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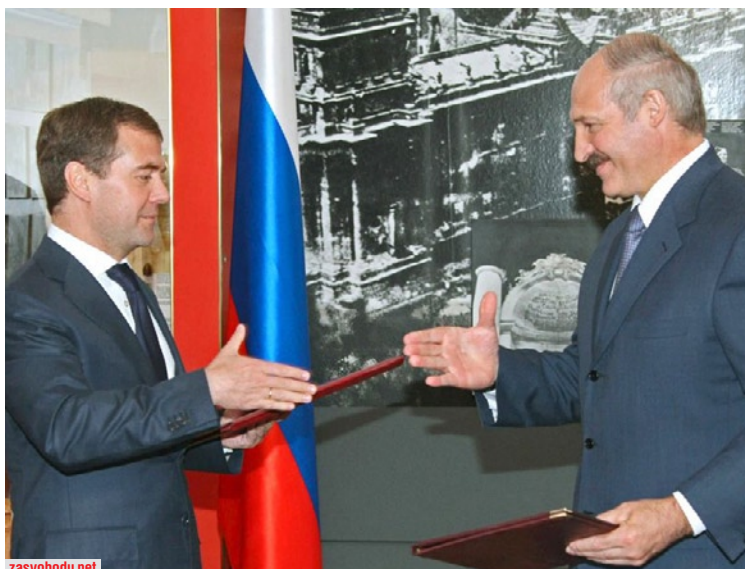
**Siamaszka mówi
o „Renesansie
jądrowym”**

Last week there were two events in the sphere of foreign policy which attracted the attention of many politicians and Mass Media.

On 22 June there was a working meeting of the Presidents of Belarus and Russia in Brest fortress. The official reason for the meeting of Lukashenko and Medvedev was connected to the Memory Day. On this very day in 1941 Germany attacked the Soviet Union. The unofficial reason was that "Gasprom" and President Medvedev (who was in his time the Chairman of the committee of directors

of "Gasprom") it was important to know how and in what way Belarus would pay off. As is well known the Belarusian side tries to make a revision of the contractual formula of the gas price. The question

concerning the price on the gas delivered to Belarus is actual for both sides. "Gasprom" has announced recently that the price on gas delivered to Europe will have exceeded 400 US dollars per 1000 cubic meters and Belarus, according to mutual agreement of 2006, is to pay 80 % of the European price. However, according



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to the Belarusian budget on the next year, the price is much lower – 140 dollars per 1000 cubic meters.

Though the main point of the last talk "from eye to eye" in Brest fortress was not reflected in the mutual

declaration, almost all experts share the opinion that Lukashenko did not manage to persuade the new host of the Kremlin that the price on gas for Belarus must correspond to the number 140 dollars, which had been put in to the Belarusian budget. At the same time the ruler would like to continue the policy of using Russia as a source of raw materials. It is not unlikely that Lukashenko is not going to allow Russian capital to privatize Belarusian enterprises. It quite possible that resisting the European price on gas, Lukashenko will try to provoke a new gas crisis with Moscow. He is known to be a hot-tempered and adventurous gambler.

The meeting of Lukashenko with the State secretary of St. Altar Cardinal Tarchizio Bertone has become a not less significant event. Lukashenko had invited Pontiff Benedict XVI to visit Belarus whenever it was convenient to him. Besides, during the meeting they agreed to start the preparatory work to sign the Agreement on cooperation between the Republic of Belarus and the Rome Catholic Church

(Concordat). The observes mainly interpreted the results of the visit of Tarchizio Bertone as a step forward on the way of reestablishing of the power of the Catholic Church in Belarus and they consider this step has been made because Lukashenko is eager to improve his image in the West.

The idea of creating closer relations with the Catholic Church making a special agreement with it and organizing Pope's visit to Belarus has appeared in the heads of the Belarusian authorities approximately since 2002-2003. Even in 2002 when Ukraine was talking a lot about the Pope's visit, Lukashenko announced: "It won't be long before I'll be able to welcome the Patriarchy and the Head of the Rome Catholic Church." But this ambition of the Belarusian President to become a mediator and organizer of the meeting of the Heads of the two Churches did not gain understanding on the part of the Patriarchy of Moscow and all Russia.

It must be noted that the role of a symbolic mediator is most desirable for Lukashenko and he has always been looking forward to playing it.

Tarchizio Bertone noted at the meeting with Lukashenko that the Rome Catholic Church considers Belarus to be a bridge between the

East and the West and that it is ready to help to regulate these relations. He stressed that the Rome Catholic Church would aim to help Belarus to obtain a significant position at the international level.

The mediation between the Rome Catholic Church and the Russian Orthodox Church is impossible and is doomed to failure—at least until the Russian Orthodox Church is headed by Aleksey II.

Till this time the meeting of the Patriarchy and the Pope can take place only under condition of the Rome Catholic Church's public renunciation of the proselytism—at least on the territories which belong to the Russian Catholic Church, as they see it. At the same time the retrograde people in the Russian Orthodox Church guess that Philaret, the Metropolit of Miensk and Slutsk, sympathizes with the ecumenism and is full of desire of helping to overcome the split (between the Orthodox and Catholic Churches). It's hard to say whether these suspicions are well-justified but it's Philaret who, under a certain concatenation of circumstances, has a possibility to perform a historic role in the reconciliation of the Churches.

Without a special concatenation of circumstances it's hard to expect that the Belarusian exarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church headed by Philaret will dare to welcome the



Pope's visit to Belarus—even without his meeting the hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church. And without their agreement the Catholic Church is unlikely to make such a visit as it might be scandalous. At the same time, some observes point out that the Pope's visit is possible as an official visit of the Head of the Vatican. We don't think that such a visit could be an expedient action as it could add to the tension in the relations of Rome and the Russian Orthodox Church.

In any case, speaking about the prospects of cooperation of Miensk and the Vatican, it should not be

neglected that the Russian Orthodox Church has a highly jealous attitude to attempts of "encroachment" in the "traditional" sphere of its influence and it has quite a sizable influence on the relations of the Kremlin with the Belarusian authorities. Following the results of the visit of Tachizio Bertone, the site of the President has announced that the Republic of Belarus and the Rome Catholic Church are going to prepare the signing of the agreement on cooperation. It should be mentioned that the possibility to sign the agreement without calling it Concordat is much higher. Judging by the contemporary relations of the Vatican with other states, the Concordats are the agreements with the states where the Catholic Church has a dominant position, thus the agreement with Poland (1993) and Portugal (2004) are called the Concordats. In other cases they sign a basic agreement on ministerial guardianship in the military detachments, on the Catholic education and so on. However, the signing of the basic agreement will appreciably broaden the possibilities of the Catholic Church in Belarus.

[OFFICIALLY

Belarusian Draft Law "On Mass Media" Adopted after the 2nd Reading

The Chamber of Representatives at the National Assembly of Belarus has adopted the Law "On Mass Media" after the 2nd reading. 96 MPs supported the bill and 2 parliamentarians voted against it, the "Interfax-West" News Agency informs.

The Head of Committee on Human Rights, National Relations and Mass Media Yury Kulakouski told that a range of proposals from the "SB. Belarus Today" ("The Soviet Byelorussia"), "The Economic Newspaper", the Belarusian Association of Journalists and the OSCE Representative's on Media Freedom Office had been included in the final version of the draft law.



[SOCIETY

Statement of Belarusian Association of Journalists

The Belarusian Association of Journalists expresses its protest in relation with the adoption of a new Law "On Mass Media" after the 2nd reading by the Chamber of Representatives at the National Assembly of Belarus.

Not only is the freedom of speech among the most important civil and political rights. Moreover, it forms a criterion that ensures implementation of other human rights. Consequently, in our opinion it is unacceptable to

consider and adopt a legal act that infringes upon this fundamental right, stipulated in two articles of Constitution of Belarus (art. 33 and art.34),

in such a hasty way.

We are sure that such laws have to be adopted after their comprehensive consideration and discussion with all the interested people and organizations as well as on carrying out their

public discussion and international expert examinations.

We would like to emphasize that the Belarusian state authorities promised to send the draft bill on the media to the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly for holding a legal examination. However, they failed to keep their promises.

The haste with adoption of the media law reveals its repressive and restrictive core. The assumption gets confirmed by the contents of the legal act.

The Media Law:

- introduces the necessity of registration of Web-editions and puts control over the Internet from the side of the Ministry of Information and the Public Prosecutor's Office;
- requires re-registration of all media outlets as soon as the law comes into force;
- broadens considerably possibilities of closing down media outlets by the state authorities;
- complicates the activity and increases the pressure on independent journalists and foreign correspondents;

We would like to remind the members of the Chamber of Representatives about their responsibility for the decisions they take and call upon the Council of Republic to

turn down the Law "On the Media" and send it back for revision.

We appeal to the Belarusian and international community members with a request to express their attitude towards the legal act that infringes upon the Belarusian citizens' right to receive and distribute the unbiased information and to express their personal views and opinions.

Adopted by the Board of Belarusian Association of Journalists on June 24, 2008.

[CULTURE

A mourning ceremony in commemoration of Vasil Bykau has been held on the East cemetery

The writer got remembered by literary men, politicians, and friends.

On 19 July friends and like-minded people of Vasil Bykau got together on the East cemetery in Minsk to remember the writer on his birthday. Among them there were literary men Gienadz Buraukin, Valiancin Taras, Siarhei Zakonnikau, Anatol Viarcinski, politicians Ludmila Graznova and Stanislau Shushkevich, and academician Radzim Garetski, Ales Adamovich's daughter Natalya

and Vasil Bykau's widow Iryna Mihailauna.

In the introductory speech the writer's friend Valiancin Taras noted that Bykau belongs to the Belarusians as well as to the Belarusian State. And, thanks God, the people remember and thank Bykau.

It might be good if the State did not lag behind.

We asked Vasil Bykau's friend Gienadz Buraukin to say a few words about the situation today. Gienadz Buraukin: "19 July is a very memorable and dear day to us. On this day I used to come to Vasil when he lived in Grodna. I came to his house, to the Nioman of his. Later I used to drop in at his place in Tankovaya street. And now I come to this soundless stone on his grave... And I have a need and necessity to talk to Vasil, to ask for his advice. And though he keeps silent, for me he remains one of the dearest and wisest interlocutors, friends, close people. The creative work of Bykau, the talent of Bykau belong to eternity. And the fact that our officials have not understood neither the size of Bykau as a personality nor the importance of Bykau's all-world fame proves that



their intellectual level is not high enough and that their attitude toward the history of the people and toward the people is highly irresponsible.

And Bykau will always belong to the history.

ECONOMY

Sweet life is to be paid for

The retail price on sugar has risen by 5% in Belarus since 20 July. You are to pay 1840 Belarusian rubles for a kilo of granulated sugar and 2000 rubles for sugar packed in paper or plastic bags. The decision to raise the price has been taken by the concern "Belarusian State Food Industry" It has been done in order to gradually compensate the increase in prices on agricultural raw materials, fuel and energy resources as well as to

improve the financial situation of sugar – processing organizations.

The price of sugar in Belarus has not been raised since 2006.

OPPOSITION

Solidarity Actions with Kazulin

Applications for holding solidarity pickets with A. Kazulin has been passed to Miensk City Executive Committee, the BelaPAN News Agency reports.

The pickets will be dedicated to the 2nd anniversary since the court process against A. Kazulin, the leader of Belarusian Social-Democrat Party "Hramada".



General of Belarus Ryhor Vasilevich last week. In particular, the lawyer addressed to the Prosecutor General with a request to cancel the court

The action organizers are going to attract public attention to a complaint, submitted by an attorney Zmicier Harachka to the Prosecutor

verdict in relation to A. Kazulin. It is suggested that more than 50 people may take part in the protest pickets.

POLITICS

Siamashka on «Nuclear Renaissance»

Deputy Prime Minister Uladzimir Siamashka responded to Gorki anti-nuclear group activists' letter.

"For Freedom" movement activists who created the anti-nuclear advocacy group addressed the government with an official letter and attached 1,000 signatures of Gorki region residents who strongly object to the construction of nuclear power plant.

In his letter Deputy Prime Minister Uladzimir Siamashka mentions that Nuclear Power Station will cover up to 30% of the country's demand for power. Natural gas, which is imported from Russia, makes up to 95% of Belarusian total energy system. This causes certain problems concerning energy supply security. According to Deputy Prime Minister, nuclear fuel supplies have greater diversification potential. The construction of the Nuclear Power Station is supposed to boost economic development of

the region. In Siamashka's opinion, the whole world is experiencing now the so called "nuclear renaissance". Deputy Prime Minister assures that modern reactors are much safer and more environment friendly. He says that according to sociological studies more than 50% of Belarusians support power station construction program and in Mahileu region more than 60% of residents back the construction of the Nuclear Power Station.

POLITYKA

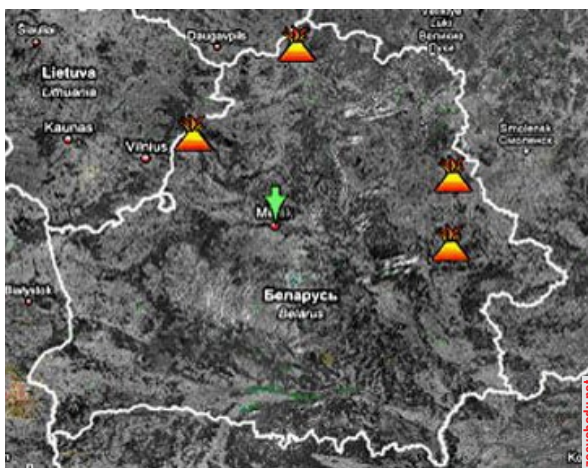
Siamaszka mówi o „Renesansie jądrowym”

Wice-premier Uładzimir Siamaszka odpowiedział na list aktywistów Goreckiej grupy Przeciwatomowej.

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There are various sites devoted to events in Belarus, which are, however, little known in Western Europe, and among people dealing with politics towards Belarus who do not understand the Russian or Belarusian languages.

The site [belarus-live](http://belarus-live.eu) fills this gap. The site allows to order weekly reception of news in English, Polish, Belarusian, Russian.