THE SECRET INDUSTRY OF DEATH



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ThePashkov

2025

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Preface

I want to tell the reader about how senseless animal killings have spawned billion-dollar industries. These industries are either unknown or barely known to the general public.

Right now, in our time, at the end of the first quarter of the 21st century.

Industries have been created and exist—industrial death conveyors where wild animals are killed, both by poachers and organized groups of businessmen lobbying for legal status for their activities.

In addition, industries have been created for breeding animals in captivity for the sole purpose of killing them. And I'm not talking about agricultural enterprises where the goal is to raise animals for food. We can debate the ethics of eating meat, but the goal in that case is clear: meat as a food product for people. I'm talking about specific industries where the goal is simply killing. Moreover, some of these industries for breeding animals for slaughter involve suffering for the animals.

Everything I want to discuss in this book is united by one thing: the thirst for profit, the thirst for money, for which everything is done. For personal enrichment, the organizers of such activities will do anything: torture and torment animals, engage in poaching, corruption, and other crimes.

It's painful to talk about this. Tears come to your eyes when you learn about the particularly horrific details of such stories. But it must be told! At least so that these secret industries of death stop being secret.

I want these industries of death to be exposed to society, to people, in all their ugliness, so that people know and see the cruelty inflicted on our so-called "lesser brothers" for the sake of money.

Without meaning or purpose, unless you count the personal enrichment of the participants in these bloody death conveyors as a purpose.

Chapter 1. Stone Age magic in the 21st century

All modern medicine is built on the foundation of “folk” medicine. This fact surprises no one. Even now, when many drugs are synthesized in laboratories, the importance of natural sources for medicines remains significant. Medicinal herbs are harvested in their natural environment, where they naturally grow. In our country, for example, harvesting medicinal herbs during the season is a relevant trade for local residents in the remote corners of the Russian Taiga.

Medicinal herbs are also cultivated. This can even become a major pharmaceutical business. Of course, fields of grain crops are more common. But fields of medicinal herbs are not rare either. The pharmaceutical industry still depends on plant raw materials.

But it’s not just plants that are used in medicine. Animal-derived preparations are also used. The general public knows less about them. It’s precisely these preparations from animal organs and tissues that I want to discuss in

this book.

In general, drugs derived from animal organs are called organopreparations. And I think most readers will be surprised by the fact that, according to some estimates, the share of organopreparations in modern (scientific Western) medicine is about 70%. That is, there are more drugs of animal origin than those of plant origin!

So, first: some general examples of animal-derived preparations.

Insulin was recently extracted from the pancreases of cattle and pigs. Although it is now mostly produced synthetically, it was originally an animal product.

Heparin, an anticoagulant, was initially extracted from the lung tissues and intestinal mucosa of animals such as pigs and cows.

Another familiar example is hematogen, a biologically active supplement containing iron from the USSR, still popular today. Hematogen is marketed as a blood-forming stimulant: iron is the main component of hemoglobin. It is claimed that the iron in hematogen helps increase hemoglobin levels. However, studies on how well the iron from hematogen is absorbed by the body have never been conducted.

The iron in hematogen is contained in the form of bovine serum albumin, derived from the dried blood of cattle. These "vampire chocolates" made from blood have scientifically unproven effectiveness. Many of us remember the hematogen bars from childhood, with a taste reminiscent of toffee—exactly what I want to discuss. Animal-derived products whose effectiveness is scientifically unproven or is merely a prejudice and myth. Yet these products are still used today, often come with a high price tag, and right now, in our time, there are multibillion-dollar industries surrounding them.

Tiger paws and bile.

Bear paws and bile.

Bezoar stones from wild deer and goats.

Badger and bear fat.

Musk deer gland.

Antlers (young horns) of deer and marals.

These are just a few examples that are well-known, examples of names familiar to many. What unites them is that their medical effectiveness is exaggerated and based on the traditional use of these organopreparations in the past. The principle being: our ancestors used them, so we will treat ourselves the same way, with

ancestral methods.

It is precisely for these organopreparations that poachers often venture into the Russian Taiga. These derivatives (body parts) of animals are what customs officers seize in batches of smuggled goods at the border. These animal body preparations have become multibillion-dollar businesses in the modern world.

The flip side of such businesses is poaching, the killing of rare, endangered animals, and farms where animals are raised in the harshest conditions.

This doesn’t happen only in our country. It’s a global problem. Some cultures, primarily “Eastern” ones, place special importance on organopreparations, viewing them as an integral part of traditional treatment. For example, in traditional Chinese medicine, many animal body parts are considered essential medicines. As a result, the demand for them is simply fantastic!

The “magic” of such substances is largely tied to the belief in the powerful “animal energy” accumulated in these organs and tissues. People reason like this: science may not have yet found evidence of the healing properties of many of them, but there is a millennia-old experience of traditional medicine. And they continue to believe in miracles, continue to pay any amount of

money for parts of wild animals’ bodies filled with “miraculous life force.”

However, modern research debunks the myths about the magical effectiveness of organopreparations. For instance, studies show that the presence of active components resembling human hormones or other substances in such products is minimal or entirely absent. Instead of the expected healing, they can even harm the body, causing allergic reactions or intoxication. As knowledge about the composition and effects of these preparations increases, a more critical view of their use emerges.

I offer a simple, "everyday," if you will, illustration—a song by Vladimir Vysotsky, "One Scientific Mystery, or Why the Natives Ate Cook."

(…)

“But there is, however, another assumption,

That Cook was eaten out of great respect,

That a sorcerer—cunning and malicious—

egged everyone on:

‘Go on, guys, grab Cook!

Whoever devours him without salt and without onion,

He’ll be strong, brave, and kind—like

Kuka!"

Someone got their hands on a rock,

Threw it, the snake—and Cook was gone!”

(…)

This is the kind of Stone Age magic in the 21st century: the more powerful the wild beast you take body parts from, the “stronger” they are as medicine. Well, it’s obvious to any savage, right? The stronger the beast, the more “life force” it has, capable of healing. And the demand for wild animal body parts not only doesn’t decrease, it grows year by year.

And this Stone Age magic in the modern world isn’t a “tribute to the past” or “ancestral wisdom,” as various modern shamans and sellers of such “medicines” claim. More often, it’s a challenge to our present and future. While the destruction of rare animal species for dismemberment into “medicines” is understandable, the harm to society from such “medical practices” needs explanation.

I see this harm as society as a whole slipping into archaism with the spread of dubious archaic practices. The loss of reason by society, and even basic common

sense, if you will. One symptom of a society's mental pathology is collective madness. When a society that was recently rational suddenly starts looking to the past instead of the future. When religious practices and religions of a very questionable nature are revived. When bloody forms of hunting wild animals, which existed in the past, are revived on a modernized basis.

All these elements of change in society, in my view, are headed in entirely the wrong direction! Certainly not towards a "bright future"! Honestly, I read the news with a bit of fear, for example, about how livestock is sacrificed. They're reviving what seemed like long-forgotten "shamanic rituals." And the questions I want to explore in the following chapters of this book are actually broader than just the topics of poaching or dubious medical practices.

Chapter 2. Cat aspic that costs more than elite drugs

More than $15,000 per kilogram is the price of the so-called "tiger bone glue." This information comes from Dang Vu Hoai Nam, a graduate student in the Department of Food and Resource Economics at the University of Copenhagen. He managed to infiltrate the closed environment of buyers of this "miraculous remedy" from tigers in Vietnam in 2021 and presents these figures in his research. This is the price for the product made from "domestic" tigers. The same "medicinal remedy," but brewed from their wild counterparts, costs much more.

"Tiger bone glue" is a brown substance resembling resin, obtained by dissolving tiger skeletons in a pressure cooker under high pressure for two to three days.

This "miracle cure" of Eastern medicine is increasingly in demand year after year among the wealthy people of Asia. The "raw material" for "tiger glue" comes from

both tiger farms, where these cats are bred in captivity, and from their wild counterparts, hunted by poachers. One of the largest sources of "raw material" is the Far East of our country.

The "glue" is also dissolved using a special technology in strong alcohol. "Tiger bone wine" (Chinese: □□ □, pinyin) is an alcoholic beverage originally produced in China using tiger bones as the main ingredient. The production process takes eight years or more. It's a unique kind of "cognac" aged over many years, not in oak barrels with plants, but with organic animal materials. Consequently, it's a very expensive drink for the wealthy.

The tiger is a recognized regal animal, including in Eastern medicine. That's why medicines for emperors were traditionally made from tigers. This regal cat continues to suffer even now: there are more and more wealthy people with "emperor" tendencies in the modern world, and fewer and fewer tigers. There's a growing demand for "raw materials," and a huge number of tigers end their days in high-pressure cookers.

In general, bone glue is glue made from animal bones. It's outdated, was actively used in the past, but still exists and continues to be produced today. The main component is gelatin, formed by the denaturation of collagen.

To obtain the glue, animal bones are cleaned, crushed, degreased, treated with an acid solution to remove mineral salts, and then boiled in special devices where the bones are subjected to repeated exposure to steam and water. These devices resemble home "pressure cookers"—high-pressure pots. As a result of this processing, the collagen in the bones turns into gelatin, which is the adhesive substance.

So, it's just gelatin—a common element of any jelly or aspic, right? What's so "medicinal" about this bone glue made from tiger bones?!

Absolutely nothing!

I think many have heard such recommendations in their families as:

— tea with honey or raspberry jam for colds;

— hot milk with honey for colds;

— chicken broth, and also aspic, especially "for recovery" after injuries, for example.

These are the "recommendations of folk medicine." There is a rational kernel in such recommendations—our bodies do indeed require nutrients. We need food! In the past, especially after wars or crop failures, simply having food was the primary medicine. Meat, meat broth, or aspic were luxuries. People would go to great lengths to obtain them to feed the sick and wounded. And good doctors recommended exactly this—nutritious food with high protein content for recovery.

And yes: it doesn't matter what you make the soup or aspic from. The properties will be the same. The demand for regal tigers is justified by two things.

First—the reputation of the tiger as a raw material for treating emperors. We use such mythology when advertising "presidential clinics" or "presidential secret pills."

Second—the concept of "vital force," direct magic of similarity, existing as a mental (philosophical) category in ancient Eastern medicine treatises. Consumers, not endowed with special intelligence but having enough money, usually interpret this principle simply and practically:

— the more expensive, the more "medicinal";

— the more powerful the beast it's made from, the more valuable the corresponding medicine.

In practice, it looks like this: jelly made from the family cat Vasya is "better" than jelly from the supermarket—in a "medicinal" sense. And jelly from Vasya's striped older brother from the zoo is "stronger" than jelly from the domestic Vasya. But the "superfood" with "super medicinal properties" is undoubtedly the wild Far Eastern tiger, because it lives further north, in colder and harsher conditions than tigers in Asian countries. So, people try to get our tigers by any means possible!

Researchers of the black market for traditional Eastern medicine products say that the origin of the raw materials is of great importance to Vietnamese buyers of these illegal goods.

"Most buyers we spoke with prefer tiger bone glue from wild tigers rather than farm-raised ones because they believe the bones of wild animals are more effective and thus provide better treatment for a variety of musculoskeletal disorders. But at the same time, buyers strive for the highest possible content of tiger bones in their mixture," explains Dang Vu Hoai Nam.

40% of surveyed buyers reported using tiger bone glue to treat musculoskeletal disorders;

32% use it to maintain overall health;

6% for disease prevention;

5% for enhancing sexual activity.

"Even with legalization, the demand for wild tigers will remain high. A third of our respondents are still willing to buy tigers caught in the wild, which will simply support the black market," suggests Dang Vu Hoai Nam.

Yes, in many Asian countries, farms for breeding tigers for the subsequent production of medicinal products from their bodies are legal.

The facts are as follows:

— According to the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA), an international non-governmental organization, in 2017 there were about 200 tiger farms in China, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Thailand, and Vietnam.

— At that time, tiger breeding farms housed between 7,000 and 8,000 individuals, which is about twice the population of wild tigers in the world.

In Chinese culture, the tradition of using organ-based preparations has existed for a very long time. The first reliable written mention of using tiger body parts dates back to around the year 500 AD. But the demand for

products containing animal body parts sharply increased in the 1980s—during the period of industrialization and the accompanying rise in wealth in Asian countries. The increase in the wealthy middle class led to these products becoming hugely popular.

In 1986, the first tiger farm was established in southern China. These establishments were initially classified as zoos until it was discovered that they were actually breeding tigers like livestock. These farms are set up to ensure rapid reproduction: newborn cubs are taken from their mothers shortly after birth so that females can give birth to more cubs sooner. Technologies are used to increase the number of newborns per pregnancy.

Tiger farms are located in China, Southeast Asia (mainly in Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam), and South Africa.

Since 1992, China has been legally exporting tiger bones to South Korea, as well as to India and Malaysia. Even European countries, such as the Czech Republic, have participated in the trade of various animal parts, including tigers, which are of interest to Asia.

In reality, very few are engaged in the genuine protection of tigers on an international scale. One of the most interesting organizations working in this direction is TRAFFIC: they are actively fighting against the illegal

trade of wild animal body parts worldwide.

To prepare this material, I studied a huge amount of scientific and research reviews. TRAFFIC has particularly good reports on tigers.

I want to present a few quotes directly from specialists—this is from the report "Skin and Bones: Tiger Trafficking Analysis from January 2000 to June 2022," which was released in November 2022.

"When reading this report, it's important to remember that due to the inherently secretive nature of illegal tiger trade, the true scale of such crime is unlikely to be reflected solely by the confiscation data presented here. While seizures indicate some success by government agencies and serve as an indirect measure of smuggling levels, these figures are inherently influenced by a range of distortions. These include varying levels of investment and effectiveness of law enforcement, the success of operations, the level of wildlife crime in each country, differences in reporting and data recording practices by both law enforcement and the media, among other factors. Therefore, an increase in confiscations in one country does not necessarily indicate a higher level of wildlife smuggling compared to other countries or an increase/decrease in the volume of illegal trade.

However, it does point to the scale of recorded violations in that particular country. It's also important to distinguish between the seizure incidents themselves and the equivalent quantity expressed in the estimated number of confiscated tigers."

Overall, according to a conservative estimate, from January 2000 to June 2022, 3,377 tigers were confiscated worldwide in 50 countries and territories, averaging 150 tigers per year. These cases relate to 2,205 seizure incidents. Of these, 77% (1,688 incidents) occurred in 13 tiger range countries (TRCs), accounting for at least 2,883 tigers (85% of the total). India, China, and Indonesia recorded the highest number of seizures during this period, together accounting for 53% of all cases (1,178 incidents). In countries outside the TRCs, nearly a quarter (23%) of all tiger confiscations were recorded — a total of 517 incidents over the 22.5-year period.

Tiger confiscations in the first half of 2022 showed a worrying trend: there was an overall increase in the number of seizures in certain TRCs compared to the median for the first half of the two previous decades. This pattern was observed in Russia and Thailand, but most notably in Indonesia, where both the number of incidents and the equivalent number of confiscated

tigers increased.

In Indonesia, the first six months of 2022 saw the confiscation equivalent to 18 tigers, which is double the volume for the same period in 2021 and 2020, and 50% higher than the median for the same period from 2000 to 2022. This alarming trend in Indonesia serves as an urgent warning of the need to reverse the further decline of this critically endangered subspecies group."

"Tigers originating from captivity—both confirmed and suspected—have consistently played a significant role in fueling the illegal trade in tigers and their parts. Globally, from 2000 to June 2022, it is estimated that at least 744 tigers had confirmed or suspected origins in captivity. The share of incidents involving whole captive tigers increased from 9% in 2005 to more than 50% in 2018–2019, totaling at least 186 cases across 28 countries. Thailand and Vietnam stand out in particular: an estimated 81% and 67% of the confiscated tigers there, respectively, are believed to be captive-bred. Several countries—including Vietnam and Thailand—are under close scrutiny due to large captive tiger populations suspected of serving as sources for illegal trade.[2]"

In addition to whole animals, the most frequently seized tiger parts are skins (1,313 whole and 609 fragments in 902 confiscations) and bones (11,528 items and an additional 2.9 tons in 411 confiscations). However, their share has decreased over time: this is offset by an increase in the number of tiger teeth (953 items in 165 cases), claws (3,101 items in 186 cases), and other body parts. It has been shown that all parts of a tiger have market value — from whiskers (503 pieces) to paws (129 pieces) and meat (1.1 tons)."

"While habitat loss, ineffective land use and management, and conflicts with humans put pressure on tigers, it is currently poaching and illegal trade that are the main factors threatening the long-term survival of this species. Tigers now survive in less than 6% of their historical range, and the global population is estimated at about 4,500 individuals — compared to 100,000 tigers at the beginning of the 20th century. Such a rapid decline has placed wild tigers among the most critically endangered animals on the planet."

There are officially 13 countries recognized as Tiger Range Countries (TRCs). As of today, only eight of them have breeding wild populations: Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal, Russia, and Thailand. In China (WWF, 2015) and Myanmar, breeding

populations have also been recorded, but they may partially depend on migrant tigers from neighboring countries. Wild tigers once inhabited Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam, but currently, there are no known breeding populations there.

I think sometimes the straightforward statements of global experts don't need retelling—it's enough to read them as they are. What a terrifying picture! And while a few organizations try to count how many tigers have been killed for traditional medicine, people around the world continue to "boil glue" from these amazing wild cats.

Note that the key phrase in the specialists' report is: "When reading this report, it is important to remember that due to the inherently secretive nature of illegal tiger trade, the true scale of such crime is unlikely to be reflected solely by the seizure data presented here."

This means that we're only talking about the cases where poachers were caught and the tigers, torn to pieces, were assembled into "units" to count how many animals were destroyed. But the real scale is unknown to anyone.

Chapter 3. Bear paws for the Chinese

My readers send me ads almost every day about the sale of bear body parts—the masters of our Russian Taiga.

I want to quote one of these ads—not about direct animal derivatives, but about amulets and their “miraculous powers.”

“Description.

Veles’ Seal—Bear Paw.

Traditionally, the Veles’ Seal amulet is used by men, as it is the man—the warrior, the protector of the family. The Bear Paw amulet is a powerful charm, infused with the bear strength of Veles.

Veles’ Seal is considered one of the most powerful symbols in terms of energy in ancient Slavic culture, and not without reason, as the god Veles held a special place among the main gods for our ancestors. It was believed he helped people whose professions were trade, magic, or those who upheld laws and order.

Ancient ancestors believed that Veles patronized sorcerers, priests, and magicians. They always treated Veles and his symbol with respect, often using it in their practices, and in return, he endowed them with incredible strength.

The amulet is made of medical-grade steel 316L. It comes with a 60 cm chain and instructions for activating the amulet.

Shipping across the entire territory of the Russian Federation.”

I don’t know what those “ancient ancestors” believed or didn’t believe—I just quoted the description of a metal pendant from a random online store. Original spelling preserved.

And there are hundreds of such sites. And these pendant-amulets, filled with “Veles’ power” and “real bear spirit,” are likely being sold.

I myself, personally, in my expeditions across Russia, have been to tourist regions, where stalls, tents, and shops with tourist souvenirs are a must. Images of bear paws or claws in various forms are often found there. I’ve seen them in Karelia, Altai, and the Far East. And even in the very center of the country, somewhere on the highway in the Tver region, connecting Moscow with

St. Petersburg, you can find this too—on a table with small souvenirs, next to stuffed bear cubs and “embellished” heads of adult bears. Bear claws, often real ones, or bear teeth are also found.

This is a preliminary sketch of how the bear's reputation leads real bears of the Russian Taiga to their slaughter and dismemberment into various trinkets, stuffed trophies, or hides for the estates of all sorts of idiots who buy them.

And the merchants, for the sake of money, spin all this medieval nonsense, talking about the “bear spirit,” “the god Veles of Slavic ancestors,” and so on. It’s a closed, self-exciting cycle: the merchant invents tales about the “magic of the bear claw” for money—the tourist, chuckling and half-believing, pays for these tales to the merchant, thereby stimulating the killing of more and more bears. And then it all starts over, but on an ever-increasing scale of extermination of all living things around.

A separate topic is the mass supply of bear body parts to China. The scale of even what is seized at customs is simply staggering! The media reports hundreds, sometimes thousands of bear paws in a single shipment.

Bear paws in Chinese culture and medicine have a centuries-old history of use. They are considered a delicacy and are used in Chinese cuisine. Let me emphasize: in Chinese cuisine for the wealthy, as a sign of high social status. Also, traditionally, bear paws are valued not only for their supposedly “special taste for the rich,” but also for their alleged “medicinal properties.” Again—mythical “medicinal properties,” inflated by merchants using medieval nonsense and ancient treatises.

In ancient China, bear paws were among the rarest products called the “eight delicacies” and were served at banquets for the wealthy—exclusive food for the elite, inaccessible to commoners.

The eight rarities are a traditional group of gourmet treats that changed from time to time. According to one list from the Mongolian dynasty era (1206–1333 AD), it included deer throat, wild horse legs, deer lips, camel udder, roasted snow goose, purple jade sauce, and black jade sauce. A later list, found in the standard Chinese dictionary “Qi Hai” (“Ocean of Phrases”), includes dragon liver, phoenix bone marrow, leopard embryo, carp tails, roasted owl, yellow monkey lips, bear paw, and crispy locust cakes.

From modern Chinese culinary recommendations, I'll quote Xi Feng's book from 1961:

"Bear paws are something ordinary people can't afford. In the past, only the very wealthy could indulge in eating them. Moreover, bear paws are incredibly difficult to prepare: they need to be cooked over a slow fire, which takes an entire day and night.

To prepare a bear paw, the chef must first skin the paw. The classic method is to coat the paw in clay and then bake it in the oven.

After some time, when it's taken out, there won't be any fur left on the paw. Then the fur-free paw needs to be dipped in boiling water. After that, when it's removed, it should be left in water for another day or two.

During this time, the bear paw will increase in volume by almost three times. It will also become softer. After this procedure, the skin is removed from the paw and the bones are taken out, leaving only the meat.

Once the skin is removed and the paw's flesh is obtained, the method of preparation depends on the chef. Besides fried bear paw, there are several other ways to prepare it—such as stewing or steaming and slicing."

Then the Chinese gourmet Xi Feng says:

"When people ask what bear paw tastes like, I can say it's sweet and much better than shark fin.

It's like pork cooked at the right temperature and for the right amount of time: tender and soft, but not as fatty as fatty pork. At first-class Cantonese banquets these days, they serve only shark fin, not bear paw. However, bear paw is still valued in Beijing cuisine, in the "Old Capital."

Xi Feng adds:

"They also say that those who care for their bears' paws prefer the front paws and pay more for them. The reason is that when our elder brother bear hibernates, he licks his left front paw. His saliva concentrates on the left front paw, making it the most nutritious."

Bear paws from northern China are considered to be of the best quality. The colder the region of origin, the higher the quality. However, bear paws from Yunnan province, located near the Himalayas, are also well-known and expensive if they can be obtained."

I think I've quoted enough to show the kind of archaic nonsense that inflates the value of bear paws among Chinese elites. And yes: bear paws from our Far East or Siberia—much further north than northern China—are, according to Chinese gourmets, even tastier and more elite than the most elite Chinese varieties of bear paws.

So, don't expect the flow of wild animal parts, legally or smuggled into China, to stop. Nor should you expect a reduction in quotas for killing wild animals. As long as there's demand, there will be traders eager to profit from it.

I've traveled through regions of Russia as part of my wildlife protection expeditions. Along the roads, there are stalls everywhere selling parts of dead animals—everything from bear cub taxidermy to bear bile. People aren't bothered by it; there are plenty of buyers: for instance, city folks passing through Siberian regions always want to buy a bear cub head on a stand to hang on their wall and brag to friends: "We visited Siberia! Look at the bear we brought back."

I remember visiting old friends I hadn't seen in over ten years. An apartment in Tula: dusty books crammed into a closet so tightly they fall out when you open the door. On the shelves, instead of books, there are various souvenirs. They say, "We travel, bringing home all sorts of things as mementos."

I look at the wall, and there's a grotesquely made badger taxidermy, which for some reason is mating with a fox. Not even a fox, but a fox cub, a little one. It's made like this: a board is cut out, secured on both sides

with a cord for hanging on the wall. On this board, the taxidermist (the one who makes animal taxidermy) created a scene where the fox cub is chewing on a pine branch, while a badger is mating with it from behind.

As it turned out later, my slow-witted friends bought this junk near the federal highway in the Southern Urals. The thing is, in Russia, there's been a traveling animal exhibition for several years where the exhibitor, calling himself an "artist," creates scenes from dead animals—how they mate in the wild. He has deer, wolves, and all the animals of the Russian Taiga! So, these poor creatures were killed to make taxidermy and display them in mass mating poses.

This became contagious for traders across the country, who started making similar taxidermy for further sale to tourists.

I ask my friends:

— What kind of perversion is this? Why did you hang it on the wall?

— Oh, we bought it in the Urals, and why not? It's beautiful, right? A little bit of the wild in the apartment, it feels alive."

“Where exactly did you buy this?” I asked irritably; it was hard for me to react to such things in the context of meeting old acquaintances. They didn’t yet know that I was involved in environmental protection and had gained some fame as a writer, so my reaction was puzzling to them.

“In the Urals,” answered Maria, the wife of the apartment owner. “Sergei, where was it?” she turned to her husband.

He awkwardly adjusted his glasses, scratched his clean-shaven chin, and stretched out the sentence:

“This is from the Siberian side, where there are still some cafes. We met an Armenian guy there. By the way, he's a hunter. For just ten thousand rubles, he cooked a bear paw for us right over the coals, and then, just below the cafe, we bought this!” Sergey gestured toward the stuffed animal on the wall; he seemed to be bursting with pride.

“You ate a bear paw?” I clarified. “Why?”

“Well, it’s Siberia. Don’t worry, it’s completely legal hunting; the Armenian, I forgot his name, said he caught the bear the day before, and people snapped it up right away. They make all sorts of dishes from bear meat! They cooked the paw for us over the fire and served it

with lingonberry jam. It’s delicious.”

“What’s the matter? Is something wrong?” Maria looked at me with a puzzled expression.

That was the first and last quick meeting with them after many years! As I left, loudly closing the door behind me, I thought for a long time about what I could actually do about it. There’s demand, and it’s met with supply. Throughout the chain—from the official selling hunting licenses to the Armenian in the Urals and Maria and Sergei as ordinary buyers—no one even thinks that such a “practice” is madness. A complete misunderstanding of what’s at stake!

Let’s get to some facts specifically about the killing of bears for the sale of bear paws. In my work, I always try to rely on verified facts, so I thoroughly study numerous scientific and research data collected from around the world.

Again, as with tigers, TRAFFIC is actively working on the analysis of bear extermination for derivatives. A quality report was prepared in Asia for the period from 2000 to 2011. The report is called “Brought to Bear: An Analysis of Seizures Across Asia.”

I’d like to quote some excerpts.

“Globally, seven out of every ten documented seizures of bear derivatives occur in an Asian country or territory. To better understand the dynamics of the trade, all bear-related seizures recorded in Asia from 2000 to 2011 were analyzed (a total of 694 cases). The vast majority of them were in Cambodia (190), China (145), Vietnam (102), Russia (59), Malaysia (38), Thailand (29), Laos (29), and India (23). Analysis of all cases shows that during this period, at least 2801 bears were traded for their parts and derivatives. Of these, 69% of the trade volume (i.e., 1934 bears) were seized only in Russia and China, accounting for 1252 (45%) and 682 (24%) individuals respectively, posing a serious threat to the existence of wild bears. The underground nature of this trade means that the volumes reflected here represent only a small fraction of the actual number of bears and their parts illegally transported worldwide.”

The report highlights the multifaceted ways in which bears are exploited for trade purposes across Asia. The trade covers all four bear species endemic to the region—the Asiatic Black Bear (Ursus thibetanus), Sun Bear (Helarctos malayanus), Sloth Bear (Melursus ursinus), and Brown Bear (Ursus arctos)—and involves more than 17 countries/territories, each favoring certain bear products.

The motives for the trade are diverse: from capturing live bears for bile farms; trading pets or “dancing” bears; processing carcasses and parts for meat consumption; tanning skins and trophies; to extracting gallbladders and bile for traditional medicine production. As a result, bears are sold alive or dead, divided into trophies, skins, meat, bones, claws, teeth, gallbladders, and bile derivatives.

The prevalence of reports on illegal international trade coming from non-bear range countries indicates that source countries are not detecting a significant portion of exported bear products. The United States and New Zealand seized a significant number of shipments with illegal bear products, mainly derivatives, exported from Asia (accounting for 79% and 76% of all their seizures, respectively).

It is assumed that this is largely due to the demand for traditional medicine products among Chinese and Vietnamese diasporas in these countries. Further study is needed to understand the dynamics and potential threat posed by these countries in the context of illegal trade from Asia. Overall, non-Asian countries were better at recording confiscations, which generally occurred upon import. Data shows that Asian range countries, especially China, Vietnam, and Russia, failed

to detect and/or document the illegal export of bears; most such shipments were recorded by non-Asian states already at the import border.

An analysis of trade and confiscation data shows that since 2000, there has been a discrepancy between the number of registered seizures and the calculated number of bears confiscated. For instance, Cambodia reported the highest number of confiscations (27% / 190), but accounted for only 9% (253) of the bears seized in the region. Conversely, only 8% (59) of registered cases were in Russia, yet these relatively few episodes accounted for 45% (1252) of the total number of bears confiscated. The small number of documented seizures compared to the large volume of animals highlights that a significant portion of the trade may go unnoticed by law enforcement.

The demand for bears is high, and seizures, especially of paws, occur with alarming regularity. From 2000 to 2011, more than 6000 bear paws were confiscated—this is at least 1500 bears. Over 75% of these seizures occurred in the last five years (2006–2011). In Russia alone, 4500 paws were seized, equating to at least 1125 individuals. It is likely that most of the paws confiscated in Russia and China, especially at the Heilongjiang (China) and Primorsky Krai (Russia) border crossings,

came from wild bears, as there are no bear breeding farms in Russia.

Such significant confiscations along the Russian-Chinese border indicate a large-scale trade in bears and their parts between the two countries. Although this does not yet pose a direct threat to the brown bear in Russia, strengthening existing control and management measures is a necessary next step to address this issue."

Again, note that we're specifically talking about cases where poachers were caught and batches of bear derivatives were seized. This isn't about officially hunted animals, although often that's what causes the main damage to wild fauna populations, but rather about illegal hunting.

I want to highlight the main quote: "The demand for bears is high, and the removal, especially of paws, occurs with alarming regularity."

Next, a bit of information about the origin of bears.

> "The dynamics of trade for each country/territory examined varied depending on the frequency of confiscations and the size of illegal shipments. Mainland China and Vietnam were involved in more than 100 confiscations, with the total number of

> bears involved being significant (> 682 in China and > 279 in Vietnam). In Russia, 59 confiscations were documented (9%), yet the total number of bears involved (> 1252) was the highest in the region, accounting for 45% of all confiscated bears over a 12-year period. Bear trade in Russia included very large shipments (up to 250 bears in a single confiscation), with each confiscation averaging 23 bears. The relatively small number of recorded confiscations in Russia, but with a large number of animals involved, highlights that a significant portion of the trade may go unnoticed by law enforcement."

In other words, Russia has the highest rate of bear slaughter for export to Asian countries, primarily to China, of course. The seized shipments were colossal—up to 250 bears at a time. And interestingly, as TRAFFIC specialists claim, despite the small number of seizures, the real mass slaughter is happening right here in our country.

This indicates that bears are being destroyed and quietly exported abroad, with no real control over it. It's simply a business built on the blood of unfortunate animals.

After reviewing reports from various wildlife protection organizations, I decided to thoroughly examine scientific research. The issue of bear destruction for the sale of paws for traditional medicine and the taste preferences of the wealthy is so extensive that entire scientific studies are being conducted in this area.

We will find the study titled "Status and Spatial Characteristics of Poaching, Illegal Trade, and Conflicts Between Humans and Asiatic Black Bears in China from 2010–2020" particularly interesting, as the data covers the period following the publication of the TRAFFIC report.

This study was conducted by Peking University (China), and since the Middle Kingdom has a very strict political system, one can confidently assume bias (underreporting of data) even in scientific work due to possible pressure. In other words, the legal sector wasn't discussed; the experts touched on the "safe topic" of poaching.

And yet, the numbers are telling.

Let's look at a few quotes:

> "Meanwhile, the continuous expansion of anthropogenic land use is intensifying conflicts between humans and bears. In this study, we conducted a comprehensive search and gathered information on cases of poaching, illegal trade, and human-bear conflicts involving the Himalayan bear, recorded in China from 2010 to 2020. By systematically studying court decisions and news reports, we identified 351 events (64 — poaching, 221 — illegal trade, and 90 — conflicts) across the country. The results showed that Southwest China is a hotspot for all categories (41, 149, and 40 cases, respectively). Bear paws were the most common bear product in illegal trade (52.1%), and the most frequently mentioned form of human-bear conflict was human injuries from bear attacks (at least 52 people were injured, and 7 more were killed)."

There you have it — everything we constantly talk about. People destroy the bears' habitat, predators come to humans, and conflicts grow! Then people simply exterminate the animals that come out of the wild, butcher them, and sell them as souvenirs and food products. That's it. And bear paws, even according to the scientific work of Chinese researchers, are the most common "bear product."

Now let's talk a bit about how the export scheme for bear paws from Southwest China is organized.

"Southwest China, especially Yunnan Province, where the country borders several Southeast Asian states, is a hub of illegal trade. In addition to the relatively high frequency of poaching by local residents, cross-border wildlife trade may significantly contribute to the illegal circulation of Himalayan bear parts.

In our study, we only considered trade episodes within China and did not focus on international smuggling, which likely leads to an underestimation of the scale of illegal trade in the country. This cross-border traffic can be viewed in two aspects:

1. Importing bear parts and derivatives from abroad for sale in China. If we consider smuggling cases where bear parts are purchased from foreigners at the border or seized by customs when entering China, according to our data, there were at least 22 such international episodes (sales to China), 16 of which occurred in Yunnan. Therefore, it is highly likely that illegal trade with Southeast Asia (e.g., Myanmar, Vietnam, and the Lao PDR) constitutes the main part of the smuggling of bear parts into China.

2. Exporting bear parts and derivatives from China to other countries. In addition to exporting bear bile to Southeast Asian countries (e.g., Singapore and the Lao PDR), other parts, such as gallbladders and even live bears, are illegally exported. Since many border areas are remote territories with numerous trails hidden in the forests, bears or their parts can be secretly moved across the border without being detected by authorities."

That's the situation surrounding the sale of bear paws. And while you're reading this chapter, tourists in the Urals, Siberia, and the Far East are savoring bear paws in restaurants and roadside cafes, claiming their right to abundance. At the same time, more illegal shipments are being smuggled into China and other Asian countries, where the wealthy eagerly heat up their steamers.

Chapter 4. How they drain the life out of a living beast: bile factories

Let's continue the story of the challenging fate of our country's symbol—the bear. In the context of dismembering these very bears into organ extracts for traditional Chinese medicine.

Again, to understand the widespread nature of archaic pseudo-medical practices, a quote. This time from the website of one of the largest Russian marketplaces.

“Therapeutic drinking balm Bear Bile.

Ingredients:

Special extract of Altai maral antlers; bear bile — 0.1—0.15%, aspen bark, yarrow herb; tansy, bird cherry fruits, honey, ascorbic acid; sugar syrup, citric acid.

Purpose of the supplement:

Digestive disorders; choleretic effect; immune system.

Description

The non-alcoholic balm “Bear Bile” is a drink that will bring great benefits to the body and help achieve robust health. The tincture contains maral antlers, herbs, and other exclusively natural components that have antiparasitic, choleretic, and biostimulating effects.

Thanks to this, the remedy helps maintain the microflora of the digestive tract, prevents the development of digestive disorders, and eliminates parasites. This dietary supplement for a healthy stomach also increases appetite, improves digestion, strengthens immunity, and reduces inflammation. The therapeutic antiparasitic balm from bear gallbladder will be beneficial for gout, rheumatism, and liver diseases.”

This is—in our country.

This is sold completely legally on the largest marketplaces.

I quoted the description of one product, but there is a huge variety of such products claiming to contain bear bile.

Now let's take a closer look at the hellish business of extracting bile from bears. In this business, simply killing a wild animal is the most humane act. Because everything else involves torment and brutal torture of the unfortunate animal. Over a long period. Until death.

A bear's gallbladder has always been the most valuable commodity because it had the highest commercial value. Sometimes bears were hunted solely for their gallbladders, I read in one of the research papers. Let's start by trying to understand this. So, the first question: what are the financial interests?

Prices for bear body parts in China sharply increased starting in the mid-20th century. This was because it was at this time that the prosperity of the Chinese began to grow. Which dramatically increased demand for literally everything. Traditional Chinese medicine products were no exception.

• In 1970, a kilogram of bear bile cost about 200 US dollars.

• By 1990, the price had risen to $3,000–$5,000.

• Currently, the market price with legal certification has risen to $30,000–$50,000 per kilogram on the legal market in Hong Kong. No researcher can provide prices for the illegal market.

The geography of drug sales is extensive. According to investigations conducted by the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA), illegal products containing bear bile were sold in traditional Chinese medicine shops in the United States, Canada, Japan,

Taiwan, Korea, Singapore, Australia, and New Zealand. Essentially, all over the world! Anywhere there's a paying demand! Their report showed that the bear bile sold in these stores was most often produced on bear farms in China. And this is the lowest, cheapest segment of the market. It's roughly the same mass market I mentioned for our country—organ products sold on marketplaces.

Starting around the 1970s, in China and then in other Asian countries, they shifted from killing bears in the wild for bear bile to keeping bears in captivity to extract bear bile. In my opinion, a truly monstrous business was created. A real infernal conveyor belt of death, where people (if they can still be called people!) put bears through what is literally "seven circles of hell."

In the early 1980s, methods for extracting bile from live bears were developed in North Korea. This marked the beginning of breeding bears in captivity for bile extraction. Researchers disagree on who pioneered the method. Many claim that such farms first appeared in China back in the '70s, and the Koreans merely refined the technique. It quickly spread in China and other regions.

In the 1980s, bear farms in China appeared en masse. Even back then, they housed more than 7,000 brown and Asiatic black bears. The animals were kept in small cages. A non-sterile catheter made of latex or stainless steel was inserted through an external fistula directly into each bear's gallbladder to extract fluid daily, either by gravity into a tray or using a non-sterile syringe. This extraction method is called the "free fistula method."

Bears experience intense pain from the daily extraction of bile. Many often die from diseases such as cholecystitis, gallstones, polyp formation, bile duct obstruction, strictures, partial hernia of the gallbladder wall, and liver cancer. Plus, there are numerous chronic infections caused by the presence of foreign objects and their open wounds. The method is not sterile.

Bear cubs are initially captured in the wild and used to replenish the stock on farms. For example, in 2008, there were reports that on bear farms in Northern China, they paid between $280 and $400 for a wild bear cub.

They start extracting bile at the age of three and continue for at least five years. Bears rarely survive longer than that on these bile farms. Over 5 years, a bear can produce 2.2 kilograms of bile. These are the

average figures that Chinese businessmen in this industry rely on.

When bears stop producing bile (around age 10), they are simply slaughtered and used for other body parts, such as meat, skin, paws, and the gallbladder. Bear paws are considered a delicacy in Eastern cuisine, as I've mentioned before. So, it's a zero-waste production, with profit at every stage of exploiting the animals.

To ease the process of extracting bile, adult bears are usually kept in small cages. These cages are so tiny that the bears cannot sit, stand, or turn around in them. On more modern farms, some bears are kept in cages with movable walls that can be pushed inward to restrain the bear. But I consider this to be unequivocally sadistic torture methods.

Bile bears are often subjected to other cruel procedures. This includes declawing, where the third phalanx of each front toe is amputated so the bears don't injure themselves or harm farm workers. Their teeth may also be removed for the same reasons.

Pain, pain, pain, and death (agonizing death!) at the end.

According to my data, international concern about such farms first arose in 1993. Since then, international animal protection organizations have publicized

information about bile farms in the media and launched campaigns against them.

By 1994, Chinese authorities announced they would not issue licenses for new bear farms, and in 1996, they released a special notice stating that foreign objects could not be inserted into a bear's body. Bears under 3 years old and weighing less than 100 kg could not be used for bile extraction. Authorities established a rule that bears could only be kept in cages during bile extraction.

Authorities also demanded the implementation of a more humane, in their opinion, method of free bile flow, which involves creating an artificial fistula between the gallbladder and the abdominal wall by opening the gallbladder. How replacing one barbaric method with another equally barbaric method is considered 'humane' is completely unclear!

In 2006, the Information Office of the State Council of China stated that it was monitoring compliance with the 'Technical Code for the Breeding of Black Bears,' which 'requires adherence to hygienic standards and painless gallbladder extraction, as well as establishes strict rules regarding methods and conditions of keeping, training, and breeding.'

However, a 2007 veterinary report published by the Animals Asia Foundation (AAF) stated that the Technical Code was not being followed and that many bears still spent their entire lives in small cages without free access to food and water. The report also noted that the free-drip method described in the Technical Code was unhygienic, as the fistula represented an open channel through which bacteria could enter the abdominal cavity.

The report also stated that the operations to create fistulas for free drainage caused severe suffering to the bears, as they were performed without anesthetics. Bears were subjected to this process repeatedly because the fistulas often healed. With the free drainage method, bears still had to be poked with a metal rod when the wound healed. During veterinary examinations, some bears with fistulas, from which bile flowed freely, were found to have clear plexiglass catheters implanted permanently in their gallbladders. Besides the suffering caused by infection and pain at the incision site, 28% of bears with fistulas were found to have abdominal hernias, and more than a third eventually died from liver cancer, which is believed to be linked to the bile extraction process.

As you can see, all the abuses against bears on such farms have been studied, documented, and there are statistics on them. All the torture is carried out legally and in accordance with the Technical Regulations for torturing bears, for the purpose of extracting bile from them while they are still alive.

What personally surprises me most about the use of various folk medicine remedies is that these “healing elixirs” are proven not to work. They are outright medieval nonsense with no therapeutic effect.

In this regard, bear bile stands apart: it is one of the few genuinely effective remedies. The pharmacologically active ingredient in bear bile is ursodeoxycholic acid (UDCA). The whole point is that it has long been possible to synthesize it using cow or pig bile, or even without using any animal-derived ingredients at all.

In Japan, since 1955, UDCA has been synthesized from cow horns as a byproduct of the meat industry.

The nonproprietary name of the drug is Ursodiol. It is also widely produced under various brand names in different countries. In 2008, it was estimated that more than 100,000 kilograms of synthetic UDCA were used annually in China, Japan, and South Korea. The total global consumption is about twice that. It seems there’s

no need to torture and kill bears! However, many traditional medicine doctors still consider natural UDCA to be a higher quality product. As long as there is demand, bile farms will remain.

The Chinese authorities still “defend” against animal rights organizations with the argument that breeding bears on farms protects the wild population from poachers. But that’s not true! It hasn’t helped protect the bears; instead, it has put them in an even more vulnerable position. Wild bear bile has simply become a more expensive elite commodity, and that’s all.

Chapter 5. Fat of the lean bears

The fact that the bear is a symbol of the Slavic god Veles, or that the bear is an informal symbol of our country, Russia, doesn't stop anyone. Everything is disgustingly arranged, and very simple in its vileness: if a pelt can be sold, then its owner will inevitably be killed, and the pelt stripped. And besides the pelt, a bear's gallbladder, paws, and even fat can be sold. All of this has a considerable price, and the demand is only growing.

Now let's talk about bear fat and consider who needs it and why.

On January 7, 2025, the news channel Mash published the following:

"The most Russian news on Christmas — bear fat has become more expensive due to a lean year for the clumsy ones.

Natural disasters spared no one, not even the forest king. Hunters claim he went into hibernation not in the best shape. Prices for a liter of bear fat rose from 10 to

13k rubles by December 2024. In the Arctic, the product goes for 15k.

In Central Russia, spring frosts are to blame, resulting in too few blueberries and lingonberries. In the Far East, it was the intense summer heat. Bears went into hibernation later and didn't gain enough fat: previously, an average carcass could yield five liters of fat, but now — no more than three. Additionally, pelt prices have risen: they used to cost 25–30k, but now — a full 70."

This is our country, Russia.

This is the present time, the year 2025.

The killing of bears has become a large-scale business with profits that would make even the most lucrative criminal enterprises like drug or arms trafficking envious. With the legal right to kill a bear for less than 10 thousand rubles, a hunter makes over 150 thousand in profit. Considering only the pelt and fat. And also considering the starving animals in the current year 2025, from which only 3 kg of fat is obtained instead of the usual five plus.

By the way, I draw readers' attention to the fact that Mash provides incorrect data on how much fat a well-fed bear should have by autumn: not 5 kg, but up to 6 poods! Which once again emphasizes — bears in the

Russian Taiga are currently in absolutely monstrous conditions of starvation and are simply dying of hunger if hunters say they get 3 kg of fat from a bear!

Note: a pood is slightly more than 16 kg; 3 poods is 48 kg.

Next, I quote an article by the famous naturalist L. P. Sabaneev about bears in the Urals and bear hunting. The article was first published in 1878 in the journal "Nature and Hunting."

"As for bear fat, the quantity and thus the profit are significant only when the bear is killed in the fall or early winter; in spring, the bear is extremely lean, and the fat remains mostly on the internal organs; then, as is known, molting and rutting soon begin, and bears are never fat at this time; they start gaining fat no earlier than the end of July; in September, a well-fed bear usually yields several poods of fat, mostly 2–3 poods, but often much more; in some exceptional cases, even more than six poods are extracted. Vasily Kryuchok once killed a large bear that had slaughtered twelve horses, which was so fattened that its pelt was worthless, with rare and coarse hair like pig bristles; it was, so to speak, saturated through with fat, which amounted to 6 poods 30 pounds. The price of bear fat, which goes in large

quantities to pharmacies, is bought by merchants and sold in small quantities to local residents as an excellent remedy for healing wounds, cuts, and abrasions on people and animals, is quite significant. Previously, a pood of fat was sold by hunters for 8 rubles, and now it is rarely sold for less than 14–15 rubles, and by the pound not less than 10 kopecks.

Thus, a bear with just its pelt and fat, not counting the meat, gives the hunter an average of about 20 rubles, and sometimes more than 40 rubles."

Bear fat, as well as dog fat, badger fat, marmot fat, and ground squirrel fat, are used in Eastern medicine. But there, they are not some mythologized "magical elixirs." Well, fat is fat. Like any fat. And they are used simply as a base for ointments or pills. Accordingly, bear fat has no special value there. It costs no more than pork lard. That is, not expensive.

Magical or even mystical properties are attributed to fat, especially the fat of animals that hibernate for the winter, like the bear, by northern peoples. For example, in our North, among the Evenks and other northern peoples, there is a real cult of the bear. That is, bears are worshipped right now, in the 21st century. And from the peoples of the Russian North and Siberia, such

beliefs about the miraculous properties of bear fat have spread to other peoples.

Native Americans (Indians), who are related to our Siberian peoples, had a similar attitude toward bears. They used bear fat to give their hair shine. They made paint by mixing clay with bear fat. And they used bear fat for rituals and ceremonies, as well as for healing.

Even now in our country, the 'healing properties of bear fat' or 'medicines from badger fat' are heavily advertised. But there's no real basis for this: fat is fat—the properties are the same! Whether it's pork fat or bear fat, for example, their 'medicinal' value is the same!

But it's all about the brand: 'Oh, mighty bear—oh, the superpower of Siberia, dissolved in fat!' And to make a profit, all sorts of pseudo-medical justifications are concocted.

Here's another example from a pharmacy website. A place meant for selling certified medical products:

"Bear Fat Capsules

Instructions for Use

Description

Bear fat contains a large amount of oleic acid, linoleic and linolenic acids, B vitamins, A, E, pectins, saponins, macro- and microelements, and other substances.

Taking it internally for 2–3 weeks significantly boosts immune responses.

Enriched bear fat is recommended by the Ministry of Health of the Russian Federation and the Institute of Nutrition of the Russian Academy of Medical Sciences for use during exacerbations of bronchopulmonary diseases as a bactericidal and anti-inflammatory agent, as well as during the use of antibiotic-containing drugs as a general strengthening and immune-stimulating agent.

Form of Release

Capsules"

Yes, it's certified as a so-called 'biologically active supplement' (BAS). But it's sold in pharmacies! And this completely misleads people who aren't knowledgeable about the subject, convincing them that it's a real medicine with actual healing properties!

In summary, I can say that now, in the first quarter of the 21st century, the 'bear trade' of the 19th century is once again expanding:

> "The price of bear fat, which is supplied in large quantities to pharmacies, bought up by merchants, and sold retail to local residents as an excellent remedy for healing wounds, cuts, and abrasions on people and animals, is quite significant."

Archaic, and often simply absurd, methods of so-called 'medicine' are flourishing. Various kinds of 'shamanism' and 'sorcery.'

Which, unfortunately, leads to the total destruction of the last animals of the Russian Taiga.

Chapter 6. The extermination of bears

I feel it's my duty to summarize the previous chapters and reveal the terrifying truth about the real scale of bear extermination in Russia. I've published numerous materials on this topic and about other countries worldwide, but since I've been involved in environmental protection in Russia for many years, I'm particularly knowledgeable about the extermination of bears in our country.

For many years, we've been working to assess the actual number of quotas issued by authorities for bear hunting in the country and have compiled a "Bear Extermination Registry." We've faced persecution, discreditation, and immense pressure for this work. We're practically the only ones talking about it! Unfortunately.

Let me provide you with complete information from our registry so you can assess the scale of the problem yourself.

According to our data, during the 2024/2025 hunting season, authorities officially permitted the killing of 42,607 bears. These are fully confirmed figures, based on the collection of official decrees from regional authorities, with quotas signed by department heads or governors themselves.

Here's the situation:

Since around 2019, many regions in the country have taken a sharp turn towards developing the sports hunting industry and have actively started attracting trophy hunters from all over the world. Hunters from Europe, the USA, and other countries have begun to flock to Russia, and "hunting tourism" is also growing among the country's own citizens.

According to official data, there are already about 5 million active hunters in the country, and a third of all publicly accessible forest lands have been handed over to private hands for organizing sports and recreational hunting.

Also, since around 2019, packages of bills aimed at developing the paid killing industry have been adopted. A law on enclosure hunting was passed, hunting with bows and crossbows was legalized, and hunting near populated areas and in green zones was permitted.

Regions have actively started increasing the number of quotas issued for the shooting of wild animals. With growing demand, there arose an acute need to meet this demand with supply.

For several years now, the Ministry of Natural Resources of the Russian Federation has been actively trying to pass a bill allowing the killing of bears throughout the winter, during hibernation. In 2020, they managed to extend the hunting season to December 31, considering that bears go to sleep in their dens by the end of November, many with their grown cubs, and pregnant females who will give birth right in the dens.

This didn't stop the Ministry of Natural Resources; the hunting seasons were extended.

Naturally, this is due to the growing demand for "den hunting" from the hunting community and foreign "hunting tourists." Under the brand of "Russian Safari," the most prioritized method of hunting is the traditional bear hunt in its den refuge.

In the summer of 2024, public efforts managed to halt the Ministry of Natural Resources' bill to legalize winter bear hunting throughout the entire winter. But, according to our sources, such an initiative is planned for consideration later!

Meanwhile, regions are deliberately increasing quotas for bear culling in recent years, issuing more and more licenses for their killing.

Before the large-scale development of the hunting industry in the country, strange circumstances arose that many overlooked.

In July 2018, the FSB of Russia developed a draft government resolution proposing that brown and Himalayan bears be considered a strategically important resource due to the decline in their numbers.

The Federal Security Service proposed protecting bears because of their mass slaughter for export to illegal foreign markets.

In March 2018, the General Prosecutor's Office of the Russian Federation also stated that the bear population in Russia had decreased by 36% in just two years. According to their data, the number of bears dropped from 225,000 individuals in 2015 to 143,000 individuals in 2017.

In June 2018, the Prosecutor General's Office asked the Russian government to include all kinds of brown bear in the Red Book of Russia.

Thus, the Russian security forces unanimously stood up to protect the bears! This issue was recognized by both the FSB and the Prosecutor General's Office of the Russian Federation.

But very quickly, the scandal was "hushed up," and the information was suppressed at all levels. No one actually protected the bears! Instead, starting in 2018, regional authorities began rapidly increasing quotas for hunting bears in the wild. In many regions today, the number of issued quotas has multiplied. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Natural Resources is actively adopting numerous legislative proposals aimed at legalizing even more killings of wild animals and fully commercializing Russia's wildlife.

As part of our projects, we decided to gather and consolidate all data on the quotas issued for killing bears in the wilds of Russia. We prepared a unified registry with regions and studied all government decrees on quota issuance, starting from the 2019/2020 hunting season and ending with updated data for the 2024/2025 season.

The registry was prepared using data strictly from official decrees.

According to the results obtained:

• For the 2019/2020 hunting season, authorities allowed a total of 37,465 bears to be killed.

• For the 2024/2025 hunting season, the total number of quotas for bear hunting amounts to 42,607 individuals.

To provide understanding, I will present the percentage increase in the number of quotas issued across several regions from the 2019/2020 hunting season to 2024/2025:

• Zabaykalsky Krai: 745.33%

• Orenburg Oblast: 400%

• Altai Republic: 381.44%

• Irkutsk Oblast: 242.65%

• Smolensk Oblast: 197.06%

It is also important to note that our calculations used data essentially only from 2020 — at the peak of hunting legislation adoption and the development of the paid killing industry in the country! Data from earlier years, including 2018 and prior, when the Prosecutor General's Office of the Russian Federation and the FSB of Russia advocated for the protection of bears and requested their inclusion in the Red Book, are not considered.

Those are the numbers.

More than 42,000 bears in a single year.

And if we deal with the facts, considering what happened in the country years earlier, it becomes unsettling. Because to anyone with even a slight analysis, it's clear that the problem isn't the increase in the bear population, but rather the development of the sports entertainment hunting industry and the growing demand for "bear derivatives."

People often argue with me, claiming that if there are too many bears in the wild, they will eventually wipe out all living things around them, leaving only bears and humans on the planet.

Is that really the case?

To get some understanding of why wild animals are increasingly approaching populated areas, we can only rely on assessments made by scientists from other countries. There are no such scientific evaluations in our country.

Unfortunately...

To accurately assess the populations of any wild animals, long-term and honest observation is necessary, typically at least 10 to 15 consecutive years.

Some of these studies are being conducted in Japan. Real scientists are investigating the actual reasons why bears approach humans. Meanwhile, they are diligently ignored even by their own government. Let me remind you that earlier, the Japanese authorities allowed the mass killing of bears in the country, and in tourist regions, they even made bear meat a "local attraction." Bears began to be killed en masse and supplied to stores, including the creation of vending machines selling bear meat right on the streets, at train stations, and in shopping centers.

And as we know: where there is money and the opportunity to profit, there is ALWAYS a selfish interest that overrides any OBJECTIVE data on the need to preserve or protect wildlife.

Naturally, the Japanese authorities say the same thing as our authorities: there are too many bears, they're spilling out of the forest, the poor things can't fit. We need to shoot them as soon as possible and as many as possible.

Yet, Japanese scientists themselves have been conducting research for many years on the real reasons bears approach humans!

Let me give you a brief example: in Russia, in the Far East, in recent years, hungry TIGERS have started to come en masse to populated areas. They feed at dumps. People see them on the roads, emaciated and exhausted. Tigers even enter village yards and hunt dogs.

This happens to the tigers because of hunger!

The cause-and-effect relationship is simple: the animals that serve as food for these striped Far Eastern cats are being wiped out by hunters. The last wild boars are being completely exterminated under the pretext of fighting African swine fever (ASF). And there’s no food left for the tigers.

No one says about the tigers that "there are too many of them breeding in the taiga, so they come to people, and we need to shoot as many as possible!" for one simple reason: the tiger is a specially protected species, and the number of tigers is known precisely.

The lie about "breeding in huge numbers" would look completely stupid and unreliable!

But with other predators, such disinformation easily passes! Because there’s no somewhat reliable accounting at all! As a result, we constantly hear tales: that we have so many wolves that they don’t fit in the taiga, and bears too.

To the point that the Ministry of Natural Resources officially EXTENDED the hunting season for bears until December 31, effectively legalizing winter hunting and the killing of hibernating bears. Bears go into hibernation in November-December, many with their cubs, or pregnant females who will give birth right in their dens. And in this vulnerable state, they are shot!

But let’s get to the point.

So, the Japanese study on bears.

Hokkaido, the northernmost island of Japan.

The Faculty of Veterinary Medicine at Hokkaido University has been conducting long-term observations on the Shiretoko Peninsula, which juts into the Sea of Okhotsk at the eastern tip of Hokkaido.

In 1964, the Shiretoko National Park was established here. Since then, it has been a wildlife sanctuary. Since 2005, the reserve has been granted international status as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

ATTENTION: as you understand, hunting for the brown bear here is truly NOT CONDUCTED, and the population is indeed growing and recovering!

"Shiretoko has one of the highest densities of brown bears in the world, and it’s one of the few places where we can observe them directly and safely. We’ve been collecting data for decades," explains Associate Professor Michito Shimodzuru from the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine at Hokkaido University.

"In cities, there’s an increase in the number of brown bear visits, leading to conflicts with people," says Shimodzuru, "In fact, our research has confirmed a trend of increasing brown bear numbers over the past three decades."

In Shiretoko National Park, scientists analyzed the diet of brown bears based on their feces.

"We noticed that in 2012 and 2015, there was a significant decrease in the consumption of cedar nuts and salmon. In those years, brown bears were seen much more often, and we observed extremely thin bears. We assume that brown bears descend to lower altitudes and eventually into cities due to hunger when supplies of cedar nuts and salmon are insufficient," explains Shimodzuru.

DESPITE THE ACTUAL GROWTH OF THE BEAR POPULATION IN THE RESERVE, THE SCIENTISTS' CONCLUSIONS ARE UNEQUIVOCAL — HUNGER IS

WHAT DRIVES BEARS TO APPROACH HUMANS!

In Hokkaido, there is also another independent group of researchers studying bear ecology. This is the Brown Bear Research Group at Hokkaido University — a student group conducting research in the University's Tesio Experimental Forest and the Daisetsu Mountains in Hokkaido.

Taiki Ito from this group says, "We have been researching bears for over fifty years and have trained several generations of bear researchers."

The results of this group's work were recently summarized in an article by Kanji Tomita, a graduate student at the Graduate School of Environmental Science.

> "In Hokkaido, there was a policy of exterminating brown bears until it was canceled for conservation reasons in 1990. Looking back at our field study reports over the past forty years, we examined the relationship between the extermination policy and long-term trends in brown bear numbers."
>
> "As a result, we found that the relative population density, which was estimated by observed tracks and droppings, has been recovering since 1990, showing

> a V-shaped curve. But the slow recovery is likely due to a strong connection with the adjacent forests, which are home to a large bear population."

ANOTHER CONCLUSION FROM THE SCIENTISTS — EVEN AFTER THE HUNTING BAN, THE BEAR POPULATION RECOVERS VERY SLOWLY, AS IT IS TIED TO THE HABITAT AND LIMITED BY NATURAL ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS.

I don't find anything unexpected in the scientists' conclusions: everything fully aligns with the current scientific understanding of complex biological systems.

The rate of population recovery is low, even if hunting is completely banned and the area is designated as a reserve.

The number of animals in their habitats is limited by ecological factors.

Animals venture into unfamiliar territories (like populated areas) due to hunger.

Chapter 7. The bloody festival of Gadhimai

We live in a very limited world. Even when we travel to "faraway lands," we mostly remain at home. We stay in familiar surroundings. Simply because for most of us, all "faraway lands" are just tourism.

Airports—comfortable passenger planes—hotels with all-inclusive amenities. A tourist is just a tourist. He's just a spectator who arrogantly spits on the arena of the Colosseum in Italy, on the sand near the pyramids of Giza in Egypt, or on the beach in Bali. And he knows and understands nothing about Indonesia, Italy, North Africa—nowhere! After gawking, he returns to his hotel room—his identical room in an identical hotel, no matter where he is.

But the world is very DIFFERENT, though it's incredibly hard for me to explain this to SPECTATORS. Often, they angrily retort: Where did you see that?! I was there (…here and there…; listing places), and everything was fine!

And I have nothing to argue with: everything is fine in an air-conditioned room, while in the south of the country, in the Caspian lowlands, desertification is happening, and all living things are burning to ashes under the cruel sun.

Everything is fine at the hunting lodge with vodka and a sauna, while nearby in the taiga, the last hungry bear is struggling, having gained only 3 kilograms of fat for winter instead of three poods.

Everything is fine at the Russian-Chinese hackathon on Far Eastern cooperation, while tigers are dragging the last dogs from local yards out of hunger. Next, they'll have to eat either the empty doghouses or the local residents themselves.

I want to talk now about sacrificial rituals. About rituals where living animals are killed/sacrificed for some human ideas, some human illusions—"gods," "spirits," or "higher powers." Killed not for food, but for something hypothetical, ephemeral.

In previous chapters, I talked about how animals are brutally and massively killed for the illusion of "medicinal" properties of their body parts. This deception of not very smart and not very educated consumers of such "shaman-healing" is actively inflated,

advertised, and supported by an entire army of crooks who have created their industries around the pseudo-medical cult of death to "siphon off money."

The internal content of creating such a pseudo-medicine industry also involves a highly dangerous archaization of people's lives. For personal enrichment, archaic, morally and physically outdated anti-scientific ideas and practices are inflated. And society begins to vigorously "rub bear fat on hemorrhoids" or "rub badger fat on bald spots for hair growth."

I use deliberately crude expressions in these figurative phrases. But this is truly a frightening symptom for the organism of our society. Such a "fall into the Middle Ages" is a clear signal of our degradation. Personally. Simply because we, personally, cannot exist outside and independently of society. As the society around us falls into the Middle Ages, so do we. From "rubbing bear fat on your butt" to "burning a witch at the stake"—a direct and short road!

Our world is very young. Naive and vulnerable. We somehow think it has always been this way, and it will be this way tomorrow. This is a mistake! Our world with human rights, equality of women's civil rights, or the recognition of people with different skin colors is,

conditionally, just over a century old. And today, when we say it's morally unacceptable to hang animal skins on walls, we oppose "black skins on walls" and "human babies" in zoo cages. All this was recent. And all this can easily return in the course of the archaization of societies.

And some elements of such completely unacceptable archaic practices exist right now. And they don't even think about disappearing from the lives of millions of people!

The Gadhimai festival is a Hindu festival held every five years in Nepal, at the Gadhimai temple in Bariyarpur, near the Indo-Nepalese border.

This festival is the largest-scale animal sacrifice in the world (but far from the only one!): water buffaloes, pigs, goats, chickens, and even mice and pigeons are sacrificed to please Gadhimai, the local goddess of power.

Participants in this bloody event believe that sacrificing animals to the Hindu goddess Gadhimai can end evil and bring prosperity. What irony, right?! A bloody mess—for the sake of good, peace, and prosperity!

In 2009, activists from international animal protection organizations made several attempts to stop this ritual. Among them were well-known figures like Brigitte Bardot and Maneka Gandhi, who wrote a letter to the Nepalese government asking to stop the killings. A government representative stated that they would not "interfere with a centuries-old folk tradition."

In October 2014, the organization People for Animals Uttarakhand filed a petition against the illegal transport of animals from India to Nepal for slaughter. Following this, the Supreme Court of India issued a temporary order directing the Indian government to prohibit the illegal transport of animals across the border for sacrifices at Gadhimai.

In July 2015, the Nepal Temple Trust announced the cancellation of all future animal sacrifices at the Gadhimai festival.

But in 2019, the festival took place again, and water buffaloes, goats, rats, chickens, pigs, and pigeons were once more involved in the sacrifices.

The Gadhimai Festival of 2024 once again became the largest animal sacrifice in the world.

Animal Equality released a video from the Gadhimai 2024 festival, capturing the killing of thousands of animals.

Devotees used machetes and knives—often unprepared or under the influence of alcohol—leading to agonizing deaths. (“Devotees” is how the believers refer to themselves.)

Animal rights activists documented high walls, a ban on filming, and thick smoke used by organizers to conceal the mass killings and prevent drone footage.

Local police imposed strict restrictions, and some animal rights activists were subjected to physical violence.

Animal rights activists claim the following:

• Animals are slaughtered with machetes and knives by devotees under the influence of alcohol.

• Buffaloes die slowly because the blunt machetes do not deliver fatal blows.

• Devotees cut off the ears of live goats and buffaloes, leaving the animals bleeding.

• Many animals are sexually abused by devotees before being killed.

• Buffaloes are forced to watch others being killed before they themselves are slaughtered. The animals huddle in corners, trying to hide from the executioners, and cry. But they are dragged out by their tails one by one and killed.

These actions violate the Supreme Court of Nepal's ruling against animal cruelty, which is not enforced at Gadhimai. All these rulings were made merely to placate foreign animal rights activists.

In the Mass Gathering Medicine report, experts state that the beheading of thousands of animals in an area soaked with blood, urine, and feces creates ideal conditions for the circulation of a cluster of dangerous diseases, including brucellosis, leptospirosis, tuberculosis, toxoplasmosis, and others.

I will quote the annotation to their report in full:

“Sacrifices at the Gadhimai festival are associated with a range of pathogen transmission risks and disease outbreaks, thus requiring effective risk reduction measures and public health interventions.

Animal sacrifice to appease a deity is a common practice in Nepal, carried out since time immemorial. The act of sacrifice (which can also be seen as ritual slaughter) varies from very small scale—involving one or a few

animals—to very large scale, where thousands of animals are killed. An example of the latter is the sacrifice at Gadhimai, held every five years at the temple of the goddess Gadhimai Devi (an aspect of Kali, the Hindu goddess of power), located in the lowlands of the central Terai region.

This sacrifice, undoubtedly the largest in Nepal, takes place at the end of November and lasts from two to four weeks. Buffaloes are the most numerous and largest animals suffering during the ritual, but goats, domestic birds, pigeons, and even rats are also killed. The slaughter is carried out by beheading, supposedly with a single blow (which rarely succeeds with buffaloes) and without prior stunning, in full view and hearing of other animals. Several Nepali and international animal protection and animal rights organizations have attempted to intervene in this event, campaigning among both religious and governmental structures to either stop it entirely or at least implement measures to improve conditions for the animals. This sacrifice is associated with several serious public health issues, caused by potential pathogen transmission and disease outbreaks.

Firstly, the slaughter and subsequent skinning are conducted in open areas, virtually devoid of slaughterhouses and waste disposal systems. The slaughter sites lack even basic sanitary conditions and are drenched in blood, urine, and manure. Butchers do not use personal protective equipment, further increasing the risk of pathogen transmission. Secondly, there is a massive movement and presence of people and animals on site—in 2009, it was estimated that over 500,000 people and 250,000 animals were present—which increases the risk of pathogen transmission."

Humans and animals can carry and spread diseases, including zoonotic infections like highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI), brucellosis, tuberculosis, and toxoplasmosis, which are serious public health concerns in Nepal. The return of people to their homes, many of which are in India, further exacerbates the risk of widespread disease transmission. Thirdly, tens of thousands of animals are slaughtered during the Gadhimai sacrifice, and a significant portion of them are illegally imported from India. Resistance from animal protection organizations to the importation of animals for the Gadhimai sacrifice has led to an increase in illegal imports. This illegal activity, facilitated by porous

borders, heightens the risk of introducing animal diseases into Nepal."

So, at just one moment, in a single location in Nepal, there were half a million people killing 250,000 animals. Everything around—urine, blood, screams, and death.

They say it's some kind of celebration. And "honoring traditions is very important."

An official representative of the Nepalese government once again noted that they will not "interfere with the centuries-old traditions of the Madhesi people."

The official representative of the festival's organizing committee, Motilal Kushwa, stated, "We do not intend to abandon our centuries-old tradition. This is our religion, faith, and tradition, which we will follow no matter what."

The chief priest of the Mangal Chaudhary temple said, "This is the tradition and faith of the people. How can any protests stop this?"

I want the reader to ask themselves: how far is this from the "ancestral traditions" that the hunting lobby in power and other similar figures are aggressively pushing on us in our own country?

Chapter 8. Animal sacrifices — are these really the social practices we want to return to?

I talked about the Gadhimai festival — a Hindu festival held every five years in Nepal. And I already mentioned that this festival is the largest animal sacrifice in the world, but it's far from the only one.

And the most important thing I want to discuss is that the Hindu sacrifice to the goddess Gadhimai is far from the only sacrificial practice in the world right now, in our seemingly “enlightened times”!

But first, a brief digression into another equally important topic: why?

Why (or for what purpose) are animals killed, sacrificed?

We’re told: these are our traditions.

We’re told: these are the demands of our religion — we will never abandon the faith of our ancestors.

We’re told: it’s our sacred right — our ancestors sacrificed animals, and we will kill them!

All these arguments are just excuses, not reasons. The real reason is more banal and simple: profit. Most often, it's straightforward and blunt monetary gain: someone always profits from these rituals. It's immediately obvious.

When I studied materials about the Nepalese Hindu festival Gadhimai, I delved into extensive material on Hinduism in general. And, particularly carefully, I examined the current state of existing religious practices. And, you know, the festival of mass livestock slaughter is far from the only religious mass ritual! There are many such festivals, though most are not associated with ritual mass executions.

They’re usually simpler: dress in certain clothes, pray, perform a river cleansing. And when I explored a large array of media publications about religious festivals, I saw the main pattern — all these festivals are about money. Local administrations in regions where religious celebrations are held unanimously say: if not for the festival, people in our region would have nothing to live on! That is, to ensure the livelihood of many people, traders gather in the region, taxes are collected from them, and local authorities demand funding from the central government. It's money, money, money, and more money! And it's money for transporters, various

religious organizations and churches, and many private entrepreneurs who thrive around such festivals.

Now let’s look at us, at our country.

Are we too civilized to publicly slit the throats of terrified animals? Alas, unfortunately, that’s not the case.

Right now, at the end of the first quarter of the 21st century, in our beloved country, right at home, sacrificial animals are having their throats slit and bloody celebrations are held! This happens quite openly under loud declarations of “traditional values,” “traditional religions,” and the like. That is, at the very least, with the silent support of government officials.

How about you, do you want a Gadhimai festival in your town with the howling and squealing of unfortunate animals trying to escape death, and blood-soaked squares?!

Personally, I find the idea utterly disgusting! I don’t want to live in a place of mass animal executions! In my personal “traditions,” there is and can be nothing like that! But...

...but I personally, and my country, and my surroundings — we are all in a situation where bloody sacrifices have already entered our homes, where this is being imposed

on us quickly and effectively against our will.

Let’s examine this in more detail.

In the USSR, there was never a complete elimination of organized religious life or an official ban on religion. At certain times in its history, the leadership of the USSR even supported some denominations, pursuing its political interests.

Nowadays, there’s often talk about the banning of religions and churches, but that’s not true at all. Religion in the USSR is a huge topic for separate discussion. Here and now, I’m talking about something else. But there, in principle, everything was arranged differently: the state power focused on educating people and developing their critical thinking, and under the guise of religious activity, it didn’t allow the organization of business, money-making.

Now our country is formally a secular state. But…

— by law, we are obliged to “respect someone’s religious feelings”;

— in our supposedly secular state, it turns out we have “traditional religions” to which we apparently also “owe” something.

A few examples for illustration.

Starting in 2023, the slaughter of sacrificial animals for Kurban Bayram in the Moscow region will be conducted in specially designated areas. For this purpose, 55 sites have been allocated, and the slaughter of sacrificial animals will take place only in the Moscow region, not in Moscow.

Kurban Bayram, or Eid al-Adha in Arabic, is the festival of sacrifice marking the end of Hajj, one of the main Islamic holidays. It lasts for three days and is celebrated on the tenth day of the month of Dhu al-Hijjah according to the lunar calendar. In 2023, the holiday began on June 28. Around 300,000 Muslims celebrated Kurban Bayram at six locations in Moscow.

Before this, sheep were slaughtered right in the yards, which shocked the "peaceful citizens."

Not all of my readers understand exactly what we're dealing with. In the capital of our country, the city of Moscow, there are about 13 million residents compared to roughly 300,000 who are initiated into the essence of this bloody ritual, slitting the throats of sacrificial animals. Especially since from 2023, THIS has been removed from courtyards and out of sight of the public, who are shocked by such spectacles. So, a little background for the uninitiated. I quote from one of the

religious sites, of which there are a great many on Runet, and in Russian, by the way.

"Permitted and forbidden animals for sacrifice.

Only the following animals can be sacrificed: sheep, goats, cows, buffalo, and camels. A goat or sheep must be at least one year old, a cow or buffalo at least two years old, and a camel at least five years old. You can also sacrifice a large six-month-old sheep if it is the size of a one-year-old. For a goat, reaching one year of age is a strict requirement.

It is highly recommended to purchase the animal several days before the sacrifice and keep it in a stable. If several identical animals are kept together before the sacrifice, it is better to mark your animal.

One sheep or one goat can be sacrificed by one person. One cow, buffalo, or camel can be sacrificed by one to seven people. In a family, it is sufficient for those who maintain it to perform the sacrifice."

Now, consider the number of sacrificial animals needed for 300,000 people who want to slit their throats. Got it? That's the subject of REAL interest. Someone is making a hefty profit from this, creating an entire industry! Notice, all of this happens within the closed communities, under the guise of cults and religion. In

other words, tax-free money.

I really hope the authorities will figure out what constitutes our "traditional religious practices" and what we absolutely don't need! At least, starting in 2024, the Federal Agency for Ethnic Affairs of Russia is introducing a series of lectures to help adapt labor migrants from Central Asia. These lectures explain, among other things, that animal sacrifices are unacceptable. The authors of the lectures emphasize that Russia is a secular state:

> "There is no state religion or supremacy of any religion over the laws in Russia, so be careful when discussing religious topics. In Russia, it's not customary to publicly display one's religious affiliation (perform religious rituals on the street, conduct prayers in public places, etc.). There are designated places for this—mosques, churches, synagogues, etc. Animal sacrifices are also unacceptable."

And I would like us to remain a secular state without any bloody festivals like Gadhimai.

I'll quote Alexey Gaydukov, an associate professor in the Department of Religious Studies at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Herzen State Pedagogical University:

> “This procedure is not much different from what happens at a meat processing plant. During Kurban Bayram, the sacrificial slaughter is performed with a single motion of a sharply honed knife by a professional, and under no circumstances in front of other animals or offspring. Thus, one could say that the procedure is even more humane.”

He claims that in large cities, “there is a well-known list of slaughterhouses,” and the participants in the rituals themselves have a negative attitude towards slaughtering animals in courtyards. He goes on to say that slaughtering the best ram for a guest is a sign of respect and favor. And when a ram is killed for God himself, everything should be even better. This tradition traces back to the legend of Abraham, or Ibrahim, who was about to sacrifice his son.

> “In the north of Russia, for example in Buryatia, there are also recorded instances of animal sacrifices as part of shamanic rituals. The procedure is also carried out within the family circle and

> according to specific rules. The purpose of such killings is a ritual feast. Amendments to the law are aimed at ethical treatment of animals in general. But if we talk about global humanism, then we all need to be vegetarians.”

I'm quoting from the media the opinion of Alexey Gaydukov as an expert regarding amendments to the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation, which provide for harsher penalties for animal abusers. At that time, the definition of animal cruelty was clarified as actions "aimed at causing them [animals] pain or suffering, including for hooligan or selfish motives." However, religious sacrifices, the slaughter of animals for agricultural needs, and hunting did not fall under the definition of animal cruelty.

I presented his opinion to show why I disagree with such experts:

The slaughter of farm animals is not done publicly and is intended to produce food. In other words, there is an obvious practical purpose.

Trophy hunting, on the other hand, is outright killing for entertainment, which I find unacceptable and no different in essence from killing or causing suffering to an animal out of hooligan motives. And for the

organizers of the hunt, there is a clear profit motive.

But even more dangerous for society, in my opinion, are religious sacrifices. No matter how they are justified, they effectively promote and advance an ideology of violence and death, plunge society into archaism, and are a symptom of societal degradation, a symptom of a dangerous social disease.

I believe that to not only talk about humanism but also live by its principles, it's not necessary to be a vegetarian. It's enough to draw a very simple line—based on practical purpose—and shut down the industries of paid killings, disguised as hunting as "sport" or "tradition," various pseudo-medical practices, or religious rituals.

Regarding the phrase, "During Kurban Bayram, the sacrificial slaughter is performed with a single motion of a sharply honed knife in the hands of a professional and never in front of other animals or offspring," let me share an event from 2025.

On June 7, 2025, the first day of the Kurban Bayram holiday in Turkey led to widespread injuries. Turkey's Minister of Health, Kemal Memişoğlu, announced on his social media page that within a day, 14,372 people sought medical attention for injuries sustained while

independently slaughtering sacrificial animals.

The highest number of injuries was recorded in Ankara (1,049), Istanbul (753), and Konya (655). Reports of injuries were noted in all 81 provinces of the country.

At that time, the country's Ministry of Health reminded everyone that ritual slaughter should be performed by trained personnel. And a year earlier, in 2024, nearly 16,000 people sought medical attention after the slaughter of animals.

In other words, every year, thousands of people in Turkey alone are injured en masse while slaughtering sacrificial animals.

I should probably clarify that I have deep respect for all religions and beliefs. However, I genuinely do not accept or understand religious practices that flood city squares with blood.

Chapter 9. Bloody initiations into hunting: should we raise psychopaths?

In 2013, State Duma deputy Nikolai Valuev became embroiled in a hunting scandal. After Valuev posted photos on his social media page from a hunt in the Arkhangelsk region, where he was pictured with killed animals—a bear, a duck, and a beaver—journalists from Arkhangelsk contacted the prosecutor's office. The issue was that, according to the law, at that time in the Arkhangelsk region, hunting was only permitted for birds.

Valuev captioned the photo with the dead bear: "A little adventure did happen. It unexpectedly came at me."

However, during the investigation, the hunter-deputy presented permits for both bird and bear hunting.

Here's a small excerpt from an interview with Nikolai Valuev in the media regarding this incident:

— And what about the beaver?

— I don't know what happened with that beaver. Maybe it got crushed by ice; there was a strong ice drift. I captioned the photo saying what a miracle it was that I pulled it out of the river—how could that be understood as me hunting it?

— In recent years, we've regularly seen scandals involving officials accused of illegal hunting or being involved in scandalous car accidents. Why does this happen?

— Speaking of my situation, I showed you all the permits. But I understand that I created a precedent by posting photos that were seen by people who are against hunting. Seeing their strong reaction, I had to remove the photos.

Another aspect of the situation is that Nikolai Valuev was hunting with his older son, Grisha.

"Had a great time with my son in the Arkhangelsk region. There will be many photos in the morning. Including from the hunt...," he wrote on social media at the time.

Such questionable hobbies among well-known people are not uncommon. Another example is Ivan Okhlobystin. He also, according to media reports, introduces children to this "sport" and is proud of it:

— I really like it when something big, aggressive, smelly, and bloody flies at you, and you shoot it, and the blood flows, — he says in one interview.

I've only given a couple of examples of high-status VIP hunters who not only hunt themselves but also teach their children this kind of "sport" from a young age. But there are many more. And don't be fooled by the fact that people have been talking less about this in recent years. "Seeing people's reactions, I decided to remove the photo"—this approach has become common among wealthy and influential hunters. They've stopped "showing off" their "heroic exploits" on social media and have ceased publishing "photo reports" with the corpses of the animals they've killed.

Have the hunts stopped? Have they stopped doing this? Of course not! They've just stopped informing the public about it.

In my expeditions through the Russian Taiga, I've often talked with workers from various hunting bases. They say that parents often come hunting with their children. And I've been told about "hunting initiations." This is when the hands and face of a hunter, who has killed their first prey, are smeared with the animal's warm blood. And now readers, somehow connected with the

hunting business, write to me more often, saying that such rituals, in their observations, have become more frequent. The owners of hunting bases try to attract clients and create shows, various rituals related to hunting.

In our country, it so happened historically that the so-called "elite of the country" started looking to the past instead of the future. Along with "searching for roots" and looking up archival data about ancestors. With depicting "family trees" like those of pedigree puppies. And many so-called "elites" started playing in the past, in princes and boyars. They began to play in a mythical "Russian Empire" they invented themselves, which has nothing to do with real history.

They build palaces.

"Train the servants."

They organize "royal hunts" with various bloody rituals, which never existed in nature!

In general, "Balls, beauties, lackeys, cadets,

And Schubert's waltzes, and the crunch of French bread"...

(A quote from the song "How Delightful the Evenings in Russia Are," which has even been dubbed the "unofficial anthem of the country" since the 2000s, according to media reports.)

This, by the way, is happening while Baikonur and space, for example, are being thrown into the trash. Apparently, as the "vile legacy of the vile USSR"?! And instead, the new so-called "elites" of the country have moved not even into the past of the Russian Empire, but into some myth about an Empire they invented themselves, which never existed in reality.

The country's reserve system has already been torn apart and is now being rebuilt on its remains into a system of private "hunting reserves" for the elite. So while Elon Musk is heading toward a flight to Mars, our new "princes and boyars" are eagerly rushing toward bloody hunting games, bloody rituals, and whipping servants with reins in the stables for the slightest offense. These role-playing games don't turn out too well, of course, but they are eager.

And as this madness, built from elements of the past and the rosy nonsense of the so-called modern "elite," collapses in reality, they start propping it up with various supports. They invent absurd pseudo-"religious"

justifications, starting with bloody rituals to initiate their own children into hunters.

Next, I want to quote a text from another author.

"Of all the practices associated with the bloody so-called 'sport,' none is as repulsive as the 'bloody initiation into hunting.' Whether it's the 'bloody initiation' of children, which is a kind of grotesque parody of a baptism ceremony. Only this 'baptism' is performed with the blood of the victim. Or the 'bloody baiting of prey' with hounds, that is, setting them on some decrepit animal to ignite their bloodlust. Here are a few examples:

The newspaper 'Daily Mirror' published an article about the 'bloody initiation into hunting' of the Marquess of Worcester, the ten-year-old son of the Duke of Beaufort. The front-page illustration showed a child with bloodied cheeks holding a dead hare, hunted down by hounds. While several ladies and gentlemen smiled approvingly behind him.

Here's another excerpt from the 'Cheltenham Examiner,' which talks about the 'eviction' and killing of a fox:

> "Two of Captain Elvy's children were present at the death of a fox in their father's hunting grounds, and Charlie Beecham duly performed the old hunting

> custom of 'blooding.' Dipping a brush made from the tail of the slain fox into its [as in the original] blood, he anointed the foreheads of both children, hoping they would become contenders for the 'royal hunt.'"

Apparently, the blood in which the brush was dipped belonged to the fox, not Mr. Charles Beecham. But what a ceremony in our civilized age!

The following paragraph also appeared in a London newspaper:

> "A pretty little girl on a chestnut horse, with a mass of blonde curls cascading over a dark blue riding habit, was the center of attention at the West Norfolk hunters' meet in Necton. The pretty little girl was Princess Mary of Wales, and this day was one she would remember for the rest of her life. She returned to Sandringham by car, holding her first brush... The hunters 'blooded' Princess Mary and gave her a brush, which was hung on her saddle."

In connection with deer hunting, the practice of 'bloody initiation' is described as a 'hunting tradition rooted in the Middle Ages, reminiscent of the times when the noble art of hunting was the most valued achievement of our monarchs.'

The author of the article is Henry Stephens Salt. The translation is mine.

And now pay attention to the year of publication — 1910!

1910, the beginning of the 20th century! A century ago! Back then, British society began to reject such customs as outdated and morally unacceptable.

And now, a century later, in the 21st century, they're trying to revive this bloody trash! And note, it's done solely for profit by businessmen making money off killings.

Chapter 10. “Grindadráp” — a millennia-old tradition of killing. “We killed and will keep killing”

On January 10, 2025, the first grindadráp of the new year took place on the Faroe Islands. In Arnafjørður on the Faroes, 47 minke whales were killed that day.

According to the environmental organization Sea Shepherd:

• In 2024, about 750 marine mammals were killed on the Faroe Islands.

• In 2023, about 850 were killed.

"Grindadráp" (from the Faroese words grindhvalur — "grinda" and dráp — "killing") is a type of hunting of marine mammals, where various species of whales and dolphins, but primarily the pilot whale, are driven into shallow bays where they are mercilessly killed and butchered.

Annually, an average of about 700 pilot whales are killed during grindadráps on the Faroe Islands, along with varying numbers of Atlantic white-sided dolphins and other marine mammals if they happen to be in the hunting area.

The practice of mass killing of pilot whales dates back to the 9th century. Many residents of the Faroe Islands consider the killing and eating of whales not only an important part of their history but also a ritual, part of a local cult.

Since 1948, attempts have been made to regulate grindadráp by law.

Since the 1980s, international animal protection organizations have been fighting against grindadráp, but without success.

Perhaps, first, a couple of words for reference.

Pilot whales are black dolphins. The Latin “Globicephala” is a genus of mammals from the dolphin family, containing two species: the long-finned pilot whale (Globicephala melas) and the short-finned pilot whale (Globicephala macrorhynchus).

Pilot whales range from 4 to 8 meters in length, weighing from one to three tons. They are black, except for a white spot under the chin. They live in families, like

all dolphins. They have complex social behavior.

Pilot whales are predators and hunters. They feed on cephalopods and fish. There are known cases where pilot whales have organized hunts for sperm whales.

In my opinion, the presence of intelligence in dolphins is convincingly proven today. However, it is a DIFFERENT kind of intelligence, which is difficult to compare with our human intelligence. We can relate the intelligence of higher primates (monkeys) to ourselves. We understand that monkeys even resemble us, humans. Chimpanzees demonstrate intelligence at the level of a preschool child. And this has become the basis for generally halting the hunting of higher primates.

With higher predators, like tigers or bears, this has not yet happened. They are killed, despite the fact that a certain level of intelligence has been shown by science in them as well. They have self-awareness. They experience emotions, can recognize themselves in a mirror. They feel pain and fear.

Black dolphins are killed en masse, even though their level of intelligence, according to current scientific understanding, is certainly not inferior to that of higher primates.

There is, by the way, another trait that links black dolphins with humans. Orcas and short-finned pilot whales are two of the few mammalian species, including humans, where females go through menopause and live many decades after losing the ability to reproduce. So they have grandmothers who care for their grandchildren.

Now about how pilot whale families are killed — both adults and grandmothers with grandchildren.

A family of pilot whales is driven to shore. They are surrounded by a wide semicircle of boats. On the signal from the whaling foremen, stones tied to ropes are thrown into the water behind the pilot whales to prevent them from escaping. This exploits the echolocation characteristics of marine mammals: the many air bubbles from the stones and ropes are perceived by the pilot whales as a solid barrier they cannot penetrate. Then, people in boats direct the whales to the beach at the end of the fjord, where they force the terrified dolphins to beach themselves in panic.

Once the pilot whales are beached, they are killed with a single deep stab to the spinal area, made with a special whaling knife called a mønustingari, to sever the spinal cord. This is the so-called element of humanity, recently

introduced by law. The mønustingari began to be used in 2011, and in 2015 it became a legal requirement. Once it is confirmed that the pilot whales are dead, their throats are cut, and the butchering begins.

Before 2015, no one even bothered with this: black dolphins were butchered alive, their skin, fat, and meat cut from them while they were still living.

I’ve given a brief description. If anyone is interested in the details, it’s not hard to find — with a huge amount of bloody photos and videos.

I want to discuss something else: why do the residents of the Faroe Islands continue to do this? Why do they say, “These are our traditions! We killed and will keep killing!” — and continue mass ritual killings despite protests worldwide?!

It's important to understand that there's no practical reason for killing grind whales now. Yes, in the past, on remote northern islands, there was no other food. But not anymore! Nowadays, grind whale meat is still consumed, but clearly not much. It has long ceased to be a primary food source.

Moreover! Since the 1980s, it has become known that pilot whales accumulate mercury in their bodies. Their meat, and especially their internal organs, are

hazardous to health. Women and children stopped consuming them.

Yes, in the distant past, cetaceans were literally a source of life for the local population. The meat and blubber of pilot whales were traditionally part of the diet of the Faroe Islands' residents. Blubber was also used for lamp oil and medicinal purposes. The skin of pilot whales was once used to make fishing lines and ropes, and their stomachs were used as fishing floats. They also made boats, clothing, or shoes. But not anymore! Now, like everywhere else, people wear sneakers or jackets from the store, and the lighting in homes is electric, not from oil lamps!

So what's the deal? Why are the locals so stubborn? Do they really have a cult of murder, practicing a grim religion of death and the destruction of all living things around them?!

I'll give you my answer to these questions. But first, take a look at the statistics to understand what I'm talking about.

So, the official murder statistics.

1951–1960 — 122 hunts were conducted, during which 18,772 whales were killed;

1961–1970 — 130 hunts were conducted, during which 15,784 whales were killed;

1971–1980 — 85 hunts were conducted, during which 11,311 whales were killed;

1981–1990 — 176 hunts were conducted, during which 18,806 whales were killed;

1991–2000 — 101 hunts were conducted, during which 9,212 whales were killed;

2001–2010 — 81 hunts were conducted, during which 6,265 whales were killed;

2011–2016 — 47 hunts were conducted, during which 3,394 whales were killed.

But then something interesting happens:

The largest catch of pilot whales in a single season in recent decades was 1,203 individuals in 2017.

And on September 15, 2021, there was an extremely unusual hunt for white-sided dolphins, during which 1,428 individuals were killed in a single day. This is almost five times the average annual catch for this species and about twice the previous record of recent decades.

The previous record was set in 2002, when 773 individuals were caught for the entire season.

What's happening? The pilot whale hunt was decreasing year by year, but suddenly it spiked. Why did this happen?

And a separate, very interesting question: why did the number of pilot whale killings sharply increase amid worldwide protests and the active fight against this hunt by the organization Sea Shepherd?

Sea Shepherd began campaigns against whaling in the Faroe Islands in the 1980s.

But they intensified their actions in 2014, when they launched "Operation GrindStop." Hundreds of volunteers went to the Faroe Islands to patrol the waters and try to protect whales and dolphins.

The following year, 2015, Sea Shepherd conducted another high-profile operation in the Faroes called Sleppið Grindini. This literally means "let the whales go free" — the traditional order given by the whaling foreman to stop the hunt.

In total, from 2014 to 2015, 28 Sea Shepherd activists were arrested and four vessels were confiscated.

Supporters of the Faroese pilot whale hunt explain their reluctance to stop it by saying it is an integral part of Faroese culture. They claim that the number of whales caught does not harm the overall pilot whale population.

The Ministry of Fisheries of the Faroe Islands claims that opposition to Faroese whaling is rooted in "the ambiguity it presents regarding the prevailing cultural perceptions of nature and human society existing in the urbanized Western world."

It is said that in the 21st century, there is a revival of Faroese whaling culture both within the framework of "international concern for the return, preservation, and recreation of the past" and within the national and local "aspiration to define identity."

I consider all this loud "blah-blah-blah" about "cultural identity and traditions" to be nonsense. It's simply about money! The scandalous fight against whaling in the Faroe Islands led to a surge of tourists visiting these islands. The "attention economy"—more attention, no matter the reason, brings in more money. The Faroese understood this and continue to draw attention in the way available to them—mass killings of dolphins.

The last place in the world where bloody and barbaric whaling exists is a tourist attraction. Note, a UNIQUE attraction! Nowhere else will you see rivers of blood flowing into the sea, turning it red with blood! Just business—nothing personal.

And "brothers in mind" continue to be executed en masse for money, for the amusement of spectators.

Chapter 11. “Corrida de toros” — murder as art

The phrase “corrida de toros” can be roughly translated as “running of the bulls.” I stumbled upon something interesting while exploring the meaning of the words. In Russian, the word “corrida” is used.

Corrida is a world-famous form of bullfighting, a traditional Spanish spectacle also widespread throughout Ibero-America, meaning South and Central America, territories colonized by the Spanish. “Toreador, on to the fight,” and all that.

But, as it turns out, the Spaniards themselves in everyday use simply call the corrida "toros," meaning "bulls." The word "corrida" is derived from the verb "correr," which means "to run." However, this verb has other meanings as well. For example, "correr una suerte" means to undergo some fate. Meanwhile, the adjective "corrido" generally means "worn," "experienced," "battered by fate," "seasoned."

The run of fate... the run of time...

The words still preserve the original meaning of the corrida — a ritual sacrifice, part of a bloody cult.

The history of bullfighting dates back at least to the Bronze Age, to the Iberians who inhabited the Iberian Peninsula and considered the bull a sacred animal. Originally, it was a ritual killing of the bull. This fact doesn't even raise questions for me, directly linking bullfighting with modern sacrifices in Tibet or India, such as the cult of Gadhimai, and with the bull sacrifices of Ancient Rome or Ancient Greece, known from history.

Tauromachy (from Greek ταῦρος "bull" + μάχεσθαι "to fight") is a contest between a man and a bull. Fighting a bull was also considered one of the deeds of Mithras, the savior god in Mithraism.

In the Middle Ages, famous monarchs like Charlemagne or Alfonso X of Castile had a fondness for bullfighting. By the end of the 15th century, the corrida had evolved into entertainment for the noble class: only a caballero, an aristocratic knight on horseback, was allowed to fight the bull.

During that period, the corrida became a cultural factor. However, even in the Middle Ages, attempts were made to ban the corrida as a spectacle that was ambiguous and largely unethical. In the mid-16th century, Pope

Pius V issued an edict banning bullfights under threat of excommunication. However, the Spanish monarch himself managed to have the church sanctions lifted — such was the importance of the corrida in Spain.

The modern form of foot corrida appeared in the early 18th century, which is quite recent. I think this happened due to the declining significance of aristocrats in society: the class-based aristocracy was fading into the past, and the beloved spectacle of the Spanish became more democratic.

Let me say right away: the corrida is the only bloody ritual where I find something beyond mere senseless killing, some kind of, albeit outdated, aesthetic.

So, the fight against the corrida has been ongoing since the 16th century, when the Pope banned it, yet the corrida still exists today. Animal rights activists demand an end to the killing of bulls as senseless cruelty. Churches oppose it, rightly understanding that it is a pagan rite that has survived to our days. Why hasn’t the corrida been banned? Note: this isn’t Tibet, where the influence of the international animal rights community is minimal. This is Europe and American countries with a fundamentally European culture.

I will present the arguments of the corrida defenders. Such arguments “for” are varied, but the essence mainly boils down to three points:

1. The corrida is an integral part of Spanish cultural heritage and national identity.

2. The torero in the fight demonstrates beautiful art, akin to ballet. The Royal Spanish Academy Dictionary defines the corrida precisely as a form of art.

3. The suffering of the bull does not exceed what many farm animals endure. However, unlike them, the bull dies “with dignity,” and in the case of “exceptional bravery,” it may be “pardoned” and spared. Pardoning the bull is even a great honor for the matador.

Well, what can I say... In the corrida, the ritual killing of an animal is indeed elevated to the level of spectacular art. This is true, and I have already acknowledged it. It’s not the same mindless bloody slaughter that believers conduct during the Gadhimai festival of ritual killings. But I want to draw attention to something else, something that receives too little attention.

Corrida is big money.

Corrida is money, money, and more money, like any large-scale show.

Corrida is a bloody variety of show business, nothing else.

And the reason for the corrida’s persistence is one — the money made from it. Everything else — the traditions, the art, the “noble and valiant death” for the ignoble bull — are secondary justifications.

Let me add one more detail to complete the story about the corrida.

A corrida was almost held in our country in 2001, planned on a grand scale at the Olimpiyskiy Sports Complex right in the center of Moscow. The production center "Russian Academy of Entertainment" was preparing to host a show featuring bullfighters from France and Portugal. For this, 13 fighting bulls and 20 cows were brought to Moscow.

There was massive resistance from animal rights activists, but they achieved nothing. However, at some point, the corrida faced criticism from the Russian Orthodox Church: Patriarch Alexy II made a special statement condemning the potential holding of a corrida in Russia. This changed the situation. The Mayor of Moscow banned the corrida at a stage when some tickets for the proposed event had already been sold.

Amid scandal, at the last moment, Russia did not join the ranks of countries where the "noble art" of bullfighting is practiced.

Let me add one more important reflection at the end. Very often, to justify bloody amusements and rituals, people use the argument: it does not exceed the suffering of farm animals. In reality, this is a counterargument to animal rights advocates' statements about animal suffering, and this counterargument is invalid because it ignores two important facts:

1. In agriculture, animals are not killed publicly, and it does not become a promotion of cruelty in society.

2. In agriculture, there is a practical purpose that is not so easily abandoned — food products for people. In all other cases, there is no such practical purpose, and various justifications hide the only true goal — making money for a narrow circle of people profiting from the killing of animals.

Chapter 12. The bloody industry of a bloody “sport”

So-called “sport hunting” is nothing more than senseless killing for the sake of killing. The ones promoting and advertising hunting for entertainment are the owners of multi-billion-dollar hunting businesses, aiming to boost their own profits.

Take a close look at what's happening:

• Among the new “elite,” hunting is aggressively marketed as a pastime for the wealthy. People are nudged into it with whispers in their ears: “You can afford this. You are kings, you are princes, you are nobles.” And the officials, drunk on their own power, along with the nouveau riche who suddenly struck it rich, head to elite hunting lodges. Not all of them enjoy it, but—status! Status, belonging to the “upper society”—all of this forces even those who dislike the bloody “sport” to participate. Or at the very least, to be present in the company of hunters at these lodges.

• Pay special attention: NEVER BEFORE has there been such a number of "princes and nobles"! I mentioned this when I wrote about the sharp increase in demand for animal body parts for the needs of Chinese medicine. Researchers note that starting around the mid-20th century, the number of wealthy people in society began to grow, which sharply increased the demand for animal organs for "medical" purposes. The exact same thing happened with "sport" hunting: this very "sport" or trophy hunting began to massively gain traction worldwide precisely from the mid-20th century and by the end of the last century had turned into a multibillion-dollar international industry.

• Simultaneously, from about the mid-20th century, there has been a mass extinction of species. Alongside this, there is a degradation of biocenoses. Years of deforestation worldwide have left only the last patches of wilderness—usually remote and hard-to-reach areas: the wild Amazon jungle, the northern boreal taiga, or the mountains.

Add two and two together, look at the big picture!

On one hand, the number of people—affluent consumers—has increased. I emphasize: AFFLUENT consumers. All bloody industries are targeted only at

those who “can afford it,” meaning the wealthy:

• elite medicines from the bodies of killed wild animals;

• “sport” hunting as a status symbol;

• fur coats from the skins of killed animals for the “aristocracy” as a status symbol;

• various pseudo-religious rituals for the “initiated” as a sign of belonging to the “upper circles of society”;

• delicacies from game (killed wild animals) in expensive restaurants.

It is this narrowness of the expensive elite product market that allows all these super-profitable industries, trading in death, to hide in the shadows, remaining secret, out of the public eye. “Only for our own.” “Only for the elite.” “Special service.”

On the other hand, the growing demand from the bloated and worldwide “new elite” has become impossible to satisfy: almost all the animals have been killed, and instead of the once vast natural ecosystems, only mosaic remnants remain in hard-to-reach places.

See for yourself, I'll illustrate briefly what happens next!

1. Mid-20th century. Large international businesses targeting affluent people in Europe and the USA are already underway: safaris in Africa, skins as rugs for

aristocrats' castles and nouveau riche wanting to join the “old aristocracy.”

2. A little later, closer to the end of the 20th century, demand from the newly wealthy in Asia, in China, and then in our country joins in.

3. Public protests worldwide, supported by environmental organizations, lead to bans on exporting parts of killed animals to wealthy countries. This makes the market closed, secret, which only drives up prices. The brutal businesses of killing animals continue to operate successfully, having gone underground completely or partially.

4. Now, in the early 21st century, partial restrictions on the export-import of animals and their parts have been joined by consumer saturation with Africa: everyone who wanted to go on safari there has already done so, and it's no longer as interesting. And that's precisely why we see the push to divide the Russian Taiga: interested parties are trying to split it into private hunting grounds. That's why they're tearing apart the protected system we inherited from the Soviet Union. It's very simple—there's demand for it, and they're coming to us for “live goods.”

If I'm exaggerating, it's only a little. I'm just sketching out the general scheme of how this happens.

And don't be fooled by the fact that all this happens within the legal field. The trophy hunting industry, already launched in our country, remains just as much a secret industry of death as its counterparts. The general public knows little about what's happening; people aren't shown this.

People watch movies. In 1995, the comedy "Peculiarities of the National Hunt" was released. The film cleverly played on the "standard set" of Russian stereotypes: saunas, vodka, and bears. It created humorous images of so-called "real men": a general, a police sergeant, a gamekeeper, and a businessman. It depicted a unique ritual of hunting initiation. Overall, it was a successful comedy that became legendary. The film then spawned several sequels and spin-offs.

There were "Peculiarities of the National Fishing" in 1998, "Peculiarities of the National Hunt in the Winter Period" in 2000, and others.

I doubt that this film started the promotion of trophy hunting in our country; such an assumption seems unlikely.

But I can say with certainty that for 95% of people, their understanding of hunting is limited to the plot of this movie!

However, that's not the case. The comedic images that come to mind when people hear the word "hunting" hide a reality that's not as amusing as the film's plot. Trophy hunting is a big business with big money. And big money, as they say, "likes silence." And none of the participants in this bloody business are going to tell us about its gory details.

Chapter 13. Hunting as a new industry

No one talks about this. There are no articles in the media. Only those involved in the hunting business in some way know about it. But even they don't see the whole picture. Rangers serve hunter clients at hunting lodges. Chefs prepare game dishes in restaurants. Doctors practicing folk medicine prescribe animal organ-based remedies to patients. Each sees their own piece of the puzzle, but no one sees the complete picture.

Let's put this puzzle together now. Let's look at the picture as a whole, in all its glory. No one has done this yet. Media coverage is limited to the topic of “sport” or trophy hunting. On a legislative level, our country has fully implemented laws specifically created for so-called “enclosure hunting.”

Enclosure hunting is a form of hunting conducted on a restricted, fenced area, in an enclosure specifically designed for housing and breeding wild animals. This

type of hunting can be either commercial or supposedly “amateur” and is usually conducted on lands owned by hunting enterprises.

Enclosures vary in size and can be large enough to provide conditions that closely resemble the animals' natural habitat. This is if the goal is to make the hunt more realistic, similar to traditional hunting in the wild. Or the enclosures can be small if that's not the aim; then it's more like regular farming, except they raise, for example, moose instead of cows.

The main physical difference between enclosure hunting and hunting in open natural areas is that the animals are in a controlled environment: there's no need to search for or track them.

The main legal difference is that in this case, the animals are the property of the hunting enterprise. Wild animals in their natural habitat are “hunting resources” and state property. They can be hunted according to state-established rules, by purchasing a license from the state: only during hunting season, only on public lands, etc., following rules set by government agencies.

Enclosure hunting is outside such rules. You can hunt whenever and however you want—as long as you agree with the owner of the animals, the hunting enterprise.

According to a law passed in Russia in 2020, you can hunt in such conditions with a permit. This “permit” is a document that merely imitates a state hunting license but is simply confirmation that an agreement has been made with a private hunting enterprise.

Again: you can shoot animals in an enclosure whenever and however you want. I'd say it's more like slaughtering animals, mimicking hunting: like going to shoot chickens in a coop, which is what these so-called “hunters” in enclosures do, after a shot of vodka and a sauna.

So even technically, enclosure hunting is a mockery of the very idea of hunting, a disgrace for all participants in such “hunting,” and a vile caricature of real hunting in the wild.

But that's not the main point. The main point is that hunting has, for the first time, become a purely commercial enterprise and, following models already developed abroad, has immediately turned into a hunting industry.

Once again: understand the difference. A commercial system created for profit. A commercial enterprise built on an industrial foundation. For clarity, by example: it's not “grandma keeping ten chickens in a shed,” but a

“commercial poultry farm.”

There has never been an industrial, commercial hunting enterprise in our country before! This is an entirely new phenomenon, the essence of which most people do not understand!

This is not “amateur hunters” from the USSR, don't confuse it! Some readers write to me: “But there were hunting societies in the USSR, there was amateur hunting. What's the problem? Why are you against amateur hunting?!”

I have nothing against the amateur hunting that existed in the past. I am against so-called “sport” or trophy hunting, which has only appeared now. You're being misled by calling it “amateur hunting” and drawing analogies with hunting societies from the Soviet era. If we're speaking in terms of that past era, I'm against a completely “anti-Soviet” form of hunting, against the bloody form of CAPITALIST appropriation not only of labor but of living nature.

Sport hunting itself only recently emerged in the world. By the end of the 20th century, a specific service sector for wealthy Europeans and Americans had formed, quickly becoming an organized multibillion-dollar industry. Before this, there were private hunts and

organizers of such hunts, but there was no actual industry. The international hunting business reached industrial scales, in my estimation, around the 1980s, and now this business is simply being introduced into our country in an already finished form.

Let's look at an example to make the difference immediately clear.

1. A vast section of the Russian Taiga is leased from the state for a hunting estate:

— for a laughable pittance;

— for a term of several decades, when in fact there's hardly any difference from ownership;

— with the prospect of later lobbying to convert such plots into permanent ownership.

Thus, in essence, the Russian Taiga is being privatized (transferred into private ownership).

2. "Sport"/trophy hunting becomes merely a facade, a cover for a larger-scale hunting business.

Enclosed hunting is organized—essentially an agricultural enterprise where, for example, deer are raised. You can hunt these deer, kill them whenever and however you want. It's all a matter of money: the enterprise is commercial, and the animals are someone's

private property.

Since the enterprise is commercial, animals are specifically bred: veterinarians work, artificial insemination methods are used, and other ways to speed up livestock reproduction.

Literally everything is monetized, bringing in profit:

• Paid animal slaughter (so-called "sport" hunting for wealthy idiots);

• Cutting antlers in the spring from males;

• Organs from the slaughtered animal are sold as organ preparations for traditional medicine;

• The hide is processed and sold separately;

• A taxidermy mount is made from the killed animal or just the head;

• The meat and some organs of the killed animal are sold in an upscale restaurant.

3. If something is illegal or semi-legal, it doesn't mean it isn't done: everything remains in the "gray zone" under the cover of the main business.

• Wild animals that end up on leased land or come onto it during natural migrations serve as a "bonus" and are captured for free;

• Owners of legitimate hunting estates sell documents to poachers that confirm the "legal" origin of the products.

I think the illustration is clear.

Right now, before our eyes, the secondary appropriation of the natural biocenoses of the Russian Taiga is happening. What is formally by law "public property" under state management is being appropriated as private property. In just a few more years, the free animals in the wild will turn into livestock at a slaughterhouse, transforming the last wild areas of the Russian Taiga. And this "magical transformation" is happening quietly and unnoticed by the country's residents.

Chapter 14. The secondary exploitation of the natural environment and the regression into archaism

Honestly, what currently hides behind the facade of "sport" or trophy hunting is hard for me to consider as hunting. The word is the same, but the meaning is fundamentally different.

It's exactly like comparing goat milk from free-range goats in a homestead to the products of industrial agriculture with the formula "pesticides + herbicides + all sorts of other junk +++ = death to all living things."

I want to understand who I am, what I do, and why I do it.

I want us to understand who we are, what we do, and why we do it.

And for this, we need a general picture of what's happening. I'll talk about what I personally know well—what's happening in our country. But similar

processes are occurring worldwide, with adjustments for local peculiarities in different places.

How is food produced? How and from what is clothing made? How are natural biocenoses structured, and how do wild animals live in their natural habitats?

Right now, 80% of people don't understand this. I'm convinced of it when I see the recently emerged petting zoos—mini-zoos with ordinary farm animals, like goats or chickens. Even now, for someone from a rural area, there's something surreal about it: paying money to look at chickens or pet a rabbit?! But that's how it is! And for many city dwellers, a rabbit has indeed become an exotic animal. Or a chicken.

In the past era, the world was technologically mastered. When people say "modern" or "capitalism," they mean precisely that past. Now, when trying to make sense of the present, they talk about "post-modern" or "post-capitalism."

I like the term "post-truth era" even more.

In any case, all these definitions speak of an era "after," drawing from the past but not understanding what the present is or how to define it.

If the past era was industrial, now we are in a post-industrial society, meaning a society after industries, after the mass industrial approach. But that's not quite right: there's an industrialization, a commercial exploitation of what previously, for some reason, escaped this grim fate.

In our country, the era of industrialization is associated with the Soviet Union. Vast territories were developed for agriculture. Millions of hectares of steppe biocenoses were plowed and turned into fields. Mineral reserves were explored and their deposits developed. Large industries, large factories, large cities. Millions of people were forcibly uprooted from their lives, from their social environments, and thrown into the furnace of great construction projects. The program of destruction, or as it was also called, the consolidation of settlements, was carried out at least twice and is essentially happening a third time: villages, hamlets—tens of thousands have already been erased from the map, thousands are being erased now.

As for my own reflections, they concern protected lands. The general course of human civilization's development was well understood by people before, or at least by some. Even in the 19th and early 20th centuries, Russian thinkers grasped this. The most striking

example is Vladimir Ivanovich Vernadsky's "Biosphere" and "Noosphere." But he was far from the only one who understood these complex systemic matters.

And so, at the initiative of scientists and thinkers who already recognized the urgent need to change the relationship between humanity and nature, a network of protected areas was established in Russia, and later in the Soviet Union.

The first was the Barguzinsky Nature Reserve. It is the only state reserve in the country established before the 1917 revolution. Named after the Barguzinsky district of the Transbaikal region, it was created in 1916 as the Barguzinsky Sable Reserve to preserve and increase the sable population. At the time of its creation, there were only 20 to 30 sables left alive. The rest had been exterminated by humans.

All other reserves, the entire conservation effort in our country, were established during the USSR. On one hand, scientists understood the necessity of preserving untouched parts of natural territories. On the other hand, these territories were of no interest to the authorities, were of no use to the state. Economic priorities were different: large-scale industrial construction and the industrialization of agriculture.

When the peasant, living off the land, was completely eradicated as a class along with villages and hamlets, he was replaced by an agricultural worker, detached from the land.

Take the example of the Barguzinsky Reserve: by the 1930s, the sable population had already been restored. The reserve stopped being solely for sables and became just a reserve, part of the country's developing system of protected areas. But by that time, animal furs had ceased to be "soft gold." Economic priorities had shifted, and where furs were still needed, the fur farm industry was being built: fur-bearing animals were bred in captivity.

Let's return to the present day. Now, in a post-industrial society, things or even mass agricultural products are no longer scarce. There's enough for everyone, and surpluses even arise. In the Soviet Union, this economic state was called "cyclical capitalist crises of overproduction." Plus, technologies themselves are changing, and with these new technologies, the life of society changes as well.

And so, attention was drawn to the protected lands that no one had particularly needed before.

And so, the "big shots" turned their attention to the wild animals in the Russian Taiga, which had been of no interest to big industrial business.

It's really quite simple: these are literally the last patches of Earth that haven't been snatched up as private property or ravaged through commercial exploitation. And it's happening right before our eyes right now: the secondary development of the natural environment. They're finishing off, gnawing away at what was missed, what wasn't the "juicy piece" in the previous stage of industrial society.

And now we see the destruction of the Soviet nature reserve system. They're turning reserves into national parks, and in the last corners of untouched wilderness, they're massively building tourist clusters. The previously underdeveloped parts of the Caucasus, Altai, Baikal, Kamchatka—they're tearing into them everywhere!

Plus, they're leasing huge tracts of the Russian Taiga for hunting estates on a long-term basis. They're creating an industry of fenced hunting, behind which lies a broader industry exploiting a vast array of different species.

The topic of tourist clusters and the development of the last relatively untouched biocenoses for them is a whole separate issue. But this too is industrial exploitation of previously undeveloped areas, a total destruction of the last remnants of what is still alive and breathing.

Continuing the theme of creating a hunting industry, I want to draw attention to the "regression into the past"—the archaization of society.

The Russian Taiga is being torn apart, where new owners essentially become feudal lords. Pay the rent, and do whatever you want. Then, deliberately advertised and promoted are:

• "royal" and "noble" bloody hunts;

• various bloody ritual practices, from initiations into hunters to animal sacrifices during pseudo-religious or "shamanic" ceremonies;

• a wide range of dietary supplements are actively advertised and legally sold. Most often, they're outright nonsense, with ads referencing ancient treatises of traditional Chinese medicine and the like. In other words, society is plunging into pseudo-medical practices of all kinds.

And now, in my book, I'm trying to vividly show how this is happening.

Chapter 15. Eat the brain with a teaspoon. And this is not a figure of speech, but a real action!

When I started gathering information about eating monkey brains, I found it very difficult to do. It seems to me that such information is under some kind of ban. Because the topic is sensitive? For other reasons I don't yet understand? I don't know why, but information about eating monkey brains is clearly restricted. However, there are cultural and historical mentions of this in many parts of the world. Just an enormous number of such mentions!

Overall, I understand that illegal practices and controversial traditions are rarely documented in open sources. But here, it's like a "conspiracy of silence" or something!

The English Wikipedia states:

"Monkey brains are a SUPPOSED (!!! Word emphasized by me.) dish consisting, at least in part, of the brains of some species of monkeys or apes."

Seriously?! "Supposed"?! So it's just "suppositions," with no confirmation of their reality anywhere, is that it?

And this despite the fact that:

• animal brains are consumed in various cuisines around the world;

• in Asia and Africa, monkey meat is widely used as food, which is reliably shown even today by numerous accounts;

• but at the same time, "there are debates about whether monkey brains were eaten."

Seriously?!

Both Wikipedia and other sources (very few, I might add!) present the information in such a way that in Western popular culture, eating monkey brains has been repeatedly depicted and discussed in the context of exotic cultures of other countries, but is merely a cruel myth invented by evil "white colonizers" solely to "discredit, humiliate, and insult foreign cultures."

Oh...

...so how is it really: do "evil white colonizers" slander the "good-hearted" natives, or do the indigenous people actually "eat Cook"... and also eat the brains of primates, including higher primates, which include Homo sapiens

sapiens?

My opinion is this: they did, they do, and no one intends to stop eating primate brains. It's just that discussing this has been strictly taboo in the world since the late 20th century.

The thing is, monkeys, especially higher primates, are very similar to us. We look at them like a mirror, seeing a reflection of ourselves. Plus, most of my readers probably know that, according to recent studies, great apes have turned out to be much smarter than previously thought. Treating them as objects—doing whatever we want—has become completely unethical and wrong.

I want to point out: this happened quite recently. For understanding:

• Experiments on great apes are currently banned in the European Union (since 2013), the United Kingdom, and New Zealand (since 1999). In total, in 29 countries worldwide. These countries have recognized that chimpanzees, bonobos, gorillas, and orangutans are so cognitively similar to humans that using them as test animals is unethical.

• Austria is the only country in the world that has completely banned experiments on all apes since 2012.

• There are a little over 190 countries in the world, and only 29 of them have banned experiments on higher primates, which are very close to us in terms of cognitive development.

To me, this situation is one of the vivid illustrations of why the modern world is called the "post-truth era." Telling the truth has become not just indecent! The truth is taboo, and discussing a wide range of extremely important issues is simply excluded from public discourse.

Now let's rewind the tape of history back—to what is now declared an "unreliable, never-existing myth."

Until the end of the 20th century, there was a persistent belief that in the countries of Africa and Oceania, both cannibalism (the consumption of humans by other humans) and the eating of higher primates existed.

Oh…

Here are some modern verified facts that are hard to ignore!

Liberia

In a 2014 Vice News documentary, it was shown that Liberia has a thriving meat industry centered around the consumption of monkey meat. Locals call it "sweet" meat

and hold it in high regard.

Republic of Congo

According to surveys, Congolese people rate monkey meat anywhere from "a common delicacy" to "a must-have ritual food." It's typically served grilled, boiled, or fried. Monkey carcasses are highly valued and cost between 20,000 and 40,000 francs. A Nairobi News reporter covering the 2015 All-Africa Games in Brazzaville noted that "residents literally hunt" for monkey meat and "have a strong love for the meat of primates like baboons and chimpanzees."

Cameroon

About 80% of all the meat consumed in Cameroon is wild game. Monkey meat and that of great apes are especially prized for their supposed "juiciness" and "health benefits." According to modern estimates, no fewer than 3000 gorillas are killed each year for illegal meat markets. This is data from a 2012 Independent investigation into the spread of zoonoses from animals to humans.

Attention, it's time to ask a couple of interesting questions:

And are these eaters of higher primates really, truly never—ever—eating the brains of the gorillas and chimpanzees they kill and consume, or do they just not talk about it?

How do the CONFIRMED thousands of killed and eaten higher primates, along with the CONFIRMED entire industries for harvesting and selling primate meat, align with simultaneous claims that "these are all myths invented by white people"?

Let's move on, now to Asia.

According to persistent beliefs that existed until the end of the 20th century, now dismissed as "white myths," there was a long-standing tradition in Asian countries of eating monkey brains. This was primarily common in Indonesia and China.

20th-century ethnographers claimed that monkey brains were historically part of the Manchu imperial table in the Qing Empire in the 17th century: they were eaten directly from the skull.

The most recent mentions of such "imperial dishes" are as follows. In a story published in 1958 by traveler Leila Hadley, a meal in a restaurant in Macau (a special region of China) is described in detail, where the brain was eaten from the skull of a freshly killed monkey.

Writer Albert Podell claims that in 1966 in Hong Kong, he ate the brains of a live monkey. He describes this in his book "Around the World in 50 Years."

Nowadays, all the researchers' notions from the past and eyewitness accounts are declared "unreliable."

However, it's certainly interesting to read in the same sources that China's official policy regarding the harvesting of certain wild animal species in the 21st century makes eating monkey brains illegal, with violators facing up to 10 years in prison.

Oh...

So why then was a special law passed prohibiting the consumption of primate brains if eating primate brains is just a "myth invented by white people"?! Apparently, it's not such a myth if the punishment is ten years in prison!

The method of consuming monkey brains in the 20th century was described as follows. A live primate is secured in a special table, with its head firmly fixed. The hair on the head is shaved, and then the skull of the monkey, which is in a state of drug-induced stupor, is pierced with special tools. After this, the top part of the skull is removed, and the exposed brain is ready for consumption. The brain of the live monkey is eaten

directly from the skull with a special spoon with a sharpened edge.

Researchers before the 20th century also claimed that the modern version with the monkey is a relatively recent change in an ancient ritual that existed for millennia. Previously, human brains were consumed in this way.

Chapter 16. So, is eating monkey brains a reality or a cruel myth? Is there any point to it?

No matter how hard we fight drug addiction, drugs continue to be sold. Yes, it's illegal. Yes, there are severe criminal penalties for drug trafficking. And yes, in many Asian countries, it’s punishable by death. But none of this stops the existence of huge drug syndicates with enormous profits. Many experts even point out that the ban on drugs only helps traffickers make more money. Because of the ban, drugs become sharply more expensive, like any illegal product.

The second example is bootlegging—the underground production and sale of alcoholic beverages, as well as the trade in smuggled alcohol during Prohibition. The topic is widely known thanks to numerous books and films about the Prohibition era in the United States in the early 20th century. The ban on alcohol sales led to the rise of gangs that traded in moonshine and smuggling.

It seems to be a common trait of any social organization: if you ban something, the demand for the forbidden item only increases. And criminal structures emerge, making huge profits from illegal trade.

And now many experts agree that something similar is happening with the market for animal-based remedies for traditional Chinese medicine in Asia. The fight against the illegal market for animal parts only stimulates demand and crime growth. Plus, all this is compounded by a sharply increased demand. By the end of the 20th century, in Asia, especially in China, the wealth of society had risen sharply. There were many more wealthy people, which stimulated demand for both animal-based 'medicines' and delicacies in restaurants.

And monkey brains, besides being an extremely rare legendary delicacy, are also associated with 'medical' use in traditional Chinese medicine.

First of all, I want to draw attention to the archaization of societies worldwide. In our country, this is clearly noticeable by the constant look to the past instead of the future. Various 'estates' of wealthy people, hunts as theatrical-status events, the 'revival' of various cults, religions, and 'shamanism,' a mass fascination with blatantly absurd 'medicines' or 'folk medicine'—all these

are symptoms of such an archaization of society.

But the most dangerous thing is that this reconstruction of an invented pseudo-past is funded and advertised by those who make money from it here and now.

And the exact same situation is in China. Perhaps in the real past, no one ate monkey brains at all. Perhaps they did, but it wasn't very popular. We don't know for sure. But what we do know is that it's not the real past being reconstructed, but an invented mythological past. So I confidently say: I don't know if they ate monkey brains during the Qin dynasty, but I'm sure they eat them now.

And the ritual of eating the cerebral cortex of higher primates can be easily reconstructed, even if it never historically existed. For example—publicly available references from the most well-known sources:

The 1978 film “Faces of Death.”

The 1984 film “Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom.” In it, during a feast at the maharaja's palace, guests are served monkey brains.

The book and film “Hannibal” about Dr. Hannibal Lecter.

So, recreating rituals that never existed is very easy—if there's a desire to make money from it! And, apparently, there are always those willing to profit, no matter how vile and dirty the means of earning.

Now, about the medical aspect of the issue. While there may not be large-scale investigations into the use of monkey brains, there are plenty of mentions. Persistent rumors, so to speak, are abundant. And the very nature of this incomplete information provides food for thought, allowing us to somewhat assess its credibility.

Monkey brains are recommended by traditional Chinese medicine as a remedy for enhancing potency, as well as for improving memory and attention and curing age-related cognitive impairments. Among the population of Indonesia, there is a belief that eating monkey brains can cure erectile dysfunction, which, according to journalists who investigated, leads to mass hunting of monkeys. The most interesting thing is that there is a rational kernel in this. There are drugs derived from brains in modern scientific medicine—with the same indications as monkey brains in Chinese medicine. Let me give specific examples.

The first, most well-known, and oldest drug is Cerebrolysin, a preparation from pig brains; a nootropic and a drug with neurotrophic activity for treating a wide range of neurological disorders.

The drug is not included in the World Health Organization's recommendations for treating any diseases, nor is it approved by the FDA in the United States or the European Medicines Agency, yet in our country, it is used very widely. For example, I came across statistics showing that just in the first half of 2010, sales of Cerebrolysin in Russia amounted to 1.3 billion rubles.

Cerebrolysin was first created in 1949 by Gerhart Harrer, an Austrian professor at the University of Innsbruck. Since 1992, it has been included in Russia's List of Essential and Important Medicines. And although in 2007, the Presidium of the Formulary Committee of the Russian Academy of Medical Sciences proposed removing it from the list as an outdated drug with insufficient effectiveness, this did not happen.

Cerebrolysin is relevant and actively used not only in our country. For instance, in Austria, it is included in the "Neurorehabilitation After Stroke" guidelines, published by the Austrian Stroke Institute in 2018.

The drug contains biologically active neuropeptides. In 2007, it was established that the drug, among other things, contains fragments of neurotrophic growth factors for nerve cells.

The second similar drug is newer and purely Russian: Cortexin—a medication derived from the cerebral cortex of cows and pigs. It is also a polypeptide bioregulator with biological activity. The drug was developed by employees of the S. M. Kirov Military Medical Academy in St. Petersburg. It is used only in Russia and some other CIS countries. Cortexin lacks unequivocal scientific evidence of effectiveness.

According to the manufacturer and developers, Cortexin has a tissue-specific effect on the cerebral cortex, aids in the restoration of cortical neurons, improves nervous control processes, and helps the body adapt to rapidly changing environmental conditions. It activates the cerebral cortex, has antitoxic and antioxidant effects on neurotropic substances and inflammation amines, provides nootropic and anticonvulsant effects, enhances memory processes and information retrieval, stimulates DNA repair processes, and accelerates brain function recovery after stress and ischemia.

It can also be added that neuropeptides are actively researched worldwide. Manufacturers of various neuropeptide complexes (and Cerebrolysin and Cortexin are far from the only ones; this is an entire class of similar drugs) claim that strictly scientific proof of their effectiveness is complicated by the fact that these are complex composite drugs: it is very difficult to demonstrate the action of an individual component.

Thus, using monkey brains to treat the senile dementia of the wealthy has some real justification—it's the second organ preparation I've studied (besides bear bile) for which such justification truly exists. However, just like with bear bile, it's absolutely unnecessary to kill monkeys and eat their brains with a spoon: peptide complexes are the same in other animals, and the anachronisms and strange religious-medical practices of medieval times are entirely unnecessary.

But, I think such cruel practices exist and will continue to exist as long as there are wealthy senile old men to whom such a "treatment method" can be sold.

Chapter 17. The Frog Princess's skin as a modern basis for magical potions

Until 2018, there was a lot of information about the illegal supply of frogs and their body parts to China from the Far East of our country. I will quote from the book "Commercial Trade of Wild Animals in the Russian Federation," published by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) in 2020. The information for it was taken from the training materials of the Russian Customs Academy, meaning it was all obtained from government officials and used for training customs officers. The issue was especially actively discussed in the Primorye and Khabarovsk media, where reports regularly appeared about night raids by inspectors intercepting bags of live "goods."

"Illegal trade in parts and derivatives of amphibians."

In the Far East, according to the results of an analysis of the illegal trade in fauna and flora from 2007–2009, amphibians (along with reptiles) were among the 10

main groups of wild animals whose products were involved in commercial trade. Smuggling and the associated illegal harvesting of amphibians became widespread due to the frequent use of their parts and derivatives for food purposes or as components of traditional medicine in East and Southeast Asian countries.

Main methods of illegal amphibian harvesting:

1. Setting up polyethylene fences with traps along migration paths;

2. Dumping toxic liquids into forest, meadow, and other water bodies;

3. Harvesting with "electric fishing rods."

Objects of illegal trade include:

● Live specimens and carcasses of amphibians;

● Frog hind legs;

● Dried frog meat with skin removed and dried skin of frogs and toads;

● Dried and smoked amphibian roe — frogs, Siberian newts, and newts;

● Unfertilized frog roe (fat-like substance);

● Secretory substance — toad venom and fire-bellied toad venom.

Most often, attempts are made to illegally export the Far Eastern frog and unfertilized roe, which is used in traditional Eastern medicine.

According to customs authorities, from 2012 to 2018, there were recorded cases of illegal movement of more than 21.2 kg of unfertilized frog roe. In terms of live specimens, this is about 7,000 animals with a total value of over 1.4 million rubles. In 2014, in the "Land of the Leopard" national park, residents of Chinese border towns with Primorye were detained, found with 528 dried and 51 live frogs."

Since 2018, media scandals related to the export of frogs to China have ceased: a veterinary customs certificate was introduced, and the export was legalized.

I would add that in the certificate itself, item 2.3 "Method of production" is divided into "farm-raised" and "natural habitat."

And now, starting from 2018, there is simply no information on how many frogs are exported from Russia. Everything is legalized, the numbers have become a commercial secret, and the most important thing is that, in the grand scheme of things, no one

really cares about the frogs!

As far as I understand the situation, frogs and their body parts are supplied to China in large quantities — legally. However, we have no major facilities for artificially breeding amphibians. Only two projects are known: in the Moscow region and Krasnodar Krai. Neither has yet managed to establish commercial breeding; the Moscow region enterprise, on the contrary, purchased and certified frogs from China, hoping to then create its own stock.

The conclusion is obvious: wild frogs from Russian swamps are going to China. Only the export through customs with a legal veterinary certificate is legalized; the capture itself remains completely illegal. An illusion of legality is created, while there is no real control over the scale of harvesting. A classic "gray scheme." The scale of population destruction, especially in the Far East, can only be guessed.

There is nothing new in such schemes. An example of a specialist's comment:

> "In 2005, there was an attempt to organize an official "frog" farm in the Jewish Autonomous Region with the involvement of the Chinese and under the control of the local Rosprirodnadzor. We were

> invited for an inspection. The farm turned out to be a "cover" to drag everything possible out of the taiga. There were some external attributes of preparation for breeding, but behind the taiga huts, bags with illegally caught frogs were hidden in pits. Rosprirodnadzor of the Jewish Autonomous Region immediately shut down the firm's activities."

(Irina Maslova, herpetologist, Far Eastern Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences)

According to her, such ventures resurface every few years and end the same way: with a devastated taiga and a wealthy poacher.

Frogs are generally popular in China and Southeast Asian countries both as medicine and as a gourmet delicacy. In Vietnam and China, industrial farming of the Asian variety of frogs, which are much larger than our "wild" ones, has long been established. Unfortunately, this only fuels the demand for Russian amphibians: animals from northern habitats are considered "stronger" and "more medicinal." This fully applies to both Siberian and Far Eastern species.

The most common product made from frogs is hasma. This traditional ingredient, which later spread throughout Asia, is a dessert component obtained from

the dried fatty tissue located near the fallopian tubes of true frogs. Due to its whitish color, hasma is often called "snow frog fat." It is expensive, so it is served on special occasions or in elite restaurants—another element of prestigious consumption alongside bear paws, shark fins, and other "status" dishes.

Hasma soups were once part of the imperial cuisine of China. Today, they are offered by restaurants worldwide; tons of the product are shipped to mainland China, Taiwan, Singapore, and Hong Kong.

Hasma is sold dried—these are flat, irregularly shaped pieces or light flakes. Before serving, it is rehydrated: boiled with cane sugar and aromatic spices to make a sweet dessert soup.

The main production centers are the provinces of Heilongjiang, Jilin, and Liaoning. Typically, the Asian grass frog is farmed, but in border areas like Heilongjiang, Far Eastern species are also used.

> "Hasma is rich in collagen and amino acids, improves metabolism, thereby aiding skin regeneration and giving women youth," claims Professor He Kuan from the University of Traditional Chinese Medicine in Henan. "Additionally, it balances hormones and boosts energy levels."

Hasma is especially recommended "for maintaining women's health": for pregnant women "for the full development of the fetus," and for postmenopausal women "to restore hormonal balance."

As a result, the pressure on wild populations only increases, and a comprehensive system for cultivating amphibians in Russia has yet to emerge.

Chapter 18. Why do they cut off a wolf's penis?

The unfortunate, long-suffering wolf—the caretaker of the wild. They literally destroy him just for existing! They crush, shoot, and raid dens to kill his pups. And this happens worldwide. I wrote a separate book on the situation with wolves called "The Right to Life"—a major work dedicated to studying the extermination of wolves. Unfortunately, the situation is dire, almost everywhere critically severe.

But besides the mindless destruction of wolves just for the existence of this amazing predator, people engage in another atrocity—they tear the wolf apart in the literal sense, due to superstitions.

Fangs, skins, claws, tails, and even... genitals. These parts are sold as amulets and charms, supposedly endowed with magical powers. Such "talismans" are traded worldwide, completely openly: from online platforms to underground markets and the dark web.

Historically, the wolf has held a special place in the magical rituals of many peoples. People believed that various body parts of a killed wolf possessed protective powers. For example, shamans from many cultures used wolf skins, claws, tails, and fangs in rituals—they served as charms and aids in magical ceremonies. It was believed, for instance, that a wolf skin warded off evil spells, the predator's skull protected the home from enemies, fangs saved from curses and the evil eye, and a wolf's tail "swept away traces" after casting a curse so it wouldn't return.

In the beliefs of Eastern Slavs and Siberian peoples, the wolf generally symbolized martial valor: clutch a wolf's fang in your fist, and you'll surely win any fistfight. Men carried wolf fangs on military campaigns to be as fast and strong as the wolf. Among some peoples, wolf fangs symbolized family loyalty, so they would kill the most mature wolf before a wedding to knock out its fangs and give them as an amulet to the newlyweds.

And here we are today. We're all so modern, with gadgets, driving to work and back, learning about technological progress—yet a huge number of people worldwide still actively buy "wolf amulets" due to superstitions. Wolf derivatives are popular globally today; I don't even know how to define the geography of

such "interests" among people. For instance, in several regions of Asia and the Middle East, wolf parts are used in traditional medicine and witchcraft practices.

For example, in China and Mongolia, wolf fat, bones, and other parts are used as a more accessible alternative to tiger derivatives, since striped cats have been nearly wiped out. Now wolf raw materials replace them. In North America, the dried wolf penis is gaining popularity: the baculum is a bone in the penis of many male mammals. In Russia, it's called the "penis bone." Humans don't have it, but wolves, bears, foxes, raccoons, walruses, and so on do.

So, the baculum has started gaining popularity worldwide, especially in the USA and Canada, amid widespread male erectile problems. Men began searching for "amulets" capable of reviving their former "power," and the market quickly filled with ads: "Buy a wolf penis and regain control over your own."

But wolves in the USA and Canada have been nearly exterminated; locally, they're trying to restore the population, but with little success. It's more of a big money shuffle: millions of dollars are sought for restoring wolf packs, then millions more for their extermination. And so it goes in circles.

The epicenter of the modern wolf trade is the post-Soviet space—Russia and the CIS countries. Here, there are still wolf packs, no laws prohibiting their destruction (on the contrary, it's encouraged, and huge bounties are paid for it), and in the end, no one wants to consider the wolf a useful animal: the gray enemy—period.

Every year in Russia, thousands of wolves are shot, run over by snowmobiles alive, killed from helicopters, and tortured (using traps and snares). In some regions, authorities pay up to $500 for each wolf killed, and where there are financial interests, there's no room for common sense. In such conditions, the bodies of killed wolves become raw materials for further trade in amulets, which are then sent through China (where they're made into products) to Canada and the USA.

If the gray wolf only knew that one day his penis would be worn around the neck of a rugged Canadian or placed under the pillow of yet another American, sincerely believing that now his own penis will work like it did in his youth.

Nonsense!

When I was writing this chapter, I specifically studied the market for trading through ads on popular platforms worldwide. Unfortunately, the sale of wolf derivatives

happens completely openly, publicly, with no one even trying to hide it. For instance, on a Kazakh classifieds service, I came across the following listings:

"Selling wolf and she-wolf fangs!" — according to the ad, the seller emphasizes the special value of paired fangs, likely hinting at a talisman for newlyweds. Price — 25,000 tenge (approximately 55 US dollars in 2025).

"Talisman-charm: wolf's asyk, wolf fang, and eagle claw," reads another seller's ad. Aha, this one sells a set. A wolf's asyk is the predator's ankle bone; it comes with a fang and an eagle claw. Usually, when parts of different animals are mixed and sold as a "package," it means the product is aimed at an esoteric audience that sincerely believes in the combination of totemic powers.

"Original wolf fang, amulet, talisman, charm" — states a third ad. The author is willing to part with one wolf fang for 10,000 Kazakh tenge; judging by the photo, this fang is very clumsily shoved into a metal frame with a "loop" for a cord to wear around the neck.

The demand for wolf genitals has grown so much that they are now being sold on an incredible scale worldwide, far beyond the horizons of a single continent! For example, I studied the classifieds market in Russia. Let me quote.

On the platform "Yarmarka Masters," the author is selling a "WOLF Baculum."

Quoting the ad:

> "The baculum is the penile bone of a wolf. The wolf's penile bone is used as an amulet for luck, to enhance a man's potency, to attract love feelings, as a charm against bad influences. It restores and increases potency and ejaculation, makes a man confident in himself and his sexual powers, makes him attractive and strong with male sexual power for the women he chooses."

Price — 3,500 Russian rubles (approximately 39 US dollars as of 2025).

If only the poor gray wolf knew that his penis would be cut off to be sold for forty dollars. The same author has a huge number of other ads with dozens of photos of "baculums" — and not just from wolves, but other animals too. Disgusting, but there's demand, and it's very high!

It turns out women have seen men buying wolf penises as amulets, and there's now a demand for "female charms" in the form of she-wolf genitals.

Haven't gone gray yet? Honestly, while writing this book, I turned gray. You should see my beard.

You don't even have to go far: open a store on the same "Yarmarka Masters" site. I won't write the store's name so as not to inadvertently advertise this madness. Right there, without unnecessary descriptions, are photos of female wolf genitals with the caption "item sold." In the title — "She-wolf Genitals," price — 7,000 Russian rubles (about 100 US dollars), and apparently, the demand is such that they can't supply it fast enough — it's selling out. Categories listed: "feng shui and esotericism; charm; amulets, charms, and talismans."

In the next ad on the "Taiga Shop" site (I won't mention the name either) in large letters: "SHE-WOLF VAGINA" and the caption:

"The she-wolf's vagina, dried as an amulet or charm, is considered a charm for women and families. The 'she-wolf's vagina' charm can be given at weddings, wishing the young family happiness."

The price is listed as 12,000 Russian rubles (about 134 US dollars in 2025). A bunch of photos of a dried vagina and even some screenshots of certificates were shoved in! They say they're ready to deliver both across Russia and worldwide. As you can see, there are no restrictions

on trading such filth. They simply don't exist.

By the way, the same ad includes the note: “Vagina of a she-wolf with uterus”; you can choose this option, and then the price will be 18,000 Russian rubles (about 150 US dollars).

The next ad — already on some "shamanic" site, titled: "Amulet: Mother of the Great Gray Clan." Price — 28,000 Russian rubles. In the photo, the she-wolf genitals are stuffed into some leather pouches on strings (so they can be worn around the neck).

Publishing the ad verbatim:

"In the culture of many Siberian peoples, the she-wolf holds an important place, associated with fertility, strength, and luck. This image is deeply rooted in traditions and beliefs, giving special significance to items related to her, especially those connected to her reproductive organs. The she-wolf's vagina is revered as a symbol embodying life force and the ability to continue the lineage. This amulet, used in rituals and ceremonies, had many functions, such as attracting luck in love and aiding conception, as well as providing protection from diseases."

Women using this amulet not only sought to restore lost feelings and harmony in the family but also turned to it to solve personal issues related to fertility and female ailments. Wearing a wolf's vagina helped them connect with deep natural forces they hoped would improve their health and happiness, as well as attract loyalty and love from their partners.

For men, this amulet worked as a symbol of power and attractiveness. Young men wearing such a talisman felt more confident in interacting with women, allowing them to communicate more easily and spark interest. The forces contained in this amulet granted young people confidence and charisma, expanding their opportunities in relationships.

In each of these cases, the she-wolf continues to embody the strength and power of the wild, capable of providing protection, love, and luck to those who seek her out. This amulet not only symbolizes physical value but also deeply rooted cultural phenomena where mythology and reality intertwine, creating a unique phenomenon of strength and fortune.

The vagina of a she-wolf, natural sarlyk leather, custom embossing, leather cord, an assortment of beads made from bone, horn, stones, and wood. Handmade. The

product may differ from the one shown in the photo: the work is done by hand by the master, and a one hundred percent replication is impossible. Custom orders can be made with an image of your choice, details are discussed with the customer individually. Production time for custom orders is 7–10 business days."

So there you have it: initially focused on women, but men can use it too. In 7–10 days, they'll stuff a wolf's vagina into a leather pouch for you — you'll probably cure all deadly ailments and gain a whole 'package' of various bonuses like protection, love, and the power of the wild.

Next, an ad on an Altai website offering to buy a 'She-Wolf's Vagina' for 20,000 Russian rubles.

Here's the full description:

"The 'She-Wolf's Vagina' amulet possesses immense power. It is used as:

— a means to aid conception and carrying a child;

— a remedy for curing female and male diseases;

— a talisman for an abandoned wife;

— a means to bring back a straying husband;

— a young man wears a wolf's vagina to never be refused by women."

Yeah, so apparently a piece of a poor she-wolf's vagina 'definitely' has immense power. Because the ad literally claims so! You can use it to conceive and carry a child, cure diseases (which ones aren't specified, probably all, from colds to cancer). And if you're a wife whose husband has left, you need a wolf's vagina just as a talisman: maybe the husband will come back (as the ad says).

Well, any young man going through puberty (for reference: this is when sexual maturity is reached, accompanied by intense physiological and hormonal changes that usually affect the psycho-emotional state) can, if he pays 20,000 rubles, obtain a she-wolf's vagina so that no woman would dare refuse him.

Finally, another ad — this time from the Yakut portal Ykt.ru.

Title: "The 'She-Wolf's Kunka' Amulet."

The ad is lengthy; I think it's worth quoting in full:

"THE SHE-WOLF'S VAGINA (KUNKA) — A TRIBUTE TO OUR ANCESTORS' TRADITIONS.

On the internet, the wolf's vagina is very popular as an amulet for men and women, a family talisman. The roots of this amulet go far back; according to some sources, this amulet has been known for over 2,000 years. It

became widespread in Central Asia. Residents of the former USSR countries are well acquainted with the meaning and use of the wolf's womb.

She-Wolf's Vagina — Meaning

They say the she-wolf's kunka helps men gain popularity among the opposite sex, gather strength, gain confidence in their actions, set goals, and achieve them. Its effects extend not only to the social sphere of life but also to the material world — career growth, finding new work.

For women, it equally helps achieve family well-being. If there is already a partner, it helps maintain and strengthen family relationships; if there isn't one yet, the wolf's sexual organ helps attract a strong partner. Keeping and using this amulet allows a woman to activate her feminine energy, which can be directed towards the birth of a long-awaited child.

The talisman is considered protection against the evil eye and damage. There are also mentions in literature that the vagina is used in black magic rituals — for love spells and terminating pregnancies.

Often, a charm is given as a wedding gift, wishing the newlyweds family happiness and healthy children.

In fact, everything I mentioned earlier is confirmed by the words of a seller trying to sell pieces of a wolf's vagina to the average consumer as "magic trinkets." The price is listed as 45,000 Russian rubles—this time, immediately over 500 US dollars; that's how the author valued his product.

All online platforms are flooded with such ads, and the demand is truly enormous. Many have nothing left in stock—everything's been bought up! Others, amid the "shortage," have started jacking up prices, like in the last ad I showed. On major marketplaces in Russia, there's the same flood of similar "amulets."

In the modern world, there's a dual attitude toward the wolf. On one hand, it's officially recognized as a 'pest' and exterminated by any means, with huge bounties paid; on the other, among neo-pagans, followers of esotericism, and amateur hunters, it remains a source of 'magical power.' To somehow emulate the mighty wolf, people tear it apart, adorn themselves with its parts, and walk around, sincerely convincing themselves and others of the magical properties of such amulets.

Judging by the reviews I saw under the ads, the classic image of a buyer is usually a very diverse crowd: from reenactors and bikers using these attributes to

emphasize a 'brutal image,' to businessmen who believe a wolf pendant will attract luck in business.

I was surprised, but a huge number of women, especially young ones, are also clients of this industry: they order wolf penises or vaginas to try to influence their personal lives—in other words, they acquire them as a sort of love talisman. By the way, women most often participate in the so-called 'activation of the wolf penis' or fangs, when sellers convince them of the need to perform 'special rituals': otherwise, they say, the wolf derivatives won't work. At all.

Naturally, all this contradicts not only ethical questions but also the scientific perspective. Unfortunate wolves are wiped out in the wild, simply exterminating their populations to zero, effectively engaging in a global "wolf genocide," and then they are torn to pieces and adorned with in the hope of gaining eternal youth or finding a soulmate.

I remember studying the use of wolf body parts in the 19th century: back then, it was believed that if you brushed your teeth with ground wolf bones, you could rid yourself of cowardice. People would literally sit in crowds, grinding the bones of wild dogs to brush their teeth, hoping to become brave and 'invincible.'

Unfortunately, even at the beginning of the 21st century, the ancient trade of wolf charms hasn't disappeared. There are so many ads that it's frightening: how many wolves have you idiots exterminated for the fangs and penises around your necks?

Leave the wolf alone. True magic is watching living wild nature, not killing it for useless amulets.

Chapter 19. Wolf-dog hybrids

I want to tell you something.

It's a complicated topic.

Unfortunately, it's a topic that sparks a lot of debate—and even scandals. Every time I've tried to address the issue of hybridization (crossbreeding) of wolves and dogs in my articles and books, it has drawn a lot of criticism from readers—and even, I would say, aggression! So let's break down this not only complex but also emotionally charged topic step by step, focusing on facts rather than emotions.

And yes, first of all, let's talk about the claims that "wolfdogs don't exist, you made them up!"

Personally, when I first heard such claims, they sounded a bit strange, to say the least. But since some people question whether wolfdogs exist or if they're mythical creatures:

First, look into the history of large dog breeds—you'll find numerous examples of wild wolves being used in breeding. Breeders still cross wolves with dogs today

and sell the hybrids to private owners!

Second, read "White Fang"—a novella by Jack London published in 1906. The main character is a wolfdog, a hybrid of a dog and a wolf named White Fang. White Fang's father was a wolf, and his mother, Kiche, was half-wolf, half-dog.

To clarify: a wolfdog is a real hybrid of a wolf and a dog. Don't confuse it with mythical creatures like werewolves! I'll provide fresh and strictly scientific data in my material further on.

I dedicate all my efforts to preserving the last corners of wild nature. There are so few of these pristine, untouched ancient forests left! It's hard for us to even grasp how few. For example, we plan to take our kids for a walk in the woods, to feed the squirrels and...

Stop! That's not a forest. I mean, not an ancient forest. It's not a natural biocenosis but a modified one, subjected to anthropogenic (human) impact. And since we're planning to "walk" there, it's more of a "park" than a "forest." The squirrels we plan to feed aren't wild animals but a synanthropic (human-dependent) population. These squirrels are VERY DIFFERENT from their wild counterparts—in behavior, appearance, physiology, and genetically.

Our human world deeply penetrates natural ecosystems, completely altering them. We see 90% as mosaic remnants of so-called "forests," mixed with fully anthropogenic landscapes of settlements, industrial zones, and agricultural lands. No more than 10% are genuine natural forests. When considering the issues of apex predators in ecosystems, it's important to understand this context.

Apex predators are always a key element of a biological system. They are highly adapted to their native biocenosis, forming and maintaining its structure, acting as a system-forming, "keystone" factor. Therefore, if we talk about preserving the boreal (northern) taiga, it implies preserving wolf packs. However, the wolf is an extremely problematic apex predator due to its ability to freely crossbreed with dogs!

In the mosaic "fragments" left from natural ecosystems, we face three interpenetrating problems:

1. The last wolf packs in a shrinking and insufficient habitat under the harsh pressure of the hunting industry.

2. Packs of feral dogs that invade forests from the outskirts of settlements and disrupt established ecosystems.

3. Emerging packs of wolf-dog hybrids, which are even more dangerous to both nature and people.

Wolf-dog hybrids, "wolfdogs," have appeared and spread solely due to anthropogenic factors. Scientists unanimously agree that the hybridization of wolves and dogs is a result of human interference. 100%! In natural conditions, wolf packs are structured to avoid interspecies breeding: usually, only the dominant pair reproduces, and young wolves form new "families" only if there's available territory and a partner.

Any biological species is separated from others by certain barriers. Sometimes they're immediately visible (like mountain ranges), but often they're not so obvious. The barrier between wolves and dogs is maintained by lifestyle differences: wild wolves live deep in natural territories, while dogs are tied to humans. However, humans remove these barriers—either by directly eliminating wolves or indirectly by altering their habitat.

The most striking example: intensive wolf hunting leads to the destruction of pack structures. Adult dominant wolves are killed for trophies. The remaining young wolves, having lost their experienced leaders, cannot hunt effectively. They become more aggressive but disorganized. Pack hunting is a social skill; it needs to

be learned.

Moreover, when numbers decrease, a genetic compensation mechanism kicks in. I studied the work of zoologist Hernández-Blanco, who found that under strong human pressure, female wolves give birth to many more pups, with the proportion of females in the litter sharply increasing—up to 80%. Then, the surplus of young females faces a shortage of male wolves, and in search of a partner, the females mate with stray dogs—this is the only way to ensure offspring in the absence of wolves. Thus, hunting intensifies hybridization: humans, trying to control wolf numbers, create conditions for the emergence of wolf-dog hybrids.

In other words, the extermination of wolves, which is happening across the country (and worldwide), leads to the emergence and spread of hybrids. And now we see officials starting to shout about the problem of hybrids, which attack domestic animals and get into conflicts with people! Simply put: exterminated wolves—created hybrids—went to exterminate them too. Following the principle of "as long as there's something to kill, nothing else matters."

It is precisely human activity (hunting, habitat destruction, etc.) that is the main mechanism removing natural barriers and bringing wild wolves and stray dogs together. Seems obvious to anyone, right? The next major reason after the destruction of wolf packs is the presence of semi-wild dogs in wolf territories. In rural areas of Russia and the world, many dogs roam unsupervised, forming packs and partially reverting to a wild lifestyle.

In our regions like Altai, Karelia, and some others, the problem of established wolfdog packs is starting to be acknowledged. Europe faces a similar situation: in almost every country where there are wolves, hybrids have been found. In some countries, the proportion of "dog blood" is alarmingly high. For example, I've come across data suggesting that in Italy's Tuscany, up to 70% of the population is estimated to be descendants of wolves and dogs, those very wolfdogs. So, it's already too late to talk about preserving the wolf population there!

The anthropogenic environment literally pushes the once-wild wolf towards crossbreeding. Instead of isolated populations in the wilderness, wolves now live near landfills, farms, and village outskirts, where there are always dogs.

The patterns of crossbreeding are particularly interesting. Genetic and field studies show that mating between wolves and dogs is usually not random but follows a certain behavioral pattern. In most documented cases, the mother in hybrid litters is a female wolf, and the father is a dog. Female wolves, left without a mate, are capable of seeking out a dog themselves.

On the other hand, the reverse (male wolf with female dog) is noted to be much rarer. In Europe, there was long no direct evidence of such a scenario until researchers described a case in Latvia, where genetic confirmation of a male wolf mating with a female dog was found through the presence of dog mitochondrial DNA in hybrids. However, this is more of an exception that confirms the dominant pattern.

Thus, the main mechanism is male dogs impregnating female wolves, leading to the birth of hybrid wolf pups right in the forest. These hybrids, raised by a female wolf, grow up in the pack as "wolves by upbringing" but carry dog genes. Moreover, these hybrids can later mate again either with wolves (reintroducing dog genes into the wolf population—so-called backcrossing) or with dogs.

As a result, a chain of generations with varying degrees of "dog blood" forms. Once the process is initiated, a kind of "hybrid cloud" can emerge in the habitat—a genetically diverse population gradually displacing the original species. This is what the mentioned study in Tuscany has already shown, where the wolf population has been replaced by wolf-dogs.

How big of a problem are wolf-dogs for the natural biocenoses of our forests, and what can be done about it? Let's try to answer by delving further into the topic.

The prevalence of wolf-dog hybrids is clearly extremely high, but very little studied. Unfortunately. As a result, we currently have a poor understanding of the impact of wolf-dog hybridization on the ecosystem, and we hardly see the risks to the populations of true wild wolves.

A rapid genetic degeneration is underway! The crossbreeding of true wolves (Canis lupus) with domestic dogs introduces genes into the wolf population that carry traits selected by humans during domestication, which are completely unsuitable for wild life. Over thousands of years of breeding, domestic dogs have acquired characteristics that reduce their survival in nature:

— early sexual maturity;

— two heat cycles per year;

— delayed formation of behavioral patterns;

— various physical deviations (color, body structure, etc.);

— increased trustfulness and low aggression levels.

In the long run, introgression (the infiltration of domestic genes) at a sufficient frequency leads to the “genomic disappearance” of the wild wolf we know, meaning the unnoticed actual dissolution of the species among various hybrids. Such examples are known among related species: hybridization already threatens the existence of the Ethiopian wolf Canis simensis and the red wolf Canis rufus. Now this danger has arisen for the gray wolf as well. It is losing its genetic uniqueness and, with further contamination of the gene pool, will lose hereditary traits developed through evolution, which means it could disappear as a distinct species.

WE RISK LOSING THE GENOTYPE OF THE TRUE GRAY WOLF FOREVER!

The change in behavior among wolf-dog hybrids is particularly dangerous. These hybrids combine traits that make them more dangerous and unpredictable than wild wolves. Hybrids often exhibit behavior undesirable to humans. Wolf-dog hybrids lack the innate fear of

humans. Unlike wild wolves, which avoid people and do not attack without extreme necessity, hybrids may boldly enter populated areas and attack humans without provocation.

For example, recently in the Kurgan region, a “wolf pack,” likely actually consisting of wolf-dog hybrids, attacked a village. A woman was killed. All witnesses said the animal behaved “inappropriately”—it wasn’t afraid of people and even charged at a car. Experts stated that such “fearlessness” and unusual aggression towards humans are characteristic of wolf-dog hybrids: the animal killed was not found to have rabies, so illness was not the cause of these strange behavioral reactions.

And what does this lead to? Exactly—to people’s hatred of true wild wolves and calls to deal with them! As a result, even more massive hunts begin on the last packs of TRUE WILD WOLVES and their total extermination, leading to an even greater spread of hybrids and worsening of the problem.

Hybrids also break the “rules of the wolf pack”—they hunt not so much for food as out of a killing instinct. A recent case is known where a pack of wolf-dog hybrids in the Altai region slaughtered nine roe deer but ate only one. The situation was investigated because mass

hunts on wolves began there too, but it turned out the conflict was due to a wolf-dog hybrid. True wolves had nothing to do with it!

This tendency towards excessive killing of prey harms the fauna: animals die in vain. Besides ungulates, wolf-dog hybrids destroy young hares, badgers, birds, and raid nests, eating eggs. Thus, wolf-dog hybrids exhibit behavior more akin to jackals than true wolves. These “jackal-like habits” make wolf-dog packs dangerous to people and catastrophically destructive to natural ecosystems.

The competition from emerging and rapidly spreading wolf-dog packs provokes significant ecosystem shifts. The spread of hybrids creates competition for resources with true wolves and other predators. Wolf-dog hybrids often form packs and groups, successfully hunting the same prey as wolves. In several regions of Europe, hybrids have already partially displaced or replaced purebred wolves from their niches and ranges.

Biologists fear that the growth of the wolf-dog hybrid population could “push” the wolf out of the ecosystem entirely, with its place fully taken by new hybrid offspring. According to available observations, hybrids also attack livestock more frequently than regular

wolves, prompting indiscriminate retaliatory measures by humans against all predators.

Another additional risk is the spread of diseases. Wolf-dog hybrids, forming dense aggressive packs, serve as carriers of rabies and other diseases, threatening both humans and wild animals. In this case, hybrids become a bridge connecting populated areas with sections of the wild.

Again, it’s worth noting that true wild wolves are actually the SANITARIANS of the wild and prevent the spread of dangerous diseases, whereas dogs and their hybrids lack natural disease adaptation and can spread them both in the wild and within populated areas.

Thus, the hybridization of wolves and dogs poses a multifaceted threat: from the gradual genetic dilution of the species to direct dangers for ecosystems and humans.

Wolves are at the top of the food chain and are a crucial element of ecosystems. But their efficiency and survival depend on adaptations honed by evolution. When domestic genes enter the genome, there is a loss of specific adaptations necessary for wild life. If such introgressions are frequent, within a few generations, a small wolf population may completely lose its 'wolf'

traits and no longer survive without human support.

Essentially, the wild wolf will disappear, giving way to a hybrid less suited to harsh nature. Scientists call this genetic degeneration or species dilution. Small and isolated wolf groups are particularly vulnerable: for them, a few hybrid litters can mean an irreversible loss of genetic integrity. For example, if a population of a couple dozen individuals includes even two or three hybrids that start breeding, the proportion of dog genes will quickly rise and simply 'flood' the original gene pool. In such a case, preserving the species is no longer possible. The main issue is that this disappearance won't be immediately noticeable—wolves will still look the same on the outside. But on a genetic level, the species will be lost.

The spread of hybrids threatens ecological replacement: a new predator will emerge in nature, occupying the wolf's niche but with different characteristics. A wolfdog looks like a wolf, but it is not a wolf! It is more unpredictable, potentially more likely to conflict with humans, and kills more prey than necessary. When wolves are replaced by such hybrids, ecosystems experience imbalance and change drastically.

Here's how it happens in a specific example:

The control of ungulate numbers—one of the most important ecosystem roles of the wolf—is disrupted. Either there will be too many hybrids, and they will excessively decimate their prey, or, conversely, due to reduced adaptability, hybrids won't be able to effectively hunt strong, healthy animals, leading to overpopulation of herbivores. In other words, the predator-wolf functions will either be exaggerated or weakened, disrupting the established balance. Additionally, hybrids, being partly descended from domestic dogs, will gravitate towards human settlements, feeding on waste and occupying ecological niches not in natural but in emerging technogenic landscapes.

Then a systemic 'vicious circle effect' begins. The main danger of hybridization is that it accelerates itself. The more hybrids are born, the higher the chance that a wild wolf will mate not with a pure dog, but with a hybrid she-wolf, further increasing the proportion of domestic genes. Over time, a situation may arise, as in some areas of Italy, where 'they are practically all hybrids'—meaning no pure wolves remain.

A documented example: in the Abruzzo National Park in the 1990s, there were small packs of wolves. By the 2000s, several hybrid individuals were identified, and despite measures taken, there are now no genetically

pure wolves left in those areas—all carry a portion of 'dog blood.' Locally, the wolf as a genetically unique entity has disappeared.

Here's another real example: the red wolf in the USA has practically disappeared as a species precisely through crossbreeding with coyotes. Now, only hybrid offspring live in the wild, and individual purebred specimens remain only in captivity. The same could happen with the gray wolf locally if the situation is left unchecked. Moreover, hybrids could displace other animals: an increase in wolfdog packs could negatively affect the numbers of lynxes, wolverines, or foxes—competitors for food, or those who could become prey for larger packs.

In summary: hybrids lead to the extinction of animals in two ways—genetically (diluting the species) and ecologically (disrupting food chains). Both can invisibly but irreversibly destroy both the wolves themselves and the species associated with them.

The first and most important thing the state must do is STOP ANY MASS KILLINGS: of dogs, wolves, and the intermediate altered hybrid. After that, start a STATE UNIFIED PROGRAM to protect both stray dogs and true wild wolves.

So, the main threat is the loss of the true wild wolf in every sense: genetic, ecological, and as an object of natural and cultural heritage. Yes, the Russian Wolf is also a symbol of our country's wild nature. Allowing its replacement by a 'feral dog' means irreversibly impoverishing not only biodiversity but losing something greater. For me personally, it means losing certain internal guides—losing the 'coordinate system' in which we define what is 'good' and what is 'bad.'

Reserves and conservation efforts in our country, in other countries and territories, and on the planet Earth as a whole, have an inner spiritual aspect. The Ancient Forest is a true Temple, a benchmark of genuine value. I think it's important to always remember this, beyond practical and purely utilitarian tasks. Strategically, the goal is not to save the wolf—it's to preserve the last intact ecosystems that we haven't yet irreversibly damaged.

The replacement of wolves by wolfdogs is a recent and incomplete process. This hybridization has become irreversible only in certain areas of Europe and North America, but not in our country. While there's still time, we can draw conclusions and determine a conservation strategy. No, not for wolves, but for the relatively undisturbed natural areas that still exist. The

displacement of wolf packs by wolfdog packs is a symptom, an indicator of the degradation of natural ecosystems. Only by considering the system as a whole should we build our strategy and take action.

Look from ABOVE, FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF A LARGE LIVING SYSTEM, at what's happening:

1. Wolf packs are effectively adapted to the vast expanses of their habitat range.

2. The territories of wolf pack migrations are shrinking. Logging areas are expanding, and in recent years, they have been joined by growing private hunting grounds and tourist clusters in what were once remote regions.

3. Trophy hunting not only deprives wolves of food but also breaks up wolf packs. The first to be destroyed are the seasoned leaders. There's no one left to pass on the experience of collective hunting to the young wolves.

4. Internal defense mechanisms kick in: more puppies are born, and the number of newborn females reaches up to 80%.

5. Young lone wolves and small groups of wolves, which can no longer be called a pack, disperse over great distances. Inevitably, many of them end up near populated areas. Female wolves, whose numbers reach up to 80%, mate with random males, including dogs.

6. The most successful groups of these wolf-dog hybrids (wolfdogs) form stable social groups. These are no longer wolf packs with strict hierarchy and discipline, but smaller packs, more akin to feral dogs or jackals. Smaller groups can feed on smaller territories. They adapt to anthropogenic landscapes, no longer fear humans, and feed, among other places, at dumps near human settlements.

Overall, we systematically observe in practice an example of the effective adaptation of predatory mammals from the Canidae family to changing environmental conditions, as well as an example of ongoing speciation.

In the mosaic remnants of natural ecosystems, mixed with anthropogenic landscapes, small groups of wolfdogs, capable of eating anything from landfill trash to large animals both in the wild and among human settlements, prove to be the most effective. Wolfdogs occupy an intermediate ecological niche between synanthropic (human-dependent) populations of stray dogs and wild wolves. From this intermediate ecological niche, they begin to expand their territories, displacing true wolves and entering populated areas, encroaching on the territory of weaker stray dogs.

Can such a problem be solved by exterminating wolves, wolfdogs, or dogs? Definitely not, because the problem is SYSTEMIC in nature! Accordingly, the strategic solution must also be systemic.

The point is that different actions are needed regarding wolf packs that are forming into a separate biological species of wolfdogs, and stray dogs. I've already written that we have three problems, not one: wolves, dogs, and the hybridization of wolves with dogs. Similarly, three different approaches are needed to solve these problems. At the same time, all actions must be united in a common strategy and synchronized.

And "shooting them down" is definitely not an option here! It's time for us, as humans, to grow up to the level of managing complex systems. To see how the "shooting pests" option works, just look at history. This option doesn't work at all: it only further disrupts the system and creates new problems. The "classic example" is China's "war on sparrows" during the Maoist period or Australia's "war on feral cats," which smoothly transitioned into a "war on the mice that proliferated because they killed all the cats."

So let's emphasize for ourselves (and preferably pass it up to the officials) in bold letters: THE FIRST THING THAT NEEDS TO BE DONE IS TO STOP ALL MASS KILLINGS.

We see how "effective managers" holding high positions are implementing the following programs across the country:

— the extermination of true wild wolf populations;

— extermination of stray dogs;

— a new phenomenon right now: extermination of the intermediate hybrid.

Thus, the problem only gets worse! Officials in their decisions behave exactly like a pack of hybrids in the wild, which completely does not understand what it is doing. And while you can understand the wolfdog—it can't find a place among humans or in the wild—officials are, first and foremost, people capable of realizing the consequences of their decisions.

Task one: stop the mass shootings

Immediately halt the destruction of stray dogs, hybrids, and wolves in the wild. Right now, no one distinguishes between a dog, a hybrid, or a wolf! They just indiscriminately kill them all.

Therefore, I would introduce a federal legislative ban on the extermination of wolves and dogs, and create an interagency commission under the Ministry of Natural Resources of the Russian Federation with other agencies to coordinate regional actions and issue permits exclusively for targeted regulatory measures. For example, when it's necessary to remove a specific hybrid individual (or pack) from the wild that poses a direct threat to human life.

Everything else should be stopped by federal order—especially the awarding of bounties for shooting wolves in the regions, where money is simply being "laundered" on a massive scale from the budget.

These measures would allow for the swift cessation of the destruction of the last wild wolves and protect dogs from spontaneous shootings.

Task two: launch federal shelters

Stray dogs are the foundation of hybridization: it's from these 'forest-edge' groups that dog blood flows to wolves. It's necessary to eliminate the source of hybridization, which can be done through systematic work with the stray dog population.

Therefore, the federal government should launch a program to build and modernize shelters in every region of Russia: at least one large center plus a network of smaller branches in cities.

I would mandate the introduction of a unified state standard, and bring all private shelters under government control: they would no longer need to seek funds for survival, as everything should be provided by the state with official employment for all shelter staff.

Unified standards for animal care should be established:

— mandatory sterilization of animals not intended for breeding;

— veterinary diagnostics (vaccination, rabies prevention, and other diseases);

— adaptation, socialization, and transfer to good homes.

For the last point, a nationwide program 'A Dog in Every Home' should be launched to encourage citizens who take dogs from shelters into their families.

Task three: special centers for hybrids

Wolfdogs require special living conditions and more complex expertise. Moreover, some of them can be returned to their habitat after sterilization, while others cannot.

Therefore, at the federal level, special centers for working with wolfdogs should be established based on leading zoos or regional wildlife rehabilitation centers. Mandatory genetic testing should be provided upon the arrival of individuals to confirm hybrid status and determine the percentage of 'wolf blood.'

Regulations should also be developed for tracking animals that can be chipped and released into the wild after sterilization (if the risk to humans is minimal), or, in cases of extreme hybridization, placed in protected enclosures (similar to reserve parks with large free-range areas) for lifelong care. But only in cases of high aggression or other risks!

Task four: wolf protection program

Urgently launch a state program to protect wolves. Genetic testing of wolf populations in regions is necessary to create a 'genetic map' of local groups and identify where the hybrid percentage is already high.

At the same time, introduce a ban on wolf hunting to avoid disrupting packs and provoking female wolves to mate with dogs. Provide differentiated quotas for shooting ONLY IN SITUATIONS OF CLEAR THREAT TO HUMANS and only after confirming that the individual poses a real danger.

Based on the wolf protection program, launch a subprogram for the reintroduction and preservation of 'pure lines.' That is, if the hybrid percentage is critically high in certain regions, it may be possible to create 'breeding' groups of wolves with genetically confirmed purity, which will be kept in semi-wild conditions and then released back into the wild. Such projects already exist in the U.S. for the red wolf, although they were launched too late.

Accordingly, within this federal program for the protection of wolves in Russia, it is necessary to remove hybrids from the wild and then send them to special centers. If they are part of existing “pure” packs, hybrids should be sterilized and released back. This will support the wolf pack without destroying it, while protecting it from further genetic degradation.

Task Five: Ban on breeding wolf-dog hybrids

I would implement a complete federal ban with criminal liability for breeding wolf-dog hybrids in the country. Today, hybrids are deliberately created for sale to private owners under the brand “Own a Personal Wolf!” Due to the wolf genes in these “exotic specimens,” conflicts with humans arise, leading people to simply abandon the hybrids on the streets.

It must be understood that the spread of hybrids is dangerous for the wild, and therefore appropriate legislative bans should be established.

Frankly, who would think of conducting genetic experiments by crossing bears and beavers? Or playing with the genome of foxes by crossing them in lab conditions with hares for the sake of selling “exotics”?

So my position is categorical—legally ban the crossing of wolves and dogs, and forcibly sterilize “domestic” hybrids unless there are special certified permits. In rare cases, this may be permissible.

Task Six: Control over domestic dogs

The lack of control and government programs for stray dogs is the fault of the management system, those “responsible individuals” who make decisions while holding high positions. And the dogs abandoned on the streets are the fault of the people themselves, who take in pets, play with them, and then discard them.

Therefore, on a federal level, I would introduce:

— mandatory registration and microchipping of all dogs: they are NO LONGER TOYS! If you get a dog, you must get used to responsibility;

— a ban on free roaming without supervision.

All this should be accompanied by strict fines and real accountability. If a family buys a puppy for a child and then throws it out when it gets boring, there needs to be a legislative response.

Task Seven: Education

Launch state and regional programs aimed at mass educating society, explaining the dangers of hybrids to ecosystems and humans. It is essential to dispel the myth (which I have already encountered in people's minds) that a hybrid is “better” than a pure wolf or “better” than a dog. We need to foster an understanding that the wolf is a valuable and self-sufficient species in the wild, and the dog is a human companion, and their spontaneous mixing leads to catastrophic consequences.

We need to restore the IMAGE OF THE WOLF as a caretaker of the wild, not an enemy of humans, and promote responsible pet ownership.

How long will it take?

It is impossible to remove all hybrids from the wild “tomorrow,” even with an unlimited budget and full government support, just as it is to change societal thinking or restructure the management system. But, having studied the problem for years, I can say that it is quite feasible within five to ten years. Whereas in fifteen

to twenty years, the problem of wolf-dog hybridization will be completely solved, true WILD WOLF PACKS will be restored, and the issue of stray dogs in the country will be resolved.

We will cultivate humanity and love for nature in society, broaden the horizons of knowledge, and be able to protect wolves, hybrids, and stray dogs from the mass shootings that our authorities are already conducting.

Right now, animals are in real danger:

TRUE WOLF PACKS ARE DYING OUT, WE ARE LOSING THE GENOTYPE OF THE RUSSIAN WOLF.

STRAY DOGS ARE ALREADY BEING SIMPLY DESTROYED AT THE FEDERAL LEVEL.

IN THE REGIONS, HYBRIDS HAVE BEEN ADDED TO HUNTING RESOURCES AND ARE ALREADY BEING DESTROYED.

Thus, the entire “solution” of the officials boils down to simply destroying everyone, and no one even tries to assess the consequences of these appalling measures.

Why am I suddenly talking about the spread of wolf-dog hybrids in the book “The Secret Industry of Death”?

There's important context here too.

Here's the thing.

All those online ads flooded with offers to buy wolf penises, vaginas, fangs, and pelts... but how many of the derivatives sold there are actually parts of real wild wolves?

When I was writing my book, I encountered a sharp increase in such products, demand, and offers on the market in Russia. And simultaneously, there are clashes between society and officials who have started allowing regions to kill stray dogs at the federal level: they're poisoned and shot.

Suddenly, companies across the country emerged, dealing with the capture of stray dogs for further “disposal.” At the same time, there was a sharp rise in the export of “wolf” derivatives from Russia worldwide! Coincidence?

I'll be blunt about what I think: I believe that the overwhelming majority of what's sold as wolf genitals and the like is outright deception, and we're actively selling parts of stray dogs. Where they sell wolf fangs and pelts, in the vast majority of cases, and I'm convinced as a researcher, almost always, these are pieces of wolf-dog hybrids now spreading in the wild.

Thus, superstitious people supporting this whole death industry are actually buying pieces of completely ordinary dogs or those crossed with wolves.

And even where people are shown some screenshots of certificates, usually, it's enough to get a wolf hunting license once to then “flash” it while selling an endless amount of goods. But who's going to check?

In general, just thinking out loud. I think my reader has something to ponder!

Chapter 20. The misfortune of being born with horns

Probably one of the most vulnerable species on the planet is the rhinoceros. Everyone knows about them! Yet many things remain little known to people. Rhinos are on the brink of extinction because wealthy individuals around the world suddenly decided to create an “elixir of immortality” from their horns. It’s quite simple: the rhino looks powerful, unusual, and its horn resembles something from the age of dinosaurs.

So the wealthy of the world thought, “What if we kill a rhino and grind its horn into powder? Will we become just as powerful and strong?”

That’s all.

And for this reason, there has been a total extermination of rhinos worldwide for many decades. Despite international bans and seemingly active efforts by various organizations, which include devising sophisticated methods to protect rhinos, this amazing animal is still rapidly dying out.

Poaching today threatens the existence of all five remaining species of rhinos: two African (black and white) and three Asian (Indian, Javan, and Sumatran). The fewer there are, the higher the market price for their horns, and the more people want to obtain the “last horn of the last rhino.”

The global trade in rhino horn was officially banned only in 1977; before that, it was quite legal to acquire such “exotic” items. The ban also caused a sharp rise in horn prices, which only fueled the wealthy’s incredible desire to acquire them! The main clients are from Vietnam and China, where references to the traditional medicinal use of rhino horn date back to ancient times.

Thousands of years ago, in their attempts to find cures for various diseases, Chinese healers actively ground the horn into powder and used it to reduce fever, treat infections, “expel evil spirits,” and other ailments. Naturally, there was never any scientific evidence, but people tend to think in terms of myths and legends, especially when it comes to incurable diseases.

The fact that the composition of a rhino horn is very similar to that of human hair and nails doesn’t deter wealthy buyers—it’s essentially the same thing. With the same success, one could gnaw on nails and chew hair to

treat cancer, for example!

Let’s talk a little about the rhino population.

The white rhinoceros is divided into subspecies: there is the southern and the northern. The southern white rhinoceros is, apparently, even quite numerous. According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the organization Save the Rhino, there were about 22,000 to 23,000 individuals in Africa by the end of 2021. However, the northern white rhinoceros is already practically extinct, as at the time of writing this "book," only two females remained alive, residing in a sanctuary in Kenya under round-the-clock protection.

Why under round-the-clock guard, you ask? Because the rich from all over the world have gone so mad that they've started a race—who can offer the highest price for the priceless horn of the white rhino! There's a belief that these last two specimens are "especially valuable" and can grant immortality to foolish millionaires.

That's why armed rangers now follow the rhinos in SUVs, taking turns continuously to protect them from wealthy idiots.

In Africa, the black rhinoceros also resides; by the end of 2021, its population numbered around 5,000 individuals. However, the western subspecies of the black rhinoceros (Diceros bicornis longipes) was declared extinct in 2011—humans had already wiped it out.

The other species live far from Africa! The Indian rhinoceros is found in India and Nepal. There, the population has seemingly been restored (as of 2022) to 3,700 individuals.

The Javan rhinoceros lives in Ujung Kulon National Park in Indonesia, with a population of only about 75 individuals. Genetic abnormalities are already being observed: the animals often fall ill, and they can only reproduce through close inbreeding, which further harms the population. Overall, the situation is critical.

In the same Indonesia, the rare Sumatran rhinoceros resides, with a population of only about 80 individuals as of 2022. They live scattered from Sumatra to Borneo.

That's the situation!

The main epicenter of poaching today is South Africa, because it is home to the largest population of southern white rhinos in the world, as well as a significant portion of black rhinos. Since there are more rhinos there, it

means more opportunities for poachers to "harvest" the precious horn and make money from it.

I studied various statistics: it turns out that from 2010 to 2019, more than 700 rhinos were killed annually in South Africa, and in peak years (2013–2017), this number exceeded 1,000 per year. In 2020–2021, the statistics dropped: according to official data, there's a decrease to 400–500 killed annually! However, some sources claim that the official statistics are outright lies, and the officials themselves are involved in corrupt schemes for killing rare animals. The money is just too huge—they can't resist.

Since 2008, the demand for rhino horn in Vietnam and China has skyrocketed, and as a result, over 9,000 rhinos have been killed in South Africa alone by 2022. For a species with only a few tens of thousands left, these are staggering numbers!

So how much does all this madness cost? Why are poachers, armed to the teeth, so zealously killing rare rhinos in groups?

There is an international organization called TRAFFIC that monitors the trade of wild animals. According to their data, the price of one kilogram of rhino horn can reach 65,000 US dollars on Asian markets. In peak

years, the price even hit 100,000 dollars per kilogram! However, the market is naturally quite closed, so the real prices could be much higher.

Today, a rhino horn is often more expensive than gold, platinum, and even cocaine (when measured per kilogram). That's precisely why poachers from all over the world are eager to kill the last remaining rhinos. And, as I repeat, the fewer of these amazing animals remain, the faster prices rise, and the killings accelerate exponentially.

Oh, by the way! A white rhino's horn can weigh up to 10 kilograms, with an average of 4–5 (that's the front horn). The rear horn weighs another 2–3 kilograms. For the black rhino, the front horn usually weighs 2–3 kg (sometimes up to 5), while the rear horn can be less than a kilogram.

You can mentally calculate how much poachers actually make by killing a single rhino. From a white rhino, they can earn up to a million dollars (at a price of 100 thousand dollars per kilogram and a total weight of both horns around 10 kg).

The horns of Indian and Indonesian rhinos weigh less.

Currently, in South Africa, some organizations cut off rhino horns every 1–2 years, repeating the procedure constantly because the horns grow back again and again—like human nails or hair! But this causes significant stress for the animals, and according to new scientific data, rhinos stop reproducing after their horns are cut. There are no objective final data on the consequences yet. It seems more like panicked, chaotic actions in attempts to save populations from poachers. It's quite likely that in the coming years, such measures will lead to even worse results.

I also want to talk about the use of horns. When I studied various sources, it turned out that in many cases it reaches the point of utter nonsense!

Supposedly, some reports from international organizations indicate that in Vietnam, among the wealthy, a "trend" has emerged to mix rhino horn powder in alcohol or water to supposedly cure... hangovers!

There have also been documented cases in China where the rich are served ground rhino horn powder at private parties as an "elite gift." The wealthy ostentatiously consume the powder, flaunting their power and influence!

Idiots... I want to say... You're consuming plain keratin, the same stuff your hair and nails are made of! You might as well eat those and leave the animals alone!

But no — mythology played a cruel joke.

Another use for rhino horns is making handles for ceremonial daggers in the Arabian Peninsula (Yemen, Oman). These daggers are called "jambiya." The demand for them began to rise significantly around the 1970s, becoming one of the main reasons for the mass slaughter of rhinos in East Africa!

The market has shrunk now, but Arabian elites still actively buy "exclusive" jambiyas with rhino horn handles. It's prestigious!

The extermination of rhinos also occurred in the Middle Ages. I came across data from Europe: there, rhino horns were faked as "unicorn horns" and sold to nobility for huge sums. Various members of royal courts genuinely believed that a real unicorn had been taken down in the wild just for them!

Special cups were made from the horns, and the wealthy were convinced that drinking from them would protect against poisons and neutralize toxins. Essentially, rich Europeans would stroll around the royal court, sipping drinks from "unicorn" cups.

These are the blatantly idiotic reasons for the extermination of rhinos. Whether in the Middle Ages or today — nothing changes, except there are fewer and fewer rhinos.

Let me also tell you about the "end buyers" these days. I came across information about a multi-stage operation by the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and the U.S. Department of Justice, codenamed "Operation Crash." Since 2012, dozens of participants in rhino horn smuggling have been arrested!

Among those accused and convicted was Zhifei Li, the owner of an antique business in China. He was sentenced in the United States in 2014 to 70 months in prison. Essentially, he was the link between "secret buyers" and poachers! The cunning Chinese man supplied the wealthy with both rhino horns and ivory. He was charged with offenses totaling over $4.4 million. He refused to give up the end buyers—otherwise, he’d be killed himself, whether in prison or out. And a 70-month sentence? That's a complete farce! It looks like a mockery of justice against the backdrop of the total extinction of rhinos.

In Europe, there was an intriguing Irish group called the "Rathkeale Rovers"—they specialized in stealing rhino horns from museums and auction houses across Europe to sell them on the black market in Asia.

In the UK, several members of the group were sentenced to real prison terms in 2017, but they couldn't get to the real buyers! The Irish proved to be just as cunning as the Chinese.

Among the "notable figures," Vixay Keosavang and Boonchai Bach stand out.

Vixay Keosavang was dubbed by journalists as the "Pablo Escobar of wildlife": he ran a multimillion-dollar network trading in rhino horns, ivory, and other contraband. He was also closely connected with the elite wealthy in Laos and other countries, to whom he sold wildlife derivatives.

Boonchai Bach, on the other hand, was a lower-level smuggler (he's from Thailand but of Vietnamese descent). He was arrested in 2018 for organizing a network supplying rhino horns to the wealthy throughout the Asian region.

I titled this chapter: "The Misfortune of Being Horned"—poor rhinos are on the brink of extinction, and some species have already vanished from the face of the

Earth! All because the wealthy around the world, to emphasize their power and influence, dream of acquiring a piece of keratin for tens or even hundreds of thousands of dollars.

And the situation continues to worsen.

Chapter 21. If a rhino horn didn’t help, maybe a hornbill will?

Rhino horns are expensive, and rhinos themselves are on the brink of extinction, yet the demand on the global “black market” keeps rising. Rich fools who indulge in consuming parts of rare animals set an example for everyone else! It usually goes like this, let’s imagine a scenario:

A woman is diagnosed with cancer, and it turns out she’s in an incurable stage. She cries, is emotionally devastated, and starts scouring the internet for treatment methods. It turns out natural selection didn’t work in her favor, and recovery is impossible. So, she turns to “magic” and tries to heal herself with various potions!

She buys a charm made from a dried she-wolf’s vagina on message boards. She hangs it around her neck, maybe even performs rituals to “activate” this miraculous remedy! But nothing helps.

Then “kind acquaintances” say:

“We heard that our minister secretly buys rhino horns! He had cancer and cured it. It’s ancient magic! You need a rhino horn.”

The woman starts frantically scouring the internet, reading various occult stories, then looks up prices for a rhino horn. Alas, it's too expensive! Even if she hurriedly sells her apartment, she can only get about twenty thousand dollars—that's all she has. So buying a whole horn on the black market for 200–300 thousand dollars is out of her reach.

But what to do then? A rhino horn is too expensive, and a she-wolf’s vagina and other animal parts haven’t helped.

So, clever smugglers and poachers have come up with a new trend that’s developing right now: they’ve started killing horned birds and offering them as an alternative to rhino horns—just for the “lower segment.”

And typically, hornbill “horns” aren’t consumed as food but are carved into various talismans, ritual bowls, and other nonsense.

Hornbills are those strange kalao birds from the family of tropical and subtropical species found in Africa and Asia. They can be recognized by their large beak with a prominent casque, a bulky helmet-like structure. In most

species, this helmet, though it looks big, is actually hollow inside! But in the helmeted hornbill, it’s made of dense bone, which in illegal trade is called “red ivory.”

The main target for poachers is the genus Rhinoplax (helmeted hornbill, Rhinoplax vigil), found in Southeast Asia. There’s a huge demand for it now. They also kill members of the genus Buceros (great hornbill, Buceros bicornis)—the Indian great hornbill and the rhinoceros hornbill (Buceros rhinoceros).

Recently, there’s been a sharp increase in demand for the African hornbill, although not long ago, it didn’t interest anyone at all.

The biggest problem is that this phenomenon is quite new, and in various countries around the world, the legal framework for protecting hornbills hasn’t been established yet. Demand has been steadily growing since around 2012, and since 2015, the helmeted hornbill has been listed as “Critically Endangered” on the IUCN Red List.

To this day, no one even knows the exact size of the populations, as the birds live in hard-to-reach areas of tropical forests. But according to available data, they’ve almost stopped being seen—in the last ten to fifteen years, they’ve disappeared from many regions. Formally,

the species still exists, but in reality, even specialists don’t see them.

Besides poaching, rapidly expanding deforestation, reduction of food sources, and habitat loss are also pressuring the populations. Scientists say that extinction could be just ten to twenty years away! Simply put, hornbills will be wiped out.

According to TRAFFIC and EIA, the price for a single hornbill “helmet” can reach up to 1,000 US dollars (depending on size and quality). Therefore, birds are killed in batches, targeting the mass consumer.

There are separate estimates that the price per gram of kalao “horns” averages four to six dollars. The market is very closed to outsiders, so much depends on how well the buyer can be “conned” in private deals. But with the species’ rapid extinction in recent years, the price is rising, attracting more poachers eager to destroy the birds for easy profit.

According to EIA data, from 2012 to 2014, law enforcement in Indonesia and Malaysia seized over 2,100 hornbill horns. This is just what was discovered during smuggling and officially recorded. Therefore, the real “black market” could be thousands of times larger.

Reports from TRAFFIC show that between 2012 and 2018, confiscations of "red ivory" repeatedly occurred in China, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore. Some shipments contained hundreds of "horns" at once! This indicates a large-scale and well-organized smuggling network.

The situation is complicated by the fact that hornbills reproduce extremely slowly. They have a unique nesting method: the female is sealed inside a cavity during incubation, while the male gathers food and feeds her. Given this lifestyle, breeding them in captivity is nearly impossible. Any stress causes the birds to stop reproducing.

As a result, hornbills are being slaughtered en masse in the wild for their beaks.

These beaks are used to make various ornaments, attributed with "ritual" significance. The same bowls for rituals, statuettes of "gods" supposedly curing diseases, amulets, and talismans. People who can't afford a rhino horn start buying bird beaks en masse!

And so our hypothetical woman, having already acquired a collection of wild animal derivatives, spends her last money on items made from hornbills. Yet she remains the same woman suffering from ailments, only now

without money! Along with her, all over the world, there are hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of similar stories where people, out of superstition, support the secret industry of death.

Chapter 22. Dragon scales

There's a fascinating animal called the pangolin. It's a small mammal covered in keratin scales. Yes, the same keratin that makes up our hair and nails, or a rhino's horn. Pangolins look like mythical little dragons, and they use their scales as a defense mechanism: when threatened, they curl up into a ball, exposing their tough scales.

There are a total of eight species of pangolins:

4 species in Asia: the Chinese (Manis pentadactyla), the Philippine (Manis culionensis), the Sunda (Manis javanica), and the Indian (Manis crassicaudata).

4 species in Africa: the white-bellied (Phataginus tricuspis), the giant (Smutsia gigantea), the Cape (or Temminck's; Smutsia temminckii), and the black-bellied (Phataginus tetradactyla).

Some species are already on the brink of extinction. Others still maintain populations but are already listed as endangered. And it's all because people are killing them en masse worldwide for traditional medicine!

The main interest for poachers is, of course, the pangolin's armor, the so-called "dragon scales." In traditional Chinese and Eastern medicine, it's believed that pangolin scales cure literally everything, even cancerous tumors. Naturally, there's not a single documented case of chewing hair and nails curing cancer. Chewing pangolin scales included! Once again, we're dealing with a simple cognitive bias, where an unusual appearance leads to attributing unusual properties to the owner of such an appearance.

So, "dragon scales" are endowed with magical properties: they're said to be able to ward off evil spirits and protect against ancestral curses. And so on, and so on, "blah-blah-blah," just to sell them at a higher price.

To avoid wasting pangolin carcasses, they're also used as a delicacy. In Southeast Asian countries, their meat is considered elite and highlights the high social status of those who "can afford it." It's served in private clubs, at exclusive banquets, and pangolin delicacies are gifted during holidays. Essentially, it always demonstrates luxury, so the wealthy dream of having roasted pangolin barbecue served at their holiday tables—preferably right in the scales for more "charm" for the guests.

So it turns out that the pangolin itself is eaten as a delicacy, while its "dragon scales" are used in traditional medicine with a magical twist.

According to estimates by international organizations WWF and TRAFFIC, pangolins are the most frequently illegally traded mammal in the world, and demand continues to rise. It's said that up to 200,000 individuals are killed annually for supply to the "black market."

Let's say that in 2019, Singapore seized 14.2 tons of pangolin scales. We're talking about scales alone, without the bodies—equivalent to several tens of thousands of slaughtered animals. These numbers are simply insane! And just a few days before that, another shipment of 12.7 tons was seized in the same Singapore, which was on its way from Nigeria to China. The cargo was valued at over 50 million US dollars.

Usually, such shipments are sent from African countries like Nigeria, Cameroon, or Congo to Asian countries—China, Vietnam, and so on. It's in Asia where pangolin derivatives are in demand. But as control tightens in Asia, they transport from Africa, where there is no control.

In China or Vietnam, people are willing to pay up to $1,000 for one kilogram of pangolin scales, and in some cases, prices can reach $3,000, especially if it's high-quality scales. Meanwhile, pangolin meat is served in underground establishments at prices up to $300 per portion of this delicacy.

What's particularly tragic is that pangolins reproduce slowly. They usually have only one offspring at a time; in rare cases, a female may give birth to two. Pregnancy, depending on the species, lasts from three to five months. The low reproduction rate is because pangolins are well-protected by their scales in the wild. But not from humans!

In captivity, they also struggle to reproduce because they feed on ants and termites, which makes it difficult to provide artificial diets. In stressful situations, pangolins simply stop eating and die. Just like that!

In mid-2020, Chinese authorities seized a large smuggling operation involving over 10 tons of pangolin scales, and poachers attempted to transport live specimens. Law enforcement managed to uncover a network of more than 200 people connected in some way to the transportation and storage of this shipment.

Another incident occurred in 2017 in Gabon: couriers attempted to use diplomatic status to smuggle a massive shipment of pangolin scales. The media at the time referred to this as "diplomatic baggage." The cargo was headed from Gabon (Central Africa) to Southeast Asia. For political reasons, the scandal was "hushed up."

Can you imagine how vast this sphere is if even government officials and diplomats are involved in smuggling, using diplomatic mail channels? This indicates the highest level of corruption, the involvement of officials and embassy staff. And it’s all about very, very big money, which is why it’s done.

I'll be honest: when I studied information about pangolins, I was struck by their uniqueness. And I genuinely feel sorry for them! Another name for pangolins is scaly anteaters. They truly look like creatures from fairy tales, inhabitants of legends, not the real world.

It's sad to see how the ignorance of people, their utterly absurd belief in the medicinal properties of simply unusual creatures, leads to the destruction of pangolins. A senseless and stupid destruction...

Chapter 23. Voodoo of the scavengers: black magic of the slain vultures

This is one of the most epic stories I encountered while writing this book. "Black" voodoo cults intertwined with medieval alchemy and were generously seasoned with a pinch of modern pseudo-medical myths.

A real "epic fail," as they say in the not-so-universal modern youth slang.

"Both laughable and sinful" is also a fitting description. I personally didn't know whether to laugh or cry while studying the materials. But let's dive into the details, step by step.

Voodoo is a general term for syncretic cults found in West African countries, the Caribbean, Central and South America, as well as in the United States among a significant portion of African Americans. The word "voodoo" came to us from the pages of novels and later from movies. The most vivid image that comes to mind for a reader or viewer unfamiliar with this phenomenon

is the reanimation of the dead and their transformation into so-called zombies. Yes, initially, in the first works of the corresponding genre, the "production" of zombies was handled by voodoo priests on an individual basis. And only much later did pharmaceutical companies start dabbling in this on an industrial scale.

So, voodoo is a conglomerate of various animistic cults, incorporating the traditional beliefs of the African diaspora in the New World. But it's a bunch of different similar cults under the umbrella brand "voodoo." That means this colorful and confusing phenomenon has different names in various parts of the world.

For example:

• Haitian voodoo, where it all began,

• Candomblé in Brazil,

• Winti in Suriname,

• Louisiana (New Orleans) voodoo,

• Santería in Cuba and the Dominican Republic.

A complete mishmash mixed with herring under a fur coat, in short!

All these directions have a syncretic nature, merging with what is called "folk Catholicism." For understanding, it's also important to add that in African,

South, and Central American countries, the European medicine familiar and understandable to us has the same legal status as folk medicine. And the number of healers, sorcerers, voodoo priests, brujos, witches, and all that sort of thing is best described by expressions like "as many as the stars in the sky" or "as fleas on the hides of local dogs."

So, in all these magical territories where European medicine doesn't reign supreme but freely competes with many other medicines, parts of scavenger birds' bodies are among the popular remedies.

The meaning here is deep and sacred. It's a mix of the already described magic of similarity with a pinch of pseudo-medical pseudo-knowledge borrowed from the white man.

Epic, no doubt!

The "logic" goes like this: since scavengers eat rotten and dead things and nothing happens to them, they must have a "strong immune system." If they have a "strong immune system," then we can borrow their "strong immune system" by eating the scavengers.

"Logic"—a magical word, indeed! Voodoo priests won't let you lie! However, white people didn't invent logic for nothing!

Now for the second part of our "magical equation."

Vultures, or griffons, are a genus of large birds of prey widely distributed in the warm climates of the Eastern Hemisphere. They resemble American vultures, but these two groups of birds are not closely related.

Typical scavengers are distinguished by predominantly dark plumage, an unfeathered head, and many also have an unfeathered neck.

American vultures are a family of birds found in temperate and tropical regions of North and South America. They also feed on carrion. Through convergence, they have developed a strong resemblance to Old World vultures and occupy a similar ecological niche.

So, griffon vultures and American vultures are relatives, but not very close. Due to their similar lifestyles and adaptive reactions, they appear identical to the untrained observer (non-ornithologist).

They are all large necrophagous birds (scavengers). Consequently, the food they eat is often completely spoiled.

And yes, all these birds have certain adaptations to such a lifestyle and diet. But this is far from the mythical “strong immunity” of voodoo priests and their gullible

clients!

The heads and necks of scavengers are bald. Pus or blood from a corpse flows over the unfeathered part of the body and drips off the vulture's body via a special feather “collar.” The high acidity of their stomach juice kills corpse bacteria and helps dissolve bones, while symbiotic bacteria in their intestines neutralize bacterial toxins. Periodically, vultures spread their feathers so that ultraviolet radiation can kill bacteria on their plumage. As you can see, this is quite far from the notions of voodoo shamans!

Another piece of the puzzle in the bigger picture. In a study on the prevalence of cancer conducted at the National Cancer Institute (Instituto Nacional de Cancerología) in Colombia, 73.5% of surveyed patients reported using various types of complementary and alternative medicine to treat cancer, and 2.2% used parts of the American black vulture for treatment. So, the prevalence of such treatment methods is very high!

Now, about how exactly derivatives of vultures and other necrophagous birds are used for treatment. Selected quotes from interviews with people who personally practiced such treatment methods:

> “Since the vulture eats garbage and doesn’t get sick, it must have a strong immune defense... since it eats everything while it decomposes, it must have good immune protection to avoid getting sick.”

“Since they live among garbage and don’t get sick, they have good immune protection and lots of red blood cells and antibodies.”

“They brought me a vulture from the plains, it lasted a few days in the house because my son was undergoing chemotherapy here; the animal lasted without food for about eight days.”

> “On the coast, there’s a person who catches them and feeds them the meat of people who died from cancer. The vultures’ immunity ‘learns’ to fight cancer. The blood of birds with trained immunity then costs more. There’s a waiting list for treatment with this person, it’s hard to get in.”

Consuming bird blood is the most common description of using it to treat cancer. In this sense, it’s important for the bird to be alive so that blood (preferably fresh) can be taken and drunk. For example, they describe it like this:

> “There’s a person who catches a vulture and brings it to us, he comes to the house and ‘prepares’ it so that a person can immediately drink the blood. He kills it and gives you warm blood, all the blood he gets from it. It’s no more than a small cup; a vulture doesn’t have much blood. The man charges about 70,000 for catching the vulture and preparing the whole ‘medicine.’”

(Note: this is not expensive. The amount in Colombian pesos is about 35 US dollars.)

Most people say they drink the blood in small amounts, usually with wine or berry juices. The purpose of the mixture is not only to mask the taste of the blood but also to add substances that ‘enhance the effect’ of the procedure:

“Here’s how it should be done: a small cup of blood is mixed with communion wine.”

As I mentioned, all these voodoo practices use a huge number of rituals from “folk Catholicism.” That is, strange superstitions and rites, not quite Christian-Catholic, but located somewhere near churches, cemeteries, or priests. Hence the use of “communion wine.”

...as well as “preparations” like “dead man’s hand,” “holy water,” “ashes from a deceased person’s hair,” or “an unwashed garment of a priest worn for a long time.”

It’s funny and not funny at the same time because this is no joke. All this is used along with parts of scavenger birds. By the way, they not only collect and drink fresh blood but also simply cook and eat broth, much like our folk practice of feeding the sick chicken broth.

And it’s not funny at all when you read researchers’ reports that the popularity of this kind of shamanic-medical practice is rapidly growing.

Chapter 24. The elephant and the lion: kings among beasts. The curse of status

What animals immediately come to mind when you think of Africa? For me, it's probably the elephant and the lion. These animals are symbols of the African continent. And from the very beginning of the exploration of the "Dark Continent," they have also been the animals that fall victim.

African safari? Of course, the first thing is to hunt and kill the outstanding, "regal" animals. "I killed a jackal," would sound pretty unimpressive in a gentlemen's hunting club. Not too cool.

That's how it was from the first day of Africa's exploration. And it continues today. Trophy hunting. Capturing animals for sale to zoos. And so on, and so on, and so on.

Elephant tusks ("ivory")—that's a whole separate topic. A huge industrial industry! For some reason, everyone I've talked to about ivory thinks this industry is in the

past. For some reason, people are absolutely sure that elephants haven't been killed for their tusks in ages. But that's not true. It doesn't match reality. The situation is such that attempts to ban the ivory trade haven't led to a complete prohibition. The demand and market for ivory still exist. And, accordingly, so does the harvesting of elephant tusks. It's just become illegal, poaching.

Let's take a closer look.

Ivory has been used as a material for crafting art objects since ancient times.

But the mass demand for ivory began with the onset of industrial production. Dice, dominoes, mahjong tiles in Eastern countries. And an absolutely colossal amount of ivory was needed for billiard balls, keys for pianos and keyboards. The 19th century became the century of elephant genocide for their tusks. Multibillion-dollar capitalist monopolies emerged around this commodity.

Since the mid-19th century, 90% of the world's ivory was sent to the cities of Deep River and Essex in Connecticut. A super monopoly with gigantic profits! And so the genocide of elephants continued until the advent of plastics, which replaced ivory in mass industrial production.

Africa has always been the main source of ivory. The very geographic name of the African Ivory Coast perfectly illustrates this. India and China never supplied ivory on such a massive scale.

However, the cessation of using ivory in mass production did not stop the slaughter of elephants. In the 20th century, the rapid growth of the global population spurred a new wave of demand—this time for works of art, expensive jewelry, and similar items for elite consumption. By the 1980s, the situation had become critical: elephants were becoming extinct across Africa. In 1989, the UN imposed a nine-year moratorium on the trade of ivory.

Apparently, knowing about this moratorium, many people believe that the trade in ivory is completely banned. But that's not the case. The ban was temporary; later it was lifted for several of the poorest countries. Many African nations, such as Zimbabwe, Zambia, Namibia, or Botswana, claim that the ivory trade is necessary both to stimulate their economies and to limit the number of elephants, which supposedly harm the environment. Many literally demand that wealthy Europeans and Americans come to them for safaris. Only, I think the issue is a bit different: it's not that "elephants have overpopulated," but rather "there's a

strong desire for dollars and euros, and lots and lots of them!"

Look, for example, at the scale.

In 2002, the UN partially lifted the ban on the ivory trade, allowing several countries to export a certain amount of ivory. Six years later, the UN-backed Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora granted China and Japan permission to purchase a batch of ivory from African government reserves in a one-time auction. About 44 tons were purchased from Botswana, 9 tons from Namibia, 51 tons from South Africa, and 4 tons from Zimbabwe. More than a hundred tons of elephant tusks—is that industrial scale or not?!

I believe we're witnessing an industry. Destruction on a truly industrial scale. But now this industry has become secret, hidden from the public: the UN supposedly banned it, but some are allowed—as an exception, in a 'one-time' auction of a hundred tons. And if needed, we'll hold another 'one-time' auction for the chosen few!

Plus, Africa is unstable, with ongoing wars. Large territories are unclear as to which country they belong. In Kenya, elephants are killed by poachers from Somalia, whom the authorities can't deal with. And so

on, up to the truly horrific 'hunting methods.' For example, in Zimbabwe in 2013, poachers got away with poisoning the soil in a section of the savanna where elephants grazed, using cyanide. Over 80 elephants died.

Now let's move on to lions. I chose these diverse animals, which are symbols of Africa's nature, for a reason: it allows us to show the similarities and differences in the industries dedicated to their destruction.

The curse of lions is that they are predators. Majestic. Beautiful. Remember: "The lion is the king of beasts"? And it's this very regality that becomes their curse: everyone wants a lion skin as a bedside rug. A hyena skin doesn't satisfy the status of the elite at all. So lions end up paying with their own hides for the whims of the wealthy.

According to a report by the conservation organization LionAid, in 1960, the lion population in Africa was around 200,000 individuals. Today, it is less than 15,500. In 25 countries on the continent, lions have already disappeared, and in ten countries, they are on the brink of extinction.

Another environmental organization, the Born Free Foundation, estimates the lion population in Africa to be slightly higher—at 25,000 individuals. In any case, three-quarters of the lions have been wiped out over half a century.

Using lions as an example, we can see the problem faced by any large predator: trophy hunters kill them for status on one side, while farmers hate and destroy them by any means necessary, labeling them as "nuisance animals." In our country, it's the same story with wolves, bears, tigers, and leopards!

In the Republic of South Africa (RSA), they've long implemented what is now being aggressively pushed here: enclosure hunting with the breeding of wild animals on farms. It's a gigantic business with simply fantastic profits. By very rough estimates, just the lion farms alone bring in over 60 million US dollars annually.

Currently, there are about 350 such farms operating in South Africa, housing around 10,000 lions. Lions are bred in captivity primarily so that trophy hunters from wealthy countries can then shoot them in enclosed pens.

Plus, the valuable trophies—the head and skin of the slain predator—also fetch a separate price, considering the processing and preparation by taxidermists.

Additionally, the farms profit from selling lion bones and other body parts for African and Asian traditional medicine.

Plus, there's an additional source of income from a more humane type of tourism: many people visit lion breeding sites to interact with lion cubs in "petting zoos."

A real death conveyor belt! From the money made by letting people "pet a cute little kitten" to selling bones to shamans and "healers" of folk medicine.

Chapter 25. Eating a chimpanzee — is it cannibalism or not yet?

“Almost all species of African great apes—chimpanzees, bonobos, and gorillas—are endangered primarily due to the expansion of human settlements and the destruction of animal habitats. Other factors include the illegal trade of apes to satisfy the demands of the entertainment industry and private zoos, as well as hunting them. The trade in bushmeat involves hunting for profit from sales. It should not be confused with subsistence hunting, where hunters aim to feed themselves, their families, and community members. When profit is the goal, everything is fair game. Poachers even kill females with their young, essentially sawing off the branch they’re sitting on. This undermines the foundations of sustainable development. In the Congo Basin and some other parts of Central and West Africa, poaching and the illegal sale of bushmeat pose the most serious threat to chimpanzees and other endangered species, which in turn leads to the

> disappearance of even more wildlife."

Quote from the report "Illegal Trade in Bushmeat in Central and West Africa" by Dr. Jane Goodall for the UN, 2014.

I want to draw readers' attention to the points that are not discussed, the points that are kept silent. Once again, we see the tip of the iceberg of a giant industry.

I will continue with a couple more quotes from Jane Goodall:

> "The bushmeat trade began in the 1980s when foreign logging companies appeared in Central and West Africa. Even when companies tried to operate with minimal damage to forests, they built roads, thus providing access to the forest depths. Hunters could reach previously inaccessible places, where various animal species, including chimpanzees, still abounded."

> "Many wealthy city dwellers in Africa believe that by buying bushmeat, they maintain their status, follow traditions, and stay true to their ancestral culture. Sometimes bushmeat even reaches members of the African diaspora abroad."

I specifically quoted an expert. This is not just my opinion. Look again at what I have already pointed out! It’s all the same, except for some local peculiarities!

First

By the last quarter of the previous century, the world had become wealthy. Entire social classes of fairly affluent people emerged everywhere—including in Asia and Africa; in countries that were once part of the USSR, too.

The presence of an expanded class of “people who can afford” led to the scaling of new ways to make money: entertainment, tourism. And, moving on to issues of wildlife conservation, this began the secondary exploitation of ecosystems. People flocked en masse to untouched corners of the wild! Trophy hunting tourism, mass production of so-called “medicinal” products from dismembered wild animals, the revival of various religious rituals involving animal sacrifices—all of this appeared around the same time worldwide!

Second

All these blatantly cruel businesses are initially created as industrial industries. In our country, for example, the ready-made and refined experience of trophy tourism is simply copied. Preparations of folk or Eastern medicine

from the bodies of slain inhabitants of the Russian Taiga are produced on an industrial scale. And all of this is initially tied to international distribution networks and supported by powerful advertising.

Third, and most dangerous.

We see the tip of the iceberg. All such businesses are in the “gray zone,” remaining secret. Many people simply know nothing about what’s happening. Information doesn’t reach the press or places where public discussion is possible. I mean not only the internet but also government bodies: they also have no reliable knowledge of the scale of the problems!

Now let’s move on to the national and cultural characteristics of Africa itself. How does “black” business differ specifically on the Black Continent? What exactly does Dr. Jane Goodall mean when she writes: “Many wealthy city dwellers in Africa believe that by buying bushmeat, they maintain their status, follow traditions, and stay true to their ancestral culture”?

For me, the answer is clear: it’s about cannibalism.

It's politically incorrect to talk about this; it's generally not done. People stay silent about it while continuing to actively "do business" with the Black continent. But personally, I consider the eating of great apes to be

cannibalism! And this is exactly what's called "following traditions" and "staying true to one's original culture."

This isn't the topic of my book, but I was simply shocked by how many cases of cannibalism are being recorded in African countries right now, in our time: media stories about how a commander of a faction orders the bodies of slain enemies to be eaten during a conflict.

If you want vivid details, read the biographies of Bokassa.

Jean-Bédel Bokassa, or Salah ad-Din Ahmed Bokassa, was the president of the Central African Republic from 1966 to 1976 and the emperor of the Central African Empire from 1976 to 1979. A bloody dictator-cannibal. And "cannibal" here is not in the figurative sense!

..."following traditions"...

..."staying true to one's original culture"...

The culture of cannibals.

And I have a question again, one I've asked readers many times: do all traditions need to be preserved?

And for us personally, in our country, do we need "royal and noble amusements" involving the killing of animals in the 21st century?

Do we need mass industries like "folk medicine" made from obviously ineffective animal body parts, which are created and advertised just to make money?

For reference

Today, it's clear that higher primates are definitely intelligent. To simplify, I'd say they have the intellectual level of a preschool child, fully aware of themselves and crying out of fear. Eating them for one's "dark traditions" is unequivocal cannibalism, in my opinion.

Chapter 26. Musk deer musk: not even the Red Book can save it

In my narrative, I drift away and return to the topic of our country, our Russian Taiga. And with horror, I realize that we are copying global practices. Perfectly copying! In no time, they consciously create a massive industry of death: from breeding once-wild animal species, to the paid killing of these poor creatures in trophy hunts, to butchering the carcasses for parts and selling them as various potions and remedies in so-called Eastern or folk 'medicine.'

Musk—it's the same in Latin, 'muscus.' One of the oldest known strongly scented substances, an ingredient in perfume with a history spanning thousands of years. True, original musk is the natural mixture of substances produced by the musk glands of the musk deer, not something else. 'Musk' is often used to describe the secretions of a whole group of different animals that produce similar strong-smelling substances in their musk glands, or even plant extracts with similar aromas—they write 'musky aroma.' But that's not it! The

genuine musk is the secretion of the musk deer. It alone has been the true musk since the times of Hellas and the Roman Empire.

This, unfortunately, makes the musk deer extremely vulnerable. So vulnerable that poachers continue to hunt this species of deer regardless of anything. And no 'Red Books' help!

In perfumery and medicine, the commercial value lies specifically in musk deer musk—largely due to its traditional use. It's a classic, the 'gold standard,' authenticity available only to the elite and only for a lot of money.

And I'll be honest right away: there is a certain real sense in this, unlike the overwhelming majority of various 'remedies' made from animal bodies, where there is simply no sense—just superstition and nonsense.

The musk deer produces the largest volume of aromatic substance with the strongest scent among all 'musks,' and this scent is unique and cannot be artificially reproduced. Externally, musk deer musk is a granular aromatic paste of reddish-brown color (musk grains), formed inside the musk gland of the male musk deer. Such a death sentence inside the body of a free

creature!

In general, animal musk is a product secreted by musk glands. In nature, it serves as a chemical signal for marking territory, attracting individuals of the opposite sex, etc., and also partly for lubricating fur. It's a complex of substances that cannot be reproduced in a laboratory—too complex a 'cocktail'!

The musk deer, in terms of appearance and behavior, occupies an intermediate position between chevrotains and true deer, or simply, actual deer. That is, it's a separate species of animal, most resembling a small (about a meter) deer. Unlike true deer, to which the musk deer is often mistakenly attributed, it has no antlers. Instead of antlers, males have long curved fangs protruding 7–9 centimeters from under the upper lip.

In the wild, the musk deer lives in the mountains—from our Eastern Siberia, Primorsky Krai, and Sakhalin to the Himalayas and Tibet. It's a taiga animal. Its favorite habitats are dark coniferous areas of the taiga with rock scatterings and outcrops. In these areas, the animals live sedentarily, occupying individual territories averaging from ten hectares in winter to thirty hectares in summer. Such sizes (huge sizes!) are necessary for the musk deer to feed in its natural habitat.

The musk deer's diet is dominated by epiphytic (growing on trees) and terrestrial lichens. In winter, they make up 60–95% of the diet. In summer, lichens are 'diluted' with needles, grasses, or ferns. But note, in winter, the musk deer feeds almost entirely on lichens hanging from trees. This type of diet makes breeding musk deer in captivity very difficult.

In the mid-20th century, around the 1950s, China attempted at the highest level (right at the government level) to organize the first musk deer farms—and they couldn't really do it until the 1980s. The survival rate of musk deer on farms was very low: they constantly had to capture wild musk deer to replenish the animal population.

Now they say the situation has improved, but breeding musk deer remains a challenging task; they still capture animals in the wild to replenish the population of 'captives.'

In our country, the first nursery for breeding Siberian musk deer in captivity was established in 2011.

Here's what was said about the organization of the nursery at the time by the Russian Geographical Society, under whose patronage the nursery was created:

> "Summing up the first year of the nursery's activities, we can confidently say that the work is yielding positive results. The nursery is located in the Priteleckaya Taiga, three kilometers from the village of Artybash in the Turochaksky District of the Altai Republic. Currently, efforts are underway to form the initial stock for creating a reserve population of the species. Twenty-six enclosures have been built, housing eight males, nine females, and five young born that year. Approximately 100 grams of musk have been obtained from live animals for scientific research."

It was announced that scientists are developing a technology to obtain musk from male musk deer during their lifetime as an alternative to the uncontrolled slaughter of these animals in the wild.

REFERENCE:

In Russia, four out of the seven existing subspecies of musk deer reside. The population of the Siberian subspecies has decreased from 140,000 to 34,000 individuals over the past twenty years. These are official figures; reality, as always, is likely even worse.

The last surveys of the Altai musk deer population, for example, were conducted in 1989. According to data from those years, their numbers in Altai were 40,000–45,000 individuals. Currently, according to the Russian Geographical Society, the population in the Altai Republic is only about four thousand individuals. A reduction of more than tenfold—the species in the region is on the brink of extinction!

Chapter 27. "Chilling the Blood": The Saiga Fever

Our country has a vast taiga belt. But the ecosystems of our enormous country aren't limited to just the taiga.

The saiga (or saiga antelope, depending on pronunciation) is an even-toed ungulate mammal from the subfamily of true antelopes. However, due to its unique anatomy, many classifications group it with the Tibetan antelope into a special subfamily called Saiginae.

But let's not delve too deeply into the intricacies of taxonomy. For literary storytelling, that's not crucial: let's just call it an antelope. So, the saiga is a small antelope about the size of a goat, living in large herds. Currently, saigas mainly inhabit Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Sometimes, herds of these antelopes wander into Turkmenistan. In Russia, saigas can be found in Kalmykia, the Astrakhan region, the Altai Republic, and the Volgograd region. A separate subspecies lives in Western Mongolia.

You'd think a herd animal that reproduces quickly wouldn't face much threat. But that's not the case: in 2002, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) classified this species as critically endangered. However, the saiga population later increased significantly. By 2023, the species was moved to the "green" category—species near vulnerable status. This means conservation efforts have led to a recovery in the saiga population.

Another fascinating fact is that saigas are among the oldest representatives of the so-called "mammoth fauna." They are the last survivors of the planet's extreme extinction events. Woolly rhinos are extinct. Saber-toothed tigers are extinct. And mammoths are extinct. But saigas survived! Likely, their fertility and small size helped them "slip through" extinction.

But will saigas survive now, in the modern extinction caused by humans? That's a big question!

In general, the relationship between saigas and humans is a thriller in itself! The plot is as wild and gripping as a bone-crunching Hollywood action movie!

Judge for yourself, just the chronology of events:

In ancient times, the saiga inhabited a vast territory of the Eurasian steppe: from the foothills of the Carpathian Mountains in the northwest and the Caucasus in the southwest to Mongolia in the northeast and Dzungaria in the southeast. During the Pleistocene, it lived in these "mammoth steppes" from the British Isles to Beringia, right up to the Bering Sea. Just as countless herds of bison roamed the ancient North American continent, saigas roamed the endless expanses of Eurasia alongside mammoths.

According to the historian Strabo's description, in the classical era of Hellas, saigas were considered characteristic animals of Scythia.

Historical records indicate an abundance of saigas in the territory of modern-day Russia and Kazakhstan as far back as the 14th to 16th centuries. Their migration routes spanned a vast area. Saigas were especially numerous between the Volga and Ural rivers.

The saiga population remained high until the second half of the 19th century, when excessive horn exports began. The horns were exported to China for use in traditional Chinese medicine. The high price and demand for horns led to mass hunting and the total destruction of the population.

After a rapid decline in the 19th century, saigas were almost completely exterminated in the 1920s.

But they managed to recover. By the 1950s, there were approximately two million individuals in the steppes of the USSR.

However, soon the saigas once again fell out of favor with the country's leadership. Starting in the 1970s, a weapon was specifically developed for hunting saigas, called the "Saiga"—a small-caliber automatic carbine.

The story behind the creation of this hunting rifle is quite an action-packed tale!

The first carbine of the "Saiga" family appeared in the 1970s. It was specifically designed after the First Secretary of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan, Kunaev, appealed to the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev, requesting the creation of a weapon to cull the saigas that were "terrorizing the republic." The issue was that migrating saigas were eating and trampling the crops planted in the steppes for agriculture.

The hunting squads, armed with smoothbore rifles, were unable to battle such a numerous adversary. So, the designers at Izhmash began developing the "Saiga" hunting carbines, and for four long years, the designers

and testers at Izhmash, together with representatives from the Main Hunting Department, tested and perfected the carbines.

Although, considering the example that in Australia, ostriches were shot with machine guns by regular military units, perhaps the "battle with the saigas" isn't all that impressive.

In short, the saiga were almost wiped out again. Their population sharply declined after the collapse of the USSR due to uncontrolled hunting and the demand for their horns in Chinese medicine. The thing is, some international conservation organizations, even influential ones like the World Wildlife Fund, began encouraging the hunting of saiga so that saiga horns could become an alternative to rhino horns for Chinese medicine needs—supposedly, to save rhinos, they suggested hunting saiga.

But the authorities realized in time, and the effort to save the saiga began promptly. In our country, to preserve the saiga population of the Caspian Lowland, the "Black Lands" reserve was established in 1990 in the Republic of Kalmykia.

And in 1996, the saiga was listed as a vulnerable species on the IUCN Red List.

By 2002, the saiga was given the highest threat status by the IUCN.

But the saiga survived the extinction of the mammoths, survived the mass uncontrolled hunting in the early 20th century, and has survived once again now. A fantastically resilient and adaptable species! In 2023, the International Union for Conservation of Nature moved the saiga from critically endangered to the "green" near-threatened category.

According to the IUCN, the saiga population reached one million. In the same year, 2023, the authorities of various countries estimated it even higher: Kazakhstan counted two million individuals, the official figure from Russia was about 38,000, and from Uzbekistan, around 500. In Mongolia, a census of the unique subspecies showed 15,540 individuals.

So, the saiga survived for the third time. But twice in a short period, this species was on the brink of complete extinction due to human actions.

The reason for the total annihilation of the saiga is singular: China with its traditional medicine. Current prices for saiga horn are around $150 per kilogram. That's big money, and poachers are willing to do anything for such profits!

For an example of the scale of financial interests: in June 2014, Chinese customs at the border with Kazakhstan discovered 66 boxes containing 2,351 saiga horns, valued at over $11 million.

Interest in the saiga horn is only growing. It is one of the basic ingredients in traditional Chinese medicine, used as an extract or powdered additive in elixirs, ointments, and drinks. It's also believed that the saiga horn can completely replace the rare rhino horn in most recipes, which drives demand even higher.

> "Saiga horns 'cool the blood' and are classified as having antipyretic and detoxifying properties. They are used in treating fever, 'internal wind,' 'internal fire,' as well as all major liver diseases."

And so, the unfortunate 'blood-cooling' saiga has been feverishly hunted for the last one and a half centuries: from total annihilation in the name of traditional Chinese medicine and big money to complete extinction, to population recovery during brief periods when it falls under state protection.

However, to paint a complete picture, it's worth noting that the use of this small ancient antelope's horns might be justified—which is rare: usually, such derivatives of animal body parts do not have real medical effects.

In the mid-1960s, at the Far Eastern Institute of Marine Biology of the USSR Academy of Sciences, experimental work was conducted that resulted in the creation of an original Soviet preparation from saiga horns, called "saitarin."

I quote a report on experiments from those years: "The study of saitarin showed that this drug is the first animal-derived sedative with effects specific to tranquilizers—anticonvulsant, hypothermic, and analgesic actions; it reduces arecoline tremor and decreases the orienting response."

There are more recent studies suggesting that saitarin acts as an adaptogen alongside pantocrine and pantogematogen—substances derived from antlers (young horns).

So, considering the real medical effects of saiga horns, the "saiga fever" won't end, and as soon as the state protection measures cease for any reason, saigas will once again be on the brink of complete extermination by humans.

Chapter 28. Maral, Izubr, and Roe Deer

The maral is a subspecies of the red deer. It lives in the mountains of Southern Siberia, primarily in the Altai region.

The izubr, or izubr, is a true East Asian deer. Its habitat is the Far East of our country and China.

The roe deer is a small deer. They are often called "goats," but that's not accurate. It's a deer the size of a goat. The roe deer is probably the most well-known hunting target among the deer family across Eurasia.

All types of deer are traditional hunting targets. They are among the "classic trophies." They are part of the old industry of recreational hunts for aristocrats, images of which are vigorously promoted in society by the beneficiaries of the modern, actively developing industry of paid killings.

Therefore, my grouping of different deer in one chapter is understandable.

But the modern industrial approach only began with generating income from the killing of wild animals. Now, this bloody business is rapidly expanding towards monetizing all aspects of animal killing. That's why I use the term "industry": around the animal-victim, the animal-object of killing, a multifaceted system of profit generation is built, where everything brings in money. Every step of the animal's life is monetized—from birth, through the trophy hunter-paid death, to the dismemberment of the animal's body and the subsequent sale of derivatives obtained from the carcass.

In the case of deer, from the large noble deer of various subspecies to the goat-sized roe deer, these aspects of the "industrialization of death" of wild animals are clearly visible.

Here, I only mention trophy hunting, focusing the narrative on the ritual, medical, and, to a greater extent, pseudo-medical applications.

Very often, this is more of a "ritual-medical" application, where practices from the realm of archaic medical beliefs are reproduced as rituals that have become meaningless.

In the modern world, in the 21st century, traditional Chinese medicine uses literally every part of the deer's body. They are still used today!

For medicinal purposes, they use: antlers, horns, glue from horns, bones, spinal cord, penis, testicles, meat, tendons, blood, gallbladder, thyroid gland, unborn fetus, tail, stomach, and so on, and so forth.

Literally one of the most sought-after "healing animals" in Chinese medicine! While researching the topic, I repeatedly encountered the description of the deer as a "healing source."

Of all these products, young deer antlers, known as velvet antlers, are considered a "healing jewel" in Eastern medicine.

Velvet antlers are deer antlers in their annual growth stage. They are tubular and not yet hardened, filled with blood, and covered with thin, velvety skin and short, soft hair. In Eastern traditional medicine, velvet antlers are widely used to preserve strength and youth.

For me personally, antlers were a revelation. It turns out I was mistaken for many years, believing that antlers actually have some medicinal properties. Apparently, this is not the case. At least, there is no scientific evidence to support this. But let's go through everything

in order and in more detail.

In our country, there has long been a developed branch of agriculture—maral farming. Maral farming is associated with Altai, where I was born and where I have personally visited maral farms (commonly known as "maralniks") many times. I have seen these beautiful noble deer up close.

The process of domesticating the maral began long ago: in the 1830s–1840s, the first maralnik appeared in the Bukhtarma River area in Altai.

By the end of the 19th century, there were already more than 200 maral farms operating in Altai, with a herd of 3180 marals. These are precise historical data.

Starting around the 1930s, the USSR began developing scientific justifications for the medical use of antlers. Various studies were conducted, numerous antler-based preparations were created, and methods for conducting health procedures emerged. In 1933, a separate research laboratory for antler deer farming was established.

By the 1970s and 1980s, well-known and still-used preparations were created: Pantocrin, Pantogematogen, and methods for conducting antler baths. All of this was supported by patents and various scientific works. Until

recently (before I began a detailed study of the topic for writing this book), I myself was convinced that the use of antlers in medicine was based on something more than medieval Eastern medicine.

In our country, antler deer farming is highly developed and, as you can see, has a long history. In the Altai Republic, there are over 70,000 marals. There are maral farms in the Altai Krai, and individual farms exist in other regions as well. Antler deer farming is also widely developed in Kazakhstan.

In the Republic of Altai alone, the export of antlers abroad amounts to 40 tons or more per year.

As it turns out, it's not Altai but New Zealand that is the world's largest producer of antlers, producing 450–500 tons annually. China comes in second with 400 tons each year. Russia produces only 80 tons a year. The U.S. and Canada are also noticeable on the global market, each producing 20 tons annually. I think the scale of the global market is clear. It's enormous!

But there's one big "BUT" that came as a surprise to me…

A review published in 2012 summarized the results of clinical studies, including three works focused on sports performance when using supplements from young deer

antlers. The conclusion was: "Claims that deer antler supplements are beneficial to human health are not supported by reliable clinical data from human trials."

Later, companies making health benefit claims about dietary supplements from deer antlers received warning letters from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regarding their marketing statements.

According to the FDA, these claims contradict the U.S. Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act because they "turn the product into a drug intended for the treatment, mitigation, cure, or prevention of disease," while deer antlers lack such scientific evaluation.

So it turns out that a multibillion-dollar international industry is based on an illusion, on a mistake in our thinking (a cognitive bias). The scientific foundations of the past are not confirmed by modern research.

I understand that many of my readers may have used Pantocrin or Pantogematogen, believing them to be effective medical preparations. Scientific reviews of the 21st century or data from the American FDA, which do not confirm what was considered a scientific fact in the 20th century, may not seem convincing to everyone. Not everyone will believe it.

And this is the key point: such industries are based precisely on "belief."

On the belief that if a "young antler grows, it is filled with growth stimulants," "immune bodies," and other "adaptogens."

But is that really the case if new studies refute the science of the past? Or should we reconsider and update our understanding of how "medicinal" the "mighty medicinal deer" really is?

Chapter 29. The "cucumber" from the sea as a Chinese aphrodisiac

Slow-moving creatures related to starfish and sea urchins—sea cucumbers—inhabit the ocean floor. Many might know these creatures by the name "trepang" or "trepang."

The word "trepang" is Malay. In Indonesia and Malaysia, trepangs have been harvested since ancient times for export to other Southeast Asian countries. Trepangs are commercially harvested edible invertebrate marine animals from the echinoderm phylum, class Holothuroidea. Sea cucumber, holothurian, trepang—all these names refer to the same strange marine organism, at least from our perspective.

Trepangs are harvested and now actively farmed in aquaculture, mainly in Southeast Asian countries. In the Far East of our country, the Far Eastern trepang—a wild species of holothurian—is harvested. It is more expensive and valued higher than its southern counterparts. It is believed that the more northern the

trepang's origin, the "stronger" it is.

Wild trepangs are harvested using a spear in shallow waters or simply collected by hand when they are exposed during low tide. Divers dive for them. They are gathered from the seabed using various types of bottom nets and trawls.

Trepangs are a common food product in Asia. Traditionally, they are blanched in boiling water and then dried or smoked for longer storage.

The sea cucumber, both in the past and now, is economically important for entire regions of Southeast Asia. It is considered a delicacy in countries like Malaysia, China, Japan, and Indonesia.

Beyond its culinary appeal, the sea cucumber is widely known as a stimulant and aphrodisiac in traditional Chinese medicine. There is scientific evidence supporting the existence of its purported medicinal properties.

Dietary supplements with sea cucumber are actively sold in our country—not only on various "folk medicine" websites but also on marketplaces and in pharmacies. Various extracts and concentrates from sea cucumber are sold both separately and as part of multi-component supplements.

I found the price for dried sea cucumber on one of the marketplaces at around 50,000 rubles per kilogram. So, this product is not cheap and is in demand here as well.

Here's a description of one of the dietary supplements as an example:

"A completely natural marine complex with Far Eastern sea cucumber for restoring men's health, boosting productivity, and enhancing the quality of sex."

Improves potency and revitalizes the male body. Effective for treating diseases of the genitourinary system and prostate gland with regular use. Successful in combating various forms of male impotence with regular use. A natural aphrodisiac.

Ingredients:

Hydrolysate from holothurians (sea cucumber, cucumaria).

Hydrolysate from shark cartilage and ray wings.

Contains more than 20 biologically active substances, including: glucosamine, triterpene glycosides (saponins), collagen, peptides, free amino acids, lecithin, vitamins A, B_1, B_2, B_3, and others, minerals (calcium, iron, magnesium, zinc, and others).

The key in advertising is precisely “cures impotence and increases male strength.” I already mentioned that in China and other Southeast Asian countries, sea cucumber is used in local folk medicine exactly this way, as a powerful aphrodisiac—a substance that stimulates or enhances sexual desire or activity.

But oops... this effect is not confirmed by scientific research!

However, in some cases, the medical use of holothurians finds scientific justification.

According to the American Cancer Society, despite the fact that sea cucumber is used in traditional Asian folk medicine to treat various ailments, “there is little reliable scientific evidence to support claims that sea cucumber is effective in treating cancer, arthritis, and other diseases.” But research is underway to study whether “some compounds found in sea cucumbers might be useful in cancer treatment.” And holothurian-based drugs are already being used experimentally: they are used in cancer treatment as an adjunct.

It has also been established that chondroitin sulfate and related compounds found in sea cucumbers may help in treating joint diseases.

Other studies show that sea cucumbers contain all the fatty acids necessary for a potentially active role in tissue regeneration.

Not only in our country, but worldwide, various pharmaceutical companies are now actively copying the traditional Malaysian medicinal use of this animal. They produce a wide range of dietary supplements from it: extracts, oil, cream, and even medicinal cosmetics.

It's easy to understand that even partial confirmation of the medicinal properties of sea cucumber products leads buyers to believe sellers who tout a whole bunch of unverified benefits. And demand is growing.

The excessive exploitation of sea cucumber stocks in many regions of the world spurred the development of sea cucumber aquaculture in the early 1980s. The Chinese and Japanese were the first to develop successful technology for cultivating one species of sea cucumber in commercial hatcheries.

In India, sea cucumber aquaculture was mastered by 1988. Now Australia, Indonesia, New Caledonia, the Maldives, the Solomon Islands, Vietnam, and other countries are successfully cultivating various types of sea cucumbers.

I came across data indicating that in recent years, sea cucumber production has sharply increased in Alaska. Wild sea cucumbers there are harvested by divers. Wild sea cucumbers from Alaska fetch a higher price than those farmed in more southern countries: they are considered "stronger."

The same fully applies to another northern species of sea cucumber—the Far Eastern trepang, which is harvested in our country. Supplies from the Far East territories are growing year by year—both legal and poached.

Chapter 30. The industry of death remains a secret

The average person in Russia, the USA, or Canada has no idea that the main goal of killing a wild animal on a hunt today is not for food, not for survival, but simply for entertainment.

People are constantly told:

“It’s for food, the small indigenous peoples have nothing to eat.”

“Killing is necessary, we regulate the population to save the animals themselves—if we don’t kill them, they’ll all die out.”

On the other hand, if the wealthy use tiger bone tinctures or rhino horn powder, people start to believe en masse that “they must have some secret knowledge, they wouldn’t spend money on nonsense.” Elixirs of immortality, various potions from living and dead water—these have always been part of historical legends and fairy tales, and they remain fairy tales in the modern world.

I've shared many terrifying things with you in my book, but this is just a fraction of the madness happening in the world today. According to UN estimates, from 2015 to 2021, illegal trafficking of animals and plants was documented in 162 countries, affecting around 4,000 species. The illegal wildlife trade is so global that it ranks fourth in the world by size, trailing only drug trafficking, human trafficking, and counterfeiting. Unfortunately, the main drivers remain beliefs and medicine: from traditional Chinese medicine to African cult practices like voodoo, juju, and others.

Right now, seahorses are being destroyed on a massive scale worldwide, as they are believed to cure asthma and impotence. In just the past ten years, over 5 million specimens have been confiscated, valued at more than 28 million euros. Smugglers supply seahorses globally, and demand is even growing in Europe and Latin America.

In China, eastern donkeys are slaughtered for gelatinous ejiao, which is used as a "blood tonic." The demand is so global that, according to various estimates, up to 5 million donkeys are killed worldwide each year! For instance, the Chinese donkey population has plummeted by 80% since 1990, and now imports come from countries in Africa and America.

In traditional medicine in South Africa, they are slaughtering every animal they can get their hands on: leopards, baboons, badgers, snakes, monitor lizards—basically everything. Scientists surveyed traditional healers in local areas and identified 71 species, among which the most frequently mentioned are the lion, sand cat, white-breasted cormorant, and others. Four out of five healers surveyed named the lion as one of the three most profitable "medicines" and reported that in recent years it has become the rarest ingredient.

The study is called "Wildlife Trade for Belief-Based Use: Insights From Traditional Healers in South Africa," and it was published in June 2022. Let me quote a few lines from the scientific article itself.

> "Three of the respondents have been earning income from traditional healing for 30 to 50 years, with the total monetary income of all respondents ranging from 30,000 South African rand (1,800 USD) to 120,000 rand (7,200 USD) per year. Our study confirms that a wide range of wild animal species are used in traditional healing practices in South Africa for both medicinal and magico-religious purposes. The traditional healers we interviewed

mentioned 20 common wild animals from various vertebrate classes, including birds, reptiles, mammals, and one invertebrate. Among them are several species listed on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. Traditional healers identified 32 different ways to use parts of wild animals, as well as 19 alternative plant-based remedies. Regarding lions, four out of five practitioners included the lion among the top three most profitable derivatives, and three practitioners reported that over the past 5 years, the lion has become the rarest or unavailable species."

"The industry of traditional, belief-based medicine makes a significant contribution to the local economy, providing employment for at least 133,000 people, most of whom are women from rural areas. According to previous estimates, its annual value is 2.9 billion South African rand (Mander et al., 2007). Across South Africa, people turn to traditional healers for a wide range of medical reasons, including (but not limited to) sexually transmitted diseases, arthritis, strokes, headaches, shingles, stomach issues, chest diseases, mental disorders, blood pressure/heart problems, HIV/AIDS, infertility,

> epilepsy, diabetes, and cancer (Cook, 2009). Traditional healing [as defined by the World Health Organization, is traditional medicine with therapeutic practices developed before the advent of Western allopathic medicine (Mthembu, 2021)] also encompasses conditions often attributed to spiritual or magical ailments, indicating significant sociocultural importance beyond treating medical disorders (Cook, 2009; Nieman et al., 2019). Thus, these traditional healing practices place equal or even greater emphasis on curing diseases of supernatural origin, such as harm from evil spirits and demons, spiritual illnesses, misfortunes, ancestral problems, witchcraft, and spiritual enemies, as well as helping to enhance intelligence, acquire wealth, and cast love spells (Cook, 2009; Nieman et al., 2019)."

“Our research confirms that a wide range of wild animals is used in traditional healing practices in Southern Africa for both medicinal and spiritual purposes. Twenty common names of wild animals were mentioned by five practitioners of traditional medicine, covering a range of vertebrate classes, including birds (vulture), reptiles (mamba and python), and mammals (eland, monkey, lion, leopard, giraffe, zebra, porcupine,

pangolin, aardvark, mole, hippopotamus, buffalo, bushbuck, and bat), as well as one invertebrate (cowrie shell). The listed mammal names represent at least 124 species (Supplementary Table 2), indicating the vast diversity of wildlife species potentially involved in the traditional healing industry of Southern Africa (Figure 4). This supports previous reports of hundreds of species in traditional medicine markets across the country, where the greatest species diversity also belongs to mammals (Whiting et al., 2013; Nieman et al., 2019). The South African National Biodiversity Institute reports that 563 mammal species are known in the country, indicating that 22% of the national mammal species are used by traditional healers for belief-based purposes (Barraclough, 2012).”

Interviews with traditional healers summarize the economic and cultural significance of traditional healing in South Africa. Of the 32 different ways of using parts of wild animals mentioned by all five respondents, the most common were "protection," "healing," "bone divination," and "power."

Less than half of all 20 species mentioned by practitioners were used in the context of medical treatment, whereas most species were used for at least one spiritual or magical purpose (except for bushbuck

and giraffe). This aligns with previous studies showing that many cultural groups in South Africa place equal or even greater importance on using animal parts and their derivatives for healing spiritual and magical ailments than for treating medical diseases (Nieman et al., 2019).

One respondent provided additional insights into how wildlife derivatives are used, especially in bone divination, describing how pangolin scales can indicate protection or, conversely, vulnerability due to the pangolin's ability to "curl into itself," and how monkey fingers can "point" to those acting against you or behind your back. This further confirms the spiritual-belief culture surrounding a significant part of the traditional healing industry in South Africa."

> "Participants in our study also mentioned the scale of illegal activities and the international nature of crime in the trade of lion parts in South Africa, noting the growing issue of people fraudulently posing as traditional healers but actually acting as wildlife traders, buying lion parts for resale on the international market rather than for personal use or for clients. In recent years, there has been an increase in both legal and illegal wildlife trade between South Africa and Southeast Asia, facilitated

> by the development of special economic zones in South Africa with a large number of workers from China and Southeast Asia, as well as a sharp increase in the volume of wildlife shipments to these regions (Nguyen and Roberts, 2020). Two of our respondents mentioned lion parts coming from abroad (from Malawi and Mozambique) and more frequent cases of parts being prepared for export to Asia. Although due to the small number of respondents we cannot draw definitive conclusions from this anecdotal data, we emphasize that the growing international nature of wildlife trade from South Africa means that any negative consequences of such activities could have a global effect."

These are the kinds of comments directly from specialists who conducted research in South Africa. It's interesting that now workers even from Southeast Asia are coming to Africa to establish wildlife derivative supplies directly to their countries.

And there are numerous scientific papers. There are documentaries, reports from international organizations about the scale of the "industry of death" worldwide! But in reality, the situation isn't improving—people continue to live in ignorance, and animals are being wiped off the face of the Earth at an ever-accelerating pace.

Chapter 31. The fewer animals left, the more people want to kill them

Unfortunately, this is the plain truth. Studying the extermination of wild animals worldwide, I come to one simple truth: the fewer animals there are, the more people want to order their killing or kill them personally, say, on a trophy hunt. The frenzy sparks competition and a rapid rise in prices, which fuels the entire industry. This is how the planet is being wiped clean of animals.

A wealthy Russian official travels to Africa to shoot the last wild cats, then takes photos next to the dead lion or cheetah. And he does this deliberately, publicly, so everyone can see how much power and money he has. He's photographed by Brits and Americans, who are also there to kill animals as part of the group! Along with them are Norwegians, Australians, and members of the wealthy class from other countries.

An African, whose job is to accompany the "white sahibs," whispers in the official's ear: "Brother, I can get you a discount on a license to kill a white rhino. Just say the word!"

The official looks at the wealthy from other countries, and it's important to him that they see how powerful and rich he is! It's crucial to publicly display his greatness, to receive approving and envious praise.

"You know what, I've decided to kill a rhino! Yes, I'm going to take down this dinosaur right here and now. How much does it cost?"

“$100,000, sir,” replies the dark-skinned fellow, “but the offer is only valid today! The regular price is $150,000.”

A few hours later, the wealthy are driven by car to a rhinoceros that was raised in captivity and isn't afraid of people at all. The official steps out of the car almost right next to it, loads the weapon mounted on a tripod, takes aim, and, laughing, kills the unfortunate animal.

Next comes the photo, the approving envy of other hunters, and each of them starts planning their next trip for the sole purpose of killing a rhino. Now, each of them wants this more than anything in the world! To kill—just to kill.

Kill to take a photo.

Kill so everyone around can see it.

Kill.

Now I want to delve into some scientific facts and show you the real scale of this madness: the speed at which humans are wiping animals off the planet!

According to the latest scientific data, humanity has erased nearly three-quarters of wild animal populations from the face of the Earth in just half a century. This data is presented in a report by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF)—a very deep and detailed work covering the entire globe. Scientists say that from 1970 to 2020, the average size of studied vertebrate groups decreased by 73%.

Thus, in just the last 50 years, due to human actions, only about 25–30% of animals remain on the planet on average. All the rest have been destroyed. They're gone! They no longer exist.

I want to provide you with real statistics by region, showing where and by how much populations have declined:

Latin America and the Caribbean — minus 95%

Africa — minus 76%

Asia and Oceania — minus 60%

North America — minus 39%

Europe and Central Asia — minus 35%

This has happened over the last few decades, essentially the lifespan of one generation—those born in the 1970s. In planetary terms, this is nothing, dust, just a moment! One breath in and out of the Earth.

Due to the chain reaction from the destruction of large vertebrates, all life on the planet is dying out. According to scientific research, over 40% of all insect species are currently declining in numbers, and a third are already on the brink of extinction. This means the Earth's biosphere's immune system itself is being destroyed—of which insects, plants, and all animal species are a part.

Freshwater populations worldwide have decreased by about 85% over these same years, terrestrial by 69%, and marine by 56%.

The average figure for the entire planet is 73%. And yes — this is already a CATASTROPHE. To grasp the scale, imagine that almost all wild fauna has gone extinct over an area the size of Europe and Latin America. Imagine waking up tomorrow, and the entire continent of South America is devoid of life; the same catastrophe across all of Europe. Just scorched earth.

That's roughly how much the animal population has declined worldwide over the past few decades.

Currently, about one million species could disappear in the coming decades — far more than the number of people in any natural or man-made disaster. And according to scientific estimates, the rate of species extinction on the planet is thousands of times higher than any natural background rate.

You could write an entire book on this, linking biological chains into a single global ecocide and showing how the killing of one species of large animals leads to the gradual extinction of dozens, hundreds, or maybe even thousands of other species of plants and animals. That's how our nature is structured — everything is interconnected by the tight threads of Life.

And I genuinely don't understand why, despite all the scientific assessments, evidence, and massive research efforts, the world continues to devour the life around it. And I also don't understand how the secret industry of death continues to exist in all of this!

Let me repeat: the fewer animals remain, the more people want to finish off the last ones. Scarcity creates a panicked desire in people to possess what others cannot.

Epilogue

I want to draw readers' attention to the things that aren't talked about. The things that are kept quiet.

The commercial form of hunting, which is now being aggressively introduced right here at home, in our Russian Taiga, is a completely recent form of perversion.

Yes, in the not-so-distant Soviet Union, there was amateur hunting, and there were societies of amateur hunters. But it was nowhere near an industry—meaning an organized and expanding system for systematic profit.

This perversion is being introduced worldwide, and it's now gaining wild popularity in the USA and Canada, and developing in South America. Essentially, this is what I've been constantly talking about: the dying trophy hunting market in Africa, due to the continent being cleared of animals, is now shifting the flow of money, and a huge number of trophy hunters are looking for new places to 'harvest' animals.

Yes, hunting as a trade existed both here and in other countries. In our country, there was even a historical period when all state income was based on fur, on the pelts of killed animals. This devastated the natural ecological systems so much that our country's reserve system was created to save the last of the animals. The first reserve—Barguzinsky—was established as a sable reserve to restore the population of the fur-bearing animal, the sable.

Yes, in the times of kings and queens, there were indeed hunting reserves for aristocrats, where commoners weren't allowed. Only the nobility, the wealthy, had the right to hunt. But those times are long gone. And today's wealthy, various hunter-deputies, fantasize more about the 'hunting privileges' they wish they had. But, alas, many of their unhealthy fantasies about the 'right of noble lords to kill' are being realized in the form of laws.

For one simple reason: since about the late 20th century, a multi-billion-dollar industry has been created around the destruction of wild animals. And this industry of death has features that allow it to remain a secret.

Everything I've told you in my book is a real horror, actively supported at the highest level. Around 2018–2019, my team and I conducted expeditions to

protect wildlife in several regions of Russia. We also investigated reports from my readers in the Tver region about roadside stands selling parts of wild animals' bodies. I went there for a public inspection to document it personally.

Indeed: dozens of stalls along the roads. Various types of animals, killed right there in the Tver region, hang on the stands and are sold to passing tourists. And the demand, it seems, is huge. Especially horrifying are the little bear cubs, or rather their stuffed forms—these babies were tortured, gutted, and filled with artificial material.

I published photos of this 'shadow business,' including extensive materials on my official website. After that, regional media were set against me, publishing discrediting materials about me, literally trying to defend the right of the illegal (and it was clearly illegal) business to trade in parts of wild animals' bodies.

When we investigated further, we found that this entire 'business' is covered by local authorities. Law enforcement agencies are well aware of it! But no one touches it. The fact is, animals are killed in local forests by wealthy hunters from Moscow, who can get there in just a few hours from the capital. Deputies, high-ranking

law enforcement officials, and representatives of large metropolitan businesses often visit here.

Coming to the regions around Moscow, they engage in killing animals for money, drink vodka, and then head back home. Sometimes they take a small trophy from the killed animal—say, a bear cub's paw or a fox's tail! And everything else is gutted by the owners of the tourist bases and distributed to the stalls to sell the 'offspring of the wealthy' to ordinary people.

So, it all starts at the top, and until the system changes—nothing will change. In an instant, all smuggling routes could be cut off, poachers caught, and bans on the sale of any parts of wild animals' bodies could be introduced, allowing our fellow creatures to live peacefully away from humans. But no! Today, in wealthy circles, within government systems and big business, a public example is set of how one 'should' behave: killing animals for fun.

Among those who govern entire nations, there are far more superstitious people than in the general public. They secretly hide a piece of a dead wolf under their white shirts and ties, pressing it close to their chests. In the evenings, they wash down powder from a white rhino horn with expensive cognac, convincing

themselves of a surge of incredible strength and protection against black magic.

This is where the secret industry of death begins.

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