

August 25 – August 31, 2005

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International League for Human Rights

## Table of Contents

### I. Domestic

1. Ivashkevich: The Democratic Forces Congress Delegate List Will Be Formed by September 10 (*Belorusskaya Delovaya Gazeta*)
2. July 16, 2006 Likely Date for Belarusian Presidential Election (*RIA Novosti*)
3. Parliamentarians Support “Beslan Address” Aimed to Protect Children From Terror (*BeITa*)
4. Monument to Late Pontiff Put Up in Belarus (*Interfax*)
5. Average Age Pensions in Belarus Pushed Up 11 Percent (*BeITa*)

### II. Regional

6. Russia to Deliver S-300 Air Defense Systems to Belarus - Russian Defense Minister (*Blackenterprise.com*)
7. CSTO States Agree On Docs to Finance Collective Forces in 2006
8. CIS: Death Notices Serve To Revive Moribund Organization (*RFE/RL*)
9. Dmitry Ayatskov Escapes Minsk (*Kommersant*)
10. Russian Defense Minister to Visit CIS Air Defense Exercises (*RIA Novosti*)
11. Expert Says CIS and CES Have Not Overcome Crisis (*RIA Novosti*)
12. Belarus Very Much Interested in CES—Lukashenko (*Itar-Tass*)
13. Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan Agree on Creation of Common Economic Space (*MosNews.Com*)
14. Living Standard in Belarus Declining After USSR's Collapse (*Pravda.Ru*)
15. Tbilisi Demands Release of Georgians in Belarus (*Civil Georgia*)

### III. International

16. Paulauskas Maintains Hope for Belarus (*The Baltic Times*)
17. Belarus to Become Kyoto Protocol Member in November 2005 (*Interfax*)
18. Declaration from the Presidency on Behalf of the European Union on Restrictions on Technical Assistance to Belarus (*The Council of the European Union*)
19. EU Diplomat to Monitor Human Rights in Belarus – Official (*MosNews.Com*)
20. Zbigniew Brzezinski: Belarus Can Follow the Way of Polish Solidarity (*Charter97*)
21. Enterprise India Kick Starts in Belarus (*India Infoline News*)
22. Warsaw Rejects New Polish Ethnic Leaders in Belarus (*Reuters.co.uk*)
23. Poles in Belarus Elect New Leader, But Split Looms (*Reuters AlertNet*)
24. Polish PM starts the Pre-election Attack on Belarus (*Pravda.Ru*)
25. On Development of Cooperation Between Belarus and Latin America (*Harold Doan and Associates Ltd.*)
26. State Department Comment on Belarus Incident with U.S. Diplomat (*NewsBlaze*)

### IV. Human Rights & Independent Media

27. Belarus: Two Georgian Youth Activists Remain Jailed In Minsk (*RFE/RL*)
28. Belarus Police Detain Polish Activists (*The Peninsula On-line*)
29. Does *Kurjer iz Borisova* Not Exist Any More? (*BAJ*)
30. “Kmara” Activists to Be Kept In Prison For Three Days And Expelled (*ZUBR*)
31. *Borisovskije Novosti*'s Editor-in-chief Anatol Bukas Has Been Warned (*BAJ*)

### V. Business

32. Belarusian National Bank Gold Reserves 23.47 Tones (*Interfax*)
33. Belarus Not To Introduce Russian Ruble (*RosBusinessConsulting*)
34. Belarus Posts 7-Mth Budget Surplus of 2.5% (*Interfax*)

## DOMESTIC

### 1. Ivashkevich: The Democratic Forces Congress Delegate List Will Be Formed by September 10

209 delegates have been nominated for the Democratic Forces Congress, said Viktor Ivashkevich, Deputy Chairman of the BPF [Belarusian Popular Front – Ed.] political party during the party leadership meeting on August 29.

According to Ivashkevich, 114 out of 146 districts in the country held successful nominating district assemblies, and 243 invitations were sent out.

“The delegates list formation will be completed by September 10,” stressed Ivashkevich.

*[Text translated by the Editors]*

*Source: Belorusskaya Delovaya Gazeta; August 31, 2005; <http://www.bdg.by>*

### 2. July 16, 2006 Likely Date for Belarusian Presidential Election

July 16, 2006 is the most likely date for presidential elections in Belarus, the Central Election Commission chairperson said in an interview Tuesday.

Lidiya Yermoshina told the *Zvyazda* newspaper that the final date would be fixed in a parliamentary decree.

The commission expects 35 billion Belarusian rubles (less than \$17 million) from the budget to be allocated for election campaigns.

Under Belarusian legislation, presidential candidates can spend only state allocated funds on their campaigns. Using money from a foreign source is a very serious offense.

"Funding election campaigns from a foreign source is illegal in all countries," Yermoshina said. "The West cannot offer anything openly. If the West violates Belarusian laws, the republic's law enforcement bodies will take appropriate measures, including with respect to diplomats if they interfere in Belarus' internal affairs."

President Aleksandr Lukashenko initiated a referendum in the republic in 2004, which lifted a constitutional restriction on terms of office, then limited to two consecutive terms. Western countries did not recognize the referendum results.

Commenting on the possibility that the West would not regard Belarus' election results as legitimate, Yermoshina said, "This is the West's problem, not Belarus'. The legitimacy of elections is to be determined by the people of Belarus."

*Source: RIA Novosti, August 30, 2005; <http://en.rian.ru>*

### 3. Parliamentarians Support “Beslan Address” Aimed to Protect Children From Terror

The deputy corps of Belarus was deeply moved by the appeal of the parliament of the Republic of Northern Osetia-Alania of the Russian Federation to the nations to support “Beslan Address” aimed to protect children from terror. “We have drafted the text of the address to the parliaments of foreign states to express our attitude towards international terrorism”, chair of the permanent commission on international affairs and links with the CIS member-states of the Chamber of Representatives of this republic Vadim Popov stated August 30.

The document says that “a year after the terrorist act in the Beslan school, resulted in 330 deaths, we feel pain and compassion, which this tragedy gave not only to the people of Northern Osetia

but also to all brotherly nations of Russia". We are unable to perceive the death of children – the most unprotected and vulnerable section of the society, the address reads further.

The Beslan events, terrorist attacks in Madrid, London and other cities prove that terrorists intensify their activities. Only by uniting efforts of the whole world community they will be defeated, the Belarusian parliamentarians underline.

The deputies of the Chamber of Representatives of the National Assembly of Belarus are among those who stand for exterminating this evil, who vote for protecting children – the future of the mankind and support "Beslan Address".

*[Text revised by the Editors]*

*Source: BelTA; August 30. 2005; <http://www.belta.by/engnews.nsf>*

#### **4. Monument to Late Pontiff Put Up in Belarus**

A monument to the late Pope John Paul II has been put up outside the St. Ann Cathedral in the village of Mosar in Belarus's Vitebsk region, sources in the Roman Catholic Church office in Belarus told *Interfax*.

"The monument to the pontiff, who led the Catholic Church for more than 25 years, has been placed in front of the central gates of the St. Ann Cathedral. A 180-centimeter statue depicts John Paul II standing on scattered stones amid which flowers are growing," one of the sources said.

"Nearly 14% of the overall number of people who call themselves religious in Belarus describe themselves as Roman Catholic. The number of this religion's parishes has quadrupled in the republic over the past 12 years," he said.

*Source: Interfax; August 30, 2005, 2005; [www.interfax.ru/e/](http://www.interfax.ru/e/)*

#### **5. Average Age Pensions in Belarus Pushed Up 11 Percent**

On August 27, 2005 Belarusian president Aleksandr Lukashenko signed Decree #402 "On increase of labor pensions".

In line with the decree starting from September 1, 2005 the age pensions will be recalculated with their amount being pegged to the average monthly salary of servicemen for the second quarter of 2005 which accounts for Br468,725 [Belarusian rubles – Ed.]. Thus the average age pensions will grow from Br198,4 thousand to Br220,2 thousand, up by 11 percent.

The social security fund will need Br53 billion additionally per month, Br212 billion until the end of 2005. The fund has such resources.

The president's press-service told BelTA the decree will help maintain the steady upward trend of amount of pensions and will be another step on the way to reach the target figures in pensions parameters for 2005.

The decree is to strengthen social security of the citizens, the press-service reported.

The last recalculation of age pensions was carried out this April when they were pushed up 8 per cent.

*[Text revised by the Editors]*

*Source: BelTA; August 29. 2005; <http://www.belta.by/engnews.nsf>*

## REGIONAL

### **6. Russia to Deliver S-300 Air Defense Systems to Belarus - Russian Defense Minister**

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov said that Russia will deliver contemporary S-300 air defense systems to Belarus in the near future.

"The contract has almost been worked out, and the systems will be fielded with the Belarusian air defense forces in the near future," Ivanov said at the Ashuluk firing range on Tuesday.

In his turn Belarusian Defense Minister Leonid Maltsev noted that S-300 systems would enter service with the Belarusian Air Defense Forces in the near future.

According to him, they will operate within the framework of the Joint Russia-Belarus Air Defense System in the western direction.

*Source: Blackenterprise.com; August 31, 2005;*

*[http://www.blackenterprise.com/yb/ybopen.asp?section=ybng&story\\_id=79837329&ID=blackenterprise](http://www.blackenterprise.com/yb/ybopen.asp?section=ybng&story_id=79837329&ID=blackenterprise)*

### **7. CSTO States Agree On Docs to Finance Collective Forces in 2006**

The member-countries of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) agreed on draft documents for the financing in 2006 of the activity of the Rapid Deployment Collective Forces command and the staff permanent group deployed in Bishkek, a source in the CSTO staff told Itar-Tass on Tuesday.

Military representatives from Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan agreed to assign 1,547,000 rubles in 2006. "This increase is caused by the price growth and the need for investments in the main funds in order to upgrade the mobile command post of the collective forces."

The Rapid Deployment Collective Forces are financed on assessed contributions: 50 percent – Russia, 30 percent – Kazakhstan and by ten percent – Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. "The drafted documents will be submitted for the next meeting of the permanent council of CSTO plenipotentiary representatives," the source pointed out.

The Rapid Deployment Collective Forces comprise by two battalions from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, three battalions from Russia and the airbase Kant deployed outside Bishkek.

*Source: Itar-Tass, August 31, 2005; [www.itar-tass/eng](http://www.itar-tass/eng)*

### **8. CIS: Death Notices Serve To Revive Moribund Organization**

Meeting in the wilds of Belarus on 8 December 1991, the presidents of Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus announced the creation of a new Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) on the ruins of the crumbling USSR. Two weeks later, on 21 December 1991, the presidents of 11 former Soviet republics (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan) met in Almaty and signed a protocol to that declaration affirming their countries' membership in the CIS.

The ink was barely dry on those signatures when skeptics began questioning how long that new union would last. Shortly after its first anniversary, in January 1993, U.S. expert Paul Goble memorably dubbed the CIS "the world's largest fig leaf," alluding to the need to conceal the final collapse of Moscow's influence over the country it had controlled since the USSR was first created in 1922.

Russian politicians, however, including President Vladimir Putin, have tended to put a positive spin on the emergence of the CIS as a mechanism for ensuring a "civilized divorce," in other words, for enabling the various former Soviet Socialist Republics to agree, without bloodshed, to go their separate ways.

Initially, every effort was made to preserve cooperation between CIS member states at a level close to that which existed within the USSR. In May 1992, six CIS member states (Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan) signed the CIS Collective Security Treaty pledging to intervene collectively to counter an attack on any one of them; a CIS armed forces general staff continued to exist until mid-1993.

But from the outset, the CIS was split into two factions, the first of which (Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan) was markedly more committed than the others (Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Turkmenistan, and Ukraine). Azerbaijan quit the CIS in 1992 following the advent to power of the Azerbaijan Popular Front (AHC), but rejoined in late 1993 after the AHC leadership was ousted. Georgia was coerced into joining in late 1993 by Russian threats to withhold energy supplies.

In January 1993, the CIS presidents adopted a new charter and statutes, and in September of that year they reached agreement in principle on creating an economic union. But already the centrifugal tendencies that precipitated the collapse of the USSR were evident within the CIS: Uzbek President Islam Karimov complained in April 1993 that the CIS had already adopted 270 documents that his country found unacceptable and would not abide by. Writing in *Rossiiskie vesti* in December, 1996, one commentator note that "implementing one [CIS] agreement is more difficult than signing 10 new ones."

The process of signing ever more documents that were never implemented nonetheless continued for several years, until at a CIS summit in late March 1997, hard-line Russian political scientists Andranik Migranian and Konstantin Zatulin unveiled a program intended to restore Russia's status as unacknowledged leader within the CIS. Warning that the CIS risked becoming "a fiction," they advocated radical measures, including the deliberate destabilization of the domestic political situation within selected CIS states (Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Tajikistan), to reverse the perceived drift of the former Soviet republics away from Russia. They argued that the founders of the CIS had committed a fundamental error by selecting the wrong (from Russia's point of view) model, namely EU-style integration, and that reunification of the two Germanies would have been far more appropriate.

That blueprint set off alarm bells across the CIS, and served as the catalyst for the foundation in late 1997 of GUAM, a loose geo-political alignment encompassing Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Moldova; Uzbekistan acceded to GUAM in April 1999.

In a possible acknowledgement that the scare tactics espoused by Migranian and Zatulin had proven counterproductive, in April 1998, Russian oligarch Boris Berezovskii was appointed CIS executive secretary with a brief to persuade the CIS presidents to endorse, and then implement, a blueprint for closer and more effective economic cooperation, beginning with the creation of one or more CIS free-trade zones. (An agreement in principle to form such zones had been signed in April 1994, but shared the same fate as hundreds of other collective statements of intent that were signed but never implemented.)

Meanwhile, the "core" CIS states -- Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan, which had formed a customs union in 1995 to which Kyrgyzstan acceded the following year -- were mulling the creation of a Single Economic Space together with Ukraine.

Two developments seemed to infuse new vitality into the CIS, albeit only briefly: the election of Vladimir Putin to succeed Boris Yeltsin as Russian president, and the creation in November 2001

of a CIS Antiterrorism Center. Then in 2003, the CIS drafted, but failed to endorse, a new 10-part plan for expanding economic cooperation, the first stage of which was to be the creation of a free-trade zone.

That failure to move decisively forward prompted Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbaev, one of the most enthusiastic proponents of closer CIS integration in both the economic and political spheres, to propose at a CIS summit in Astana in September 2004 transforming the Single Economic Space into the nucleus of a "super-CIS" while the remaining CIS members confined their cooperation within that body to the military sphere. Nazarbaev also proposed other measures to streamline the CIS and make it more effective, including abolishing the CIS Economic Court and several other bodies and reducing the staff of the CIS Executive Committee from 220 to 140, according to *Vremya novostei* on 17 September 2004. The summit participants agreed to reach a final decision on Nazarbaev's reform proposals within 12 months.

In the event, however, last week's CIS summit in Kazan failed yet again to yield a consensus on reform; the participants decided to readdress the issue at their next summit, tentatively scheduled for 2006 in Belarus. (An alternative blueprint for reform drafted by Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko was reportedly not included in the agenda.)

Despite the ongoing uncertainty, however, Moldovan President Vladimir Voronin described the Kazan summit as one of the most productive ever, according to "The Moscow Times" on 29 August.

That comment may, however, prove to be premature in light of two related developments. First, in line with its predilection for structuring its foreign policy exclusively on bilateral, rather than multilateral ties and agreements, Turkmenistan has finally admitted its total lack of interest in the CIS and formally requested that its status be downgraded to that of associate member. (Article 8 of the CIS Statutes adopted in January 1993 provides for states with such associate membership to participate in selected CIS activities with the formal consent of the CIS full members).

Some might argue that the effective exclusion of Turkmenistan from the CIS equation is a positive development insofar as it removes an obstacle to closer and more effective economic integration. Others, however, might see it as the thin end of a much larger wedge -- a wedge that the unequivocally Western-oriented CIS members, in the first instance Georgia and Ukraine, might seek to use at some future point to deal the coup de grace by announcing their collective withdrawal.

One unfortunate incident at the summit's opening ceremony on 26 August -- shown on Russian television -- perfectly symbolized the CIS's dilemma. The presidents gathered in a magnificent new conference center only to find the air conditioning did not function and the windows would not open. Putin, perspiring visibly, looked on as a workman wielding a crowbar was summoned to force open a window and let in some fresh air -- a commodity without which the CIS will suffocate, sooner or later. The question being, which president will wield the crowbar?

*Source: RFE/RL, August 30, 2005; www.rferl.org*

## **9. Dmitry Ayatskov Escapes Minsk**

Former governor will not become an ambassador

Friendship of Nations

An end has been put to the Russian-Belarusian scandal involving the appointment of Dmitry Ayatskov as Russian Ambassador in Minsk. Russian President Putin and his Belarusian counterpart Alexander Lukashenko agreed at the meeting of the CIS in Kazan that Mr. Ayatskov would not represent Russia in the Belarusian capital. The question of Russian Ambassador Alexander Blokhin's successor is still open.

*Kommersant* wrote that before the last week's CIS summit in Kazan Russian and Belarusian presidents Vladimir Putin and Alexander Lukashenko would discuss the appointment of Russia's new ambassador to Belarus Dmitry Ayatskov, who had got mixed up in a major scandal. A source in the Kremlin reported to *Kommersant* following the summit that Vladimir Putin and Alexander Lukashenko did discuss the Ayatskov issue to decide against this appointment and now consider the incident involving the former Saratov region governor to be over.

*Kommersant* correspondent sent yesterday an enquiry to the director of the information and press department of the Russian Foreign Ministry Mikhail Kamynin asking either to confirm or refute the information on the status of Dmitry Ayatskov. "Issues of the appointment and the recall of ambassadors are in the sphere of inter-state relations. In these cases official information is usually revealed after required inter-state procedures are complete and agreed on between the parties concerned," says the statement the Foreign Ministry posted on its official web site yesterday night.

Though the comment of the ministry's press service does not include a direct answer to the question and does not mention Dmitry Ayatskov, one may suppose that the matter has been practically resolved and now only all formal procedures are left to validate the decision taken by the leaders of the two countries.

Mr. Ayatskov was appointed Russian Ambassador to Belarus by the decree of Russian president Vladimir Putin on July 15. The agreement of the Belarusian party was received two days earlier. The path to Minsk for the former governor who enjoyed warm personal relations with Alexander Lukashenko seemed to be absolutely clear and nothing could have prompted a scandal. The situation changed drastically after Ayatskov's ringing news conference dedicated to his new appointment on July 19 with Saratov local TV channel. The only one ill-considered statement of Dmitry Ayatskov, widely cited in the press, advising Alexander Lukashenko to "stop blowing out his cheeks" and not to think that "Russia is Russia, and Belarus is Belarus" caused indignation in Minsk. Afterwards, news about Dmitry Ayatskov became all the more contradictory. He was due to arrive in Minsk late July, as Russian Ambassador to Belarus Alexander Blokhin had already left by that time. Mr. Ayatskov never came to the Belarusian capital, though, and mysteriously "disappeared" en route. The story of the new ambassador took on a detective color.

The scandal was not settled over this time. The Belarusian party was quite determined in grudging, which was proved by a number of blunt statements of Belarusian officials aimed at Dmitry Ayatskov. Vladimir Putin and Alexander Lukashenko have put an end to the conflict. The presidents preferred to take away the irritant in the relations between Moscow and Minsk altogether.

*Source: Sergey Strokan, Kommersant; August 30, 2005; <http://www.kommersant.com>*

#### **10. Russian Defense Minister to Visit CIS Air Defense Exercises**

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov will visit Russia's southern Astrakhan region Tuesday to attend military exercises conducted by former Soviet states that are now party to agreements on establishing a joint air defense system. The Russian Defense Ministry said that Ivanov would attend the Ashuluk testing range for the Military Commonwealth 2005 exercise, which will include Air Force and air defense units from four member states of the Commonwealth of Independent States: Armenia, Belarus, Russia and Tajikistan.

The exercises will focus on training units in near combat conditions, and ensuring that air defense units are capable of regrouping. One objective is to establish a joint CIS air defense unit in conflict regions.

Both Armenia and Belarus are each providing an air defense brigade and two air defense missile divisions, whereas Tajikistan is providing an air defense regiment.

Russia will field an air defense regiment, four MiG 29 (Fulcrum) air superiority fighters from four training centers, four Su-24 Fencer striker warplanes, and an Air Force regiment of Su-25 Frogfoot close support planes. In addition, two Su-24 (Fencer) reconnaissance aircraft and a radar brigade will represent the country.

The exercises will finish on Tuesday evening.

*Source: Andrei Malosolov, RIA Novosti, August 30, 2005; <http://en.rian.ru>*

### **11. Expert Says CIS and CES Have Not Overcome Crisis**

The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the Common Economic Space (CES) have not yet come through a protracted crisis, a leading political scientist said Monday.

Commenting on the outcome of the CIS and CES summits in Kazan, Director of the Institute for Political Studies Sergei Markov said the reason of the crisis was that the CIS had not managed to "find its mission" in the last few years.

"The CIS is an informal club of presidents, and low-level integration, which means cooperation in communications, aviation, as well as a single criminal database and mutual recognizance of diplomas," Markov said.

Touching upon the reformation of CIS bodies, the expert said those ones that did not work properly had to be abolished. "This is not a search for new ideas, but spring cleaning," he said. "Of course, some mechanisms will improve after the reform, but there is no answer to the main question - there is no clear-cut mission," the expert said.

He also said the CES, which covers Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Belarus, would not be implemented in its original form. "I think the creation of a common economic space for three countries (Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan), or in the "3+1" format to share a free economic zone with Ukraine could be a good solution," Markov said.

The political scientist concluded that the CIS was not becoming obsolete, but problems did remain.

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

### **12. Belarus Very Much Interested in CES--Lukashenko**

Belarus is more interested in the formation of Common Economic Space (CES) as soon as possible, than anybody else, Belarusian President Aleksandr Lukashenko said here on Saturday.

He stressed in his statement on the results of the meeting of presidents of Russia, Belarus, Ukraine and Kazakhstan that "Minsk was willing to sign all the agreements right away as early as two years ago."

"Belarus and the Russian Federation have made a perceptible headway in the integration of their economies. Two years ago we could not even imagine that the idea of the creation of CES would be supported so enthusiastically, because it gives a very strong impetus to the economic development of both countries and brings about a gigantic growth of trade turnover. CES promotes our economic development and is supported by our nations," the Belarusian President said.

"In my opinion, the current summit differs from the previous ones, because we have reached agreement on how many documents are to be signed, on when and where the signing will take place. We are happy this important progress has been achieved in Kazan, in this old, sacred city," he continued.

According to Lukashenko, "common customs tariffs have been coordinated, which will permit to start free movement of goods." Transport tariffs will be coordinated on the next stage, and common conditions will be created for the functioning of the economies of the countries, integrated in CES.

*Source: Itar-Tass, August 27, 2005; www.itar-tass/eng*

### **13. Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan Agree on Creation of Common Economic Space**

Presidents of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan have adopted a resolution on the signing of a package of documents for the creation of Common Economic Space (CES), Itar-Tass news agency reported.

"We have agreed to sign 29 documents in the Russia-Kazakhstan-Belarus format before next December, and another 15 documents will be signed in the same format before March 1, 2006," Russian President Vladimir Putin told journalists at CIS summit in Russian city of Kazan.

He said that Ukraine expressed willingness to work in the "four" format and would join the rest of the countries as soon as it completed the examination of the documents. This is recorded in a joint statement.

Putin admitted that each of the CES countries should decide on its own what steps to take in the sphere of economic integration.

"Each country should decide whether the integration is profitable for it or not. If there are some doubts among the public, it is better to take one's time, to think the situation over, to analyze all pros and contras. Otherwise it will be regarded as something imposed from the outside. If agreement is reached on the problem, however, this will create favorable conditions for integration," he said.

*Source: MosNews.Com, August 27, 2005; www.mosnews.com*

### **14. Living Standard in Belarus Declining After USSR's Collapse**

Average pay is bigger in Russia while social stratification is lesser in Belarus

Many Russians and foreigners would like to know how the people of Belarus live. Russia is not only a neighbor to Belarus - Russians and Belarusians make two brotherly nations sharing common Slavic roots. They both have a similar mentality and, hopefully, relations between Russia and Belarus are bound to become even closer in the future. The interest in Belarusian affairs intensified following the recent statement by State Secretary of the Unified State, Pavel Borodin, regarding possible introduction of a single currency policy slated to be effective January 1st, 2006.

The difference in a standard of living was rather insufficient in the Soviet era. For example, in 1989 the number of the poor (with average income of 75 rubles and below) was 3.3% in Belarus and 5% in the Russian Federation. In fact, average pay was a bit higher in Russia those days while the neighbors took advantage of owning plots of land for growing fruit and vegetables. The studies of family budgets show that the difference between the mean aggregate incomes of workers and employees in Russia and Belarus eventually ceased to exist at the time.

The former parts of the Soviet Union took their own paths following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Russia's citizens had to survive "shocking therapy," a dramatic economic reform program "administered" by ultraliberal reformers. As a result, a third of the country plunged into the dark of poverty. On the contrary, the government of Belarus refused to pursue the "shocking policy." The authorities treated every novelty in the economy with utmost caution. The state was not keen to let go of the control levers in the economy. A private sector is still a tiny spot on the map. Private

companies own about 35% of capital assets in Belarus. The indicator for Russia is twice as larger.

The situation in foreign exchange market is not so good either. Belarus' foreign debt totals \$4.4 billion as of April 1, 2005, while the foreign reserves amount to \$1.46 billion.

Advocates of the conservatives methods in the reforms implementation point out certain achievements of the strategy e.g. high economic growth rate (15.9% last year) over the last nine years. By the way, the impact of the economic crisis of the early 1990s on the economy of Belarus was not that severe as it was in Russia, and, therefore, the Belarusian economy began to recover earlier. There are statistic data to back the statements. In the meantime, World Bank experts draw attention to certain instability of the Belarusian economic model citing high production costs, heavy government regulations, underdeveloped banking sector and a lack of foreign reserves. "We can not see any new factors capable of maintaining that customary high economic growth rate in Belarus," says the report released by the World Bank this June.

The situation in social area is even more difficult. The standard of living plummeted in Belarus even deeper than it did in Russia in the 1990s. Nearly half of Belarus' population (46.7%) was reported to be living below the poverty line in 1999. The worst indicator for Russia was 33.5% in 1992. The fight against the large-scale poverty became a priority for both countries. The Belarusian government has been stepping up its program to reduce the number of the poor and underprivileged. The Belarusian government seems to be succeeding. There was a significant decrease in the percentage of the poor in Belarus in 2004 (17.8%). The indicator for Russia at the time was the same.

As regards a number of other indicators showing the standard of life, Russia still leaves Belarus behind. Average gross payroll in Russia as of May this year amounted to 8,089 rubles or \$300 at the official exchange rate. Average gross payroll in Belarus at the time was \$209 at the official exchange rate. It is understood that the numbers can not produce a full picture, an average pay should be correlated with an average level of prices in each country.

Statisticians normally analyze how many food baskets an average paycheck can buy in the nation's capital. The food basket comprises a kilo of beef, a kilo of butter and vegetable oil, a kilo of sugar, wheat bread, potatoes, cabbage, a liter of milk, and ten eggs. According to calculations of Statistical Committee of the CIS, last year an average pay could buy 28,8 of the food basket. The data for Minsk, the capital of Belarus, was a little lower, 23,6.

"The income of a 10% group of the well-off population exceeds the income of the same-sized group of the underprivileged by 5,2 times, not three times," a source in Minsk told *The Trud* newspaper. The same correlation was 1:14.5 for Russia in the first half of this year. No doubts about it, the income gap like that can be regarded excessive. Still, it is simply impossible to draw parallels between Belarus and Sweden using the numbers of social differentiation. The standard of living in the Scandinavian states is a sci-fi movie both for Russia and Belarus.

"Unlike Russia, Belarus is making fewer mistakes with regard to the economy and social area," said Igor Nikolayev, head of the FBK company that deals with analysis and forecast. Mr. Nikolayev said Belarus was taking lessons by watching Russia make mistakes. Some CIS countries i.e. Kazakhstan are stepping up their reform plans. Speaking of Kazakhstan, it has made some achievements. On the other hand, you can simply sit on the fence and watch your neighbors. That is what the Belarusian government is doing, either on purpose or by accident. They do not rush ahead with reforms in the energy or public utilities sectors. They do not speed up a reform of the national pension system either. This policy does not bring about spectacular results yet it is a lot better than confusion and inconsistency shown by the Russian government over the last fifteen years.

This April an opinion poll was conducted by the All-Russian Center of Public Opinion Studies as part of the project The Eurasian Monitor. The poll aimed to probe social atmosphere in Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan. On the whole, the Russians and Belarusians evaluated the financial state of their families in a similar way ("good" by 10%-11%; "average" by 58%-59%, and "bad" by 27%-30%). President Putin's approval rating was 67% in Russia as President Lukashenko got his 53% in Belarus.

*Source: Pravda.Ru; August 25, 2005; <http://english.pravda.ru>*

#### **15. Tbilisi Demands Release of Georgians in Belarus**

In a statement issued on August 25, the Georgian Foreign Ministry condemned the "groundless detention" of two Georgian citizens by Belarusian police as "provocative" and demanded their immediate release.

Two activists of the Georgian youth movement Kmara – Giorgi Kandelaki and Luka Tsuladze were arrested in Belarus on August 24. No official charges have been brought against the Georgian citizens, but Belarus police said that unspecified irregularities were found in their papers

According to the Georgian Foreign Ministry, the two Georgians are currently held in the Belarus Emigration Service Department awaiting deportation.

The two Georgian citizens, who left for Minsk a week ago, were arrested together with coordinator of the Belarus youth resistance movement Zubr, Vladimir Kobets. However, Kobets was released shortly after the arrest.

*Source: Civil Georgia; August 25, 2005; <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=10616>*

### **INTERNATIONAL**

#### **16. Paulauskas Maintains Hope for Belarus**

Hoping to promote democracy in Belarus, Parliamentary Speaker Arturas Paulauskas expressed the importance of tightening relations with the country.

In an interview with the Ziniu Radijas radio on Aug. 31, Paulauskas said that parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Justinas Karosas' idea for a "policy of balance" with Minsk could be "partially" approved.

During the 14th Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference on Aug. 29, Karosas asked the European Union to delegate Lithuania with the task of establishing contacts with Minsk, as the "policy of isolation" had failed.

"I think that the ideas expressed by him should be partially approved, and various forms of promoting the democratic processes should be tried," Paulauskas told the Baltic News Service, adding that a compromise with Belarus could not be ruled out.

Whatever the development leads to, Lithuania would not ignore human rights violations in Belarus, Paulauskas said.

*Source: The Baltic Times; August 31, 2005; [http://www.baltictimes.com/hot1.php?art\\_id=13325](http://www.baltictimes.com/hot1.php?art_id=13325)*

#### **17. Belarus to Become Kyoto Protocol Member in November 2005**

Minsk has formally announced its signing of the Kyoto Protocol to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, Belarusian Foreign Ministry spokesman Ruslan Yesin told Interfax on Wednesday.

"The protocol will take effect as of November 24, 2005," Yesin said.

Under the agreement signatories pledge to reduce their annual volume of greenhouse gas emissions by 5% of their 1990 basic figure, or to bring their emissions down to 110 million - 115 million tones. Today's greenhouse gas emissions in Belarus total 60 million - 65 million tones.

*Source: Interfax; August 31, 2005, 2005; www.interfax.ru/e/*

#### **18. Declaration from the Presidency on Behalf of the European Union on Restrictions on Technical Assistance to Belarus**

The European Union reaffirms its determination to support the needs of the population and democratisation in Belarus. It is the firm belief of the European Union that technical assistance to Belarus is of mutual benefit. Our goal is to help to develop civil society and independent media, strengthen the social and health sectors, improve the rule of law and the human rights situation, and develop small and medium enterprises. This assistance also aims to help the Belarusian government fulfil its international commitments, including its commitments in the framework of OSCE.

The Belarusian government has agreed together with the EU on several programmes, e.g. TACIS and CORE. The EU is concerned that the restrictions introduced by President Lukashenko's decree on foreign aid (issued on 17. August) may seriously hamper the implementation of a wide range of mutually beneficial programmes and activities. The restrictions may lead to increased self-isolation of Belarus and adversely affect the population.

The European Union calls on Belarus to seriously reconsider the implementation of the decree, particularly in the light of its negative impact on the people of Belarus. The Acceding Countries Bulgaria and Romania, the Candidate Countries Turkey and Croatia \*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro and the EFTA country Iceland, member of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine aligns itself with this declaration.

\* Croatia continues to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

*Source: The Council of the European Union; August 30, 2005;  
[http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressData/en/cfsp/86084.pdf](http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/cfsp/86084.pdf)*

#### **19. EU Diplomat to Monitor Human Rights in Belarus - Official**

The European Commission is becoming increasingly concerned about human rights abuses in Belarus and will send a top diplomat there to get a better idea of the situation, the Reuters news agency quoted EU President Jose Manuel Barroso as saying on Tuesday.

"We are preparing a decision to send a charge d'affaires to Minsk to monitor the situation on the ground," Barroso told a news conference in Budapest.

Speaking after meeting with the prime ministers of Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, Barroso said the EU was "very concerned with the situation of human rights in Belarus".

The EU imposed sanctions on Belarus last year after alleging that President Alexander Lukashenko's administration had staged fraudulent elections.

Belarus has been dubbed Europe's last dictatorship by U.S. officials, and Poland, which has a large ethnic minority in Belarus, has been particularly vocal in protesting about repression ahead of presidential elections due next year.

The most recent incident saw Poland complain that Belarus had installed its own leaders of a Polish ethnic organization after ousting the pro-Warsaw leadership.

Polish Prime Minister Marek Belka told the news conference that all four east European countries at Tuesday's meeting backed Warsaw's position on Belarus. Belarus accuses Poland of trying to foment a Ukraine-style revolution.

*Source: MosNews.Com, August 30, 2005; www.mosnews.com*

#### **20. Zbigniew Brzezinski: Belarus Can Follow the Way of Polish Solidarity**

Belarus and Russia in the future can take the tack of changes, showed by Polish "solidarity", but this process would be a long one and would have its peculiarities in each country. According to PAP, this opinion had been expressed on August 29 in Warsaw at a conference "From Solidarity to Freedom" by Zbigniew Brzezinski, a well-known American analyst, member of the board of the Center of Strategic and International Research, former National Security Adviser to President Carter. The event was dedicated to the 25th anniversary of the trade union Solidarity, which activities led to a collapse of communist regime in Poland.

According to Z. Brzezinski, Russia and Belarus, unlike Ukraine, could not leave the post-Soviet epoch. However the analyst, as said by him, is optimistic, as, for instance in Belarus the growth of ethnic self-awareness of the nation and its self-identification as a European nation are taking place. "It has a great significance. Both Belarus and Russia are at the latest stages of a post-Soviet era. But there would be a turn to a democratic era, not to a Soviet one," Z. Brzezinski believes. The position of other countries in this issue should be moderate, he believes. The analyst is convinced that revolutions had to be sparked from within, not transplanted from the West. Political changes demonstrate a political maturity of a society, and Ukraine could be an example for that, as it was independent since 1991 by law, but only now has acquired a real sovereignty.

The process of political developing of a society is taking place in many countries, but it does not mean that all of them would have the courage for serious reforms, Z. Brzezinski said. "These countries are more like Poland 20-25 years ago. I mean, first of all, Belarus, Russia, Iran, Latin America. The events in the world now are to a certain extent a chain of consequences of the vents in Poland 25 years ago. It is a long-term process, and one could not hope for changes within a year or two, but the general historical trend is seen," Z. Brzezinski said, the BelaPAN informs.

*Source: Charter97; August 30, 2005; <http://www.charter97.org/eng/>*

#### **21. Enterprise India Kick Starts in Belarus**

Enterprise India 2005 in Minsk, Belarus was inaugurated on Friday by the deputy foreign minister of Belarus, Victor Gaisionok. In his inaugural speech, Gaisionok said that trade between India and Belarus was set to double. He also added that Belarus shared the Indian view on international cooperation for forging political activity. He was accompanied by Mikhail Seventitsky, Deputy Trade Minister of Belarus and Lilia Ananich, Deputy Communications Minister of Belarus. The inaugural ceremony was also attended by the senior bureaucrats from Industry, Trade, Foreign & Economic Ministries of the Belarusian Government.

By forging alliance in sectors like Pharmaceuticals, Healthcare, Medical equipment and Metal technology, Gaisionok said that there was a vast potential for substantial increase in trade between the two countries. He also mentioned that the MoU signed earlier between CII and the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI), would actually help to realize the trade potential between the two countries, as it would also supplement the Indo-Belarusian Inter-Governmental Commission.

In his remarks, R Mishra, Charge'd affairs of the Embassy of India in Minsk, Belarus, mentioned that due to the strategic location of India in Asia and that of Belarus, at the gateway (transit point) to Europe, it would benefit both the countries to cooperate so as to facilitate trade in Eurasia and South East Asia. Enterprise India, according to Mishra would be a major milestone in achieving this objective.

Though the show is being organized for the first time in Belarus with the objective of exploring Business and Trading tie-ups, it will eventually look forward to many more joint ventures and technical tie-ups among the enterprises of India and Belarus, in growth potential sectors.

The show encompasses the entire CIS region and would give considerable importance to the potential that exists for further co-operation between the two regions in the area of Trade, Industrial, Scientific, Drug and Pharmaceuticals, Health care, Agricultural and Cultural Co-operation.

The show will focus on the need for a long term commitment for doing business with India, a spirit of give and take in multilateral trade issues and a more liberal framework for movement of people between the two nations.

Earlier, CII also entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI) with the objective of exchanging information on economic and commercial matters, business interests expressed by Belarusian and Indian enterprises respectively and to facilitate favorable environment for enhancing trade and investment between India and Belarus.

"Enterprise India" is organized by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), in Belarus, from August 26 to August 30. It showcases the capabilities of the Indian SMEs, with active support from the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP), Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India and the Embassy of India in Minsk, Belarus.

The major sectors represented at the show are Bicycle & Bicycle parts, Hand Tools, Light Engineering, Auto Components, Tractor parts, Pharmaceutical & Surgical, Cosmetics, Leather & Leather goods, Handicraft, Cosmetic jewellery and Textiles/Readymade Garments all of which sectors have potential business opportunities in Belarus.

*Source: India Infoline News; August 29, 2005;*  
<http://www.indiainfoline.com/news/news.asp?dat=64713>

## **22. Warsaw Rejects New Polish Ethnic Leaders in Belarus**

Poland will not recognize newly elected leaders of a Polish ethnic organization in Belarus because they were installed after pressure from President Alexander Lukashenko's regime, a senior diplomat said on Sunday.

Poland objected to the new leaders of the Union of Poles in Belarus on the grounds that they were hand-picked on Saturday by Lukashenko to replace the ousted pro-Warsaw leadership. Poland, once in Moscow's orbit, has used its new political clout as a member of the European Union and NATO to criticize Lukashenko's government, arguing it is undemocratic, and has focused on the situation of the Polish minority in the country.

Minsk accuses its neighbor Warsaw of plotting an uprising in Belarus similar to revolutions in Ukraine and Georgia and says Warsaw exploits the Polish minority to foment upheaval. "The Polish government will not recognize the (Union's) authorities elected in this manner," Poland's Deputy Foreign Minister Jan Trzuszczynski told private all-news channel TVN24. The election "violated all democratic norms", he said.

Dissident activists say Saturday's vote was orchestrated by an administration which only weeks ago sent commandos to forcibly eject the previous leaders from their headquarters.

## United over Belarus

The issue of the 400,000-strong Polish minority in Belarus has united Poland's political class ahead of general elections next month.

Popular centre-right leader Jan Rokita said Poland must tap into its 1980s Solidarity-era experience of toppling an oppressive regime and back a dissident movement in Belarus. Conservative Ludwik Dorn went further, saying Poland should boycott the Union's new executive. "We should make it clear that (ousted leader Andzelia Borys) is the only partner for the Polish authorities," he told private radio Zet on Sunday.

Leftist Dariusz Szymczycha reiterated plans for Poland to set up a radio station broadcasting uncensored news to Belarus.

The row over the ethnic Poles has highlighted Western accusations that Lukashenko denies basic human rights, cracks down on opponents, silences the media and rigs elections.

It has also cooled relations between Poland and Russia, a friend of the Lukashenko regime. Three Polish diplomats were beaten up in Moscow after the mugging of Russian teenagers in Warsaw.

Poland has withdrawn its ambassador to Minsk while Belarus has denied entry to a group of parliamentarians from Poland.

Belarus's small, disunited opposition says the row amounts to an attempt by Lukashenko to secure control over one of Belarus's few well-organized non-government organizations ahead of next year's presidential elections.

*Source: Rob Strybel, Reuters.co.uk; August 28, 2005; <http://today.reuters.co.uk/news/>*

### **23. Poles in Belarus Elect New Leader, But Split Looms**

Belarus's Polish community on Saturday elected a leader committed to working with President Alexander Lukashenko after weeks of tension which has damaged the ex-Soviet state's ties with Poland.

Lukashenko accuses EU member Poland of exploiting the Poles, one of Belarus's largest minority groups, to foment upheaval in the style of ex-Soviet Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan.

The Union of Poles chose Iosef Luchnik as its leader just weeks after Belarusian police stormed the group's headquarters and removed the previous independent executive.

The Union's ousted leadership said Saturday's election, organized with the backing of Lukashenko's administration, would split the Union between opponents of the veteran president and those prepared to be compliant.

The row over the leadership of the 400,000-strong Polish community has once more highlighted Western accusations that Lukashenko denies basic human rights by cracking down on opponents, silencing the media and rigging elections.

Dozens of police ringed the district of Volkovysk, 240 km (170 miles) west of Minsk, where the Union's congress took place and stopped cars approaching the town.

Opposition groups said a bus carrying 45 activists from various groups was stopped and turned back, and two members of the Union's ousted leadership were detained on Friday.

"I hope this congress will end the conflict," Tadeusz Kruchkowski, reinstated as union president after the police action, said after the meeting.

"Iosef Luchnik has long been linked to our organization. He was behind the opening of schools with instruction in Polish. He is an authoritative figure able to talk with Belarusian and Polish authorities."

Andrzej Pisalnik, a member of the Union's ousted executive, said his comrades were resolved to pursue activities independent of Lukashenko's administration. That inevitably meant a split. "After this congress, there is no chance of ending the conflict," he said. "There are now two organizations."

Poland withdrew its ambassador from Belarus after the police action against the Union's headquarters. Belarus denied entry to a group of parliamentarians from Poland and each country has thrown out diplomats from the other.

Belarus's small, disunited opposition says the row amounts to an attempt by Lukashenko to secure control over one of Belarus's few well-organized non-government organizations ahead of presidential elections.

Lukashenko is expected to seek re-election next year after winning a referendum -- denounced as fraudulent in the West -- enabling him to change the constitution and remain in office.

*Source: Vasily Fedosenko, Reuters AlertNet; August 27, 2005; <http://www.alertnet.org/>*

#### **24. Polish PM starts the Pre-election Attack on Belarus**

Polish PM Marek Bielka held talks over overthrow of the Belarusian president

On Thursday, the press service of Polish PM Marek Bielka reported that he had held talks with his colleagues from Latvia, Lithuania and Ukraine over collaboration in overthrow of the Belarusian president Aleksandr Lukashenko.

Lukashenko's overthrow has become the major question not only for the EU new members and states winning color revolutions, but the whole West. In April US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice had a meeting with Belarusian oppositionists in Vilnius. Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili followed her at the summit of the so-called GUAM-group (this is Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldavia) saying that "Belarus deserves a better fate". In July the Euro Parliament adopted several resolutions condemning "Lukashenko's dictatorship" and encouraging not to spare money on struggle against him. The largest country of New Europe that used to possess Belarusian territories, that is Poland, should play the most important role in these measures.

Poland has already proved its determination to fight Lukashenko. Many Belarusian oppositionists, especially Russophobes from the Belarusian popular front, live in Poland. It is here that Belarusian opposition radio stations work, opposition newspapers and magazines are published and anti-Lukashenko rock-festivals are held. Besides, dozens of organizations with headquarters in Poland are busy with developing Belarusian democracy. The largest of them include Polish-American Freedom Foundation under former Polish Ambassador to the US Jerzy Komiczski, East European Democratic Centre and the Stefan Batory Foundation. The latter is researching the possible ways of development of Belarus after Lukashenko's overthrow and is financed by the State Department of the United States.

The need for Lukashenko's overthrow has been one of the main topics of Polish newspapers for a long time, but after Ukrainian Orange Revolution it has become an everyday subject of discussion. In his article "The world against Lukashenko" the journalist from Rzeczpospolita newspaper Jerzy Haszczycki wrote: "It is not easy to fight dictators. It is also hard to make the

satisfied society of the West react to persecution in the country, which they no little or nothing about. This weak point is used by Alexander Lukashenko".

However, in all this flow of calls for overthrow of Lukashenko the real objects, which are purposed by Poland, become visible. "Polish government does not conceal its interest in overthrow of Lukashenko's regime. Love for democracy is just an excuse. The real goal is to kick Russia away from the Polish-Belarusian border. It does not matter whether the goal is chosen successfully and will become a reality in the nearest future", Polish weekly Nie reports.

Poland that joined the EU a year ago decided to burden itself with the role of leader in Eastern Europe and to surround Russia with the countries under Polish influence. According to the Polish opinion, Belarus is the only missing link. All means are employed to subdue Belarus. It concerns half a million of ethnic Poles living in Belarus and Belarusian Catholics who are more or less Polish-oriented in the first place. A great number of the latter are Poles in fact, but during the Soviet period were registered as Belarusian on voluntary basis or by force. It is their Warsaw organization that is used as a trap to draw Russia away from Belarus by overthrowing Lukashenko.

*Source: Vadim Trukhachev, Pravda.Ru; August 26, 2005; <http://english.pravda.ru>*

## **25. On Development of Cooperation Between Belarus and Latin America**

Acting MFA press secretary Ruslan Esin reported, that growth in trade and economic cooperation between the two countries was significantly fueled by the successful visit of Belarusian Foreign Minister Sergei Martynov to Cuba, Argentina, Brazil in October 2004. The negotiations held by the Head of the Belarusian Foreign Ministry with the official and business circles of the above-mentioned countries encouraged economic cooperation between Belarus and these states.

The deliveries of the Belarusian products to Cuba spiraled 340 per cent over the first six months of 2005. The total Belarus-Cuba turnover jumped 85.5 per cent. The figures include successful contracts on the delivery of 134 automobiles MAZ, 37 tractors Belarus, 129 engines of the Minsk motor plant. By the end of the year Belarus intends to deliver 42 pit lorries to Cuba manufactured by Mogilev automobile plant.

The acting MFA press secretary Ruslan Esin informed, that in the first half 2005 the turnover between Belarus and Argentina soared by 445 per cent. Exports jumped by 308 per cent. At the same time Belarus started exporting new products, i.e. potash fertilizers, spare parts and components for trucks and tractors. Argentine businessmen are taking a pro-active approach to work through all variants of trade and economic cooperation, in particular, deliveries of protein raw material (soybean and wheat of solid types), frozen fish and seafood.

According to the contract Belarus will supply USD 600 worth of combine harvesters to Argentina. Now Belarus continues implementing joint projects with this country on promotion of the Belarusian agricultural equipment, trucks and tyres on the Argentine market.

The first six months of 2005 witnessed positive dynamics of growth of Belarusian exports to Brazil. The specialists are working through an opportunity to deliver Belarusian quarry equipment, acrylic plait, large-scale tyres, and alcohol beverages. Besides, negotiations are presently underway to organize assembly shops of Belarusian tractors and lorry trucks in Brazil and creation of the joint production of Belarusian electronic equipment.

*Source: Harold Doan and Associates Ltd.; August 25, 2005;  
<http://www.harolddoan.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=5437>*

## **26. State Department Comment on Belarus Incident with U.S. Diplomat**

Belarusian police detained a U.S. diplomat for forty minutes while in a meeting with representatives of non-governmental organizations.

The routine meeting took place in Gomel, Belarus on August 23, 2005. Police entered the meeting and refused to permit the diplomat to leave for forty minutes, without offering any clear explanation, except for an alleged need to check his identification.

The U.S. State Department made their concerns about this incident known to Belarusian officials both in Minsk and in Washington. Belarusian officials indicated they will look into the matter and provide more information, but a full explanation has not yet been received.

The U.S. continues to press the Government of Belarus to respect civil society and to uphold its international commitments to human rights.

*Source: Alan Gray, NewsBlaze; August 25, 2005;*

*<http://newsblaze.com/story/20050825093101nnnn.nb/newsblaze/TOPSTORY/Top-Story.html>*

## **HUMAN RIGHTS & INDEPENDENT MEDIA**

### **27. Belarus: Two Georgian Youth Activists Remain Jailed In Minsk**

Giorgi Kandelaki and Luka Tsuladze -- two activists of Georgia's Kmara, an organization that was very instrumental in deposing the Georgian government during the bloodless Rose Revolution in 2003 -- were arrested in Minsk on 24 August, reportedly because the authenticity of their passports raised official "doubts."

However, the following day a KGB official announced on Belarusian Television that they will be deported from Belarus for meddling in the country's internal affairs. Although they were scheduled to be deported to Georgia on 26 August, RFE/RL's

Belarus Service reported that a Minsk-based court on 29 August sentenced the two Georgians to 15 days in jail each for "petty hooliganism."

"During their stay in the country, they made contacts with representatives of radical, politicized, unregistered structures, such as Zubr, Youth Front, and Limon, and held a number of training seminars on the organization of civil-disobedience actions accompanied by mass unrest, similar to those during the colored revolution in Georgia," the KGB official explained to television viewers on 25 August. "They participated in a number of unsanctioned actions to disseminate illegal publications in the city of Minsk and intended to travel to a number of regions of the country with analogous purposes."

On 26 August five members of the Belarusian youth organization Zubr organized a protest in Minsk against the detention of their Georgian colleagues. Carrying the Georgian flag, the Belarusian national white-red-white flag banned during President Alyaksandr Lukashenka's rule, and a banner that read "Freedom to the Georgian Brothers!" the five youths marched down Independence Avenue in central Minsk. They were arrested by a riot-police squad some 30 minutes after their demonstration began.

The police released two adolescents of the detained five, while the remaining three -- Natallya Ushko, Alyaksandr Kurbitski, and Alyaksey Lyaukovich -- were immediately sentenced by a court to 10 days in jail each for staging an unsanctioned demonstration.

The Belarusian regime appears to be really concerned with a recent wave of "colored" revolutions in the post-Soviet area and takes every measure to avoid a similar scenario in Belarus next year, when autocratic President Lukashenka is going to run for president for the third time in a row.

In late April Belarusian police arrested five Ukrainian and 14 Russian representatives of youth organizations for their participation in an unsanctioned antigovernment protest together with their

Belarusian colleagues in Minsk. The Ukrainians and Russians were handed jail terms varying from five to 15 days. The Russians were subsequently granted early release, following a plea from the Russian ambassador to Belarus. The Ukrainians, despite a similar intervention by the Ukrainian ambassador to Minsk, served their jail terms in full.

As regards the "bad influence" from Georgia, in June Lukashenka issued a decree introducing visas for Georgians visiting Belarus and thus withdrawing Belarus from the CIS agreement of 1992 on visa-free travel. Minsk officially explained the move by the large number of Georgians who allegedly took advantage of the lack of border control between Belarus and Russia by using Belarus as a transit country for illegal entrance into the Russian Federation.

The Georgian parliament immediately came up with an ingenious, "asymmetrical" response, drafting a resolution to ban Lukashenka from entering Georgia. Lukashenka apparently realized that he lost in that propaganda duel -- Minsk banned all Georgians from traveling without visas to Belarus, while Tbilisi banned just him, thus differentiating between the autocratic leader and the people. Therefore, Belarusian Foreign Ministry Syarhey Martynau was given the task of backing off on that unfortunate decision.

Martynau claimed on Belarusian Television that Lukashenka only instructed the Foreign Ministry and law-enforcement agencies to look into the possibility of introducing visas for Georgians, but did not introduce them in actual fact. At the same time, Martynau admitted that Belarus would not hesitate to introduce visas for Georgians should Tbilisi attempt to export "some revolutions or pseudo-revolutions" to Belarus.

*Source: RFE/RL, August 29, 2005; www.rferl.org*

## **28. Belarus Police Detain Polish Activists**

Belarusian police detained two ethnic Polish activists yesterday before a meeting intended to entrench rival leaders at the helm of a Polish association who would not oppose President Aleksandr Lukashenko.

Lukashenko accuses the West of exploiting the 400,000-strong Polish minority to foment upheaval in his country of 10 million in the style of ex-Soviet Ukraine, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan. And the row over who is to lead the Polish community has brought back into focus Western accusations that Lukashenko denies basic human rights in Belarus by cracking down on opponents, silencing the media and rigging elections.

Belarusian police last month stormed the offices of the Union of Poles, removed the group's executive elected earlier this year and reinstated the previous, more compliant team.

Belarus' small, disunited opposition says the rumpus amounts to an attempt by Lukashenko to secure control over one of Belarus's best organized non-government organizations.

The Union is to hold a congress today in the west of the country to confirm the election of the restored executive.

Anzelika Borys, head of the Union's ousted executive, said two members, Andrzej Pochobut and Ivan Roman, had been detained.

"We naturally have no intention of taking part in this congress organized by the authorities. But the authorities are doing everything too to keep us away," Borys said.

"I have been summoned to a hearing tomorrow in connection with what appears to be some sort of financial irregularities." Relations with Poland have been plunged into crisis.

Poland withdrew its ambassador from Belarus after the police action. Belarus denied entry to a group of parliamentarians from Poland and each country has thrown out diplomats from the other. Polish public television's regional third programme said one of its reporters had been denied entry to Belarus on Thursday.

Six members of the Union's ousted leadership have served brief prison terms for taking part in an illegal demonstration.

Borys predicted today's congress would amount to a "huge farce. No one is going to be elected. They will be appointed."

The head of the union's restored executive, Tadeusz Kruchkowski, said he hoped for an end to polemics. "I believe we should have absolutely new people involved," he said. "That's why I am not running for the leadership."

In a separate announcement, authorities said they were deporting two activists of Georgia's "Kmara" group on grounds of interfering in Belarus's internal affairs.

Source: *The Peninsula On-line*; August 27, 2005;

[http://www.thepeninsulaqatar.com/Display\\_news.asp?section=World\\_News&subsection=Rest+of+the+World&month=August2005&file=World\\_News200508272247.xml](http://www.thepeninsulaqatar.com/Display_news.asp?section=World_News&subsection=Rest+of+the+World&month=August2005&file=World_News200508272247.xml)

### **29. Does *Kurjer iz Borisova* Not Exist Any More?**

On August 24 Minsk Region Court answered to the claim of Minsk Region Executive Committee concerning the liquidation of "Press-service" Ltd., which is the founder of *Kurjer iz Borisova*. The enterprise should be closed till January 1, 2006.

The suit against the enterprise was brought on August 17 in connection with some violations during its registration. The essence of those violations is the fact that the aims of the newspaper and the rights of staff members were not mentioned in the statute of "Press-service".

"Press-service" Ltd. does not find the case proven and claims that during the period of registration the functions of the editor of the newspaper were carried out by another legal entity, which means that the information about the aims of the newspaper and the rights of staff members does not have to be mentioned in the statute.

The judge, Tamara Benchuk, came down in favor of the Executive Committee and decided that the enterprise should be liquidated before January 1, 2006. Till that time the head of the liquidation committee will be the head of the enterprise. (It should be noted that the head of the liquidation committee is the head of the Ideology Department of Minsk Region Executive Committee). The defendants can appeal the decision during the period of 15 days.

The editor thinks that this was a political decision. "There has been a very rare situation in Belarus lately. There were two independent newspapers in the region, (*Kurjer iz Borisova* and *Borisovskije Novosti*), their circulation was seven times more than that of the state newspaper *Adzinstva*. Of course the authorities were dissatisfied with it", - thinks Pavel Mahilin. It is even mentioned in the text of the suit that the activity of "Press-service" Ltd. contradicts the interests of the state and society.

According to BAJ deputy chairperson Andrej Bastunets, "the decision to liquidate "Press-service" Ltd. is connected with the liquidation of "Mestnoe vriemia" Ltd. in September 2003, the liquidation of registration of the editor of *Nivaja Gazeta Smorgoni* Ramuald Ulanin in February 2003 and of "Deinpress" Ltd. In all these cases the authorities put pressure upon mass media, using some defects of Belarusian laws".

Source: *Belarusian Association of Journalists*, August, 25, 2005; [www.baj.ru](http://www.baj.ru)

### **30. "Kmara" Activists to Be Kept In Prison For Three Days And Expelled**

In line with the sanction of the prosecutor for detention of the Georgian youth organization "Kmara", the detention of journalist Giorgi Kandelaki and film producer Luka Tsuladze has been prolonged for three days. Aleh Slepchanka, the head of information and PR division of Internal Affairs Department of Minsk Executive Committee, told to the BelaPAN on August 25. Besides, it has been informed today that on August 25 the prosecutor of Maskouski district of Minsk Viktor Zhyngel signed a statement of deportation of "Kmara" activists. The prosecutor referred to the fact that the Georgians had violated visa regime.

On August 24, 2005 in the center of Minsk criminal police forces detained Giorgi Kandelaki and Luka Tsuladze, as well as one of the "Zubr" coordinators Uladzimir Kobets. They were first taken to a police department Number 1 of Maskouski district of Minsk, and in an hour they were transferred to the Internal Affairs department of the Maskouski district of Minsk. In two hours, after taking his fingerprints, Uladzimir Kobets was released. As said by Uladzimir Kobets, one of the police officers offered his apologies, saying that the detention was a "mistake during the identity check operation aimed against persons from the Caucasus".

As said by A.Slepchanka, the Georgian citizens were detained as their documents "caused suspicion" during the check. "According to the law-enforcers, there documents were not looking the right way", he underlined. In the evening the detainees were transferred to the pre-trial detention center at Akrestsin street. The sanction of the prosecutor for prolongation of the "backup withholding" was received, Slepchanka noted.

Foreign Ministry of Georgia condemned the groundless detention of the Georgian citizens by the Belarus side, considers such actions to be "provocative" and "categorically demands their immediate release".

*Source: ZUBR; August 25; 2005; <http://www.zubr-belarus.com>*

### **31. *Borisovskije Novosti's* Editor-in-chief Anatol Bukas Has Been Warned**

On August 25 Borisov Office of Public Prosecutor pronounced a warning to Anatol Bukas, *Borisovskije Novosti's* editor-in-chief. He was informed that if the same violations repeated the newspaper would probably be closed.

The reason for the warning was the printing of two articles in June and July in issues ##26 and27 which were dedicated to the judicial proceeding against A.Bukas. According to the Office of Public Prosecutor, it was a violation of art. 5 of the Law on Mass Media which forbids the printing of information concerning cases which are not closed yet without the judge's permission.

Legal experts from BAJ Law Center for Media Protection emphasize that no citations from the materials of the case were published in those articles. The journalist described the judicial proceedings in his own words.

It should be reminded that the Public Prosecutor of Barysau V. Shpakouski filed a criminal case on the fact of publishing "The crazy scamp has a finger in every pie, or the silence of lambs" article by Anatol Bukas in the *Borisovskije novosti* newspaper on November 3, 2005. The newspaper material was dwelling upon Viera Pratasievich. The highly critical article appeared in response to three publications in the official newspaper, representing A. Bukas in the utterly negative way.

Among other, the court treated as libelous and offensive the following phrases regarding V. Pratasievich: "in her opuses she presents the desired facts as the real ones", "Once again, Ms. Pratasievich... has published gibberish" etc. On the other hand, Viera Pratasievich had named Anatol Bukas in her newspaper article "an ill-bred publisher", compared him with "a stupid cock"

etc. The judge Alena Samceвич urged A. Bukas to pay out a fine in the amount of 40 basic rates. Moreover, he had to pay out 3 million Belarusian rubles to Viera Pratasieвич, the *Adzinstva* newspaper editor-in-chief.

*Source: Belarusian Association of Journalists, August, 25, 2005; www.baj.ru*

## **BUSINESS**

### **32. Belarusian National Bank Gold Reserves 23.47 Tones**

Gold reserves at the National Bank of Belarus as of August 20, 2005 amounted to 23.47 tones, bank Chairman Pyotr Prokopovich said at a Monday press conference in Minsk.

He said that this gold reserve is worth the equivalent of \$331.8 million.

Prokopovich said that Belarusian gold and currency reserves have increased significantly. He said that international reserve assets have increased by \$454 million since the start of 2005 to reach \$1.14 billion by August 15.

He said that this year the National Bank increased the volume of foreign currency acquired on the domestic market by almost 300% to \$465.2 million as of August 24.

However, one negative trend on the domestic currency market noted by Prokopovich is rapid growth in public demand for hard currency cash. In January-July this year net purchases of foreign currency by the public amounted to \$207 million, compared with net sales of \$17.5 million in the same period in 2004.

*Source: Interfax; August 29, 2005, 2005; www.interfax.ru/e/*

### **33. Belarus Not To Introduce Russian Ruble**

Russian ruble will not be introduced in Belarus on January 1, 2006, executive board chairman of the National Bank of Belarus Pyotr Prokopovich said today. He noted that this move should be preceded by a number of steps. Specifically, the Constitution Act of the Union State, as well as a series of agreements that will provide for equality of rights of citizens and economic entities of Belarus and Russia, should be finalized and adopted.

Additionally, agreements meant to settle healthcare, social, pension, taxation and freedom of movement issues with regard to people in the Union State are to be worked out as well.

As reported earlier, it had been initially planned to introduce the Russian ruble in Belarus as the only legitimate means of payment from January 1, 2005, and later on the possibility of making the move from January 1, 2006, was looked into.

*Source: RosBusinessConsulting; August 29, 2005; http://www.rbcnews.com/*

### **34. Belarus Posts 7-Mth Budget Surplus of 2.5%**

Belarus had a central budget surplus of 839.8 billion Belarusian rubles (2,150 Belarusian rubles/\$1 on August 24) or 2.5% of GDP in January-July, the Belarusian Finance Ministry told Interfax.

Revenue was 12.147 trillion Belarusian rubles and spending 11.308 trillion Belarusian rubles.

The budget was drawn up with a deficit of 1.108 trillion Belarusian rubles or 1.8% of GDP. Planned revenue was 18.394 trillion Belarusian rubles and planned spending 19.502 trillion Belarusian rubles.

*Source: Interfax; August 25, 2005, 2005; www.interfax.ru/e/*

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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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