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Edited by Sanwaree Sethi
International League for Human Rights

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DOMESTIC

1. Deputies Want Some Independence Again

For a long time, a number of deputies from the previous Chamber of Representatives have pushed for an expansion of parliamentary powers. They wanted their own accountants and their own law-making center. But their efforts were fruitless.

However, nobody thought that these questions would be brought to the Chamber floor immediately after the beginning of work of the new lower house of parliament, which is entirely pro-presidential. During a session, Mikhail Sosonko, the Chairman of the Permanent Commission on State Construction, Local Self-Management and Rules noted that deputies will start work on the bill, "On the National Assembly of Belarus" practically anew.

Sosonko said that for several years efforts to work out the bill with the presidential administration have been unsuccessful. Some deputies have raised the question of creating a separate accounting department and independent financing for parliamentary activities which are currently financed through the president's administration.

However, according to BelaPan, the Chairman of the Chamber of Representatives, Vladimir Konoplyov had advised Sosonko not to rush the introduction of the bill in the Oval Hall but instead to hold another commission session to familiarize all the deputies with the document. In the

speaker's opinion, the deputies should convince the president of the necessity of expanding their rights and functional duties.

Will this work out for them? The last parliament had more teeth, due to the presence of the group Respublika, and it still achieved nothing.

Deputy Olga Abramova is against raising this question in parliament. "As a deputy in the last parliament, I was against this bill because it is just superficial broadening of the parliamentary powers, not real broadening. The real expansion of powers can happen only through a constitutional referendum. Therefore, because of such limitations of the draft law, I do not support it," she said.

However, Abramova does not exclude the possibility that these small steps may lead to the real expansion of political powers for the Chamber of Representatives. "Declarative actions are also useful. But only if they are intermediate. It is possible we could arrive at a political component in this way. If, of course, the president agrees to it.

The president has the right to veto any law. However, the parliament can override the veto if two-thirds of the house votes.

Vasily Novosyad, an ex-deputy of the Chamber of Representatives, who initiated consideration of the bill during the last parliament, said that much will depend on the Speaker's and the coordinating body's position. "At least such expansion of the parliament's powers is necessary. But first of all, all the deputies must realize this," said the politician.

[Text translated by the Editor]

Source: Sergei Pulsha; BelaPAN; November 26, 2004; www.naviny.by

2. Conditions in Belarus Worsen for Opposition After Referendum

Conditions have worsened considerably for the democratic opposition in Belarus, since last month's parliamentary elections when a national presidential referendum was adopted to remove any term limits on the current president Aleksandr Lukashenka, according to a noted Belarusian journalist.

Svetlana Kalinkina, former editor-in-chief of *Belorusskaya Delovaya* and recent recipient of the Committee to Protect Journalists' annual International Press Freedom Award, told an RFE/RL audience last week that prosecutors in Belarus are beginning to assemble criminal cases against opposition candidates who campaigned against the presidential referendum, which was adopted in an election widely criticized by international election monitors. Members of the democratic opposition are also being denied exit visas for travel abroad, said Kalinkina.

While reviewing the methods used to guarantee the election of government-endorsed candidates and the adoption of the presidential referendum, Kalinkina concluded that "normal democratic elections are no longer possible in Belarus." She noted that "the unfair ways and means" the regime used to achieve its results "are nothing new or unusual, because we have seen them under the Soviet regime." During the election campaign, Kalinkina said, only government-sponsored newspapers were allowed to operate, sometimes printing million-copy editions, while 19 regional newspapers were closed in order to eliminate any dissent and local television and radio coverage was censored to prevent any anti-referendum discussion.

Kalinkina asserted that it is not a surprise that only one country recognized the results of the parliamentary election and the vote on the presidential referendum. That country was Russia, where the lower house of parliament, the State Duma, declared the referendum free and fair even

though Russian President Vladimir Putin did not acknowledge the results. The lack of global acceptance can be attributed to blatant violations reported by the OSCE international monitors on election day, who found that ballot boxes used at the polls were switched with boxes containing pre-determined ballots, and ballots supporting opposition candidates were later found uncounted in nearby dumpsters. Among the protest actions taken throughout Belarus concerning the presidential referendum results, Kalinkina said, residents of the city of Volkovysk have begun a hunger strike with the hope that local prosecutors will file cases against officials who allegedly engaged in election fraud.

Kalinkina noted that the current government's "ideological machine" is very efficient in manipulating public opinion -- "it has created a propaganda miracle" that portrays Lukashenka as a hero who has "prevented war," "defends the poor and fights the rich," and "saves his country from foreign enemies" because "everyone is against Belarus." Despite the government's success in maintaining power, Kalinkina said, the October 17, 2004 election was fundamentally different from the 2001 presidential election. The majority of people who voted for Lukashenka's re-election in 2001 did not support his 2004 constitutional referendum. It is the "absence of an alternative candidate" that keeps Lukashenka in power, according to Kalinkina.

Source: RFE/RL; November 28, 2004; www.rferl.org

3. Belarus Seizes Suspects in Murder of US Reporter

Belarusian police said Monday they had arrested several people, including ethnic Chechens, in connection with the murder in Russia of a U.S. reporter.

Paul Klebnikov, editor of the Russian edition of Forbes magazine, was shot dead outside his Moscow office in July. Russian police have said his murder might have been Chechen separatists' revenge for revelations he made in his last book.

Four Chechens, suspected of being linked to Klebnikov's murder, have already been detained in Russia.

A spokesman for Belarus' Interior Ministry said Monday several other suspects, including two Chechens, had been seized in the former Soviet republic.

"Their detention was a joint operation of Belarus Interior Ministry and the KGB (national security service)," Gennady Glebcha said. "They will be handed over to Russia."

Glebcha gave no further details. Russia's Interfax news agency quoted police sources as saying four people had been detained altogether.

While Klebnikov had written a book that heavily criticized Chechen separatists, commentators have said his murder was more likely a contract killing possibly linked to Forbes' publication of a list of Russia's 100 richest businessmen.

Chechens are often linked to major crimes in Russia, which has been fighting separatists in the Caucasus region for the past 10 years.

Rebels have carried out a series of attacks, including the Beslan school siege that killed more than 330 hostages, and analysts say that arrests of Chechens for other crimes may be part of a campaign to undermine their reputation as a whole.

Klebnikov, a U.S. citizen of Russian origin, had worked for Forbes since 1989.

Source: Reuters; November 29, 2004; www.reuters.com

4. Case Against Former Belarusian Minister Sent to Court

The criminal case against Mikhail Marinich, the former Belarussian foreign economic relations minister and former Belarussian ambassador to Latvia, has been passed to court, Marinich's lawyer Vera Stremkovskaya told Interfax.

She said that the case against her client has been passed to the Minsk District Court, and, in accordance with the Criminal Code, the judge now has 21 days to examine the materials of the case and decide whether it will be examined further.

Marinich is charged with two crimes: illegal actions involving firearms, munitions and explosives and large-scale or organized theft through abuse of authority.

He is accused of illegal possession of firearms and seizing office equipment that was temporarily given to the Belarussian Business Initiative Association.

Earlier, charges against Marinich on theft or damage of documents or stamps were dropped in accordance with the current Belarussian law on amnesty.

Marinich was detained by the Belarussian KGB on April 26, 2004 and has been in detention for over six months.

Source: Interfax; November 24, 2004; www.interfax.ru

REGIONAL

5. Kuchma, Lukashenko Discuss Situation in Ukraine

Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma has informed President of Belarus Aleksandr Lukashenko about the results of the second round of the presidential election in Ukraine and the assessment of the election made by different international organizations, spokeswoman for the Belarussian president Natalia Petkevich said on Wednesday.

During the telephone conversation on Wednesday Leonid Kuchma thoroughly analyzed the situation in Ukraine and prospects for its development, the spokesman said.

President Lukashenko has invited Leonid Kuchma to pay a private visit to Belarus.

Source: Itar-Tass; November 24, 2004; www.itar-tass.com

6. Neighbors watch Ukraine protests with interest

Images from Kiev of tens of thousands of demonstrators ready to defend democracy and stand up to a government they feel no longer represents them, brings to mind the revolutions that swept Eastern Europe in 1989. What happens here could influence events in neighboring countries.

The dramatic events in Ukraine are still unfolding and no one is predicting how they will turn out. Will Kremlin-backed Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovych survive the wave of demonstrations and Western condemnation and ascend to the presidency he claims is his? Or will Viktor Yushchenko's protest movement mushroom into a popular revolution that sweeps the old guard from office, in a victory for representative democracy? However things turn out, every move is

being closely watched around the CIS. Some suggest a Yushchenko triumph could provide a boost to pro-democracy movements in countries such as Belarus and Azerbaijan. While others say that even a successful revolution in Ukraine has little chance of being repeated anywhere else. Belarus is perhaps the biggest question mark. Last month, the world watched as police in Minsk beat back and arrested demonstrators protesting the outcome of a referendum vote that ostensibly will allow President Alyaksandr Lukashenka to hold on to power. The police showed their willingness to use violence and the pro-democracy protestors their inability to muster broad support from the population. Would a Yushchenko win in neighboring Ukraine change the equation - emboldening demonstrators and a population that has remained largely passive up to now? Opposition leader Mikola Statkevich seems to believe so, as he tells RFE/RL. But he warns that if Yanukovych emerges as the victor, with Moscow's backing, then the democracy movement in Belarus will have been further weakened. "If the democratic opposition comes to power in Ukraine as the result of the elections, it would mean that the things happening in Belarus are an anomaly. And any anomaly, so to say, dissolves rather quickly. But if they work in Ukraine according to the 'Belarusian scenario,' it would mean that our country only leads a sad trend," Statkevich says.

Independent sociologist Valery Karbalevitch, also speaking from Minsk, agrees. He notes that aside from Georgia, there has not been a change in the post-communist old guard in any of the CIS countries since the fall of communism, so a Ukrainian "revolution" could serve as an important example. "A Yushchenko victory, which would be a victory with broad support from the population, could inspire the Belarusian electorate, the democratic electorate. It could give them strength and renewed confidence. Up to now, across the CIS, the political forces or clans that came to power have not given up their power. I am talking about Russia, Central Asia - where the rulers are in office for life - Azerbaijan where there has been a father to son succession," Karbalevitch said. But Karbalevitch says there is an interesting twist. Lukashenka, unlike Russian President Vladimir Putin, has been careful not to ally himself too closely with Yanukovych. This is reflected in Belarusian television's coverage of the story, which has been at times more balanced than Russian state-controlled broadcasts. And that is because, paradoxically, a Yushchenko win might carry some advantages for the Minsk regime, according to Karbalevitch. If Moscow's relations with Kyiv were to suffer, Russia would almost certainly draw closer to Lukashenka. Conversely, if Moscow and Kiev become even closer allies, Russia is likely to be less generous in its subsidies to Minsk. "Ideologically, Yanukovych is closer to Lukashenka and his regime, because Yushchenko is a pro-Western politician etc.... But Lukashenka understands that if Yanukovych emerges as the victor, relations between Belarus and Russia will be worse. But if Yushchenko triumphs, Moscow will stay close to him, to Lukashenka. He understands this and that is why he has tried not to put all his eggs in one basket and has kept his distance and neutrality," Karbalevitch says.

Central Asia's upcoming elections

Over the next three months, all of the Central Asian countries - except for Kazakhstan - will hold legislative elections that will once again focus attention on the imperfect state of democracy in the region. Could a triumph for Yushchenko's forces in Ukraine inspire change? Regional expert Alex Vatanka, editor of "Jane's Sentinel Security Assessments" does not think this is likely. He notes that Ukraine's democratic forces have been building up to this week's events for several years, gaining local representation and parliamentary seats that allowed them to form a powerful bloc. The overwhelming support for these parties in western Ukraine combined with the government's apparent reluctance to unleash massive force against its opponents, gives Yushchenko and his allies a chance at pulling off their revolution. None of those factors exist in Central Asia. "You don't have the kind of internal momentum as you had in Ukraine and at the same time, whatever momentum there might be, you can bet your money that the response from the state will be very harsh," Vatanka says. Geography also plays an important role. Vatanka argues that the US and Europe feel they cannot sit back and allow democracy to be so obviously repressed in Ukraine - a large European country of key strategic importance - which also represents a counterweight to Russia. That is unfortunately not the case in Central Asia. There, alliances with governments that promise to cooperate in the fight against terrorism, appear to take precedence over support for

dissident democrats. "Following the enlargement of the European Union, it's bordering places like Slovakia and Poland. They're next door and there are huge issues you've got to worry about - security issues. You need Ukraine to cooperate on a number of big issues such as security, border control, immigration, transnational crime. Therefore, [for Europe] to sit back and say 'let's just see how things unfold' isn't really an option," Vatanka says.
Hope, despite the odds

Despite the long odds for democracy advocates in Central Asia, opposition representatives say the events in Ukraine are giving them hope. Exiled Uzbek opposition leader Muhammed Solih, had this message, which he conveyed to RFE/RL by telephone. "We support the struggle of the Ukrainian opposition for democracy, under the leadership of Viktor Yushchenko. Ukraine's democratic forces have come through the first stage of this struggle with honor. We wish them a final victory. This victory will be a victory for those who still believe in, and have not lost their faith in freedom," Solih says. As Ukrainians determine the fate of their nation, the eyes of the world - and their neighbors are focused on them.

Source: Jeremy Bransten; RFE/RL; November 26, 2004; www.rferl.org

7. Zubr Coordinator: "Shoulder to Shoulder With Ukrainian Patriots"

"A wave of democratic non-violent revolution is gathering strength in Eastern Europe. The nation has chosen its president, and now is assisting in his legal rise to power. I am very glad that hundreds of Belarusians are in Kiev now, mostly young people, struggling shoulder to shoulder with Ukrainian patriots. History has once again proven that the fate of all authoritarian regimes is dismal. It is remarkable that Viktor Yushchenko swore with his hand on a Bible to be faithful to Ukrainian people. It means that the God is with Ukrainians. I would also like to recall the words of Yulia Timoshenko, when she said of Belarus, "Liberation of the Eastern European countries is to start with Ukraine." Zubr coordinator Vladimir Kobets is in Kiev and is participating in the rallies of democratic forces. The Belarusian movement Zubr, as we have reported, actively cooperates with the Ukrainian youth movement "Pora".

Source: Zubr; November 27, 2004; www.zubr-belarus.com

INTERNATIONAL

8. Beware this Post-Stalinist Threat

The outcome of the Ukraine power struggle is vital to the future of Europe and the EU

Life isn't long enough to know everything about everywhere. Or even to know that much about anywhere. One of the big advantages of having the old Soviet Union around was that it Hoovered up a great job lot of nations and peoples and allowed them all to be posted in the same pigeon hole. What did you need to understand about Azerbaijan (to pick one at random) when it was part of that big place ruled over by Brezhnev or Khrushchev? And the Cold War also permitted the tidy-minded on both sides of the ideological divide to flatten out the bumps and reduce the complexities to a series of simple 'for us or against us' calculations.

Now it's hard to keep track of it all. It's like something written by Malcolm Bradbury or produced by Jetlag Travel Guides. No sooner has Slaka re-elected the kleptocratic President Splodj, than people waving red and green flags are in the streets of neighbouring Molvonia demanding the right of the bauxite producing province of Plit to secede from the crisis-ridden (and hitherto completely unknown) republic.

So, when you encounter a situation like that of the Ukraine it's tempting to settle for one of the great simplifications. With two candidates, both called Viktor, battling each other for the presidency and their partisans making accusations about each other, you look for a story to make sense of it all. One of the most obviously available is 'pro-Western democrats struggle for freedom against corrupt hang-overs of previous regime', and another - increasingly popular on the left - is 'warring factions in divided country head for civil war, intervene at your peril'. In the post-Iraq world these two narratives can also be fairly easily reduced still further into 'pro' and 'anti' American.

Somewhere in the middle of these stories is the place itself and its people, 48 million of them: miners in Donetsk, intellectuals in Kiev, farmers on the great wheatlands, waiters in Sebastopol and postmen in Kharkov. They are citizens of a large European country, and the possibility of its descent into civil strife or civil war should be as frightening as anything that happened in the Balkans.

So far, however, this crisis seems to have been handled by the lads and lasses in the Department for Half-full Glasses. In Belarus (up and to the left a bit) last month there was one of those dodgy referendums, overturning a constitutional provision limiting the sitting president to two terms. Alexander Lukashenko will now be able to run for a third term in 2006. 'An authoritarian style of rule is characteristic of me, and I have always admitted it,' Lukashenko said in August 2003. 'You need to control the country, and the main thing is not to ruin people's lives.' This notion of control may explain why the occasional Belarussian opposition figure has simply disappeared. Meanwhile, south in the 'stans, ruling presidents rarely manage to garner less than 90 per cent of the vote, and vociferous opponents rarely manage to stay alive.

Yet in the Ukraine apparent widespread electoral malpractice has not sealed an election for a sitting candidate. And nor, as I write this, has the situation degenerated into violence, despite the fact that the Ukraine has not been a model democracy. According to the CIA world fact-book (despite its provenance, actually rather useful) of January 2004, in the Ukraine, 'true freedom remains elusive, as the legacy of state control has been difficult to throw off. Where state control has dissipated, endemic corruption has filled much of the resulting vacuum, stalling efforts at economic reform, privatisation, and civil liberties'. There were reports from international observers of intimidation at polling stations, of attempts at electoral fraud, and voting figures from some electoral districts seemed implausibly unanimous.

But in the face of a determined and surprisingly youthful opposition, it has not been possible for the old regime simply to impose the 'results' of this election, nor to use force to crush the demonstrations. Either that, or they simply haven't wanted to behave in a brutal manner. And so far the demonstrators (who seem an articulate and moderate bunch), have also handled themselves with restraint. In Kiev the protesters have been joined by flower-wielding police cadets, army officers and TV journalists.

At the time of writing both the Viktors - Yanukovich, supposed winner of the presidential election, and Yuschenko, the challenger - are due to meet under the auspices of various international figures, to try and find a way out of the impasse. That never happened in Belarus.

And here's a second reason for feeling warm about this cold place. For all the talk about the wedge driven between the EU and America over Iraq, what has been evident from the response to events in the Ukraine is how much we have in common. The EU and its representatives, the governments of the new EU states which border the Ukraine and the US State Department have all been saying much the same thing. The consequence has been to give immense encouragement to those Ukrainians for whom the issue is a straightforward one of democratic standards. And for those of us who cannot see how the world will be a better place if Europe and America are at each others' throats, this solidarity is encouraging.

It also shows that there are some places where it is easier for the EU to go than for America. Eurosceptics, many of whom claim that democracy lies at the heart of their objection to the Union, should reflect on the role of Javier Solana, the EU's foreign policy chief, who has been leading mediation attempts in Kiev. This is how it should be. This was the whole idea. The EU's political purpose was originally about bringing the continent together, not in currencies, but in peace and democracy.

Hopefully the consequence of any talks will be the holding of new elections under international supervision, the results of which should be respected by all participants. Hopefully too, the victor of such an election will reflect on the extraordinary division that seems to exist between the western and eastern parts of the Ukraine - a division that makes the much-bruited red-state/blue-state schism in America look tame. Perhaps some regional autonomy does make sense.

But a word of warning here, to oneself as much as to anyone else. This business, from the point of view of America or Europe, must be about democracy and pluralism, and not about geopolitics. The people of the Ukraine deserve a proper democracy, not because they are more likely to do business with the West or join Nato, but because it is a superior form of government. What the Ukrainians then decide to do about their relations with other countries is up to them.

Corrupt and oppressive regimes end up being dangerous for all of us. They create tensions that cannot be resolved and grievances that cannot be dealt with. The simple fact that they are 'on our side' in any particular struggle in no way lessens the long-term dangers that they represent. In fact it magnifies them.

And Russia has to understand this process too. There is absolutely no reason why the Russian people should regard a democratic Ukraine as a threat. But by siding too obviously with people who may be guilty of rigging elections and suppressing opposition, Russia could turn millions of people against it.

The question is in the balance, right now. What happens in the Ukraine, even if none of us were thinking much - if anything - about that country just a month ago, may decide whether democracy or neo-Stalinism rules in the important lands to the east of the EU. Keep your fingers crossed.

Source: David Aaronovitch; The Guardian; November 28, 2004; www.guardian.co.uk

9. Belarus to Expand Ties With United Arab Emirates

Belarus intends to deepen and expand the bilateral relations with the United Arab Emirates, Belarusian President Aleksandr Lukashenko stated on November 29, upon accepting the credentials of Mohammed Ali Abdurahman Al-Oseimi, the plenipotentiary ambassador of the UAE to Belarus.

"We will maintain all the good that exists in our current relations. In our country, we treat UAE representatives with respect and honor. The most favorable conditions will be created for the activities of this government's ambassador," Lukashenko pointed out.

The Belarusian leader emphasized his good relations with the head of the UAE, Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed al Nahyan. He extended well wishes on behalf of the Belarusian people.

The UAE ambassador, in turn, confirmed his readiness to strengthen bilateral ties with Belarus

[Text translated by the Editor]

Source: BelaPAN; November 29, 2004; www.naviny.by

HUMAN RIGHTS & INDEPENDENT MEDIA

10. Bandarenko: Kuchma's Administration Ordered that We be Seized

Four Belarusian citizens detained in Ukraine were released yesterday after a court order regarding the absence of any crime. They returned to Minsk today. The coordinator of civil initiative Charter'97 Dmitri Bandarenko, Zubr coordinator Vladimir Kobets, one of the leaders of the European coalition "Free Belarus" Dmitri Barodko and Zubr press secretary Aleksandr Atroschankov were detained on the night of November 24th/25th at the Ukrainian-Belarusian border by Ukrainian law enforcement. The Belarusians were on their way from Kiev, where they had been taking part in protest rallies in support of Viktor Yushchenko at Maidan Nezalezhnosti (Independence Square). Today, they say that officers who participated in arrest said the orders came from Kuchma's Administration. We offer you Bandarenko's the first-hand account of the event:

On November 24, we left for Minsk from Kiev on the Kiev-Moscow train, number 86. When we approached the Ukrainian-Belarusian border, a frontier guard entered our compartment. She checked our passports and collected our immigration cards. After that a train employee came to our compartment and offered us some tea. We were surprised a bit, that employee would offer us tea while we were crossing the state border, but we decided that it was a demonstration of good service. Aleksandr Atroschankov immediately fell asleep after having drunk the tea. I felt a little funny: I felt dizzy, my tongue grew numb. After that people in military uniforms and camouflage entered our compartment. They demanded our passports for search again. They refused to produce their documents and rudely demanded that Dmitri Barodko and I go into the neighboring compartment for search. At that time Atroschankov was unconscious, and we could not bring him round. The customs officer searched my things and said that everything is fine. When I left the compartment, two guys in leather jackets unexpectedly ordered me to leave the carriage. It was unexpected, as I had sports shorts, a T-shirt and slippers on, and it was midnight, frost and a snowstorm outdoors. I told that I am not going to go out. My first thought was that the Ukrainians are going to put me into the hands of the Belarusian special services. But when these people started to drag me out of the carriage, shouting: "So what, bastard? You have come to us to support Yushchenko, haven't you? You'll pay for this!" I understood that they are from Donetsk. They failed to pull me from the carriage, that is why border guards, people in camouflage and, for some reason present in the carriage policemen, rushed to their assistance. They tried to knock me off my feet and handcuff me with my hands behind my back. There were six of them. They twisted my arms. I called for help, and resisted, but when my left arm cracked, they managed to put handcuffs on. I have experienced many incidents, but this situation was one of the most terrible ones.

Beside me, Atroschankov and Vladimir Kobets were handcuffed. Barodko was locked in one of the compartments. We asked those people: who are you? Why we were detained? What are the charges against us? They told us, that we would find out everything in a short time. After that we were allowed to dress ourselves, and taken to the platform. Only people wearing uniform and leather jackets were standing on the platform. There were no passengers at all in the carriage and on the platform. About 20 people in total took part in our detention: frontier guards policemen, and people camouflage. When I was standing in the carriage my face to the wall, a person came from behind and said in a low voice: "We are just carrying out an order from Kiev. After the train departed, we were taken to the building of Gornostaevka frontier post. We were called one by one to the building for search and interrogation.

When we made a request to policemen, they said that they are not in command, and the Security Service of Ukraine (former KGB) is responsible for that, you should address them. People in mufti, and a senior lieutenant in camouflage interrogated me. They were interested in the purpose of my visit to Ukraine. I said that I am a human rights activist, and showed my accreditation in the press center of Viktor Yushchenko. I said that I work for the Belarusian Internet site Charter'97. They told they know that I participated in the meeting at Maidan (Independence Square). They

called a doctor; she gave me an anaesthetic injection, and put a bandage on the arm. She said that it must be a fracture. At that moment we realized, that at least nobody wanted to kill us. We were released only 18 hours after the detention by the decision of the court.

I consider it revenge from the Yanukovych-Kuchma clique. Hundreds of the Belarusians and dozens of the Belarusian flags at Maidan were a convincing proof of which side the Belarusians are on. I assumed that it could be a joint operation of Kuchma and Lukashenko's special services. We saw which methods Yanukovych and Kuchma's people were using and are ready to use. I have made sure that the slogan "Band, get out!" is not a figure of speech, but an urgent need for Ukraine. The Ukrainians, be vigilant! These people would go to any length. They are ready to follow every order, however cruel or illegal it may be. They surrender only to force. I am sure that such violent actions are going on all over Ukraine against many Ukrainians with democratic views, and not only against us Belarusians. The criminals must know that soon they are to stand trial of the Ukrainian people. If the new authorities of Ukraine would decide to investigate this incident, we are ready to help them. We heard the people who arrested us say, "We are going to get the Georgians as well."

We are with you, Ukraine!

[Text revised by the Editor]

Source: *Charter 97*; November 26, 2004; www.charter97.org

11. Volha Zavadzskaya's Appeal Rejected by Minsk City Court

On November 25, the Minsk City Court, headed by judge Lugina rejected an appeal submitted by Volha Zavadzskaya, mother of the ORT TV-Channel cameraman kidnapped four years ago. She was attempting to appeal the Central City District Court of Minsk's resolution to ignore her complaint against the actions of the Prosecutor General's Office. Mrs. Zavadzskaya was intending to sue the General Prosecutor's Office officials, as the latter had disregarded her demand to resume the criminal case on her son's kidnapping.

On July 20, 2004, during Aleksandr Lukashenko's press conference, the Prosecutor General declared that he had "certain documents", which could transform Zavadzky's case into "an anti-case". Referring to this information, Mrs. Zavadzskaya submitted a statement to the Prosecutor General's Office, demanding a resumption of the criminal case, taking into account the "newly appeared" actuality regarding her son's kidnapping.

Surprisingly, the Prosecutor General's Office did not respond to her appeal at all. Therefore, Mrs. Zavadzskaya made up her mind to appeal against the illegal actions of the Prosecutor's Office officials. She submitted a claim to the Central City District Court of Minsk. The latter rejected to consider the claim due to "the lack of jurisdiction". Thus, Mrs. Zavadzskaya had to readdress the claim to the higher court.

[Text revised by the editor]

Source: *Belarusian Association of Journalists*; November 25, 2004; www.baj.ru

BUSINESS

12. Foreign Investment in Belarus Soars by 17.4%

Foreign investment in Belarus soared 17.4% year-on-year to \$1.007 billion in January-September, the Belarusian Economics Ministry said in a press release, quoting the Statistics and Analysis Ministry. Foreign direct investment (FDI) rose 29.5% to \$631.6 million or 62.7%

of the total foreign investment, and loans and credits accounted for 37.3%, compared with 56.8% and 43.2% respectively in January- September 2003.

Foreign investment was highest at \$320.7 million in retail and catering (31.8% of total foreign investment), \$264.2 million in industry (26.2%) and \$162.4 million in communications (16.1%).

Portfolio investments grew 16-fold year-on-year to \$376 million.

Enterprises from Minsk received 59.2% of the foreign investment, the Minsk region 19% and the Gomel region 6.3%.

Source: Interfax; November 29, 2004; www.interfax.ru

13. Five CIS States Plan to Speed Up Container Railway Link with China

The Council for transport policy of the EurasEC Integration committee, which unites Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kirghizia, Tajikistan and Russia, will meet in the Belarussian city of Brest Friday to consider a possibility of accelerating container railway shipments to China.

The Belarussian Transport ministry told Tass the meeting will “discuss the possibility of accelerated passage of container trains” from the Chinese city of Urumqi to Brest, to Novosibirsk in Russia and to Moscow.

Urumqi is located in the Xinjuang Uygur Province that borders on Kazakhstan, Kirghizia and Russia.

Source: Itar-Tass; November 26, 2004; www.itar-tass.com

The Belarus Update is a weekly news bulletin of the Belarus Human Rights Support Project of the International League for Human Rights, www.ilhr.org. The League, now in its 62nd year, is a New York-based human rights NGO in consultative status with the United Nations, the Council of Europe, and the International Labor Organization. To send letters to the Editor or to subscribe/unsubscribe please contact Sanwaree Sethi at sanwaree_ilhr.org.

For current and back issues, list of events, and more information about the League's advocacy activities in Belarus, please visit the Belarus Update website at: www.belarusupdate.org.

The Belarus project was established to support Belarussian citizens in making their case for the protection of civil society before the international community regarding Lukashenko's wholesale assault on human rights and the rule of law in Belarus.
