

August 13 - August 18, 2005

Edited by Maria Kabalina and Olga Tarasov
International League for Human Rights

Table of Contents

I. Domestic

1. Department of Information Established in Belarus (*E-Belarus.ORG*)
2. Belarus Increases Control Over International Technical Aid (*Itar-Tass*)
3. Belarusian President Is Confident of Winning 2006 Elections (*RIA Novosti*)

II. Regional

4. Sergei Sidorsky: Belarus and Ukraine Achieve Great Progress in Increasing Bilateral Trade in 2004-2005 (*The National Centre of Legal Information of the Republic of Belarus*)
5. Aleksandr Lukashenko Offers Ukrainian Ambassador Piotr Shapoval Whose Term Is Nearing Completion to Stay in Belarus (*BelTa*)
6. The Saga of the New Russian Ambassador To Belarus (*The Jamestown Foundation*)
7. Belarus and Kaliningrad Region To Start Implementing New Joint Projects in 2006 (*BelTa*)
8. After Poles Lukashenko is To Start Confrontation With Ukrainians? (*Charter97*)

III. International

9. Chernobyl Children Visit Scotland (*Grampian TV*)
10. Warsaw Seems To Be Losing Duel With Minsk Over Ethnic Organization (*RFE/RL*)
11. Polish President Urges Minsk To Observe Minority Rights (*RFE/RL*)
12. Walesa Backs Belarus Revolution (*BBC News- UK*)
13. Belarus Joins Kyoto Protocol (*Itar-Tass*)

IV. Human Rights & Independent Media

14. Mikhail Marynich's Sentence Commuted (*Charter97*)
15. Lukashenko Cracks Down on Journalists in Row With Poland (*IFEX*)
16. President of Belarus Holds Fast to Soviet Way of Life. Those Opposing Lukashenko's Rule Get the Message (*San Francisco Chronicle*)
17. Lukashenko Cartoon Club Raided in Belarus (*MosNews.Com*)
18. Vandals Desecrate Belarus Holocaust Memorial (*AlertNet*)
19. Opposition Against Deployment of RF Military Facilities in Belarus (*Itar-Tass*)
20. Belarus Polish Chief Jailed Again (*BBC News- UK*)

V. Business

21. Belarus to Be Able to Sell Greenhouse Gas Quotas in 2008 (*The National Centre of Legal Information of the Republic of Belarus*)
22. Grain Growers of Minsk Region Gather First Million Ton of Grain (*BelTa*)

DOMESTIC

1. Department of Information Established in Belarus

Department of Informatization under the Ministry of Communications and Information is to be established in Belarus according to the Presidential decree #372.

The new Department will be responsible for coordination and integration of state agencies automated information systems. The 24 specialists of the new Department will also revise and improve Electronic Belarus Programme in order to trim it and in order to make it more cost effective.

[Text revised by the Editors]

Source: Mikhail Doroshevich, E-Belarus.ORG; August 17, 2005; www.e-belarus.org

2. Belarus Increases Control Over International Technical Aid

Belarusian authorities will strengthen control over foreign technical aid.

President Aleksandr Lukashenko signed a degree on Wednesday, which prohibits Belarusian organizations and individuals from receiving and using international technical aid for anti-constitutional purposes, for preparing and holding elections and referendums, for recalling deputies, for organizing and holding meetings, rallies, and strikes, for making and disseminating propaganda materials, for other political and mass propaganda work with the population.

According to the degree, international technical aid includes student and post-graduate exchanges, seminars, conferences, research, exchange of experience and money.

Source: Itar-Tass; August 17, 2005; www.itar-tass.com/en/

3. Belarusian President Is Confident of Winning 2006 Elections

Belarusian President Aleksandr Lukashenko said during his trip around the Minsk Region Friday that he was sure of victory in the country's elections in 2006.

Lukashenko said his nation would support him. "Why wouldn't they? We did nothing bad, we did not rob the country," he said.

According to the president, the opposition's interests lie abroad. "They will hang on and play on for a year, and then this weak opposition will be nowhere to be seen," he promised.

Lukashenko said broadcasting from abroad in Belarus did not worry him at all.

Last year Lukashenko called a constitutional referendum, which lifted a prohibition on holding presidential office for more than two terms. However, the West did not acknowledge the outcome of the referendum. The U.S. and the European Union earlier announced their intention to provide funding for independent broadcasting around Belarus from abroad.

Source: RIA Novosti, August 12, 2005; http://en.rian.ru

REGIONAL

4. Sergei Sidorsky: Belarus and Ukraine Achieve Great Progress in Increasing Bilateral Trade in 2004-2005

Energetic activity of Ukraine's ambassador in Belarus Piotr Shapoval was one of the factors fostering the growth of bilateral trade in 2004-2005, prime minister of Belarus Sergei Sidorsky said August 17 at a meeting with Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Ukraine to

Belarus Piotr Shapoval. The meeting took place in view of the expiry of the diplomat's term in office.

The head of Belarusian government noted that in the course of several last years the countries made great strides in economic integration. In 2004 the trade turnover hit USD 1 billion level while in 2001 it was USD 300 million. Economic integration is the most important thing in the relations between the two states, Sergei Sidorsky said. "Various political trends cannot shake economic foundation which we have established", he added.

Belarus-Ukraine turnover in 2004 was USD 1,085 billion, up by 53.7 per cent against 2003. The index jumped by 68.4 per cent over the first seven months of 2005 to USD 786,8 million, including exports – USD 403,8 million (77.7 per cent growth), imports – USD 383 million (59.7 per cent growth). Belarus exports oil products, tractors, lorry trucks, polymers, refrigerators, potash fertilizers and synthetic fibre. The republic mainly imports carbon steel, jet engines, cyclic hydrocarbon, ferroalloys, articles from metal, oil-cakes, maize.

Today the countries strive to organize proper energy overflows in boundary regions of Belarus and Ukraine. The parties are discussing the prospect of building a power line from Rovensk nuclear power plant to supply Belarus with energy.

[Text revised by the Editors]

Source: The National Centre of Legal Information of the Republic of Belarus; August 18, 2005; <http://law.by/work/EnglPortal.nsf/0/8EE6B99384DB8556C2257061002E2DE4?OpenDocument>

5. Aleksandr Lukashenko Offers Ukrainian Ambassador Piotr Shapoval Whose Term Is Nearing Completion to Stay in Belarus

President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko has offered Ukraine's ambassador to Belarus Pyotr Shapoval, whose term in office is coming to an end, to stay in Belarus. 'We will gladly find you a nice job where you will be able to work for the benefit of our peoples,' the president said when meeting with the diplomat today.

'Not only did we have no problems with the Ukrainian ambassador we always felt that Ukraine, our brotherly neighbor, was presented by our friend who knew Belarus very well.

This is why we are very sorry that such a person has to leave our country,' the head of state underlined.

At the same time Alexander Lukashenko added: 'If you have any problems, please come back – it is your land. You can come any time together with your family, either to rest or to work'.

Source: BelTA; August 17, 2005; <http://www.belta.by/engnews.nsf>

6. The Saga of the New Russian Ambassador To Belarus

The appointment of the former Saratov governor, Dmitry Ayatskov, as the new Russian Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Belarus has resulted in a protracted scandal that has complicated relations with Russia and the proposed formation of a Union state. It indicates a clear hardening of attitudes in Moscow toward the regime of President Aleksandr Lukashenko.

The appointment of Ayatskov was anticipated by the Secretary of the Russia-Belarus Union (RBU), Pavel Borodin, in mid-March, when there was also a possibility that the outgoing governor, implicated in a corruption scandal, might also receive a senior position in the RBU (*Moscow Times*, March 15). President Vladimir Putin signed the decree on his appointment on July 15. Once officially appointed, and prior to his departure, Ayatskov held a press conference in Saratov, at which he reportedly remarked that: "It is hard to break Lukashenko, he's very steady

on his feet. Of course in his mind, he needs to separate Russia from Belarus and Putin from Lukashenko. And under no circumstances must he puff himself up. He's been working there for some time and someone has to run errands for him" (*Kommersant*, July 29). Another report modifies the last sentence as follows: "And he should not put on airs and think that someone has to run errands for him because he has been there a long time" (*RIA-Novosti*, July 29).

Ayatskov also said that he would become the "last Russian ambassador to Belarus" and that Lukashenko would become the first citizen of the new state (*Narodnaya volya*, August 4). These statements caused much offense in official Minsk, particularly as they were highlighted on Russian Television. Though Russian embassy officials stated that Ayatskov would be arriving in Minsk at night on July 28, and an official of the Russian Foreign Ministry provided a date of July 29, Ayatskov did not appear in Minsk on either of these dates.

One analyst, Igor Shatrov of Rosbalt, has surmised that there are two conflicting points of view in the circles close to the Russian president, both of which have as a goal the resolution of the "Belarus problem" by 2008 with the formation of a Union state. One attitude is that the Belarusian regime is still beneficial to Russia because of the positive reflection of Russia, when it compared to the harsh regime in Minsk. The West is unlikely to take action against Putin as long as Lukashenko is in office. The second opinion is that the "flirtation" with Lukashenko is dangerous, and that if Russia does not intercept the Western initiative to produce a democratic state in Minsk, there will be an "Orange Revolution" in the Belarusian capital (*Narodnaya volya*, August 4). In other words, Russia must control the situation and initiate the removal of the Belarusian dictator. Arguably the second viewpoint has now superseded the first.

A source in the RBU commented on August 4 that either Ayatskov would be required to apologize for his comments, or his appointment would be annulled (*Narodnaya volya*, August 4). In a letter to President Putin, the leaders of the inter-regional public organization "Rossiisko-Beloruskoye Bratstvo" and the Russian Academy of Sciences (Aleksandr Vorontsov and Dr. Leonid Maiboroda) protested the appointment of Ayatskov, citing his past indiscretions with land sales in Saratov, his proposed legalization of prostitution there, and his reportedly rude insinuations against the Belarusian president unworthy of any ambassador. The authors of the letter maintained that one of the main missions of Ayatskov as ambassador is to "destroy Lukashenko" (*Narodnaya volya*, August 6).

To date, however, there are no signs of either a forthcoming apology or a change of decision on the appointment of Ayatskov, despite the protests coming from Minsk. Borodin has stated that Ayatskov will now arrive to take up his duties between August 15 and 20, and would then comment on his statements. Neither the Russian nor Belarusian foreign ministries have confirmed this arrival time. The appointment is a critical one given the impending referendum on the new Union state, which will take place in November, and could be followed by the adoption of a common currency on January 1, 2006 (*Narodnaya volya*, August 12).

The ostensible purpose of Ayatskov's appointment is to accelerate the departure of the Belarusian president. It is inconceivable that such a high-level and politically sensitive appointment could have been made without due consideration or that Ayatskov could have been expressing personal views counter to those of his president. At a recent meeting with the "Nashi" youth movement at Zavodovo, Putin stated, "We do not want to offend those who value Belarusian culture, language, and history, of which we are also proud. However, in a broad sense, we are a single nation and we will only benefit if we unite...." (*Belarus segodnya*, August 2-8).

In short, whatever the platitudes offered about the RBU from both capitals, Russia appears to have decided that the irascible Belarusian leader has become a liability at a time of potential political change and following the "loss" of Ukraine as a geostrategic partner. Further delay in the formation of a Union state controlled by Moscow is unacceptable.

Source: David Marples, *The Jamestown Foundation*; August 17, 2005;
http://jamestown.org/edm/article.php?article_id=2370160

7. Belarus and Kaliningrad Region To Start Implementing New Joint Projects in 2006

At the beginning of 2006 Belarus and Kaliningrad region will start implementing their new joint projects, president of this republic Aleksandr Lukashenko stated today at his meeting with governor of this Russian region Vladimir Egorov.

The Belarusian leader deems it necessary to set up a joint working group for bilateral cooperation. He offered Vladimir Egorov to head it on the part of Kaliningrad region. "Belarus will be represented at a high level as well", the president said.

He has underlined it is necessary to "consider seriously all cooperation avenues and take a corresponding legal decision till the end of the current year".

"All the proposals, which have been put forward, were supported by the president of Russia", Aleksandr Lukashenko underscored.

[Text revised by the Editors]

Source: *BelTA*; August 16, 2005; <http://www.belta.by/engnews.nsf>

8. After Poles Lukashenko is To Start Confrontation With Ukrainians?

Belarusian oppositionists do not exclude that Ukrainian citizens are to be the next after the Poles to face detentions. This consideration has been expressed by the deputy chairman of the Belarusian Popular Front Ales Mikhalevich in the interview to the Ukrainian TV channel *5 Kanal* on Saturday.

On Saturday one of the founders of the Union of Poles in Belarus Tadeusz Gavin was to be released, but 15 days of detention were added for him.

"As for prolongation of the term for important persons, he thinks that 15 days is not enough. Then the method re-classification of the case is used. The case becomes a criminal one because of beating of a cell-mate, and the next term is given," Mikhalevich said.

"Such things cannot happen without Lukashenko. I am sure that it is done after his personal agreement and after a coordination with him," the oppositionist believes.

"Turning neighbors, the Poles, into enemies, was relatively easy and achieved long-range goals. Ukraine is to become the next enemy," Mikhalevich believes.

Source: *Charter97*, August 15, 2005; www.charter97.org

INTERNATIONAL

9. Chernobyl Children Visit Scotland

Nineteen children from a country badly hit by the Chernobyl disaster are in Orkney as part of a month-long visit to Scotland. Although none was born when a huge explosion rocked the nuclear power plant in 1986, their lives could still be affected by the radioactive fallout that affected Belarus, part of the former Soviet Union.

They're a long way from home and they're having a ball. The children from Belarus are spending a month in Scotland having fun and enjoying clean air, food and water. For the youngsters it's a time of recuperation.

It's almost twenty years since their country was badly affected by the devastating fallout that followed the explosion at the Chernobyl nuclear power station. A huge cloud of radioactive dust escaped from the plant and the area where the children live is still contaminated. The generosity of people in Orkney and Nairn has allowed the charity Chernobyl Children Lifeline to fund the four week holiday for the nineteen youngsters. Every penny raised by families, businesses and individual well wishers has been spent in giving them a much needed break from the radiation still present in their home environment.

The children of Belarus could have become the forgotten victims of the Chernobyl disaster. Those who organized their trip to Scotland hope they'll go home knowing that people here care about them and their country.

Source: Grampian TV; August 18, 2005;

http://northtonight.grampiantv.co.uk/content/default.asp?page=s1_1_1&newsid=7351

10. Warsaw Seems To Be Losing Duel With Minsk Over Ethnic Organization

After two rounds of reciprocal diplomatic expulsions and the recalling of Polish Ambassador to Belarus Tadeusz Pawlak last month, the conflict between Warsaw and Minsk over the Union of Poles in Belarus (SPB) appears to be entering a calmer stage. Belarusian Deputy Foreign Minister Alyaksandr Mikhnevitch said last week that Minsk is ready to start talks with Warsaw on solving the present crisis in bilateral relations. Polish Sejm speaker and leading presidential candidate Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz, who earlier did not rule out closing the Polish Embassy in Minsk, responded immediately that Poland should not reject the possibility of discussing the ongoing standoff.

The conflict erupted in May after the Belarusian Justice Ministry refused to recognize the SPB's new leadership elected at a congress in March. The ministry quoted irregularities in both the nomination of delegates and the congress itself and demanded a repeat convention to hold a more "democratic" vote. However, the new SPB leadership headed by 32-year-old Andzhelika Borys asserts that the true motive behind the ministry's decision is to reinstall Tadeusz Kruczkowski, SPB head in 2000-05, as a more compliant leader from the authorities' viewpoint.

This view is shared by most Polish and Belarusian commentators who see the conflict as primarily an attempt by autocratic Belarusian President Alyaksandr Lukashenko to get full control of the country's largest NGO before the 2006 presidential election. The SPB claims an official membership of some 25,000 out of the 400,000-strong Polish minority in Belarus, but SPB leaders admit that the organization's active membership is much lower.

In May and June the authorities prevented the SPB's new leadership from printing their weekly "Głos znad Niemna" (Voice From Over the Niemen) and even produced several fake issues of the publication with the collaboration of Kruczkowski. And on 27 July, Belarusian police drove Borys and a dozen of her supporters out of the SPB headquarters in Hrodna and reinstated Kruczkowski there. In the meantime, Kruczkowski managed to gather a part of the SPB's old board and, with the blessing of the authorities, scheduled a new SPB congress for 27 August.

Warsaw's official position in the conflict was formulated by Polish Foreign Minister Adam Rotfeld in June and boils down to the requirement that Borys and her adherents be installed as a democratically elected SPB leadership. Does this mean that Warsaw will refuse to recognize the decisions made by the upcoming SPB congress, which is obviously being orchestrated by the Lukashenko regime? Borys said earlier this week in an online interview moderated by RFE/RL's Belarus Service that she and her followers are not going to participate in the SPB congress later this month. She also asserted that the Polish government, which finances the SPB, will not recognize the results of this convention, whatever they may be.

However, Warsaw now appears to be looking at the situation from a much more practical point of view. Warsaw seems to realize that Lukashenko has actually won the battle over the SPB and by

the end of August he will have a politically submissive SPB leadership that won't make any trouble in the 2006 election campaign. Borys would hardly be allowed to register a competing organization of ethnic Poles in Belarus, and this could certainly be a serious setback for Warsaw, which needs to have a legally recognized receiver of its assistance to the Polish minority in Belarus. For Warsaw, cutting financial aid to the SPB would mean losing too much in Belarus.

The Polish minority in Belarus receives funds through the Polish upper house, the Senate, and its specialized body for contacts with the Polish diaspora, Stowarzyszenie Wspolnota Polska (Polish Community Association). Borys recently told Polish media that the annual costs of running the SPB amount to some \$200,000. She also said that the SPB has non-state sponsors but did not disclose their contributions. In the past, the Polish government financed the construction of 16 Polish cultural centers and two Polish-language schools in Belarus -- most of these facilities were built during Lukashenko's rule. Some 22,000 children in Belarus study Polish. It is hardly conceivable that Warsaw could now decide to put all this educational and cultural infrastructure of the Belarusian Poles at risk only because the SPB is run by people not palatable to Poland.

There is also one important aspect of the conflict over the SPB that either escapes the attention of media in Poland and the West or is intentionally omitted by them. The point is that the bulk of the Polish ethnic community in Belarus is located in rural areas in Hrodna Oblast. Collective-farm Poles in Belarus, just like collective-farm Belarusians, are highly supportive of Lukashenko and his policies. Besides, a majority of Belarus's Poles are either unaware of what is actually going on with the SPB leadership, or indifferent to the conflict, or take the authorities' side in the spat. Thus, what in Warsaw or elsewhere in Europe may be seen as a conflict between democracy and dictatorship, for those concerned most closely it is just a quarrel within their elites. And this means that Borys cannot expect that any significant number of fellow Poles in Belarus will stand to support her cause. She is decidedly not in a winning position.

If so, why has Warsaw miscalculated so gravely and taken such a stiff stance in the conflict? Did the Polish government -- as suggested by official Belarusian media -- really believe that it could influence the political situation in Belarus through the ethnic Polish organization and thus contribute to the export of a "colored revolution" to "Europe's last dictatorship"? These questions have no easy or unambiguous answers.

Russian political analyst Stanislav Belkovskii told RFE/RL's Belarus Service earlier this month that the Warsaw-Minsk conflict reflects Poland's increasingly assertive drive to regain its historical influence in the east -- on the territory of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania, that is, primarily in Belarus and Ukraine -- after Russia lost its global superpower status, while Poland secured its rear in the EU from encroachments of its another historical rival, Germany.

In accordance with this line of argument, Warsaw, encouraged by its role in brokering a political compromise in the Orange Revolution in Kyiv last year, is now trying to influence developments in Belarus by using the organization of ethnic Poles. In other words, the conflict over the SPB is no less than part of a geopolitical game (involving Washington and Brussels) over supremacy in the former Soviet republics. An ongoing diplomatic spat between Russia and Poland over the beating of Russian diplomats' kids in Warsaw and of Polish diplomats in Moscow seems to confirm the theory that the Russian and Belarusian presidents work hand-in-hand to ward off the Polish political offensive to the east.

But others, including this author, look for the main reason behind the conflict over the SPB in much more mundane circumstances.

Warsaw, which did not object to Kruczkowski's chairmanship of the SPB in previous years, might have simply become fed up with him by the end of 2004, when it emerged in Belarus that Kruczkowski was possibly a target for brazen manipulation by the KGB. "Kruczkowski does not belong to himself any longer -- he is simply an object of manipulation," Tadeusz Gawin, SPB's founder and chairman from 1988-2000, commented on the conflict to a Polish regional

newspaper in June. Gawin explained that the authorities "have a hold" on Kruczkowski because of his supposed involvement in bribery, fraud, and rape. "He had a great chance to become a major figure in the Polish renaissance movement in Belarus but he has lost everything," Gawin concluded.

Consequently, when the SPB congress in March replaced Kruczkowski with Borys, an intellectually unassuming but apparently free-from-manipulation schoolteacher, Warsaw decided to stand behind her to make its democratic credentials in Belarus look stronger. Because Kruczkowski is known in Belarus not only as a loyalist of the Lukashenko regime and a potential object of KGB manipulation, but also as a staunch opponent of the democratic opposition and a hater of the Belarusian language and non-Sovietized Belarusian culture. Which, incidentally, explains why Lukashenko had taken so much trouble to reinstall him in the SPB leadership.

Now it seems that the Polish government has decided not to aggravate its relations with Lukashenko any longer and is looking for a compromise solution. Such a solution, as suggested by Belarusian Ambassador to Poland Pavel Latushka, could be found in denying any major role in the SPB to Kruczkowski and Borys and electing someone else to lead the organization. Cimoszewicz told journalists this week that Poland should formulate "clear-cut conditions" for talks with Minsk on the SPB, adding that these conditions should include "cessation of all unfriendly actions towards Polish diplomats [and] cessation of illegal interference in the internal affairs of the SPB." Compared to what Polish politicians and media said about the conflict over the past few months, these words sound like a coded acceptance of surrender.

Source: Jan Maksymiuk, RFE/RL, August 16, 2005; www.rferl.org

11. Polish President Urges Minsk To Observe Minority Rights

Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski today called on the Belarusian government to respect the rights of the Polish minority in the country.

In a speech for Polish Armed Forces Day, Kwasniewski said he expected authorities in Belarus to respect their international commitments towards minorities and freedom of the media.

Kwasniewski said Poland would continue to insist that Poles and other nationalities in Belarus have the right to meet freely and elect their representatives.

Earlier this year, authorities in Belarus refused to recognize the new leadership of the Union of Poles of Belarus, which represents 20,000 of the some 400,000 ethnic Poles in Belarus.

Belarusian authorities arrested several officials from the association at the end of July and accused its leaders of being puppets of Warsaw.

Warsaw then recalled its ambassador to Belarus.

Source: RFE/RL, August 15, 2005; www.rferl.org

12. Walesa Backs Belarus Revolution

The former leader of the Solidarity movement in Poland has said he would support a people's revolution in neighboring Belarus.

Lech Walesa who won a Nobel Peace Prize and went on to become Poland's president, was speaking on the 25th anniversary of the union's founding.

In an interview for the BBC's World This Weekend program, he said Belarus should expect no support from the West.

He said the European Union should be ready to support a reformed Belarus.

Iconic figure

Lech Walesa likes to describe himself as a revolutionary. Even 25 years after the founding of Solidarity, the trade union movement which eventually toppled Communist rule in Poland, he is regarded still as an iconic figure by many in central and Eastern Europe.

Now he is turning his attention to Poland's neighbor, Belarus, considered to be the most repressive state in Europe.

President Aleksandr Lukashenko brooks no criticism and opponents are often treated harshly. Mr Walesa says he would support a revolution there, similar to those which have taken place in Ukraine and Georgia.

However, he gave a warning that the people of Belarus should expect no help from the West, just as Poland had been left to struggle on its own in the 1980s.

But he said that if there were to be a change of regime there the European Union should immediately open its doors to Belarus as a way of encouraging democracy.

Source: BBC News - UK; August 14, 2005; <http://news.bbc.co.uk>

13. Belarus Joins Kyoto Protocol

Belarus joined the Kyoto Protocol on Saturday.

A decree signed by Belarusian President Aleksandr Lukashenko says accession to the Kyoto Protocol will benefit the country and allow it to contribute to the prevention of climate changes, get access to financial resources in the green house quota market, raise its international standing, and seek further integration into the European and world community.

Belarus' hazardous discharges into the atmosphere are way below the quotas set forth in the Kyoto Protocol. So it can sell the difference to countries that exceed their quotas.

Accession to the Kyoto Protocol will also allow Belarus to take part in projects of joint implementation. This in turn will enable it to attract resources for introducing high technologies and modernizing industry in order to reduce greenhouse emissions, the presidential press service said.

Source; Itar-Tass; August 13, 2005; www.itar-tass.com/en/

HUMAN RIGHTS & INDEPENDENT MEDIA

14. Mikhail Marynich's Sentence Commuted

The term of imprisonment of the Belarusian political prisoner, former Minister of Foreign Economic Relations, Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of Belarus Mikhail Marynich has been reduced by one year due to the amnesty dedicated to the 60th anniversary of the Victory in the Great patriotic War. The press center of the Charter'97 was informed about it by the son of the political prisoner, leader of the civil initiative "Freedom to political prisoners!", member of the "Free Belarus" Igor Marynich.

As we have informed, according to the law amnesty reaches the cases of pensioners and people who had not committed hard crimes and were accused for the first time. Mikhail Marynich can be entered into this category. Besides, a 65-year-old politician has serious problems with his health.

In March 2005 he had a stroke, and he had been placed to a republican prison hospital in Minsk twice.

After the amnesty Mikhail Marynich, who had already served a year and a half, would have to serve his term for a year more. "However now, taking into consideration his state of health, father has every reason for being released earlier," Igor Marynich said.

A well-known politician, former Minister of Foreign Economic Relations, Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of Belarus Mikhail Marynich was detained on April 26, 2004. In a trial on December 30, 2004, Mikhail Marynich was found guilty of stealing office equipment that the Delovaya Initsiativa (Business Initiative) association, of which he was chairman, had received from the US embassy for temporary use. A Minsk Regional Court panel on February 18 reduced the prison sentence for the politician from 5 to 3.5 years, taking into consideration his age, health state and merits.

Source: Charter97, August 18, 2005; www.charter97.org

15. Lukashenko Cracks Down on Journalists in Row With Poland

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), the Committee to The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), the International Press Institute, (IPI) and Reporters Without Borders (Reporters sans frontières, RSF) have condemned the Belarusian government for targeting journalists of Polish origin amid an escalating diplomatic row between Belarus and Poland.

Since 6 July 2005, at least 19 journalists have been arrested, fined, sentenced to jail or banned from entering Belarus, says RSF. In one case, Andrzej Pisalnik, acting editor-in-chief of the Polish-language newspaper *Glos znad Niemna*, was sentenced to 10 days in jail on 4 August for participating in an illegal Independence Day demonstration and for disobeying police, reports IFJ. Pisalnik is also a spokesman for the Union of Poles in Belarus (SPB), an organization that has been accused of trying to overthrow the government.

RSF has written to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), urging its Representative on Freedom of the Media to raise the cases with Belarusian authorities. "Journalists must not be made to pay for the tension between the two countries," RSF says.

The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, has accused the country's Polish community of seeking to overthrow the government with Poland's backing, reports BBC. Roughly 400,000 ethnic Poles live in Belarus. Poland has the support of much of the West in its desire to see political change in Belarus.

Belarus has one of the poorest free expression records in Europe. Since 2004, President Lukashenko's authoritarian regime has tightened its grip on the country's media, says RSF. The state media is flooded with pro-Lukashenko propaganda, which vilifies opposition leaders and independent media, and urges voters to support the president or face Western domination and political instability, notes CPJ.

Source: IFEX; August 18, 2005; <http://www.ifex.org/en/content/view/full/68697/>

16. President of Belarus Holds Fast to Soviet Way of Life. Those Opposing Lukashenko's Rule Get the Message

The prosecutors did not tell Andzelika Borys which laws she had violated, or what her punishment might be. They just told her that if she broke "Belarusian law" again, she "would be punished."

In Belarus, a Kansas-size nation on Russia's western border, everyone knows what that means. In this last outpost of Soviet-style dictatorship in Europe, such warnings are reserved for politicians, journalists, businessmen or anybody else who has irked the regime.

For Borys, who is a leader of the country's small Polish minority, it means she is a supporter of the opposition -- small as it is -- to President Alexander Lukashenko. The authorities want her to stop, or face arrest -- or worse. Dozens of Lukashenko critics have simply disappeared in recent years, including an opposition leader and his business associate, and a television journalist. Some have been found dead.

"They want us to shut up," Borys said after her meeting with the prosecutors in Grodno, a Belarusian town on the border with Poland, two weeks ago. The prosecutors refused to comment. Belarus, with a population of 10 million people, is a country that the 21st century seems to have forgotten. Once part of Russia's Slavic core, which included Ukraine as well as Russia, Belarus remains a miniature model of the old Soviet Union.

A walk down Independence Street, the main road in Belarus' capital Minsk, is like time travel back to the Soviet Union: A few cars drive slowly along the wide, clean but largely deserted avenue lined with huge, Stalin-era apartment buildings. The occasional pedestrian saunters in and out of the enormous, state-run GUM mall that sells crudely made, shapeless Belarusian clothes and souvenirs made of straw and amber. The only billboards on the street extol the heroism of Soviet soldiers in World War II.

Outside the capital, dilapidated wooden houses with caved-in roofs stand in the dying villages amidst golden and purple fields of wheat and buckwheat and emerald pastures, empty except for storks.

Most companies remain state-owned. Soviet-style collective farms, which constitute the majority of Belarus' agriculture, are rewarded by gifts of television sets. All students and state employees are forced to attend weekly "ideology classes," which hammer home the benefits of Lukashenko's "market socialism" and the dangers of Western-style democracy and capitalism.

Newspaper kiosks sell the *Soviet Belarus* and *Respublika* newspapers, which these days are dominated by two topics: the continuing wheat harvest and the alleged Western conspiracy to overthrow the 50-year-old Lukashenko.

"You will not succeed with the color revolution" -- a reference to Ukraine's Orange Revolution of 2004 -- "nor with the revision of state borders," the *Respublika* warned the regime's opponents in an editorial this month.

Alarmed by the popular uprisings that have toppled authoritarian regimes in three other former Soviet republics since 2003, Lukashenko -- a former head of a collective farm who has ruled Belarus by decree since he was elected president in 1994 -- is stepping up efforts to prevent what he sees as attempts by the United States and other Western countries to remove him from power.

"The Americans, the West" are preparing to "create certain groups that will head for Minsk ... and will make a revolution in the main square," Lukashenko said this month on Belarus' only, state-run television channel. "I want to warn you that ... we know how to stop the intervention."

The Russian government of President Vladimir Putin, which fears that Belarus, Russia's satellite for centuries, will go the way of another former ally, Ukraine, supports Lukashenko and helps keep the feeble Belarusian economy afloat by purchasing Belarusian wheat, corn and tractors and selling it oil and natural gas at subsidized prices.

To ensure that Belarus' nascent opposition does not gain steam the way the opposition had in Georgia, Kyrgyzstan or Belarus' southern neighbor, Ukraine, Lukashenko has silenced nearly all non-government news media and jailed, killed or "disappeared" his critics, international human rights groups say.

Lukashenko has even dug up Independence Square, the main Minsk plaza, which held up to 200,000 protesters during political unrest of the early 1990s -- so that "even if someone decides to protest, they will have no place to congregate," said Alexander Feduta, a former Lukashenko spokesman who is now an independent political analyst.

Over the last month, police in Grodno arrested six of Borys' colleagues from the Union of Poles for their ties to the Belarusian opposition, turning this tattered city of 322,000 people into the latest arena of Lukashenko's political repression. Police stormed the group's headquarters and reinstalled Borys' predecessor, who keeps the organization away from political activity. Borys was arrested during the raid but later released.

Belarus also has expelled three Polish diplomats, severely damaging crucial economic ties with its western neighbor. Lukashenko has accused Poland of trying to help the United States try to topple his regime with the help of 20,000 members of the Polish association Borys once led in Grodno.

To be sure, the Bush administration has made it clear it would like to see a different government in Minsk. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has called Belarus "an outpost of tyranny" and "the last true dictatorship in the center of Europe," and Congress wants to add \$5 million to Washington's annual \$7 million aid package to Belarus to increase U.S. assistance to the country's independent media, human rights groups and programs that promote civil society.

Some opposition leaders hope that such aid, combined with the popular frustration over Lukashenko's dictatorial regime and the sense of stagnation in Belarus, will bring about what they expectantly call a "Cornflower Revolution" that would end the country's political and economic isolation.

"What happened in Ukraine -- that's our only hope," said Lyudmila Gryaznova, deputy chairwoman of the United Civil Party, one of the leading opposition groups. But many observers say Lukashenko's machinery of repression will be hard to overcome, in part because it has so successfully intimidated much of the population.

Lukashenko is eligible to run for a third term in next year's presidential election. In October, he won a referendum that scrapped a constitutional two-term limit. Western governments have refused to recognize the legitimacy of the referendum, but a Gallup poll last month showed that 48 percent of Belarusians believed Lukashenko should be re-elected.

Even some of Lukashenko's formerly most fierce critics admit they are often afraid to speak out. Olga Zavadskaya, mother of television journalist Dmitry Zavadsky, who vanished five years ago, blames Lukashenko for the disappearance of her son. But Zavadskaya, who works as a dentist at a state-run clinic in Minsk, says she never talks about her son's disappearance at work because she is afraid to lose her job.

"There is a great sense of Lukashenko fatigue -- more and more people are becoming more frustrated," said a Western diplomat, who spoke on condition of anonymity. "But you don't get a sense that there's a great will of the public to protest. There's a lot of fear, a lot of levers the government can use to stop people from being politically active."

Source: Anna Badkhen, San Francisco Chronicle; August 18, 2005; <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/c/a/2005/08/18/MNGM2E9BOR1.DTL>

17. Lukashenko Cartoon Club Raided in Belarus

The Belarus domestic security service - the KGB - has raided apartments of several students who had set up the Multclub web-site offering daring cartoons that featured the country's autocratic leader, Aleksandr Lukashenko, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty reported Wednesday.

KGB officers seized 12 computers and discs with software, according to the report.

The controversial Web site was launched by the members of the civil initiative group Trety Put (The Third Way) that unites students of Belarusian universities. The students established an animated cartoon club on the Web and posted their products on their site. The cartoons featured Aleksandr Lukashenko and other top government officials, opposition leaders and ordinary citizens.

KGB officers also searched apartments of cartoon-makers all of whom were questioned by investigators. One of the activists was detained but later reportedly discharged under a travel ban.

"Internet cartoons are popular everywhere across the globe. But it never occurred to anyone to open criminal cases during election campaigns against the makers of numerous political cartoons, neither in Russia against Masyanya, nor in Ukraine," Belarusian cartoon-makers said commenting on the recent raids.

Masyanya, a brainchild of a St. Petersburg-based cartoon-maker Oleg Kuvayev, won the hearts of Russian Internet users with her bold views and outspoken personality.

Source: MosNews.Com, August 17, 2005; www.mosnews.com

18. Vandals Desecrate Belarus Holocaust Memorial

Vandals have defiled a memorial to Jewish victims shot by Nazi occupiers in Belarus, a leader of the ex-Soviet state's Jewish community said on Wednesday.

It was the third time the monument honoring the "Yama" (Pit) site where Jews from the Minsk ghetto were shot has been desecrated.

Yakov Basin, Vice-President of the Union of Jewish Organizations, said the vandals had set fire to wreaths and scattered stones placed, according to Jewish tradition, on the graves of victims.

"We have made a statement to the prosecutor's office, but there is of course little hope that anyone responsible will be found," Basin said.

"It's not easy to investigate cemetery vandalism. And it's unlikely anyone will go looking for them."

Ex-Soviet states, particularly Russia, have witnessed a spate of anti-Semitic acts in recent years, prompting Kremlin leader Vladimir Putin to express shame at ceremonies last January marking the 60th anniversary of Auschwitz death camp.

Vandals had already struck at the Yama site in 1992 and 2003. Belarus was among the ex-Soviet states to have suffered the greatest losses in the war, with one in four of its inhabitants being killed in more than three years of occupation.

Source: AlertNet; August 17, 2005; <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/L1767199.htm>

19. Opposition Against Deployment of RF Military Facilities in Belarus

Belarus' opposition come against the deployment of Russian military facilities.

Sources in the Belarusian People's Front told Itar-Tass on Monday the protest action was organized in the territory of the Gantsevich and Kletsk regions where the Volga radar station of Russian Space Troops is located.

Young men of the Belarusian People's Front talked with local residents and gave leaflets saying the Russian radar station would cause damage to the environment and the people. The

opposition said the deployment of Russian military facilities made prospects for Belarus' integration into Europe.

Belarus' opposition organized the first protest action in the Vileika region in 2003 where a communication base of the Russian Navy is stationed.

Source; Itar-Tass; August 15, 2005; www.itar-tass.com/en/

20. Belarus Polish Chief Jailed Again

A leader of Belarus' ethnic Polish minority has been given a second 15-day prison term, in an apparent escalation of tension with the authorities.

Tadeusz Gawin, the former head of the Union of Poles, was accused of beating his cell mate - a claim he denies. He was initially jailed for 15 days for arranging a meeting between a visiting Polish MP and ethnic Polish activists.

Belarus' President Aleksandr Lukashenko has dismissed Poland's criticism of his country's treatment of ethnic Poles.

Mr Lukashenko has in the past accused the Polish government of stirring up unrest within Belarus' Polish community to unseat him.

The affair has damaged relations between Belarus and neighboring Poland.

Diplomats expelled

Mr Gawin was originally sentenced on 2 August for setting up a meeting between ethnic Polish activists and the deputy speaker of the Polish parliament, Donald Tusk. The Belarusian authorities said the gathering in the town of Grodno, near the border with Poland, amounted to an unsanctioned rally.

Fellow activist Veslaw Kewlyak, deputy chairman of the Union of Poles, was last week also sentenced to 15 days in prison for meeting Mr Tusk.

The US has condemned the Belarusian government for raiding the Union of Poles headquarters in Grodno last month.

Meanwhile, Mr Lukashenko said Poland had only criticized Belarus to distract from its own domestic problems ahead of national elections in September.

The two countries have expelled each other's diplomats and gathered support from political allies. Poland has the support of much of the West in its desire to see political change in Belarus, while Mr Lukashenko looks to Russia as an ally against outside interference. He has been in power since 1994.

About 400,000 ethnic Poles live in Belarus, in areas that were part of Poland until World War II.

Source: BBC News - UK; August 13, 2005; <http://news.bbc.co.uk>

BUSINESS

21. Belarus to Be Able to Sell Greenhouse Gas Quotas in 2008

Belarus will be able to launch a large-scale sale of greenhouse gas quotas within the framework of the Kyoto Protocol in 2008, deputy minister of natural resources and environmental protection Aleksandr Apatsky informed.

In his words, in line with the Kyoto Protocol the first budget period is scheduled for 2008-2012. Within this period Belarus will have an opportunity to sell about 40 million tons of greenhouse gases a year. Given the minimal price of 1 ton of greenhouse gases in CO2 equivalent equals USD 3,5, Belarus will make a yearly profit of about USD 200 million.

Aleksandr Apatsky informed that the Kyoto Protocol will come into effect in Belarus 90 days after the president signs it. After the document comes into force, this country will be able to partake in joint implementation projects that would help attract necessary funds to introduce new technology and to modernize the productions in the effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

BeITA note: Kyoto Protocol to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change was adopted in Japan at the 3rd session of the parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. The Kyoto Protocol is a legally binding agreement under which industrialized countries will reduce their collective emissions of greenhouse gases by at least 5 per cent compared to the year 1990. Each country is assigned an individual emissions target. An "emissions trading" regime is seen to stimulate the countries cut their emissions. Decree on Belarus' acceding to the Kyoto Protocol was signed by the president of Belarus on August 13 this year.

[Text revised by the Editors]

Source: The National Centre of Legal Information of the Republic of Belarus; August 18, 2005; <http://law.by/work/EnglPortal.nsf/0/CD0C1AE88CC2D465C225706000251C9A?OpenDocument>

22. Grain Growers of Minsk Region Gather First Million Ton of Grain

Grain growers of Minsk region have collected a million ton of grain.

Chairman of the Minsk City Council Nikolai Domoshkevich reported this achievement to the president by wire. The message says that 'working to ensure country's food security laborers of Minsk region have collected the first million ton of grain today on August 17. The state purchased 40 per cent of the target'.

'Well-organized joint work of specialists and officials, farmers and scientists, discipline, creative approach and high responsibility of workers of the agro-industrial complex and organizations in charge of the harvesting campaign contributed to the high labor achievement,' Nikolai Domashkevich said.

[Text revised by the Editors]

Source: BeITA; August 17, 2005; <http://www.belta.by/engnews.nsf>

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 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 or Olga Tarasov at 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.
