

Housing Office Demands
the Belarusian Popular Front
to Leave Its Premises prior
to July 8

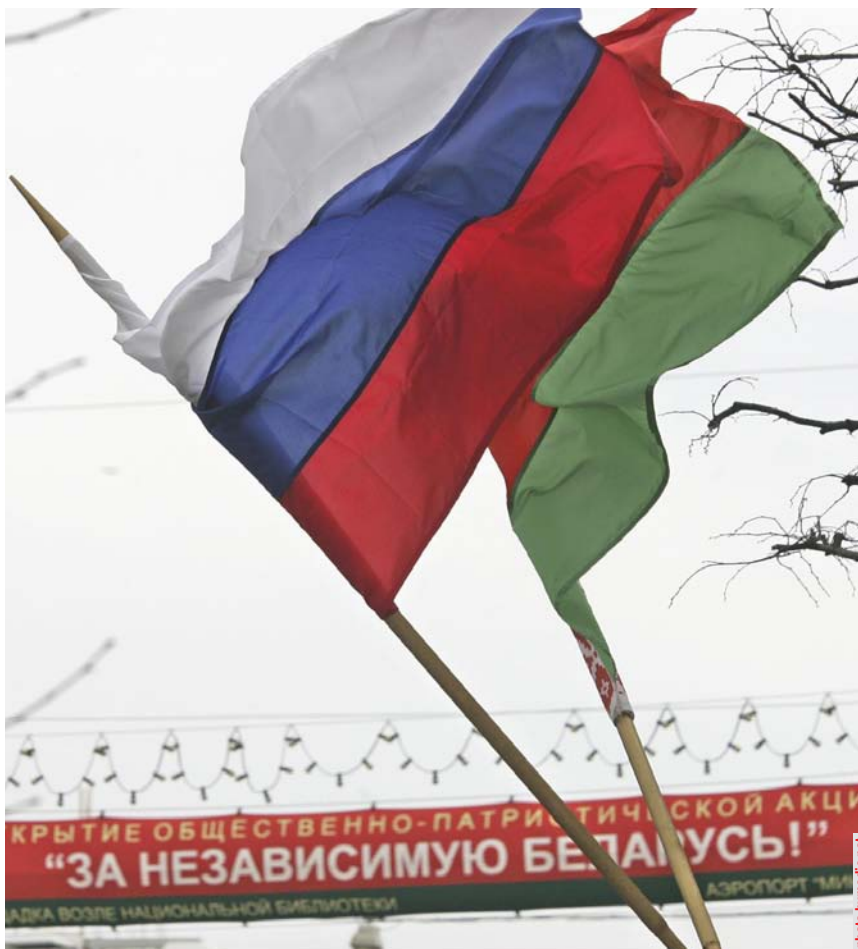
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Denies Registration
to the Belarusian Christian
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Another round of negotiations between Alaksandar Lukashenka and Dmitri Medvedev was held on April 10. Judging by information about the meeting Lukashenka attempted to exact promises from the Russian president on issues which are crucial to Belarus.

Lukashenka also told Medvedev about prospects of Belarus' participation in the Eastern Partnership programme.

According to the Belarusian president's press service, Alaksandar Lukashenka and Dmitri Medvedev agreed to meet in Miensk next time. According to preliminary information, a meeting of the Supreme Council of the Union State may be held in June. Usually, problems arise about the dates of this event. So, it cannot be ruled out that the meeting may take place in autumn during large-scale Russo-Belarusian military exercises which will be held on territories of the two States.

After the meeting between Medvedev and Lukashenka it became even more evident that conflict issues may not be arranged at the presidential level because Russian producers and agencies directly influence the decision-taking process.



So, negotiations between Belarus and Russia on increasing the share of the Russian rouble in mutual payments go on. As the Russian party assures, ministries of finance and central banks of the two countries

have several scenarios of further movement in this direction.

It should also be noted that on April 10, the very day of the meeting between Medvedev and Lukashenka, Chief State Veterinary Inspector of the Russian Federation Nikolai Vlasov said: “It was never the case that all Belarusian enterprises were forbidden to supply their products to Russia; now a sort of weeding is under way.” “Belarusian products often wins competition because it is seriously subsidized by the State”, a deputy head of the Russian Federal Veterinary and Phytosanitary Monitoring Service asserts.

As for other problematic areas of bilateral relations, First Deputy Prime Minister of Belarus Uladzimir Siamashka said that the Belarusian equipment had been assimilated with the foreign one and a fifteen per cent mark-up is added to its tender price. In its turn it does not allow it to compete with Russian products on equal terms.

In the Russian party's opinion, Belarus lifted only two out of four barriers which obstructed access of Russian producers to the Belarusian market.

According to Belarusian Deputy Prime Minister Andrej Kabiakou, preferential amendments for Russian public purchases apply to eleven Belarusian industrial companies. According to him, this order was signed by Russian Minister of Economic Development and Trade Elvira Nabiulina.

“In the near future the order is to be registered at the Ministry of Justice of Russia and it will come into effect if OK is given”, Kabiakou described the

situation. According to the deputy prime minister, further to the decision of the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade of Russia an agreement on credit financing of purchases of Belarusian agricultural equipment was reached with Ros-selkhozbank.

Prime Minister of Belarus Siarhiey Sidorski said on April 9 that the Russian party hampers adoption of a decision on equal access of Belarusian and Russian products to the markets of the two States.



A peripheral issue of smuggling Moldovan wines has also arisen in relations between Miensk and Moscow.

Head of the Russian Agency for Health and Consumer Rights Gennadi Onishchenko said that “there are reasons to believe that deliveries of wines and wine-making materials of Moldovan producers who are not allowed in Russia, as well as supplies of these products from other regions which are under an absolute embargo in the Russian Federation, are being made to Russia through Belarus.” The Belarusian group “Beldziarzhkharchpram” rejected Onishchenko's accusations saying that in Belarus “there are no enterprises having the right of further export of imported grape wine-making materials.”

w“To pay for gas one-hundred and fifty US dollars in January – September (as the Belarusian party

proposes – “Telegraph”) means to destruct the contract. Who would accept it? The gas price for Belarus in the first and second trimesters and further on will be set in accordance with the contract”, said Mr. Kuznetsov, counsellor of the Russian Embassy in Belarus. The representative of the Russian Embassy pointed out that Belarus was able to pay USD 210 for gas in the first trimester because Gazprom had already transferred about USD 250 million to Miensk as the advance payment for gas transit through Belarus.

“Factoring in this money which practically is a technical credit, Belarus will get the annual average price in the first semester; the mechanisms are different, but the result is the same, the annual average price”, Kuznetsov explained.

On April 9, on the eve of Lukashenka's visit to Moscow, a visit of Governor of Leningrad region Valeri Serdiukov to Miensk took place.

Lukashenka voice him his grievances about actions of Russian leaders.

He expressed his perplexity regarding the fact that Russia does not buy Belarusian sugar which is less expensive than the Russian one.

“There is a problem even with milk. If we sell everything to Russia it would not suffer any economic damage”.

“Why is Russia buying butter from New Zealand paying twice as much? ... Why is it not buying our fresh butter? There is no resolution of this issue”.

Lukashenka said that Russian mass media “had mangled through the length and breadth” his five-year son Nikolai. “Belarus is not represented at all in Russian mass media space. And even when it is represented, then the president is an idiot and his children are abnormal, swindlers and crooks.”

As for the situation within the government agencies themselves, observers note the increase of importance and influence of the Committee of State Control. By its structure and functions this agency is one of the Belarusian special services.

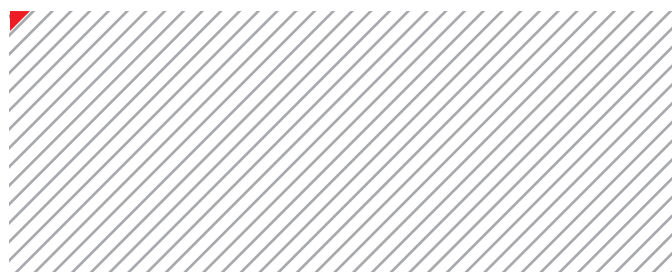
The President of Belarus approved carrying out inspections of several insurance organizations as well as the State Property Fund of the State Property Committee in the second trimester of 2009. It happened after Head of the Committee for State Control Zianon Lomac reported to the president about shortfalls which had been uncovered in activities of insurance organizations, in particular, in the Belarusian National Reinsurance Organization. It is a State enterprise whose fixed assets are formed from budget money. The organization gets most of its revenues by allocating funds of its fixed assets in deposits.

At the same time, the organization does not do any reinsurance as it follows from its name, a communiqué of the presidential press service points out. Almost a half of the insurance premium got from Belarusian insurance organizations is transferred abroad. As a result, the negative balance of foreign economic services in 2007 and nine months of 2008 amounted to USD 3,5 million.

According to Gieorhi Badziej, chairman of the Business Union of Entrepreneurs and Employers named after Kuniauski, the State should cut budget expenditures and lower the tax burden gradually for companies in order to overcome the crisis successfully. The analysis of the budget policy of recent years made by the Business Union showed that there was no question of lowering the tax burden. On the contrary, it increased in 2008 comparing to previous years. So, last year the revenues of the consolidated budget increased by 36,7%, which is in three times more than the growth of GDP (10%). Also, the tax burden's growth is confirmed even if the share of net tax revenues is taken into account. In 2008 they made 36,3% of GDP comparing to 35,6% in 2007 and 34% in 2006.

“It would be logical to cut down the number of controlling agencies and, therefore, expenses of State needs in conditions of the announced liberalization”, he pointed out. One needs to regard more closely the expenses on the national economy, Gieorhi Badziej believes.

However, the government takes several initiatives of business guardedly saying that enterprises have their own interests, and the State has also social obligations towards the population.



POLITICS

Housing Office Demands the Belarusian Popular Front to Leave Its Premises prior to July 8



Top management of the Belarusian Popular Front (BPF) Party received a letter from the Housing Office of the capital's Saviecki district with a demand to vacate the premises on Masherava (Varvasheni), 8 prior to July 8. Allegedly, the point is that the organization has arrears in the amount of 6381396 roubles and violates terms of the rental contract in a regular manner.

Lavon Barshcheuski, Chairman of the BPF Party says that according to the documents received it appears that the organization has not paid one-month rent. “We’ll pay this sum, it is not a problem. However, the letter says that the contract will not be renewed even if arrears are paid. It looks like a political hit, especially in the context of confiscation of some property of the Movement for

Freedom. So much for liberalization policy”, Lavon Barshcheuski says.

Starting from April 2008, after rental payments for premises of public organizations increased almost tenfold, the BPF Party pays for its Miensk office about 2800 euro a month. “It is enormous money, it is very hard for us to get them”, BPF’s leader says.

The premises of the BPF Party are located at Varsheni, 8 from 1992. Since then, a lot of events, presentations, concerts, and press conferences were held there. Even congresses of political parties were held there. BPF was on the brink of ejection on several occasions, but premises were successfully stood up for every time.

Nasha Niva

OPPOSITION

Ministry of Justice Denies Registration to the Belarusian Christian Democracy Party

The Ministry of Justice denied registration to the Belarusian Christian Democracy Party. Reasons of denial are still unknown.

It should be reminded that the founding congress of the Belarusian Christian Democracy was held at the end of February in Miensk. After that information started coming in that activists in regions experienced pressure from ideological departments of executive committees, security services’ agents and heads of

enterprises and organizations where members of the Belarusian Christian Democracy worked.

Radio Liberty

ECONOMY

Strongest Budget Wildfire in the Country

Lukashenka and his government admitted de-facto existence of a profound economic crisis in the country. Authorities announced a cutback of budget receipts and expenditures to 62,8 trillion Belarusian roubles. Comparing to the budget law adopted in November 2008 receipts will be cut down by 11,1 trillion roubles, and expenditures by 13,9 trillion roubles (18%).

According to the new budget plan receipts and expenditures to GDP ratio will be 40,5%. In 2008 receipts were 50,9% of GDP, and expenditures were 49,5% of GDP. It means that the Belarusian government plans to reduce the size of the State (budget expenditures) by 9 per cent points, and receipts by 10,4 per cent points. This is the biggest belt-tightening of the State in the Belarusian history. It is similar to the one made by Evgeni Primakov in Russia after 1998 default. After a lasting “liberal” period when State expenditures in the Russian federation were at the level of 45 to 50%, communist Evgeni Primakov had to cut them down to a level lower than 40% of GDP. It is very probable that Alaksandar Lukashenka will have to do the same under the threat of default.

Doing such a radical budget cutting Alaksandar Lukashenka and Siarhiey Sidorski have to affirm unanimously that budget policy priorities (without specifying a concrete list) will be financed in full. The head of State says that one “must work strictly in the most important sectors, investing money where we can get the best return ..., not to lose time on small things, and cut second-order expenditures”.

His statements fall on deaf ears of the Council of Ministers. Ministers do not take into account the radical change of situation. They see among priorities those enterprises which today contemplate in panic warehouses that are packed to capacity, and balances that are “red” from debts, and try to ignore persistent claims of suppliers and creditors.

One cannot agree again with Alaksandar Lukashenka: “It looks like the government works as it did yesterday or, probably, the day before yesterday, closing the eyes on developments which take place in the world and affect our country, and staying mechanically in realities of mid-XX century”. It is surprising that after making such evaluation the head of State keeps old-time personnel of the Council of Ministers and his Administration where “old dinosaurs” entrenched themselves who are responsible for economic analysis and working out anti-crisis recommendations.

Jaraslau Ramanchuk, head of Mises Centre

Charter'97

SOCIETY

Sociologists: Belarusians Cut Down Expenses Less than Russian and Ukrainians because of the Crisis



Because of the crisis Belarusians cut down their expenses less than Russians and Ukrainians do, according to a sociological study conducted by the All-Russia Public Opinion Research Centre together with Research & Branding Group and Sociological Workshop NOVAK. Experts wondered how the financial crisis and its outcomes are perceived by typical dwellers of the three countries.

It has been found that in conditions of the crisis Ukrainians have to cut down expenses more frequently than their neighbours — 67%. The same answer has been given by 43% of Russians and only by 30% of Belarusians. Our compatriots say more often than that they have to cut down some expenses but not the others (50%), or do not cut down expenses at all (16%).

Fifty to fifty-six per cent of Russians and Ukrainians save on food, and only 45% of Belarusians do so. Thirty-nine per cent of Belarusians, 42% of Russians and 56% of Ukrainians economize on clothes and shoes.

Also Belarusians save less on recreation and entertainment, medications, household appliances, utility payments, and education. Russians economize less than Belarusians on communication only. Belarusians and Ukrainians economize in equal measure on luxury articles and transports.

Free Press

OFFICIALLY

Lukashenka: "Those Who Are Not Able to Work Will Leave"



The Belarusian leader said that the government will go through some personnel changes in a week or two.

On April 16 Alaksandar Lukashenka appointed heads of district executive committees and confirmed some deputy ministers in their positions. These appointments are not strategic. However, at the end Lukashenka warned: "Literally in a week or two there will be more important appointments which concern some members of the government and heads of some republican agencies.

It is not related, as some think, to a forthcoming resignation of the government. Those who are not able to work today will leave. Those who are able to work in the government or the presidential administration, at other positions, they will work. We have no need whatsoever to "sweep" personnel. In the first place, a great lot of decent and good people who work well today may be hit by this "broom". A mass "sweeping" always leads to it. At the second place, we do not have so many people who are able to work successfully in these conditions".

Komsomolskaja pravda v Bielarusi

CULTURE

Belarusian Government Would Like to Buy Lauryshava Evangelistary in Poland

The Belarusian government would like to buy Lauryshava Evangelistary of the 14th century in Poland. This question was discussed at a meeting of the Commission on Return of Cultural Property from Abroad which was created by the Council of Ministers earlier this year.

Lauryshava Evangelistary was taken from Navahradak land to Krakow where it remains in the library of Czartoryski family. Alongside with purchase which is seen by experts as rather unlikely, options of equivalent exchange, making an electronic copy or a facsimile edition are also being considered.

STV TV Channel



CENTRUM STOSUNKÓW MIĘDZYNARODOWYCH
CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS



EUROPEAN RADIO FOR BELARUS



Polish aid

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://www.Belarus-Live.eu) fills this gap. The site allows to order weekly reception of news in English, Polish, Belarusian, Russian.