

July 28- August 03, 2005

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## DOMESTIC

### **1. Park of High Technologies to Start Active Work Immediately Following Signing of Corresponding Presidential Decree**

The park of high technologies Intellectual Belarus should start active work immediately following signing of the corresponding decree of the Belarusian president. Aleksandr Lukashenko has set forth such a task at today's meeting about this document.

The meeting will listen to the report by Belarusian premier Sergei Sidorsky and chairman of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus Mikhail Myasnikov on development of the infrastructure of the park and on proposals from potential residents, including from foreigners.

The president has once again confirmed that he approves of the idea to advance information technologies in the republic to make this field more profitable. "But I support an idea that can be made a reality", Aleksandr Lukashenko pointed out.

*Source: BelTA; August 2, 2005; <http://www.belta.by/engnews.nsf>*

### **2. Sidorsky: Belarus Exports USD 50-100 Million Worth of Information Products Yearly**

Setting up of Silicone Valley's analogue in Belarus will both promote the national science and strengthen Belarusian export of software and technologies, prime minister of Belarus Sergei Sidorsky has told today during a meeting dedicated to the draft decree "On park of high technologies Intellectual Belarus".

According to the prime minister, the republic, which is leading among other European states in the software development, has gained certain experience in stimulation of information technologies development. In particular, Belarusian State University has founded a Center of Information Technologies which proved to be effective. Thus, over the last two years, its associated members issued Br78 billion worth of information products. According to experts, annual exports of information products from Belarus range from USD 50 to USD 100 million.

As BelTA has been told in the president's press service, the park of high technologies will be constructed on the territory of the Minsk Akademgorodok on the area of 106,8 hectares. The status of the park's resident will be awarded not only to the companies located there, but also to the legal entities outside of it which are working on concrete projects. The extraterritorial right would allow to introduce the regime of the park in every individual case for any organization of the country which is working on important projects if this meets the interests of the Belarusian state.

*[Text revised by the Editors]*

*Source: BelTA; August 2, 2005; <http://www.belta.by/engnews.nsf>*

### **3. Belarus's Lukashenko Fires Senior Presidential Office Officials**

Belarusian President Aleksandr Lukashenko has dismissed a number of senior officials of the presidential property department, including the department's deputy chief Vasily Sudas, chiefs of the audit department and the wildlife preserves and nature management department, the presidential press-service has said.

The prosecutor-general has been asked to dismiss a district prosecutor in the Vitebsk Region. The officials were fired for failing to take timely action to stop abuse by some officials of the Braslav Lakes national park that resulted in heavy damage to the state.

*Source: Itar-Tass; August 2, 2005; [www.itar-tass.com/en/](http://www.itar-tass.com/en/)*

#### **4. Belarus Puts Foreign Adoptions in Limbo**

President Aleksandr Lukashenko is cracking down on adoptions of Belarus children by foreigners, calling the practice "a national disgrace."

"Our children should be brought up and educated in Belarus," said Lukashenko. "Adoption by foreigners should be maximally reduced."

The fate of children adopted by U.S. nationals and other foreigners has become a hot topic in Belarus and Russia amid media reports of children being abused or slain by their new parents, as well as by concerns about human trafficking and declining populations, ABC News reported.

Since 1991, when Belarus gained independence after the collapse of the Soviet Union, some 1,000 children have been adopted by Americans and another 1,500 by Italians.

"It's not a small figure, for a small country like Belarus," said Andrei Kozhan, first secretary at the Belarus Embassy in Washington.

Kozhan said the Belarus government has adopted new regulations that give preference to native families seeking adoptions over foreigners and require adoptive parents to report to Belarus authorities on the children's welfare for five years, instead of three.

*Source: Monsters and Critics.com; August 2, 2005;*  
[http://news.monstersandcritics.com/europe/article\\_1038363.php/Belarus\\_puts\\_foreign\\_adoptions\\_in\\_limbo](http://news.monstersandcritics.com/europe/article_1038363.php/Belarus_puts_foreign_adoptions_in_limbo)

### **REGIONAL**

#### **5. Ayatskov's Destiny Under Question**

The Union State is not concerned with questions regarding the arrival in Minsk of Dmitry Ayatskov, Plenipotentiary Ambassador of Russia in Belarus, according to a statement made during Wednesday's press conference by Vasily Sholodonov, the head of the Permanent Committee of the Union State in Minsk.

When answering a question posed by the Agency of National News [Ann.ru – Ed.], Sholodonov noted that the delay with Dmitry Ayatskov's arrival in Minsk had no impact the work of the Permanent Committee of the Union State and of its representation in Minsk.

Commenting a Russian NTV network news segment regarding the fact that the delay in the appointed Ambassador's arrival is unprecedented in diplomatic practice, Vasily Sholodonov said that questions of whether a Russian ambassador is needed in Belarus and who will be the ambassador "should be addressed to the Foreign Affairs Ministry."

At the same time on Wednesday, citing the Permanent Committee of the Union State, information that Dmitry Ayatskov could lose his post was circulated among Belarusian journalists. Vasily Sholodonov did not comment on this information.

Nevertheless, according to Moscow sources, the situation with Ayatskov should be resolved in the nearest two days.

"The confusion surrounding the appointment of the new Russian Ambassador in Belarus will be resolved in the nearest two days," Ivan Makushok, press secretary of Pavel Borodin, State Secretary of the Union State of Russia and Belarus, said about it in his interview to the *Ekho Moskv*y radio station.

The scandal erupted after Ayatskov's press conference in Saratov. "It's hard to break Lukashenko, very hard; he is firmly planted on his feet. He needs to understand one main thing: Russia is Russia and Belarus is Belarus; Putin is Putin and Lukashenko is Lukashenko," said the former governor of Saratov.

*[Text revised by the Editors]*

*[Text translated by the Editors]*

*Source: Annews.ru; August 3, 2005; www.annes.ru*

## **6. Common Economic Space Set to Lose Ukraine**

The Common Economic Space (CES) uniting Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan may be entering its final weeks, a leading business paper reported Monday.

Vedomosti wrote that Ukraine had refused to enforce common customs regulations and bodies, and that the other members did not want to see the CES as simply a duty-free trade area.

The CES concept, which was unveiled in February 2003, involved a duty-free trade area, a customs union, common rules to support producers and supranational bodies to regulate tariffs. In all, 93 agreements were to be approved.

Ukraine put the brakes on integration from the very start. For example, it demanded that duty-free trade agreements be made priorities and that countries be allowed to integrate with the new entity at their own pace.

A session of the High Level Group on the union, which was held on Friday, saw significant differences emerge between the one-time allies: Ukraine, fearing for its prospects of joining the European Union and World Trade Organization, agreed to sign fewer than half of all the proposed treaties - mostly free-trade ones - and blocked crucial common regulators and customs restrictions in trade with third countries.

Experts told *Vedomosti* that the CES was pointless without Ukraine. Anatoly Martynov, the head of the Center for Trade Policy and Law, said the other members could introduce similar regulations under Eurasian Economic Community, and the Russia-Belarus Union State. An official in the Russian Industry and Energy Ministry said the leaders of the four countries could announce that Ukraine was withdrawing from the CES at a summit of the leaders of the Commonwealth of Independent States on August 26.

*Source: RIA Novosti, August 1, 2005; <http://en.rian.ru>*

## **7. Final Report On Creation of Legal Base for Common Economic Space Signed**

The High-Level Group on the Common Economic Space (CES) submitted its final report to the presidents of Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan summarizing the talks on creating a regulatory base for the CES and focusing on differences on this matter.

"The report has been approved. As to the meeting between the heads of state, we made pertinent proposals and took pains to advance it because there are a number of issues that cannot be solved without the presidents," Belarusian Deputy Prime Minister Andrei Kobyakov said after the Group's 22nd session.

Russian Industry and Energy Minister Viktor Khristenko said the main results reflected in the report were a summarization of the group's activity and proposals on the agenda of the quartet's summit.

"The report and the agenda hold all that has been done concerning the priority package of documents," Khristenko said.

He also said they contained materials for the second package of documents related to "the next stage of integration, or the Customs Union." "The agenda also includes the issue of determining the format of the further development of the CES," the official said.

*Source: RIA Novosti, July 29, 2005; <http://en.rian.ru>*

#### **8. President Lukashenko: Belarus Ready for Friendship With Neighbors**

Belarus is ready to normalize relations with Lithuania and its other neighbors, President Aleksandr Lukashenko said Friday at the meeting with new Lithuanian ambassador Petras Vaitekunas.

"If the Lithuanian leadership wants normal relations in the political and diplomatic spheres, we are ready for this anytime," Lukashenko said. He added that Belarus did not impose its friendship or partnership on Lithuania and other neighbors, such as Poland, Ukraine, etc.

Lukashenko said all countries need friendship with their neighbors. "No matter what union Lithuania has joined, it understands this very well."

Lukashenko accused Western countries, including Lithuania, of orchestrating a velvet revolution in Belarus at a Tuesday session on domestic and foreign policy.

He said Lithuania and Poland were controlling Belarus via media and other means and trying to involve Ukraine in these activities.

*Source: RIA Novosti, July 29, 2005; <http://en.rian.ru>*

#### **9. Khristenko: Common Market to Include Three States At First**

The common economic space that Russia authorities want to create will initially embrace Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan, Russian Industry and Energy Minister Viktor Khristenko said Friday. The high-level group for a common economic space will hold its last session this Friday before the presidents from Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine hold a summit.

Khristenko said common market experts from Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine had finished drafting all 93 agreements on the common market. He added that currently Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan had harmonized the agreements while Ukraine had approved only a half of them.

"The Ukrainian side has started to change its approaches to its role and participation in the common market," he said.

Any attempt to transform documents will deteriorate their quality, Khristenko said.

"Three countries [Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan] have come to a mutual understanding, while Ukraine holds a special position and this issue has to be resolved by the presidents," the minister said.

At their summit, the presidents will discuss a new format of 25 agreements proposed by Ukraine to decide what to do, he said.

"So far, I do not see a possibility for Ukraine to join the common market with 14 agreements. At the first stage, the situation is simple: you either sign the whole package of 93 agreements or a part of it, but this package will not work for you unless you sign the whole of it," Khristenko said. Khristenko added that representatives of the Central Asian republic of Uzbekistan would also attend a session of the high-level group Friday.

"They expressed the desire to participate as observers," he said.

Khristenko said Uzbekistan could, in theory, become part of the common economic space.

*]Text revised by the Editors]*

*Source: RIA Novosti, July 29, 2005; <http://en.rian.ru>*

#### **10. Arrival of Russian Ambassador Ayatskov to Minsk Delayed Over Urgent Matters**

The arrival in Minsk of the new Russian Ambassador to Belarus, Dmitry Ayatskov, has been delayed, the information and press department of the Russian Foreign Ministry said on Friday. "Indeed, Ayatskov's recent press conference in Saratov drew attention and evoked a certain response in mass media," the ministry said.

"However, it is quite another matter," the Foreign Ministry said. "It is about the need for an additional thorough study of several pressing issues determining the current prospective tasks of building the Union State and developing integration cooperation between our countries as a whole," the ministry noted.

"As far as the presentation of credentials by Ayatskov in Minsk is concerned, the date for this will be determined after coordination with the Belarusian side, as is customary in the diplomatic procedure," the Russian Foreign Ministry stated.

*]Text revised by the Editors]*

*Source: Itar-Tass; July, 29, 2005; [www.itar-tass.com](http://www.itar-tass.com)*

### **INTERNATIONAL**

#### **11. Belarus to Stop Visits of Foreign Emissaries**

Belarus will stop visits of foreign emissaries, who stir up inter-ethnic discord, in line with international legal norms and national laws, Maria Vanshina from the Belarusian Foreign Ministry's press service said on Tuesday.

She referred to an unofficial Monday visit of Polish Sejm Vicemarshal and leader of the Citizens Platform party Donald Tusk to Grodno.

"Trips of foreign emissaries, who give instructions to our citizens, look like a direct interference in internal affairs of a sovereign state against the background of a search for ways to settle the crisis in the Belarusian-Polish relations," she said.

The Belarusian parliament and the State Security Committee assessed the Tusk visit in a similar way.

The Belarusian media said that Tusk took part in an unauthorized rally in Grodno and supported members of the Polish Union in Belarus, who object to the Belarusian Justice Ministry's invalidation of the Union congress.

*Source: Itar-Tass; August 2, 2005; [www.itar-tass.com](http://www.itar-tass.com)*

#### **12. Belarus Arrests Heads of Polish Group**

Belarusian police arrested two leaders of an ethnic Polish cultural group on Tuesday after seizing the group's headquarters, raising already heightened tensions between the neighboring countries.

The former president and vice-chief of the Union of Poles were arrested in the western Belarusian city of Grodno, according to Angelica Boris, head of the group representing ethnic Poles.

Poland's Foreign Ministry declined comment on the arrests. Last week, it recalled its ambassador from the capital, Minsk, in protest of what it called heavy-handed tactics against the Polish community.

Warsaw has been pushing for democratic reforms in Belarus, angering the autocratic regime of President Alexander Lukashenko. The former Soviet republic's minority Polish community has complained of being harassed in a government crackdown.

The former president of the cultural organization, Tadeusz Gawin, was sentenced to 15 days in jail for publishing a manifesto against government attempts to wrest control of the organization.

Police also remained outside the group's headquarters for a fifth day on Tuesday. Police seized the building last week, temporarily detaining several of the organization's leaders.

The Belarusian ambassador in Warsaw said he had been urged by his government to ease the friction that has been worsening over the last weeks.

"The atmosphere is very tense," Pavel Latushka was quoted saying in Polish daily *Rzeczpospolita*. "The foreign minister recommended that ... I work to overcome the crisis, to enter into dialogue with the Polish authorities."

Authorities in Minsk are worried about the ethnic Polish minority of about 500,000 -- or 5 percent of the population -- concentrated in Western Belarus. Lukashenko has accused them of trying to foment revolution ahead of elections next year.

The State Department on Tuesday condemned the Belarusian government's actions, with its spokesman Tom Casey saying they "are part of a continuing pattern of harassment against those seeking to peacefully express their views."

Casey said that in the past two months, Belarus has closed 80 percent of the local offices of three major parties, jailed activists, and levied massive fines against the few remaining independent newspapers.

*Source: Ryan Lucas, Newsday Inc.; August 2, 2005;*  
<http://www.newsday.com/news/nationworld/world/wire/sns-ap-poland-belarus,0,4851355.story?coll=sns-ap-world-headlines>

### **13. Majority of Belarusian Diplomats Working in Poland Send Their Children Home**

The majority of the Belarusian diplomats working in Poland have sent their children back home, BelTA was informed by spokesman of the Belarusian embassy in Warsaw Vsevolod Glushakov.

He has noted that his 15-year-old daughter Anastasia went home when a group of people in black T-shirts holding candles and shouting slogans appeared by the embassy and the mission started getting threatening calls insulting the diplomats and Belarusian authorities.

The children of Russian diplomats who were attacked by Polish bandits went to the same school as Anastasia. When the father called the girl and told her what happened she was shocked. Anastasia is worrying about the boys who are still in hospital.

Vsevolod Glushkov noted that Russia demanded an official apology from Poland and sent a strong note to the foreign ministry of the country. The Polish authorities' response was that Russia was aggravating the situation around the incident.

According to the official, the anti-Russian sentiment in the Polish mass media is fanned alongside with the campaign aimed against Belarus.

At present there is a 24-hour police post near the Belarusian embassy in Warsaw. Moreover, necessary measures have been taken to protect children of Belarusian diplomats who are still staying in Poland as well as all the employees of the diplomatic mission, Vsevolod Glushkov stressed.

*Source: BelTA; August 2, 2005; <http://www.belta.by/engnews.nsf>*

#### **14. Popov: Political Hysteria in Poland to End With Presidential Election in This Country**

Political hysteria in Poland will end together with presidential election in this country, chairman of the permanent commission on international affairs and contacts within the CIS of the Chamber of Representatives of the National Assembly of Belarus Vadim Popov said at a press-conference on August 2.

Serious foreign debts, unemployment, difficult situation with farmers constitute the Poland's present day issues. In order to divert attention of the electorate from grave internal problems the Polish leadership is resorting to an old political trick, namely, to seeking for an external enemy. This reason lies beneath the fabricated issue of the Union of the Poles in Belarus.

Vadim Popov has condemned actions of certain Polish officials which aim at interfering with the internal affairs of Belarus. In particular, on August 1 vice-speaker of the Polish Sejm Donald Tusk came to an unauthorized meeting in Grodno. But the VIP-person did not bring a 'full-house' effect to the meeting which numbered no more than 50 with the majority representing occasional passer-bys.

*[Text revised by the Editors]*

*Source: BelTA; August 2, 2005; <http://www.belta.by/engnews.nsf>*

#### **15. Sergei Martynov: Belarus is For Strong But Just OSCE**

Belarus wants to see OSCE strong but just, foreign minister of this country Sergei Martynov has told journalists today.

In his words, together with Russia Belarus insists on reforming this organization. "It is necessary to level the thematic and geographic misbalance in the OCSE activities. Today virtually all its actions are centered in Central and Eastern Europe as well as in Middle Asia and Caucuses. As if Western Europe had no problems. Sure it has," the minister emphasized.

Speaking about the thematic misbalance he meant that the humanitarian issues prevail over the military and political ones. "We do not doubt the importance of the former. However the political and military issues are not least important as they ensure international security. To take the OSCE expenditures, for instance, just 4 percent of the organization's budget is allocated for the economic and ecologic spheres. Belarus, as a country greatly affected by the Chernobyl catastrophe, is interested in drawing attention to these spheres, Sergei Martynov noted.

The head of the foreign ministry also spoke about the OSCE activities in terms of election monitoring. When elections are held in Belarus or Kazakhstan, thousands of observers are sent to these countries, while only 25 people go to monitor US elections. I can't call it equal conditions, the minister stated. Apart from that, predominantly representatives of states located to the West of Vienna come to monitor our elections. "Let amend all that. We believe that if OSCE fails to adapt to the new realities and fails to reform, it will gradually disappear. We would not wish such an end to this organization. We want to see OSCE strong but just," Sergei Martynov concluded.

*Source: The National Center of Legal Information of the Republic of Belarus; August 1, 2005; <http://law.by/work/EnglPortal.nsf/0/89B3F6375E508458C22570510022052A?OpenDocument>*

## **16. The Tyrant of Belarus**

'Europe's last dictator,' as the Bush administration has aptly tagged him, is up to it again. This time, President Alexander Lukashenko of Belarus has gone after ethnic Poles living in western Belarus, accusing them of "fomenting revolution." On Wednesday, Lukashenko sent riot police to seize the headquarters of an association that represents the 400,000 Poles and hauled in several leaders for questioning. Poland then pulled out its ambassador in Minsk, charging Lukashenko with trampling on human rights. The state-run news media in Belarus have often accused Poland of using the Polish minority in Belarus to stir up a revolution like the "orange revolution" in Ukraine a year ago, something Lukashenko has vowed to block. When dictators of his kind start identifying minorities as enemies, there is every reason to be alarmed.

Lukashenko, a former state farm manager, was first elected president of Belarus in 1994, at the age of 40, on a wave of popular resentment against the madcap privatization and massive corruption that characterized the first post-Soviet years. Indeed, Belarus has no oligarchs, and has not suffered the massive dislocations of Russia and other former republics. But Lukashenko achieved this essentially by freezing Belarus in time - Soviet time. Hardly anything has been privatized, television programs focus largely on agricultural exhortations, and Lukashenko even brought back the Soviet republican flag, minus only the hammer and sickle. Above all, Lukashenko has established himself as the complete Soviet-style dictator.

When his Parliament rose up against him in 1996, he chucked it out and set up a rubber-stamp Parliament next door, while strengthening the reach of the KGB (as it is still called). Since then, he has ruthlessly clamped down on any opposition, and any foreign organizations he suspects of working against him. Even Russia, with which he longs to reunite, is wary of Lukashenko.

But the pressures on Lukashenko have been steadily growing from the West, first of all Poland, Lithuania and Latvia - now all members of NATO and the European Union - and Ukraine. In the United States, the Belarus Democracy Act passed by Congress last year authorized payments to nongovernmental groups. Like Yugoslavia's Slobodan Milosevic, one of Lukashenko's heroes, the Belarus dictator is likely to become ever more dangerous as the pressures grow on him to exit. Nonetheless, out he must go, and the sooner the better.

*Source: The International Herald Tribune; August 1, 2005; www.iht.com*

## **17. EU May Fund Broadcasts To Belarus**

The European Union says it is exploring the possibilities to support independent media outlets such as radio and television in Belarus to give the country a source of information other than state-controlled broadcasters.

EU spokesman Amadeu Tardio said today that the broadcasts could be financed from the EU's 8 million-euro human rights budget.

The statement follows last week's condemnation by the EU executive of what it said were "acts of intimidation by the Belarusian authorities" against members of the Polish minority. (Reuters)

*Source: RFE/RL, August 1, 2005; www.rferl.org*

## **18. Senior EU Official Lashes Out at Belarus Over Tensions With Poland**

EU Commissioner for External Affairs Benita Ferrero-Waldner has harshly rebuked the government of Belarus for its recent attempts to terrorize the country's Polish minority, Polish News Bulletin reported Monday.

"The temporary arrest of members of the Polish Union in Belarus (ZPB) and the tampering with an independent, non-governmental organization is unacceptable," Ferrero-Waldner said. Her

statement came after Polish Foreign Minister Daniel Rotfeld called for EU support in the conflict with Belarus.

Relations between the two countries have deteriorated during the last few months. One of the reasons was the situation surrounding the Union of Poles in the Belarusian city of Grodno. In March, the union elected a new leadership, but Minsk called it illegitimate and insisted on the former leadership being reinstated.

In April, the Belarusian authorities stopped the publication of the union's periodical, *Glos znad Niemna*, and arrested its reporters. Afterwards the authorities started to release a new periodical under the same name but not authorized by the Union of Poles. Poland's Senate condemned this step, stressing that the new periodical claims it is supported by the Polish Senate, although Poland stopped financing the magazine after the incident.

On July 27 union activists were detained by Belarusian police. They were all released overnight but the police have not let them back into their headquarters referring to an order by the Justice Ministry that states the former leadership of the union must be reinstated.

Over the last three months, Belarus expelled three Polish diplomats, prompting Poland into tit-for-tat deportations of Belarusian diplomats. Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko said his country will not let Poland interfere with its interior affairs. The Polish ambassador to Minsk was recalled for consultations.

Meanwhile, Russian analysts have suggested that the row between Poland and Belarus suits the authorities in Moscow.

*Source: MosNews.Com, August 1, 2005; www.mosnews.com*

### **19. Ambassador Benedejcic Presents Credentials**

Slovenia's Ambassador to Russia Andrej Benedejcic handed his credentials to Belarus President Aleksandr Lukashenko at a ceremony in Minsk on Friday, 29 July, noting that the two nations shared a common historical experience, in particular during World War II, when both peoples suffered great hardship.

Benedejcic told STA that this historical experience led to Slovenia's commitment to the world order established after WWII. According to him, Slovenia has often demonstrated this commitment, currently also as the country chairing the OSCE.

Slovenia's stint comes at a very hard time, which is why the country is counting on Belarus's help in the effort to ensure the security organization would continue to operate successfully, the ambassador said.

He said that President Lukashenko voiced an interest in consolidating bilateral relations in the spirit demonstrating the fact that Slovenia and Belarus are both Slavic nations.

The ceremony was also attended by Foreign Minister Sergei Martynov, whom the incoming Slovenian ambassador met on 28 July to present him with a copy of his credentials.

Benedejcic is also scheduled to meet Belarus Minister of Trade Aleksandr Ivanko and several representatives of companies that do business with Slovenia. He will be accompanied by the representative of the Ljubljana-based prefabricated houses manufacturer Riko in Minsk and the company's general manager Janez Skravec.

The ambassador, who met the outgoing head of the OSCE office in Minsk, Ambassador Eberhard Heyken, told STA that Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel was scheduled to visit Belarus in the second half of the year in his capacity as OSCE chairman.

Benedejcic presented his credentials to Speaker of Turkmenistan's Parliament Ovezgeldy Ataev in late June. Turkmenistan is one of the five Central Asian countries that the Moscow-based ambassador will be responsible for.

*[Text revised by the Editors]*

*Source: Slovenia Business Week; August 1, 2005;  
<http://www.gzs.si/eng/news/sbw/head.asp?idc=19217>*

## **20. Poland Files EU Complaint Against Belarus**

Polish government officials are asking the European Union to urge Belarus to respect the rights of the Polish minority there.

Polish Foreign Minister Adam Rotfeld says a clampdown is under way, aimed at destroying "all elements of political pluralism and independence," the BBC reported Saturday.

The request to the EU follows a police raid earlier this week at the Belarus headquarters of the Polish community. Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko has accused the Polish community of plotting to overthrow him, the BBC said.

The request was contained in a letter to Britain's Foreign Secretary Jack Straw. The United Kingdom currently holds the EU presidency.

*Source: ScienceDaily LLC; July 30, 2005;  
<http://www.sciencedaily.com/upi/?feed=TopNews&article=UPI-1-20050730-09564600-bc-poland-belarus.xml>*

## **21. Russia Should Push for Change in Belarus - Poland**

Russia should do more to press Belarus -- engaged in a worsening row with its western neighbor Poland -- to respect human rights and democracy, a leading Polish diplomat said on Friday. Warsaw has called for European Union help in protecting the Polish ethnic minority in Belarus after the ex-Soviet country's special forces stormed the offices of a Polish association on Thursday.

France expressed solidarity with the Poles on Friday, a day after the EU said it was worried about the situation in Belarus.

The raid was the latest in a series of moves against Poles in Belarus, which retains close ties to Moscow, after President Alexander Lukashenko -- described by U.S. officials as Europe's last dictator -- accused Poland of plotting an uprising.

"For a number of months we have been discussing (Belarus with our partners) ... and the overwhelming view is that we should talk to Russia about this issue more than we have in the past," Deputy Foreign Minister Jan Trzuszczynski said.

He told private radio TOK that an internationally accepted Belarus would be a much stronger ally for Moscow than it is now. The EU recently rejected visa applications by top Minsk diplomats in protest at Lukashenko's clampdown on the opposition.

"Until now, there was no will on the Russian side for such dialogue. Russia keeps repeating that Belarus is an independent country, that it decides for itself, that 'we have nothing to say here' -- this is fiction," he said.

The EU said it would refrain from any concrete action against Minsk for now but France said it would push the bloc to adopt quickly a firm position on human rights in Belarus.

"We reiterate the call for the Belarus authorities to ... stop these actions, which are preventing the development of relations between the European Union and Belarus," a French Foreign Ministry spokeswoman told a regular briefing in Paris.

"The pressure on (ethnic Poles) in Belarus is not only a bilateral problem between two countries but is telling of the development of power in Minsk."

Truszczyński said he also saw scope for coordinated diplomatic action.

"The EU and the United States are closely cooperating on Belarus and share the conviction that more can be done for democracy there. One way is by dialogue with Russia, if Russia believes that such talks would be in its interest."

*Source: Reuters.Com; July 29, 2005; www.reuters.com*

## **22. Poland & Belarus Fight On**

The European Commission remained calm as Polish-Belarus relations soured even further on Thursday. "We learned about the arrests, and releases, of members of a Polish organization in Belarus. These new events take place in the context of growing repression of political parties, NGOs and independent media," said Amadeu Altafaj Tardio, External Relations spokesperson for the European Commission.

On Thursday, Poland withdrew its ambassador Tadeusz Pawlak from Minsk, officially for consultation. Warsaw accuses Belarus authorities of not respecting European treaties with regard to national minorities, including the 1975 Helsinki Final Act that established the OSCE.

Estimates put the Polish minority in Belarus at over 400,000. Minsk officially removed from their posts the former leadership of the 'Union of Poles' paving the way for a pro-government administration of Belarus' largest non-governmental organization.

"We have a strong interest in Belarus being a democratic state," said European Commission spokesperson Tardio, steering clear of specific mention of any action by Brussels against Belarus. "This includes respect of European norms and protection of minority rights. We'll continue to closely monitor the situation," added Tardio, repeating official EU policy.

Commission spokesperson Tardio also refuted suggestions that the European Union is now on holiday and EU officials are not willing to cut short breaks over a minor Eastern European state like Belarus: "The Union is not on holiday, neither is the Commission. We are discussing what to do with Member States. There is an informal Council of Foreign Ministers on 8 September," insisted Tardio. Brussels traditionally grinds to a halt as European Commissioners leave for long breaks in August.

European Union Foreign Ministers may, however, decide in early August on whether to continue with a process that could lead to withdrawal of low tariff status for Belarus. Earlier this month, Belarus Deputy Foreign Minister Aleksandr Mikhnyevich admitted that EU trade sanctions could cost up to as much as \$120 million if the European Union. "We know how much it would cost," said Mikhnyevich. "Still, the problem is not so much the cost, but the precedent of the EU taking such an unwarranted decision."

Following the diplomatic row with Minsk, Poland may now drop its opposition to trade sanctions. This would certainly hit hardest at normal Belarus citizens, including the Polish-speaking minority. Warsaw, however, has failed to understand Minsk's intentions thereby escalating an already tense situation.

The Belarus' Polish-speaking minority does not appear to have been singled out for special treatment, but is undergoing the same fate as many other independent organizations and media under Belarus President Aleksandr Lukashenko's authoritarian rule. The Union of Poles is then being brought under control like other non-governmental Belarus associations and political parties by the Belarus President who is increasingly wary of elections in 2006. Lukashenko has repeatedly said there will be no 'colorful revolutions' as in Ukraine and Georgia.

*Source: David Ferguson, Euro-Reporters.com, July, 28, 2005; www.euro-reporters.com*

### **23. Belarus Falls Out With the West For Good**

A serious crisis has developed in relations between Poland and Belarus, Polish Foreign Minister Adam Rotfeld said on July 28.

Warsaw has recalled its ambassador from Minsk. Several hours previously, Minsk officials abrogated the plenipotentiary powers of Polish diplomats in Belarus in response to the eviction of Belarusian diplomats from Poland, Belarusian Foreign Ministry officials said.

This Polish-Belarusian crisis is a small step in the cold war that the West has declared on Belarus' President Aleksandr Lukashenko.

U.S. State Department officials and EU commissars are likely to toughen their anti-Lukashenko rhetoric, and pro-Western media will put more and more emphasis on the regime's anti-democratic tendencies as presidential elections in Belarus approach. Elections may take place as early as next year.

Lukashenko knows this only too well. He also understands that he will not be able to come to terms with the West, and thus is already doing everything possible to reduce all external influence - including from Russia - on Belarus' domestic affairs to the absolute minimum.

The Belarusian leader says that the U.S. has already earmarked US \$24 million or, according to the latest data, US \$32 million, for a revolution in the country in 2006-2007.

Tatyana Stanovaya of the Center for Political Technologies said that "funding of the opposition and the work of U.S. budget-funded independent media is conducted from Baltic territories."

She added that the presidential elections in Belarus next year may be a turning point, and that the U.S. and Western Europe will refuse to recognize them as legitimate a priori, giving the opposition the hope to overthrow the regime.

Russia's decisions in this context remain to be seen. Lukashenko said recently that the United States needs Belarus in order to control the flow of Russian resources into Europe.

"Americans want to shut this small window to influence Russia and Europe," he said.

Moscow's attitude is two-fold: On the one hand, Lukashenko is continuing his typical anti-American rhetoric, while on the other, he is obviously urging Russia to help, hinting that otherwise it will only lose.

But Russia and Belarus are not very good friends today. Lukashenko obviously mistrusts Moscow; otherwise the long-term bilateral integration project would have produced some results. For the time being, Lukashenko cannot or does not want to offer Moscow anything better than the status quo. Yet, realistically, he can only hope for Moscow's support.

*Source: Arseny Oganessian, RIA Novosti, July 22, 2005; <http://en.rian.ru>*

#### **24. Poland Recalls Ambassador From Belarus**

Poland has decided to recall its ambassador from after a series of scandals involving the Polish minority in the country.

Poland's Foreign Minister Adam Rotfeld quoted by RIA-Novosti news agency said the ambassador will travel to Warsaw for consultations and "will not return to Minsk (capital of Belarus) till the situation in Belarus is settled."

The ministry has already addressed the European Commission in order to take measures to support Poland and defend the rights of the Polish minority in Belarus. Earlier, external relations spokesperson for the European Commission, Amadeu Altafaj Tardio, called the incident "a bilateral matter between Belarus and Poland." He added, however, that the Commission is "concerned by the situation of all minorities and of civil society in Belarus. We will continue to monitor the situation closely."

Relations between the two countries have deteriorated during the last months. One of the reasons was the situation around the Union of Poles in the Belarus city of Grodno. In March, the union elected its new leadership but Belarus found it illegitimate and insisted on the former leadership being reinstated. In April, the Belarus authorities stopped the edition of the union's periodical, *Glos znad Niemna*, and arrested its reporters. After that, the authorities started to release a new periodical under the same name but not authorized by the Union of Poles. Poland's Senate condemned this step stressing that the new periodical claims it is supported by the Polish Senate, although Poland stopped financing the magazine after the incident.

On Wednesday, union activists were detained by Belarus police. They were all released overnight but the police have not let them back into their headquarters referring to an order by the Justice Ministry that states the former leadership of the union must be reinstated.

Over the last three months, Belarus expelled three Polish diplomats, prompting Poland into tit-for-tat deportations of Belarusian diplomats. Belarus President Aleksandr Lukashenko said his country will not let Poland interfere with its interior affairs.

*Source: MosNews.Com, July 28, 2005; www.mosnews.com*

### **HUMAN RIGHTS & INDEPENDENT MEDIA**

#### **25. Union of Poles Leaders Sentenced in Hrodna**

On Wednesday, Wieslaw Kewliak, Vice President of The Union of Poles in Belarus (UPB), was sentenced in Hrodna to 15 days of administrative arrest. According to Itar-Tass, the court found him guilty of being an active participant of an unsanctioned rally which took place in Hrodna on August 1.

One day earlier, Tadeusz Gawin, UPB's Chairman, was also sentenced to 15 days of administrative arrest.

One of the main reasons for holding an unauthorized rally, in which tens of people participated, was the arrival in Hrodna of Donald Truska, leader of the Polish Civic Platform party and Vice Speaker of the Polish Parliament. During the rally, he expressed support for the The Union of Poles in Belarus activists, who speak out against the Justice Ministry's decision to recognize as illegal the organization's VI Congress.

Tuska's visit to Hrodna and his statements evoked an extremely negative reaction of the official Minsk.

*[Text translated by the Editors]*

Source: *Gazeta.ru*; August 3, 2005; [www.gazeta.ru](http://www.gazeta.ru)

## **26. Prosecutor Rejected Zavadskaya's Case Against Riot Policeman**

The Prosecutor's Office rejected Svetlana Zavadskaya in initiating a criminal case against the riot (OMON) policeman, who struck her, Aleksei Volokov, Central District's Deputy Prosecutor said in an interview to Radio Svaboda.

After a three-week review, the Prosecutor's Office came to the conclusion that the case had no criminal aspects.

The decision to decline the initiation of a criminal case against the OMON policeman was made on July 29. However, Svetlana Zavadskaya still has not received the official notice of rejection. Nevertheless, Zavadskaya is going to appeal this decision in a higher court.

The OMON policeman punched Svetlana Zavadskaya in the face on July 7, while dispersing a rally held in October Square in commemoration of the fifth anniversary of the disappearance of her husband, Russian ORT network cameraman Dmitry Zavadsky.

Zavadskaya documented the assault and filed an application with the Prosecutor's Office, requesting the initiation of a criminal case against the policeman who used force against her. The prosecutor's review lasted almost three weeks and ended with rejection. Earlier the Minsk city police department representatives stated that Svetlana Zavadskaya herself was to blame for the incident because she provoked the OMON policeman to fight and he was forced to defend himself.

*[Text translated by the Editors]*

Source: *Belorusskaya Delovaya Gazeta*; August 2, 2005; [www.bdg.by](http://www.bdg.by)

## **27. Minsk Riot Police Dispersed Rally of Solidarity With Svetlana Zavadskaya**

On August 1, a rally of solidarity with Svetlana Zavadskaya took place in Minsk. Today at 6 in the evening, tens of people, including activists of political parties and NGO's, gathered in October Square. According to the United Civil Party press service, Anatoly Lebedko, Vincuk Viacorka, Yuri Hodyko, Aleksandr Aristovich, and Dmitry Dashkevich attended the rally.

"Special services representatives, the notorious 'people in civilian clothing', five of whom traced every move of the United Civil Party leader Anatoly Lebedko, were also present. The press service's statement notes that when asked, "Who are you and why are you following me?," people in civilian clothing without blinking replied, "We are your protection service."

The rally transpired according to the script familiar to the authorities. A few seconds after people picked up portraits of Dmitry Zavadsky and formed the Chain of Compassionate People, the Minsk riot policemen appeared and began forcing the participants out of the Square in the direction of the Zhuravika restaurant.

"We assumed that the authorities would permit the rally to take place in the center of Minsk. However, we made a decision to support Svetlana Zavadskaya today because we are convinced that there are many people in our country, who don't tolerate rudeness, betrayal and maliciousness. Today we had the opportunity to say this to the riot policemen faces. It would be logical if this time around the riot policeman, who struck Svetlana, apologized to her in the front of television cameras. But this did not happen. I said to Major Tozik, one of the Minsk riot police heads, "If your subordinate did not find the strength to apologize to Svetlana Zavadskaya, maybe you will do it?" Major Tozik muttered in reply, "I do not know. I was on vacation," Anatoly Lebedko told AFN.

Anatoly Lebedko is convinced that it's necessary to hold this kind of rallies, while the Prosecutor's Office remains silent.

"Silence is the best option for the Prosecutor's Office and Lukashenko. That's why we have no right to keep silence," said the Belarusian politician.-

Svetlana Zavadskaya thanked everyone who came to support her. To this day she has not received a written answer from the Prosecutor's Office, where she applied to initiate a criminal case against the riot policeman who struck her.

[Text translated by the Editors]

Source: AFN; August 1, 2005; [www.afn.by](http://www.afn.by)

### **28. Andrzej Pisalnik is Brought... (To Trial?)**

On Monday in Hrodna strangers kidnapped Andrzej Pisalnik, acting editor-in-chief of the only Belarusian newspaper printed in Polish *Glos znad Niemna*. Those plain-clothes people simply pushed him into their Mercedes and drove him off into the sunset. According to Paval Mazheika, head of Hrodna affiliate of BAJ, the journalist had not been brought to any police station. A little bit later it became known that Andrzej Pisalnik was being brought to trial in Shchuchyn. At this moment we do not have any other information about it. The BAJ Press Service is keeping an eye on the situation.

Source: *Belarusian Association of Journalists*, August 1, 2005; [www.baj.ru](http://www.baj.ru)

### **29. Hrodna Journalist Paczobut Serves his Sentence in Lida**

Today is the third day of Andrei Paczobut's (a Hrodna journalist, the editor-in-chief of *Magazyn polski* 15-days' detention. He is serving his sentence in Lida now.

On July 28, in the evening, the head of Lida temporary detention ward let Paczobut's wife Oksana bring him some food and his personal belongings. Oksana Paczobut managed to find out that her husband was staying together with two other activists of the Union of Poles in Belarus Jozef Pazecki and Mieczyslau Jaskievicz, who had also been condemned to detention by the District Court of Lida.

In her comments given to BAJ Oksana mentioned that she did not know anything about the conditions in which her husband and his colleagues lived. When she asked a policeman how many people lived in the cell, he answered "Men and women are kept separately". Andrei Paczobut will be released on August 10, and his colleagues – on August 5.

On July 26, in the evening, the editor-in-chief of *Magazyn polski* Andrei Paczobut together with Jozef Pazecki and Mieczyslau Jaskievich were detained by the police in Shchuchin. On July 27 the District Court of Lida condemned Andrei Paczobut to 15 days of detention and Jozef Pazecki and Mieczyslau Jaskievich to 10 days of detention each for "participating in an illegal protest in Shchuchyn on July 3 and disobedience to the police".

On July 3, members of the Union of Poles in Belarus together with Consul General of Poland Andrzej Krentowski visited Shchuchin to celebrate the official Independence Day in the office of the Union of Poles. The office was closed and the Polish minority's representatives had to hold a concert right on the doorstep.

Source: *Belarusian Association of Journalists*, July 29, 2005; [www.baj.ru](http://www.baj.ru)

### **30. Belarus: Protestant Property Obstacles Continue**

The Belarusian religion law's insistence on religious communities being registered at a non-residential address, as well as state approval for religious activities outside purpose-built places

of worship, creates obstacles for Protestants in particular, Forum 18 News Service has found. For example, the charismatic New Generation Church's 150-strong congregation in Baranovichi faces long-running problems, caused by the authorities' refusal to allow a warehouse the church owns to be converted into a church. Reasons given vary between multi-storey housing being planned for the site, and that it will be used for a stadium's car park. Another example is the Minsk-based charismatic New Life Church, which faces continuing obstruction in using a cowshed for worship. The latest threat, Forum 18 has learnt, is that the city is considering ending the church's right to the land beneath the cowshed. Officials claim that the cowshed can only be used only for its designated purpose – even though animal husbandry is illegal in Minsk city. Forum 18 has found that other Protestant churches throughout Belarus face similar obstructions from officials.

The 2002 Belarusian religion law's strict requirements on places of worship are continuing to restrict Protestant churches in particular, Forum 18 News Service has found. The law insists that religious communities must be registered at non-residential addresses, as well as state approval for religious activities outside specially designed places of worship. Previously, religious communities could be based at private homes and did not have to register with the state.

While most of the charismatic New Generation Church's (which is based in Riga, Latvia) eleven communities in Belarus have managed to re-register under this law, "there are other problems", Pastor Leonid Voronenko told Forum 18 on 13 July. His 150-strong congregation in Baranovichi (Brest region) bought a 443-square-metre [530-square-yard] warehouse in 1997 intending to convert it into a church, he said, but the town authorities are refusing to allow the designated purpose of the building to be changed or give the church full rights over the land beneath it.

In long-running correspondence on the issue between the church and Baranovichi municipal executive committee viewed by Forum 18, the latter's chairman Mikhail Pavlov explains in July 1997 that conversion of the warehouse is "inexpedient" because the town plans to redevelop the area where it is situated with multi-storey housing. While Pavlov later informed the church that the warehouse building would be demolished to make way for the car park of a stadium, his successor Viktor Dichkovsky wrote to Pastor Voronenko in August 2004 that the plot of land beneath the warehouse would after all be used for multi-storey housing. Stating that there was "no basis" to alter the building, Dichkovsky also warned that if the designated usage of the plot of land was not complied with – in this case, storage of goods and products - then the church's right to use it would be terminated in accordance with the Belarusian Land Code.

With the help of public pressure, New Generation Church has so far managed to resist state threats to seal and demolish the building, according to Voronenko. He pointed out, however, that this does not mean that the situation has been resolved, since the church has no legal basis to use the warehouse.

In the capital Minsk, the charismatic New Life Church was informed in 15 July 2005 that the city's executive committee would review at its next session the issue of terminating the church's right to the plot of land beneath the cowshed that it uses for services. Just as in New Generation's case, the Minsk authorities have refused to allow the building's reconstruction, latterly also maintaining that it is to be demolished as part of Minsk's general development plan. A nearby Orthodox community, which uses a disused railway carriage for worship, has not faced similar problems

Officials maintain that the cowshed – purchased by the church in 2002 - may be used only for its designated purpose and have imposed heavy fines for violations. On New Life's website, church lawyer Sergei Lukanin points out that this is in fact impossible as animal husbandry is illegal in Minsk city: "The church is in an absurd situation - the authorities are following the letter of the law while forgetting about the sense of their actions." Both New Generation and New Life are affiliated to Belarus' charismatic Full Gospel Union.

On 7 June 2005, the Evangelical Belarus news service reported that the local authorities in Ivatsevichi (Brest region) were refusing to allow a local Baptist Union congregation permission to

build a new prayer house on the site of their old one on the grounds that it is situated in a residential area. According to the church's pastor, an alternative site one kilometer [half a mile] outside the town, offered by the local district executive committee, would be inconvenient for elderly church members and be more vulnerable to theft. A similar situation is reportedly faced by another Baptist church in nearby Drogichin [Dragichyn].

Unable to re-register the independent Belarusian Evangelical Church at his Minsk flat under the 2002 law, Pastor Ernst Sabilo has been given two months to find a suitable legal address, he told Forum 18 on 25 July: "If we fail then we would be gathering illegally and be liable to be fined." A Minsk city court judge adjourned an 18 July hearing held to liquidate the church, said Sabilo, when it emerged that the city's executive committee had assisted in the search for alternative premises only by suggesting that the congregation affiliate with the main Baptist Union. While he pointed out to Forum 18 that he was not opposed to this, the Union turned out not to have spare premises for all its own churches, let alone his.

Initially registered in 1993, Sabilo's Belarusian-language church does not have sufficient funds to complete construction of a church building, begun eight years ago in Osipovichy (Mogilev Mahilyow) region). A former prisoner-of-conscience, Sabilo told Forum 18 that while the church unites some 60 people from various Belarusian cities, the 2002 law's requirement that the 20 founders of a religious organization be resident in one location would not affect its re-registration chances. However, he was concerned by the law's territorial restrictions on religious organizations: "We can't operate in just one place - we must operate wherever people are willing to hear us."

Also encountering problems with worship premises are Belarusian communities of the Kiev (Ukraine) based charismatic Embassy of God Church. On 19 July, the co-ordinator of its 15 congregations in the republic, Natalya Komovskaya, told Forum 18 from Gomel [Homyel] that seven have managed to re-register, while several others would hopefully register for the first time later this year. Others, however, are unable to meet publicly and/or re-register due to the near impossibility of obtaining worship premises fulfilling the 2002 law's criteria, she said. Thus, congregations in Grodno [Hrodna] and Bolshevik (Gomel region) have been unable to register for five years due to a lack of premises (the 2002 law simply reinforced for religious organizations changes made to the Housing Code in 1999), while three congregations totalling some 160 people in Minsk have been unable to find a place to meet for the past two years. While the 100-strong congregation in Rechitsa [Rechytsa] (Gomel region) does hold registration, she said, it too is currently without worship premises.

Komovskaya suspects that the authorities have a hand in these churches' predicaments: "While officials say they are not opposed to churches registering, they do everything possible to stop them finding premises – every time they find an address, the director of the premises is instructed not to lease or face dismissal." Forum 18 has discovered that several other churches in Minsk have had similar experiences.

Komovskaya also told Forum 18 that congregations are so far able to meet unobstructed in private homes, although the instability of constant moves has led to her own church membership falling from 400 to around 200. However, the Baptist Council of Churches, whose congregations refuse on principle to register with the state authorities in post-Soviet countries, have reported fines for worship in private homes from time to time ever since the adoption of the 2002 law. In the latest case, according to the Baptists, church member Nikolai Dolbun was questioned by a local policeman at his home in Mogilev on 9 July and accused of leading an unregistered religious organization contrary to the Administrative Violations Code. Despite arguing that the charge was "completely baseless and unproven", Dolbun was reportedly fined 127,500 Belarusian rubles (377 Norwegian kroner, 48 Euros or 57 US dollars) by an administrative commission in Mogilev's Lenin District on 12 July. This is roughly half the average monthly wage.

Source: Geraldine Fagan, *Forum 18*; July, 28, 2005;  
[http://www.forum18.org/Archive.php?article\\_id=619](http://www.forum18.org/Archive.php?article_id=619)

### **31. Journalists Detained in Hrodna Were Released**

All the journalists detained on July 27 in Hrodna when the police assaulted the office of the Union of Poles have been released. They spent 2-2,5 hours in the police-station and were then released together with the other apprehended people. According to BAJ, two journalists of the Polish periodical *Gazeta Wyborcza* Aclau Radzivinovicz and Robert Kavaleuski, the head of Hrodna affiliate of BAJ Pavel Mazheika, a press photographer for *Associated Press* Sergei Hryts, a reporter of the site [www.euramost.org](http://www.euramost.org) Irina Charniauka, the editor-in-chief of *Glos znad Niemna* Andrzej Pisalnik and a reporter of this newspaper Inesa Todryk, *Nasha Niva's* journalist Julia Darashkevich, *Pressbol's* reporter Maksim Hubarevich, a journalist of the site [www.pahonia.promedia.by](http://www.pahonia.promedia.by) Alesia Sidliarevich were among the detained. All the photos the journalists managed to take during the assault of the office were destroyed by the policemen.

On July 27, late in the evening special police officers and plain-clothes policemen assaulted the office of the Union of Poles and detained all the present together with all the people who were passing by the building-18-20 people in total. Three of them were taken to the police-station Dzeviatouka (among them Pavel Mazheika) the others were taken to the Leninski City District Department of Internal Affairs in Hrodna. According to Irina Chrniauka and Pavel Mazheika, they were not allowed to use their tape recorders and cameras - including the cameras in their mobile phones. The certificates the journalists showed to the police did not help - just like the other apprehended they were asked to give their explanations and then, one by one, had to sign the apprehension report. According to BAJ, many journalists refused to sign anything. The reporters of *Gazeta Wyborcza* claimed they would not talk to the police and demanded the presence of the consul. When he arrived the Polish journalists were taken to another room and the Belarusian reporters did not see them any more.

As BAJ informs, some of the detained journalists are going to lodge complaints concerning the actions of the police on July 27 to the Office of Public Prosecutor and to the head of the Leninski City District Department of Internal Affairs.

*Text revised by the Editors*

Source: *Belarusian Association of Journalists*, July 28, 2005; [www.baj.ru](http://www.baj.ru)

### **32. Journalists Not Allowed at Press Conference**

A number of journalists from independent periodicals were not allowed to assist at the press conference of Tadeush Kruchkowski who is considered by the Department of Justice to be the legitimate head of the Union of Poles in Belarus. Some Polish journalists were not allowed either.

The press conference started at 3 p.m. in the office of the Union of Poles. T.Kruchkowski had managed to enter the office on July 27 with the help of emergency forces. At the beginning of the conference Kazimer Znaidzinski, T.Kruchkowski's companion, looked through the documents of all the journalists and decided who could be allowed in. He was guarded by a group of police-officers.

In his comments the head of Hrodna affiliate of BAJ Pavel Mazheika mentioned that he was not allowed at the conference together with Andrej Pisalnik, the editor-in-chief of *Glos znad Niemna* and one of its reporters Ihar Bantsar, the editor-in-chief of *Dzen* and the owner of the site [www.pahonia.promedia.by](http://www.pahonia.promedia.by) Mikola Markevich, *Salidarnas't's* reporter Ivan Roman, a reporter of the site [www.hrodna.by](http://www.hrodna.by) Andrej Kuselchuk. Polish journalists from RMF-FM were not allowed either.

Journalists from Hrodna Broadcasting Company, state newspapers (*Zviazda*, *Perspectiva* (their founders are Hrodna Regional Soviet of People's Deputies and Regional Executive Committee), and Polish TV journalists were allowed at the conference without hindrance.

*Text revised by the Editors*

*Source: Belarusian Association of Journalists, July 28, 2005; www.baj.ru*

## **BUSINESS**

### **33. Finance Minister Korbut: Draft Budget of Belarus for 2006 Envisages 1% GDP Deficit**

The draft budget of Belarus for 2006 was considered today at a sitting of the Council of Ministers' board presided by prime minister Sergei Sidorsky.

As finance minister Nikolai Korbut noted, the draft budget was mainly determined by the priorities of the tax and budget policy of the current year. The revenues and expenditures were determined by the GDP growth rates, change of prices, and increase in wages. The major changes were introduced to the revenues – the target dues are proposed to be reduced from 4 to 3 percent, the customs dues from natural persons passing the state border via border check-points are to be abolished, the fund of the development of construction science is to be included to the target funds.

On the whole, the revenues are forecast at the level of Br34,2 trillion, or 46.2 percent of the GDP what is almost the same as last year, Nikolai Korbut stressed. Main sources of revenues are VAT and income taxes.

Expenditures of the budget will amount to Br34,9 trillion, or 47.2 per cent of the GDP. Major expenditures will be spent on social sphere (they will exceed 60 percent of the total expenditures), their main component – financing of the expenditures on wages. Over Br7,5 trillion will be allocated in the national economy, including the village revival program. The budget deficit is projected in the amount of 1 percent of the GDP, or Br0.7 trillion.

*Text revised by the Editors*

*Source: BelTA; August 2, 2005; <http://www.belta.by/engnews.nsf>*

### **34. Belarusian State Debt Down 2.3% in H1**

Belarus's state debt dropped 2.3% year- on-year to 4.35 Belarusian rubles in the first half of 2005, the Belarusian Finance Ministry said.

Belarus's state debt grew 0.6% in June after dropping 0.2% in May and 1% in April.

The country's domestic debt grew 5.7% year-on-year to 3.009 trillion Belarusian rubles in the first six months of 2005, while its foreign debt dropped 15.8% year-on-year to US \$623.7 million as of July 1.

Of total foreign debt, direct government debt amounted to US \$385.8 million on July 1, a 10.2% drop from the beginning of the year.

The official exchange rate on August 1 was 2,148 Belarusian rubles/ US \$1.

*Source: Interfax; August 1, 2005; [www.interfax.ru/e/](http://www.interfax.ru/e/)*

### **35. Lukashenko Insists Belarus Should Not Import Over 100,000 Tons of Wheat**

Belarusian leader Aleksandr Lukashenko, speaking to subordinate authorities, insisted that starting from 2006 the country should not import above 100,000 tones of wheat from other countries. According to him, the basic needs of the nation should be covered with domestically

produced grain and only small volumes of high-quality durum wheat could be imported for production of top-grade pasta and breads.

The Belarusian ruler also found very important to provide the country's brewing industry with locally produced malting barley.

*Text revised by the Editors*

*Source: APK-Inform Information Agency; July 29, 2005;  
<http://www.agrimarket.info/showart.php?id=27222>*

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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](http://www.ilhr.org). The League, now in its 63rd 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 Maria Kabalina at [cis@ilhr.org](mailto:cis@ilhr.org) or Olga Tarasov at [otarasov@ilhr.org](mailto:otarasov@ilhr.org)

The Belarus project was established to support Belarusian 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.

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