па вялікім рахунку, займаюся сваёй любімай справай, без якой не магу жыць.

### Галоўнае — не прапусціць момант...

— Толькі нядаўна раптам ўсвядоміла, што ішла да гэтага захаплення

ўсё сваю жыццё, — прыводзіць факты з асабістай біяграфіі субясецніца. — Успомніла, як у далёкім дзяцінстве саломкай займаўся родны брат бабулі па бацькавай лініі Філіп Іосіфавіч. Усе звалі яго дзед Фэлька. Калі стаяла гарачае надвор'е і трэба было пасвіць кароў, усе ішлі да яго, каб ён сплёў капелюшы. А мы з братам сядзелі і глядзелі, як ён спрытна робіць з простаі зубаткі самыя розныя, як раней казалі, "брылі". Заказаў паступала шмат, і ён часам не паспяваў да раніцы зрабіць усё.

У тых часы гэта зусім звычайная справа: саломаліценне зарадзілася на нашых землях адначасова з земляробствам. Саломка ўцяпляла, абувала і нават карміла: у галодныя гады яе давалі ў хлеб.

National Cultures, as well as many other branded events.

"I cannot fail to mention the visit of the Head of State to us in 2019," recalls the master. The President was keenly interested in everything, asked questions. Such meetings are not forgotten! I can't imagine so much attention is paid to the preservation of traditions in any other country in the world. It is worth a lot, because, by and large, I am doing my favourite thing, without which I cannot live."

The main thing is not to miss the moment...

"Only recently I suddenly realised that I had been on the path to this hobby all my life," Irina cites facts from her personal biography. "I remembered how, in my distant childhood, my granny's paternal brother, Philip Iosifovich, was engaged in straw making. Everyone called him Grandfather Felka. When the weather was hot and cows had to be pastured, everyone went to him to make hats. And my brother and I sat and watched how he deftly makes a variety of 'bryls' (large-brimmed hats) from simple straw. There were many orders, and sometimes he did not have time to do everything by morning."

In those days, this was a completely ordinary thing: straw weaving originated on our lands at the same time as agriculture. Straw was used for keeping people warm, as well as for footwear or even food: in famine years it was added to bread.

"I myself am left-handed, I can't even draw an even circle with my right hand, but when I take straw with the edges of my fingers, everything turns out well somehow by itself," says Irina. "I can work with my eyes closed. The first step is to make a wickerwork out of four straws, a so-called 'zubatka' (toothed pattern from straw), which in the end can turn into anything."

The shortest one can be used for a bookmark, those that are a little longer can be used for making wreaths, to which you can attach decorations. A simple hat can take several meters of wickerwork.

"The most time-consuming thing in the process of creating any product from straw is the procurement of material. The main thing is not to miss the moment when rye ripens in July. And before that,



— Сама я ляўшун, правай рукой не магу нават роўнае кола акрэсліць, але, калі бяру краёчкамі пальцаў салому, усё атрымліваецца неяк само сабой, — дзеліцца Ірына. — Магу з зачыненымі вачыма круціць. Перш за ўсё неабходна зрабіць з чатырох саломін пляцёнку-“зубатку”, якая ў выніку можа ператварыцца ў што заўгодна.

Самую кароценькую можна выкарыстоўваць для кніжнай закладкі, ледзь даўжэй — вось ужо гатовы вяночак, да якога можна прымацаваць упрыгажэнні.

— Самае працаёмкае ў працэсе стварэння любога вырабу з саломкі — гэта нарыхтоўка матэрыялу. Галоўнае — не прапусціць момант, калі ў ліпені паспее жыта. А да гэтага яго трэба якасна вырасціць, увесь час сачыць, каб не расло пустазелле. Важна таксама правільна скасіць або сціснуць сярпом.

### Візітная картка майстра

— Сам працэс саломалляцтва таксама досыць працаёмкі, які патрабуе вялізнага цяплення і любові, — распавядае Ірына Смірнова. — І абавязкова павінна быць натхненне, без яго нічога не атрымаецца. Вось гэтага коніка рабіла амаль два месяцы ў вольны ад працы час. Кожную дэталю трэба адкіпяціць, адбіліць, адпрасаваць... Саламаяная пластыка — вельмі цяжкая праца, практычна ўсё даводзіцца рабіць на паўвытанутых руках. Паспрабуйце так проста пасадзець хаця б паўгазіны!

Практыка паказвае, што з саломкі можна сплесці ўсё, што заўгодна: не толькі дэкаратыўных лялячак, жывёл і кветкі, але і рознага аб'ёму

ёмістасці, рамкі для фота, нават прадметы мэблі. Аднак сваёй візітнай карткай Ірына Смірнова лічыць саламяныя кветкі ў традыцыйных беларускіх “капялюшах”.

**Работы майстра можна знайсці ў прыватных калекцыях розных краін. Выдатны букет з саламяных кветак падараны перадачы “Поле цудаў” на расійскім тэлебачанні: тады жыхарка Іўя прымала ўдзел у знакамітай тэлегульні.**

Самыя загадкавыя беларускія вырабы з саломкі — бязважкія падвясныя канструкцыі-павукі.

— Вось традыцыйны павук, — дэманструе залацістую канструкцыю майстар. — Гэты абярэг у славян — атыбут Каляд. Лічылася, за год такі павучок забірае ў свае саламяныя сеткі ўсе беды і няшчасці. Усё гэта распаўядаю хлопцам і дзяўчатам: на гурткі па саломалляцтве прыходзяць жадаючыя розных узростаў. Нават малым пад сілу зрабіць пуцяводную зорку-абярэг або прасценькага павука. Хтосьці, пасталеўшы, забудзе аб навучы, а ў кагосьці спрацуе той самы генетычны код, які дапамог мне знайсці справу ўсяго жыцця.

Таццяна Урублеўская

it must be grown in such a way that it reaches high quality, weeds must be removed. It is also important to mow or cut it with a sickle properly.”

Master's trademark

“The process of straw weaving is also quite laborious, requiring great patience and love,” says Irina Smirnova. “And there must be inspiration, without it nothing will work. I have been making this horse for almost two months in my free time. Each detail must be boiled, bleached, ironed... Straw weaving is very hard work, almost everything has to be done with half-stretched arms. Try to simply sit like this for at least half an hour!”

Practice shows that anything can be woven from straw: not only decorative dolls, animals and flowers, but also containers of different sizes, photo frames, even pieces of furniture. However, Irina Smirnova considers straw flowers in traditional Belarusian ‘kapyalushs’ her ‘trademark’ work.

The most mysterious Belarusian straw products are weightless suspended spider structures.

**The craftwoman's works can be found in private collections in different countries. A beautiful bouquet of straw flowers was presented to the Polye Chudyes (Field of Miracles) TV show on Russian television: the resident of Ivye took part in the famous television game.**

“Here is a traditional spider,” the master demonstrates the golden design. “This charm is considered to be an attribute of Christmas among the Slavs. It was believed that such a spider takes all the troubles and misfortunes into its straw nets during a year. I tell all this to my little students: children of different ages come to straw weaving classes. Even kids can make a guiding star charm or a simple spider. Someone will forget about this upon growing up, but some people will discover for themselves this genetic code that helped me find my life's work.”

Tatiana Vrublevskaya



# A DEEP UNDERSTANDING OF THE CLASSICS IS WORTH A LOT



This year marks the 140th anniversary of the birth of the classics of Belarusian literature Yanka Kupala and Yakub Kolas. Both of them were outstanding writers and still remain iconic figures: symbols of the country and the formation of national identity. It is not for nothing that the images of Yakub Kolas and Yanka Kupala, the characters of their works, once became one of the main and extremely popular subject areas for Belarusian art.



Probably, there is not a single artist, especially of the older generation, who would not touch on this topic. The one through which one could better feel the image of the Motherland, express one's view of its past and the difficult path to revival. As for Yanka Kupala and Yakub Kolas themselves, they somehow imperceptibly turned from living people into 'official idols' and are here to stay. Of course, this process is inevitable, because time moves the events of their lives away from the present, transfers them to the rank of historical realities worthy of perpetuation. But today and our attitude to the heritage brings a new note to the understanding of the Kolas-Kupala theme. We again consider the life path of these undoubtedly outstanding writers, which was more complex than previously presented in various sources, we place other accents in the lines they wrote.

It's bad when you don't see a living person behind bronze or a layer of paint. A cardboard silhouette, an abstract symbol can neither shock nor even simply interest you. Like an appeal on a banner, where sincere words are perceived only as a festive march slogan. Have you ever paid attention to how the images from the covers of 'mass literature' are very similar to each other? Comic long-legged blondes or muscular superheroes... Is this the look that characterises the literary characters of our era? Where are the faces and characters that distinguished Kolas' characters, for example, Symon the Musician?... Yanka Kupala's Guslar is not two-dimensional either. He is not only colourful in appearance, but also strong in spirit, angrily refusing the 'chervonets' (coin) of the mighty prince.

At one time, a new exposition was opened in the Yanka Kupala Museum in Minsk, where, among others, unique exhibits were presented: interior details of the Moskva Hotel, where Yanka Kupala mysteriously died in 1942. They include the door of his room at number 414, part of the flight of stairs with low stone railings from which the poet fell. There are many versions of his death. It still remains an unsolved mystery and excites the imagination of not only researchers of the writer's work, but also artists. This moment is difficult to depict, as evidenced by the search for the artist Yuri Krupnenkov, who nevertheless decided to paint the painting Ya. Kupala. June 28th, 1942. Nevertheless, the very fact



Ya. Kupala with students of Bobruiskaya school. 1921



Ya. Kupala with wife. 1916



Ya. Kolas

of addressing a topic that has not been previously reflected in the visual arts deserves interest.

A person dies, but his things continue to exist and write his personal history. Our ancestors tried to take these things with them to the burial mounds... By the way, some of the projects of monuments to Yanka Kupala looked like this: a mound with the figure of a poet on top of it. Just as it was described in the poem *Kurgan* (Burial Mound). One of such projects for a monument to the poet was proposed back in 1942 by the architect Georgy Zaborsky. Later, this image was used in his idea by the sculptor Aleksei Glebov. The monument-mound was supposed to be erected on the occasion of the 80th anniversary of the poet's birth, but the project did not materialise.

Zair Azgur is rightly considered the founder of the sculptural theme of Kupala and Kolas in Belarusian art. It was he who in 1924 executed the first sculptural portraits of the *Pesnyars* (poets) for the Vitebsk Museum. The sculptor described his acquaintance with Yakub Kolas in his memoirs: "For the first time I saw a real poet and looked at him as a miracle".

During the first session, Yakub Kolas read *Novaya Zyamlya* (New Land) to Zair Azgur, while the sculptor carefully peered into his features. "Very simple in communication, the poet reminded me a little of a peasant who had a very hard time in life. Therefore, he was gloomy and thought more, delving into himself."

Unfortunately, the first sculptural portraits of writers have not been preserved, there are not even their images. There are only photographs of portraits of 1939, which the master prepared for

the days of Belarusian literature and art in Moscow. Even the photo illustrations show that these works literally 'breathed' with life. Azgur wrote: "I wanted to convey those movements of the poet's soul that I observed, which delighted me. And this is exactly what is very difficult to do in sculpture. Those who knew the poet can confirm that behind the calm character of Kupala there was a very sensitive soul that reacted to everything". And about Yakub Kolas: "He willingly posed for me in 1928 and 1939".

Of course, time has brought a number of changes to the creative style of Zair Azgur. The monument on Yakub Kolas Square in Minsk (*on the photo*) signifies a departure from the impulsiveness of the first works to the smooth roundness of the arranged volumes. The severity and simplicity of the plastic solution of the central figure, resembling a huge boulder with its outlines, are slightly softened by decorative sculptural groups on the sides. It is interesting that the author himself planned to place all three parts of the work on stones in the middle of the surface of an artificial lake with bronze reeds: "And the lake itself, together with thickets and birch trees that will be planted around the monument, should speak of the nature of Belarus. It seems to me that this will be what I read about in the works of Yakub Kolas". And indeed, in this version, the figures would look more organic than in the current situation of the traffic intersection.

Artists often turned to the images of the Belarusian *Pesnyars*. They painted their portraits, their native places. Many gave special preference to Vyazynka, where a memorial museum was opened on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of Yanka Kupala. They depicted the poets' friends and associates, illustrated books that were reprinted in different series: from academic collections to the School Library. This theme was present in the works of recognised masters and students of the theatre and art institute (now the Academy of Arts) as well. It sounded different, but basically the chords of this sound were not so much insightful as officially solemn. The audience saw not people with their thoughts, doubts, dreams and hopes, but more often 'teachers of the nation' in such works...

Only recently have we begun to talk aloud about the seal of tragedy, which largely determined their fate. The noble origin of the ancestors of Yanka Kupala was not voiced, but, apparently, it still left its mark on the poet. After reading the poem *Beznazounaye* (Nameless), written by him in 1924, you feel the depth of bitter reflection about the fate of the Motherland, hidden behind light poetic lines. There is not a single named character in the poem, there is only a generalized 'We'. Thus the character in *Advechnaya Pesnya* (The Neverending Song), Kupala's first dramatic poem, has no name, he is just a man. The character in the poem *Son na Kurgane* (Dream on the Burial Mound) is someone called Him, and the character in the poem *Na Papakhe*





(On the Sheepskin Hat) is a stranger who, although he has signs of the biography of Kupala himself, remains nameless. To hide one's own 'I', not to stick out, not to bother is a property of the Belarusian character, which was noticed by many writers. Kupala did not really like some features of this character, but he himself was a Belarusian.

Probably, today's young artists need to learn to look at Yakub Kolas and Yanka Kupala not as banners or symbols, but to understand them as people who, in difficult life circumstances, did everything they could for their native language and Motherland. Young people sometimes say something like: "A normal person who grew up in the city, who does not know rural work, does not understand such literature". Or maybe you just need to read a little more to feel the real passion for your native land between the lines.

Of course, a logical question arises: what principles should a contemporary artist rely on in developing the Kolas-Kupala theme? Should they rely on the accuracy of ethnographic and historical details? This is insisted on by museum staff, who lack in the exposition of those works of art that would reflect certain life stages of the poets, images from their environment, accurate sketches of their native places. It was from this that point, for example, the sculptors Aleksandr Botvinyonok and Aleksandr Chigrin proceeded, who worked on the image of Yakub Kolas for the courtyard of the writer's museum. Many painters were guided by this while working on paintings. These works include Ya. Kolas. Family by Grigory Tabolich, Ya. Kupala in Vilnius by Aleksandr Ksendzov, Ya. Kupala as an Engineer by Vladimir Novak.

Sure, you can try to approach the topic through your own author's vision and unexpected plasticity. This primarily concerns works of decorative and applied art, where the material itself requires complex associative solutions. Then unexpected figurative comparisons appear in paintings and graphic works, such as in the painting Kupala Song by Raisa Siplevich or in the graphic triptych by Vladimir Savich.

All this is possible because the key to understanding the world of the Pesnyars is the versatility of folk art. This world is surprisingly lyrical and musical. It is easy to find consonance with it. An artist, no less than a musician, translator or actor, needs to know and convey the style of the works of the classics, which means to feel their word, to delve into the themes and images, plot twists, in the manner of the story. And their best works, as a rule, become sincere stories about the creative fate of the Belarusian classics.

Veniamin **Mikheyev**



# STARTING WITH QU YUAN...

The new book by Mykola Metlitsky titled Amulet (Obereg) has 'Chinese pages' as well

## 从屈原开始。。。。

在尼古拉·梅特利茨基的新书《护身符》中  
有“中国的影子”

The Zvyazda Publishing House, with the financial support of the Ministry of Information of the Republic of Belarus, has prepared for publication a book of poetry by the recently deceased laureate of the State Prize of the Republic of Belarus Mykola Metlitsky titled Amulet (Obereg).

Collected together, there are the latest works of the talented master of the word concerning our time, those anxieties that have now engulfed the entire planet. Mykola Metlitsky often turned to the theme of the Great Patriotic War. The writer considered the memory of it and the heroic ancestors of the Belarusians to be the social, spiritual, moral guidelines for us today, as well as for the future.

Separate pages of the vast and multifaceted poetic book are about China and the people of China, about the culture of the Celestial Empire. 'I am translating into my native language / you, the poets of China. / Sad, sometimes full of suffering / Pages of the eternal book I turn over / Starting with Qu Yuan, / His famous poems, / I see that over time there will be no less / Sad, disturbing themes...' (from Poets of China).

Mykola Metlitsky is a translator into Belarusian of the creative heritage of dozens of legendary Chinese poets from different centuries. In 2012, with the support of the Republican Confucius Institute of Sinology of Belarusian State University (then this educational institution was headed by Doctor of Philology Aleksandr Gordey), the anthology Under the Wings of the Dragon: One Hundred Poets of China by M. Metlitsky was published. The work of the Belarusian translator was awarded the Special Prize of the President of the Republic of Belarus to Art Luminaries.

After some time, Mykola Metlitsky compiled and

translated an anthology of poems Lotus Petals and Chrysanthemums. One Hundred Poets of China in the 20th Century. The talented master managed to complete one more solid work by translating and publishing a book of poetry by the classic of Chinese and world poetry Ai Qing Hymn to the Light.

在白俄罗斯共和国新闻部的资助下，已故的白俄罗斯共和国国家奖获得者尼古拉·梅特利茨基的诗集《护身符》最近已准备出版。

这位才华横溢的艺术家最后几年的作品集是关于我们的时代、关于当今弥漫全球的焦虑和困惑。尼古拉·梅特利茨基经常提及伟大卫国战争的主题。作者将它和白俄罗斯人的英雄祖先的记忆描述为我们今天和未来的社会、精神和道德里程碑。

诗集的很多篇章谈到中国、中国人民和中国文化。“我将您翻译成我的母语 / 你们，中国的诗人。/ 我正在翻阅一本孤独的，有时是悲惨的/永恒的书。从屈原开始，/ 那些著名诗篇，/ 我看以后也不会少 / 悲伤，令人不安的话题……《中国诗人》)。尼古拉·梅特利茨基是一位白俄罗斯语翻译家，他将生于不同世纪的数十位中国传奇诗人的作品翻译成白俄罗斯语。2012年，在白俄罗斯国立大学孔子学院（当时由语言学博士亚历山大·戈迪任院长）的支持下，梅特利茨基的诗集《龙之翼下：中国百位诗人》出版。白俄罗斯语译作获得了白俄罗斯共和国总统文化艺术特别奖。一段时间后，尼古拉·梅特利茨基编译了诗集《莲花和菊花花瓣：二十世纪中国百位诗人》。而这位才华横溢、勤奋的大师完成了另一项重要的工作：他翻译出版了中国和世界著名诗人艾青的诗集《光的赞歌》。





Микола Мятліцкі

# АБЯРЭГ

I walk on the steps of centuries,  
I take a stanza after a stanza —  
From Eternity,  
Wang Wei,  
Li Bai,  
Du Fu  
come out  
to meet me  
The twentieth century  
is so close now  
On the horizon of years:  
Wen Yiduo  
touches my heart  
with rhymes,  
saturated with blood.  
(Poets of China)

在《护身符》一书中，《兵工厂》这首诗以精神上的使命献给中国。尼古拉·梅特利茨基逝世于新冠时期，将饱和和诗意的《行星警报日记》留给读者，留给白俄罗斯和世界。而在这首“生命之诗”中有关于天下的诗词：“中国，你向世界展示了/人文主义，坚定的精神-/做了一切，付出了一切，/拒绝了悲伤的哀悼……”（《来自白俄罗斯的问候》）。

顺便说一句，尼古拉·梅特利茨基的一些作品最近被翻译成中文。我们希望不仅在他自己的祖国，而且在中国和其他国家都能继续听到白俄罗斯艺术家的声音。他的《护身符》一书和许多其它诗集的作者，人类美好的愿望——希望得到所有国家和人民在人文主义、和平及价值观方面的肯定。

阿列西·卡尔柳科维奇

In the Amulet (Obereg) book the Arsenal poem is also devoted to China, its spiritual imperatives. Having passed away as a result of the COVID disease, Mykola Metlitsky left to the readers, to Belarus and the world, the poetic Diary of Planetary Anxiety. And in this 'poem of life' there are lines about the Celestial Empire: 'China, you showed the world / Both humanism and fortitude / You did everything, gave everything, / To reject mournful sadness ...' (To China from Belarus).

By the way, some of the works of Mykola Metlitsky have recently been translated into Chinese. Let's hope that in the future the voice of the Belarusian artist of the word will be heard not only in his native land, but also in China, as well as other countries of the world. Let's hope they will hear the bright civic aspirations, as well as the hope for the establishment of humanistic virtues, peace-loving convictions among all peoples and in all countries of the world, of the author of Amulet and many other poetry collections.

Aleksandr Karlyukevich.

我走在世纪的台阶上，

我不断写诗 —

从永恒

跟我碰面

出来

王维，

李白，

杜甫。

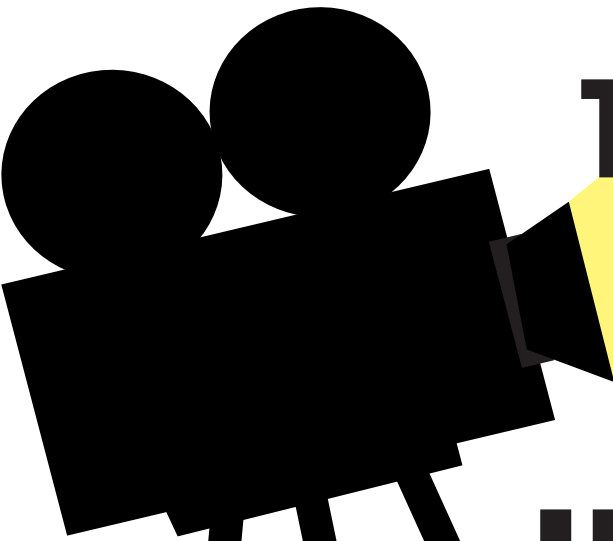
这很接近

二十世纪

在多年的地平线上：

闻一多用血腥的韵律触动了我的心。

（《中国诗人》）。



# THE ABILITY TO LOVE WHAT YOU HAVE AND BE HAPPY FOR OTHERS

The musical-detective Jack the Ripper of the Youth Variety Theatre was recognised as the best in the Musical Theatre section at the National Theater Award. An example when success begins with individuals united by a common goal and desire for results. And the role of the Artistic Director of the group, Vladislava Artyukovskaya, is remarkable in this. As she herself admits, she could be a commander, develop strategic plans and fight to the last bullet, but... Instead, she writes scripts, puts on performances and manages all creative processes. She sincerely believes that everyone can change the world according to their abilities, character and love...





**“With your arrival at the theatre, the genre of the musical began to develop here in different directions... Three years ago you voiced the desire to work fruitfully, and today it is already possible to sum up certain intermediate results of what has been done.”**

“Stably twelve premieres a year... You will not find anything like this anywhere else. People often ask me, where does this creative energy come from? Here everyone is just doing their job: some make concert programmes, others are involved in productions. We arrange concerts in the Palace of the Republic with television broadcasts and thus popularise our artists. Many plans were disrupted by the pandemic, something had to be changed, but we did not stop. You just have to adapt to life. As an experiment, we even did a concert in the botanical garden, which made it possible to gather an audience in the fresh air.”

**“Theatrical art, unlike, say, cinema, is more difficult to adapt to new realities, because even the Internet platforms are not an equivalent replacement for the stage, and the perception is not the same there...”**

“I agree, the theatre should not be online, because the theatre is magic, mystery, living energy. If you failed to convey your message

to the audience, then it will not receive catharsis. After the performance, the viewer should be filled with energy. And for the artists, each meeting with the audience is the same exchange of energy and magic that fills everyone.”

**“What trends are inherent in the modern musical and where are we, Belarusians, in this context?”**

“Modern audiences are very sophisticated. Even a child is difficult to surprise with something after everything that the phone gives him or her. For example, I remember how impressed I was when I watched Mikolka the Steam Engine in the Youth Theatre as a child. It is already difficult for modern children to perceive this story, since they see a certain primitivism in it, and everything in it seems invalid to them. However, the theatre is a certain convention. Music is the very vibration that creates a unique atmosphere and affects the audience. That’s why I like the genre of the musical, because it combines theatrical and musical art. We have gathered excellent vocalists, a kind of consonance of voices. We have the opportunity to do incredible things with the help of such people. And I think this is the future. I understand that, for example, such a genre as the musical parable *You and I*, and in the Belarusian

## BLITZ SURVEY:



**1. Any force majeure situation for me...**

*"It is an interesting test."*

**2. Creativity is destroyed by...**

*"Indifference."*

**3. Three episodes of your biography that could form the basis of a good script...**

*"My childhood adventures, which were a lot of fun. Definitely something about first love. And I would like to write about something that has not happened to me yet."*

**4. Name a movie that you are ready to watch in any mood.**

*"I really love Harry Potter. Miracles and the fictional world fascinate me a lot. The creativity of JK Rowling and the way she came up with this work, for me, is the level that I myself aspire to."*

**5. What do you think of modern women?**

*"They take too much care of their faces. I*

*agree that you need to take care of your appearance, but you should also think about the spiritual."*

language at that, is difficult to understand. Even in the process of preparation, they told me that I was desperately brave, because usually when the Belarusian topic is raised, it means straw shoes, the countryside, and so on, and we have gods, heroes, philosophy, plus a language that not everyone understands well enough. But if everything is this way, then it means that the problem is in ourselves, that we have no respect for our native word... Or another example is the musical-detective Jack the Ripper, a story in which the audience has yet to figure out who is guilty and who is innocent. Every time I take on new topics, colleagues say that I'm taking a risk. Nevertheless, according to my observations, courage in creativity is the current trend. It's worth the risk, but we're often afraid to take it."

**"How can you explain this fear and inability to love what you have?"**

"The inability to love is the worst thing. And I don't attribute it to mentality or history. In my opinion, the reason is the lack of education, which originates in childhood. My mother believed that all the melancholy we have is from the absence of the sun, and as a result, this affects the perception of the world around us. We lack optimism. If, starting from the family, a feeling of love for oneself, for everyone who is nearby, is instilled, then one can hope for changes. We often do not even know the names of our neighbours, not to mention inviting them for tea. We recently started working on a new theme where religion is present, and in the process it turned out that among our employees there are deeply religious people. And, imagine, they are ready

to work so far even without payment, because the implementation of the idea is so important to them. I am convinced that we all need the spiritual.

The main thing is only that there are those who will tell the way and call for them. Start small, with yourself. Learn to praise your own children, be proud of what each of us does and creates. Right now, however, you hear criticism more often... In Moscow, for example, every theatre and artist will always tell you that they are the best, although, of course, performances are of different levels, without this there is no way to work. However, they will try to convince you that their work is excellent. That's what you need to strive for — the ability to love your own and be happy for others."

**"I was pleasantly surprised and glad that your site contains contacts of various help services for those who are in a situation of some kind of addiction or are subjected to violence... Whose idea is this and does it work?"**

"I am convinced that such information should be on any site. You never know where and at what moment a person will find it, and maybe this is what will push them to action. Psychological problems are always very complex, and it happens that sometimes





it is not so difficult for people to be cured as to take a step towards such a solution. There must be mutual respect.

We build the theatre according to this principle. When I first came here to work, not everyone was friendly. But we started talking. We used to talk to each one for hours. I spared no energy and time, because I understood that people needed it. We could solve many problems if we learned to talk and hear each other."

**"And where do you get the resource to restore the energy that you spend on working with the team and the creative process?"**

"It's just not worth skimping on energy if we can help others in this way. This is the essence of human existence. Any creativity in the team makes it possible to reveal people, their abilities. If this succeeds, then new reserves are revealed in a person, people feel that they can fly. The same is about the audience. If they come to our theatre and break out of their everyday life to watch the performance, then this is evidence that we are doing everything for a reason. I, as part of the directorial and production team of the Istoki (Origins) festival, travelled through Belarusian cities and

saw how people live. They have a job, a family, but few hobbies. And without this, a person does not receive fulfilment. And when people came to our events, I saw happy faces. They need it."

**"When you go on tour to other cities, how are you met?"**

"Our visits give people a clear example of what wonderful artists we have."

**"Is coming to the Youth Variety Theatre an important step in your career?"**

"I have the education of a drama director, but I can't say that I was burning with the desire to come here. The Minister of Culture summoned me and offered me this position. I took time

to think. I do not like unprofessionalism, I am very scrupulous in everything, and therefore I did not understand whether I could cope with the task, build relationships. My husband played a decisive role here. He said that we must agree, because otherwise nothing will change anywhere, if we all only doubt and wait. It was really difficult at first. Someone did not want to work with me and left, and they were replaced by young enthusiastic artists."

**"What principles do you adhere to as the artistic director of the theatre?"**

"I do not like traitors in my life and always trust people. I don't like it when people say one thing to my face and something else behind my back. As for me, it's better to immediately say that you hate. I had a case when one colleague said this to me: I couldn't stand you, and then I looked closer and realised how hardworking you were. We do one thing. Don't be hypocritical, be sincere."

**"Even at school, the performance based on your play called Until the Stars Faded was awarded. Then the university noticed your production of TUTTI FRUTTI. That is, from the very beginning of your professional path, life**

**accepted your work with approval. Now, after a large number of performances, awards, have you noticed yourself to suffer from star sickness?"**

"I always try to look at myself from the outside, because I know that star sickness can absorb anyone and very quickly. Therefore, from time to time I ask myself: have I been carried away? And I'm constantly running somewhere, thinking of something for myself. I've been like that since childhood. I always need movement, new things."

**"Are your children also drawn to creativity?"**

"Yes, my girls all found a creative path for themselves, while I'd rather see them become chemists or mathematicians. After all, a creative profession is a difficult path, where you are constantly beaten, but you need to get up and move on. I once watched Sylvester Stallone talk about his attempts to break through. He wrote scripts for seven years, and he was refused everywhere. Nevertheless, he achieved his goal, but not everyone is able to fight for so long to no avail. Even the first unsuccessful attempt can break a person, and he or she leaves for another profession. So here you need to have a lot of strength."

**"What traits of your characters are closest to you?"**

"I like courageous characters. From each of them I learn to adequately accept any trials. Emotions never help. Although I am a very emotional and sentimental person, it all depends on the context of the situation. I can hear a touching story and cry, and then it will be tears of purification. As for the rest, I discipline myself, because I think that every day is a struggle and a test where you need to be able to survive."

**"In your opinion, is it possible to calculate the success of a production today if you place bets on the director, cast, etc.?"**

"As a playwright, I always know what moments can get through to the audience. However, creativity is like faith, it just has to be. And most importantly, the heart must sing. And if you only calculate with your head, then nothing will work."

Elena **Drapeko**

# HIS CANVASES COULD ILLUMINATE THE HALL OF THE MUSEUM IN THE ABSENCE OF ELECTRICITY





## Some believe that Belarusian painting is restrained, but the artist Nikolai Bushchik asserts with his works that real art can be festive, bright, sublime

A major, incredibly life-affirming mood radiates from all the works of Nikolai Bushchik. The good purity of such art is captivating. The sketchiness of rare people in the paintings, 'childish' multi-coloured houses and trees say that the artist is moving away from concreteness: these objects here are more like random guests. But Nikolai Bushchik is far from a purely formal approach. Even a person who is far from painting will understand that this is not just a geometric spot on the canvas. In any experiment with each tone of colour (and all the paintings of Bushchik sparkle with dozens of such experiments), one can see the poetic nature of the author, his desire to convey the rhythm of the music, which he loves very much. This passion makes it possible to work painstakingly and flawlessly, very intelligently, both in oil and watercolours.

The author offers an interesting game in the names of his works, which characterise individual colours in a new way. For example, *Prostranstvo Ognya* (The Space of Fire) by Nikolai Bushchik is made in warm red colour palette, but it is difficult to see the flame. At first glance, it seems that there is only a creative search for the artist in the palette. And when you step back, you will notice how the stretched wide stripes represent the desert and the sky separated by the horizon line, and the little yellow spot turns out to be the sun...

His landscapes are not ordinary. Although they are not jokes and not even inventions of the subconscious, but are the product of the nature itself that once accompanied the author on travels. This nature, according to the remarks

of not only art critics, but also ecologists, is the emotions of the soul, the canvases are the feelings of the Almighty, and the images are the thoughts of the Universe.

I remember the personal exhibition of Nikolai Bushchik. One of the halls of the National Art Museum of Belarus was significantly different from the others in those days. Firstly, there was subdued, spot lighting above the works, which created a certain atmosphere — an atmosphere of some intimacy, depth and mystery, perhaps, of the universe. Entering the hall, I immediately wanted to muffle the sound of my voice and speak in a whisper, so as not to disturb the harmony — the harmony of art, which you are afraid to frighten, like a rare bird. The emotions of the artist Nikolai Bushchik, about whom they say that the master creates only with these very emotions, were right there on the walls...

### Imagination game

"As long as I can remember, I loved to draw so much," Nikolai begins his story. "At first I just copied the drawings, but then surprised my parents at the age of five when I drew an absolutely even circle



by hand. They took a pair of compasses and measured it. At fourteen I received my first paints, which my grandparents from the city sent to me, a boy from the countryside, after which I began to make copies from the paintings of great artists. Vasnetsov's *Three Heroes* (Tri Bogatyrya) in my performance was gratefully placed in the teacher's room, but I liked the copy from Levitan more. I have always appreciated the classics. I saw in it exactly what carries the depth of thoughts and feelings. This is what accompanies me all my life — not so much the external side of things, but the essence of phenomena and their emotional side."

His biography includes an art school in Krasnodar and a theatre and art institute in Minsk. After graduating from alma mater, he does what he loves. The word 'must' is not in his vocabulary. Nikolai Bushchik paints most often about what is important to him and in what he finds answers to his questions, as well as

the eternal questions of mankind, today.

I have always been amazed at how beautifully the master combines colours, how he creates space and plane. This is exactly the kind of true pictorial thinking. He thinks exclusively in colour: he perceives any emotion, any phenomenon of nature as a colour with its variations. After all, all this is his impressions of real life. Not naked abstractions, but his feelings of nature against the background of the traveller's impressions. His work is a landscape, which, through the efforts of the master's personality and talent, turns into such a large element of colour, which is practically non-existent in Belarusian painting.

### Memories of impressions

He creates when he feels ready, and he defines inspiration as 'willingness to paint'. Often he makes small sketches in order to comprehend how the higher forces 'colour' the world. Often he goes out into the street, sometimes he sits by the window and talks a lot: about friends, people, events, such peculiar memories of impressions. Sometimes music helps him in this.

"I like music that has its own style," continues the artist. "From classical to modern jazz. Well, if this is jazz, it must not be destructive, but one that is built on improvisation and manifesting itself, as an image, on the basis of some emotions. I try to somehow bypass destructive things, because I see that they destroy the harmony. When I see that thoughts line up in some kind of positive 'line', the line of harmony, this is a structured thing. And if on the contrary it breaks everything, then this thing is destructive, and I easily refuse it."

He also considers art to be a 'thing', but an organic thing that remains in time only because it gives an idea of it. As for



the masterpieces, here the master has his own opinion.

"I think that a masterpiece," argues Nikolai, "is a work that combines the thoughts of an artist, composer, poet about the time in which he or she lives, with the thoughts and feelings of those who are not initiated into creativity. After all, an artist is always a pioneer. These are the eyes of God for all mankind. What is music? These are the ears of God. What is poetry? This is the word of God."

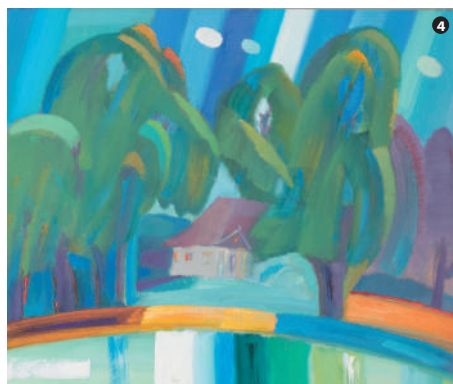
### Forever in harmony

When communicating with the

master, you feel that the harmony he speaks about is his permanent state. The state of calm and harmony is in him and his works. Therefore, I wondered how such a state, which, of course, happens to everyone, can be preserved for a long time.

"One must be faithful to the chosen path," concludes the artist. "To be faithful to the love of life and the concept of 'love' in general. Everything always depends on the desire of a person, even if you have to make a choice. Should one choose the path in which the soul and mind sound together and thus sing





- 1 Spring Mood
- 2 The Lady in the Red Beret
- 3 Village in the Evening
- 4 In the Old Manor"

with one voice? This path hasn't got much money in it. Or a path that brings good income, but also disharmony? Making a choice is not easy. Someone is more pragmatic, someone is more confident in himself or herself and in his or her abilities. Everyone will decide for himself or herself what is more important to him or her."

Yes, he is always talked about as a master with an exceptional sense of colour. Such descriptions of the artist as 'the element of colour', 'a wonderful colourist' remain valid, but I can swear there is even more colour in the new

paintings. The main impression: the triumph of solar colours, the radiance of the canvases, which, I am sure, could illuminate the museum hall in the absence of electricity. Where the artist 'takes' so much sun remains a mystery.

"As always, I want a fresh look at myself and a new proposal for the viewer. I would like to show new compositions, the possibilities of the soul."

**"What has changed in your work?"**

"Time has changed. We feel it through urban reality, through space, our surroundings, the impetuosity or calmness of people. The rhythm of

conversation, relationships, the rhythm on the roads, the rhythm of our thoughts, communication on the Internet. The face of time changes in rhythms, and after them — emotions. And emotions are always colour. Hence the play of heat and cold, all the changes in colour and imagery. I can't find any other explanation. I have no desire for journalism, for the creation of a chronicle, let the experts do it. The artist works for something else, to show the aesthetic, spiritual beginning of his or her time."

**"Colour can help establish everything: plot, images, composition?"**



"Of course. I try, as far as possible, to determine only the future. Now these are only impressions with which a person agrees or not, but it excites, it is unexpected. The artist, on the other hand, translates into art what he or she sees — the harmony of the world, the feeling of happiness. I would like people to see this, and not go to extremes: they watch either action films, or tearful soap operas. However, the world is wonderfully harmonious. And even global corporations that pollute nature are being careful, they make decisions on ecology, on poverty issues. People still tend to think about the future, about children. These reflections are also in my paintings, so they are more symbolic than plot-driven, chronological."

**"In one of the interviews you spoke about moving away from local topics. Could you clarify?"**

"I'm interested in painting as an open art. It is close to people, regardless of the colour of their skin and political positions. Art should be understandable without a translator."

**"Are your watercolours travel impressions?"**

"Yes, as a personal perception, as

chamber music: Belarus, Lithuania, Bulgaria... But a journey for an artist is the whole life, even if he or she just looks out the window. In watercolours, there is a thirst to tell what a beautiful gift our life is. It surprises me when in painting I see a semi-photographic concreteness, when people do not write through emotions. Technique must have its own place, it satisfies the primary aesthetic interest, and the artist must express himself or herself, as an artist, refracting what he or she has seen in his soul. I must tell my story, my melody in colours. Whether reality is guessed in it or not, nature it is still completely different, and for the artist it is an image that is not similar to anything previously created."

**"Still, travel is a strong impetus for work?"**

"Traveling is interesting as a first sight, as a feeling of a child. For me, this is necessary in order to be able to see, to rejoice in still pure, untrodden feelings. I go to the same place only when a lot has been forgotten, and only significant things remain in my memory. And I'm surprised that people paint trees, stones. This is a domestic aspect, and the themes for the

artist are man, Earth, Space. This is completely different."

**"From this point of view, does it matter where to go? To comfortable countries or less developed places, but interesting in their own way?"**

"I don't want to travel as a tourist, and exotic for the sake of exotic is not interesting either. It is important to understand what you see and to endure aesthetic impressions. Australia, America, Africa... no, it doesn't."

**"Is Europe interesting?"**

"Undoubtedly. And even Europeanised Asia is more understandable. And the East is beautiful, but not my cup of tea. We have a European culture, which is more calm, reasonable and minimalist."

**"Do people still buy paintings?"**

"Less than before. They almost stopped buying real art. Streams, birches are bought, as well as reproductions in GUM, but these are not purchases. You wouldn't say you're doing an act when you buy socks. Buying a painting is an act. I really hope the situation changes. You just need to continue to do your own thing, be yourself and think about the world, God and man. These are the things that constantly worry me."

**"You have always said that culture and art are very different things."**

"Yes, culture is like soil, and art is something that grows on soil. The way of life is culture, and everything to which the soul is directed, which is bright and harmonious, is art. More down to earth, creativity is all that people do. And how they do it is, in my opinion, an art."

Veniamin Mikheyev