

**Timothy Bell mimo
wszystko podpisał
umowę z Białorusią**

**Prezydent podpisał
„Ustawę o środkach
przekazu”**

**BNF wymuszają, żeby
zdjąć z budynku flagę
narodową**

Biedna Brześćczyzna

**Białorusini kupili ponad
1,3 tony złota**

**W Wilnie będą wyklądać
muzyczne tradycje
Białorusii**

Before his trip to the Olympics Opening Ceremony in Beijing the president Aliaksandar Lukashenka made several trips to Belarus regions to check the harvesting campaign in progress. He noted that crops should be harvested as quickly and as completely as possible, because considering world foodstuffs crisis Belarus could benefit from food export.

On August 6, 4 million tons of wheat was threshed in Belarus. According to preliminary forecasts it



is planned to harvest 8 million tons of wheat. Independent experts think that Soviet traditions of overreporting are widely used in agrarian sector just to show that the plans are fulfilled.

Meanwhile, according to experts, hidden tension grows in Miensk-Moscow relationships because of unresolved questions in energy field.

Deputy Prime Minister Uladzimir Syamashka told reporters in Minsk on August 1 that Belarus and Russia should revise the former gas supply agreement. On December 31, 2006 Miensk and “Gazprom” signed the agreement which states the price of Russian gas for Belarus (oil price is the reference point). In the first quarter of the year the gas price was \$119, now it’s \$128 per 1000 cubic meters

According to Syamashka, when the agreement was signed “we used Russian forecasts that oil price will lower to \$61 a barrel. What we have now is \$120 a barrel. That’s why we must sit down at the negotiating table and either terminate the agreement, which is unacceptable, or amend the agreement in order to arrive at a civilized solution”.

Of course, when talking about a “civilized solution” Belarusian side means lower gas price. But Moscow remains firm. On August 6 Russian am-



bassador Aliaksandar Sourykau told reporters in Miensk that “the agreement is signed. It’s dangerous to terminate the agreement and there are no other gas suppliers.”

Experts think that Miensk has its trump cards in the game. For instance, it could use worsening of strategic military situation as an argument. The matter concerns the fact that the Ukraine joins NATO and USA plans to place its missile defense shield in Poland and Czech Republic (or Lithuania), which makes Belarus the only Russia’s ally in the region.

At the news conference on August 6 Russian ambassador Sourykau noted that to respond to the placement of USA missile defense shield

in Europe Russia may consider placement of missile complexes “Iskander” in Belarus and placement of strategical bombers in Belarus, Kaliningrad and so on” (Russian generals call that an “asymmetrical answer”).

“Belarusian side’s concern during the talks about the “asymmetrical answer” will be narrowed to just one question: “What we will get?” – Belarusian military analyst Aliaksandar Aliesin thinks.

Political analyst Andrei Fyodarau agrees with him. He draws attention to a recent secret meeting between Sidorski and his Latvian colleague Godmanis, and also to the fact that Belarusian government wants to have more civilized elections than usual. In other words, Miensk tries to secure its position in Europe at the negotiations with Moscow.

At the same time Miensk will also try to play the tramp card of the “asymmetrical answer”, thinks Fyodarau: “The government will maneuver using Russia-West opposition and then will choose the most beneficial solution”.

Meanwhile Parliamentary elections campaigns is launched in Belarus. Head of the Central Election Committee Lidzija Jarmoshyna notes lower political parties activity. “Parties’ interest to the elections lowered as

compared to the Parliamentary elections 2004”, – head of the Central Election Committee said during news conference on August 5. “It should be mentioned that fewer parties, just 15, take part in the elections as compared to the year 2004 when 18 parties were represented,” – mentioned Lidzija Jarmoshyna.

Ms Jarmoshyna also noted that fewer candidates apply for deputy mandates. For instance, in 2004 there were 690 registered candidates and now only 424 candidates are nominated by collection of signatures (a couple more candidates will be nominated by work collectives and political parties).

According to head of the Central Election Committee, 100 of the registered initiative groups are nominating political parties representatives for candidates, almost 80% of them are opposition members.

The Central Election Committee forecasts that average number of candidates per district will be 4,5.

The government was pretty permissive to the registration of initiative groups, there were just a few refusals.



The candidates were promised to have equal access to media.

Analysts mention that little TV and radio time and little newspaper coverage of the election campaign cannot revive political life in the country because media are monopolized by the government and political parties are in the underground.

The new Mass Media Law, narrowing the freedom of speech, was signed by the president.

Lawyers of the Belarusian Association of Journalists (BAJ) mention several regressive clauses of the law: the government will regulate all online media, limitations on foreign investments in mass media will be set, the procedure of an edition’s closure will become much simpler.

During June and July many international organizations and associations of journalists appealed to the Belarusian government not to sign the law in the present form, many international experts offered help but it was rejected.

According to independent analysts this shows the real situation: the government is not ready to cooperate with Europe. Belarusian democrats are concerned that more and more people in EU seem to be ready to turn a blind eye to the fact that there are no

conditions in Belarus for a civilized political life and want to give Miensk the credit for technicalities adherence during Parliamentary elections. It is necessary to find grounds for dialog but not with the help of unscrupulous compromises, internal opponents of the government think.

POLITICS

Timothy Bell Has Signed Agreement with Belarus

The world known PR-manager Timothy Bell will work on improving the image of Belarus at the international stage.

Current agreement was signed at the end of last week. According to Timothy Bell, the agreement covers carrying out two campaigns – informational and marketing. The first has a goal to create a positive image of Belarus in the world mass media and at the international stage, and the second – to increase the amount of foreign investment in Belarus.

Timothy Bell met with Aliaksandar Lukashenka in the middle of March this year. Some details of their talk and now agreements are still

unknown. The amount of money involved and the term of its realization is also kept secret.

OFFICIALLY

The President Signs New Media Law

Aliaksandar Lukashenko signed the new Mass Media Law. It was passed by the Chamber of Representatives on June 24 and approved by the Council of the Republic on June 28. The document underwent examination of the Constitutional Court of Belarus.

Independent journalists and media experts point out several clauses in this document which don't meet democratic norms and create grounds for repressions in mass media.

Specialists of the Belarusian Association of Journalists (BAJ) are concerned with the following clauses of the law: the government will regulate all online media, limitations on foreign investments in mass media will be set, compulsory re-registration of all media will be established, more officials will have the right to issue warnings, the procedure of an edition's closure will become much simpler, the accreditation for foreign



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journalists will become more difficult and so on.

When the Mass Media Law was developed many international organizations and associations of journalists appealed to the Belarusian government not to sign the law. Many international experts offered help but it was rejected.

The Mass Media Law will come into power in 6 months after its signing.

OPPOSITION

BPF is Forced to Take Down the National Flag

The Municipal Service of Savetsky region ordered BPF to take down the white-red-white flag from the building where BPF's headquarters are situated. The party received an official letter which binds it to «take down the flags. Otherwise the term of the lease contract will not be prolonged».

The leader of BPF party Lyavon Barshchewski is sure that while it's the municipal service who has to fulfill the order, it was given by top officials. BPF's chairman Barshchewski notes that by forcing the party to take down the flag the government violates the "Law regarding political parties". According to this law every party has the right to promote its ideas. The national white-red-white flag is one of the main ideas of the BPF party, Lyavon Barshchewski said.

ECONOMY

Poor Brest Region

Brest region residents are again outsiders on the nominal calculated level of wage for the first six months.

It became clear after the Ministry of Statistics and Analysis reported the data about all the Belarusian regions. The region residents got on the average 711,200 BYR meanwhile Miensk residents got on the average 1095,200 BYR. In other words Brest region residents got 64.9% from Miensk average wage. This situation is a great surprise when talking about social equality and justice on the one hand. On the other hand border regions usually look more prosperous. Mainly, if we talk about western regions.

Unbiased development of a historical process obviously demonstrates



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advantage of West countries in a socio-economic aspect and shows that western regions are always more prosperous than the eastern ones. Here we can make examples of West and East Germany, Czech Republic and Slovakia, West and East Poland. But in our case this rule doesn't work. Thus, we have only to wait for an official explanation, why Miensk residents got higher calculated wages than the Brest ones.

SOCIETY

Belarusians Bought More than 1.3 Tons of Gold

Belarusian citizens bought 3.7 times more gold bars in the first half of this year than in the same period last year. According to BelTa news agency Belarusians bought more than 1 ton 300 kg of gold.

10 gr gold bars enjoy the greatest popularity. They made more than 27% of the gold sold. 140 1 kg gold bars were sold.

The gold is sold to Belarusians by the National Bank through head administrations and departments throughout the country and also through some commercial banks. Total weight of the sold gold bars is 4 tons 329 kg. It's

high standard (999) gold bars rated 1, 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, 250, 500, 1000 gr. 1 gr of gold costs 80,290 BYR. A 1 kg gold bar costs 64,097,000 BYR.

CULTURE

Belarusian Musical Traditions Will Be Taught in Vilnius

On September 1 Vilnius College of Traditional Slavic Music opens Belarusian Department, «Narodnaya Gazeta» newspaper informs. The College exists in Vilnius for seven years. College administration and teachers are sure that the classes will not stay empty, because many ethnical Belarusians live in Lithuania, especially near Belarusian border.

It is planned to create a consulting center at the Belarusian Department which will include scientists of Belarusian National Academy of Sciences, Cultural University and ethnographers from different regions of Belarus.

The college administration noted that it's time to organize an expedition to Belarus to learn Belarusian folk traditions and real Belarusian folklore, which can only be found in Belarus.



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.