

Belarus Headlines

Issue XIII

July 11 – August 31, 2007



Office for a Democratic
Belarus

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PACE RAPPOREUR ON BELARUS ANDREA RIGONI: THERE IS NO NEUTRAL THINKING ON THE SITUATION IN BELARUS

Interview with PACE special rapporteur on Belarus (series: *Face to face with Europe*) Italian deputy of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe Andrea Rigoni was appointed Rapporteur on Belarus in the Political Affairs Committee in February 2007. Since then he has had several meetings with Belarusian officials in Rome and Strasbourg.

Office for a Democratic Belarus: Mr. Rigoni, you seem to be the first Rapporteur on the situation in Belarus with whom the Belarusian officials are ready to have a regular dialogue. Your colleagues Andres Herkel (CoE) and Adrian Severin (UN) have never been able to visit Belarus. What makes you different?

Andrea Rigoni: I think I have an open approach, namely I would like to know the overall situation of Belarus, without any prejudices. I am more focused on the positive outcomes concerning the future of democracy, respect of human rights and the rule of law.

ODB: Is your mission a difficult one?

AR: Yes, given the biased background related to Belarus I think that my task is going to be difficult. Nowadays there is no neutral thinking on the Belarus situation

and that is the reason why it isn't easy to set a dialogue about it.

ODB:
What is then the country like?

AR: I am currently building my personal idea on Belarus through the hearings in the Sub-Committee for Belarus, through the meetings I am having on this issue and even more with the help of the visits that I will carry out to Minsk.

ODB: You are planning a fact-finding mission for the purposes of your report in autumn. Is it possible that you will travel together with Mr. Pourgourides, Rapporteur of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights, who is authorised for the report "Abuse of the criminal justice system in Belarus"?

AR: That is right, I am planning to carry out a 3-4 day visit to Belarus, according to the needs. The Bureau of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly has assigned my mission as independent from the others, given that



it is focused on the opinion exchange for the elaboration of the report within the Political Committee of the Council of Europe.

ODB: Will you cooperate only with the Belarusian authorities for your report? When will your report be ready?

AR: I'm planning to meet both the authorities and the opposition leaders as well as the representatives of NGOs, economic and cultural elites and representatives of the academic circles. It is too early to talk about the conclusions of the report a few months after I have been given this mandate, considering also that my mandate has no specific deadline.

ODB: Mr. Rigoni, in your opinion, what does the European future of Belarus look like? Is it possible to restore the Belarusian special status in PACE?

AR: It is even more early

Interview with Andrea Rigoni

to talk about that — the future status of Belarus within the Council of Europe is still an open matter.

Andrea Rigoni is the Chairperson of the Italian Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe; Vice-Chairperson of the Assembly. Since February 2007 Rapporteur of the Political Affairs Committee on the situation in Belarus.

Was born in 1960 in Milan. Has a degree in Economics. Worked as a tax consultant, auditor and journalist. Member of the L'Ulivo (The Olive Tree – Democrats of the Left) parliamentary group. Party Leader in Massa Carrara (Tuscany). Was senator of the Italian Republic. Member of the Assembly of Western European Union. Member of the Standing Com-

mittee on Foreign Affairs of the Italian Chamber of Deputies.

Prepared by Maryna Rakhlei for the Office for a Democratic Belarus

17/08/2007

Politics and Society

Short Summary, July 11 – August 31

11/07/2007 Belarusian Lawmaker Slams OSCE Resolution

Mikhail Orda, a lawmaker in Belarus's House of Representatives, has criticized the resolution on Belarus adopted on July 9 by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's (OSCE) Parliamentary Assembly (see "RFE/RL Newsline," July 10, 2007),

16/07/2007 Belarus Says Ring Spying For Poland Uncovered

Belarus' secret services say they have arrested a spy ring working for Poland.

Viktar Vyaguera, the deputy head of Belarus's KGB, said four Belarusians and one Russian citizen have been detained on charges of selling classified information about the air-defence systems of Belarus and Russia.

See: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6901010.stm>

17/07/2007 Belarusian President Fires KGB Chief and First Deputy in Shake-up of Security Services



President Alexander Lukashenko dismissed the head of the country's KGB and his first deputy Tuesday.

KGB Chairman Stepan Sukhorenko and First Deputy Head Vasily Dementey were transferred to other jobs, Lukashenko's office said. Their new positions were not announced.

The dismissals follow the arrest in June on bribery charges of two KGB officers, one of them retired. The two men were believed to be close to Sukhorenko.

See: <http://www.pr-inside.com/belarusian-president-fires-kgb-chief-and-r174510.htm>

21/07/2007 Oman Named as Most Important Partner of Belarus in Middle East

Oman is one of the most important partners of Belarus in the Middle East, Chairman of the Council of the Republic of the National Assembly of Belarus Gennadiy Novitskiy said at a meeting with Yusuf bin Alawi bin Abdallah, Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs of the Sultanate of Oman on Friday

Gennadiy Novitskiy stressed, the official visit of Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko to Oman in April 2007 gave a major impetus to the bilateral relations. Top-level meetings held during the visit showed that the potential of the bilateral cooperation is great.

See: http://www.indianmuslims.info/news/2007/jul/21/oman_named_most_important_partner_belarus_middle_east.html

Politics and Society

23/07/2007 Belarusian Ministry Denies Registration To Milinkevich-led Movement



Belarus' Justice Ministry has refused to register the Movement for Freedom led by former opposition presidential candidate Alyaksandr Milinkevich. The ministry cited flaws in the movement's charter as the grounds for its decision. The Movement for Freedom was established at a congress in Hrodna in May.

See: <http://www.rferl.org/newsline/2007/07/3-cee/cee-230707.asp>

26/07/2007 EU 'Dismayed' by Arrest in Belarus of Opposition Youth Leaders

EU External Relations Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner voiced dismay on Thursday at the imprisonment earlier this week of two opposition youth group leaders in Belarus.

After being detained for robbery, Pavel Severinets and Alexei Shein were sentenced on Tuesday in Minsk to 15 days in prison for possessing fliers for a banned concert.

"I am dismayed at the arrest and detention of several members of the Belarus democratic opposition over the last days, including Pavel Severinets and Aleksei Shein," she said in a statement.

See: http://www.eubusiness.com/news_live/1185469213.66

02/08/2007 Belarus President Aims at the Internet



President Alexander Lukashenko said the Internet was full of sites hostile to Belarus and a law was needed to end such anarchy, local news agency BelTA reported on Thursday.

"It is time to stop the anarchy on the Internet. We cannot allow this great technological achievement of man to be turned into an information garbage heap," Lukashenko told reporters at a press event to which foreign media were not admitted.

Lukashenko, criticized by the West for his iron grip over the former Soviet republic, said: "It is a massive loudspeaker, not even of the opposition, but a loudspeaker of voices hostile towards us, hostile states." He did not name the states.

See: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/story/RTGAM.20070802.wgtbelarus0802/BNStory/Technology/?page=rss&id=RTGAM.20070802.wgtbelarus080>

07/08/2007 US Widens Visa Ban on Belarus Officials

The United States expanded the list of politicians and government officials serving under Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko that are banned from visiting America.

The initial list, adopted by Washington in May 2006, comprised nearly 40 names including Lukashenko and others suspected of repressing human rights and committing fraud during presidential elections in the former Soviet republic.

See: http://news.yahoo.com/s/afp/20070807/pl_afp/usbelarussanctions_070807210936

15/08/2007 Belarusian Opposition Plans 'European March' in October



The Belarusian opposition on August 14 formally asked the Minsk City Executive Committee for permission to stage a demonstration called the "European March" in the Belarusian capital on October 14. Viktar Ivashkevich, deputy chairman of the Belarusian Popular Front (BNF), told journalists that the main objective of the march is to show the Belarusian opposition's orientation toward Europe. "The pro-democratic forces want to send a signal to the Belarusian civil servants that the opposition is ready to hold talks for carrying out democratic reforms with due regard for their interests," Ivashkevich said.

See: <http://www.rferl.org/newsline/2007/08/3-cee/cee-150807.asp>

Politics and Society

20/08/2007 Belarusian Police Detain Tens of Opposition Activists



Around 30 opposition activists, including the leader of a youth movement, were detained during an event in south-western Belarus on August 19.

The activists were Brest to attend a book reading by youth activist Pavel Sevyarynets that was organized by the regional branch of the Belarusian Popular Front.

The Youth Front (Malady Front) leader was to discuss three of his recently published books, one of which was written while he was serving a restricted-freedom sentence for organizing protests after Belarus's 2004 referendum. The contentious referendum freed up President Alyaksandr Lukashenka to run for a third presidential term.

See: <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2007/8/alad2cac-37f7-4607-ab83-8333809d0080.html>

23/08/2007 Belarus "Free Theatre" is Under Attack by Militia in Minsk, Belarus



On August 22nd, 2007 at about 22:30 pm Belarusian militia have rushed into the private house in area of Bangor where a premier performance of Edward Bond's play "11 shirts" by "Free Theatre" was taking place. More than 50 people were taken to the Soviet District Militia Station for a pure interrogation (probably, under duress, as always). After 3 hours 30 of them including a French director Christian Benedetti (Art-Manager of French Theatre-Studio "Artfoville") and two professors of one of the Dutch theatrical schools were released.

See: <http://www.americanchronicle.com/articles/viewArticle.asp?articleID=35833>

27/08/2007 Opposition Leader Milinkevich Welcomes Nomination of Stanislaw Shushkevich for 2007 Nobel Peace Prize

Alyaksandr Milinkevich, leader of the Movement for Freedom, has welcomed the nomination of Stanislaw Shushkevich, Belarus' formal head of state between 1991 and 1994, for the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize.

Mr. Milinkevich, the winner of the European Parliament's 2006 Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought, has called on heads of states and governments, as well as other influential people to second the nomination of the "first president of Belarus," the former presidential candidate's press office said.

See: http://naviny.by/rubrics/inter/2007/08/27/ic_articles_259_152451/

29/08/2007 Russian Diplomat Backs Down on Statement about Deployment of Nukes in Belarus



Russian Ambassador to Belarus Aleksandr Surikov on August 28 denied that he said Russia might consider deploying nuclear facilities in Belarus in response to the U.S. plans to expand its missile-defence shield to Eastern Europe. "Russia has no plans to deploy nuclear weapons in Belarus. I didn't say what was reported that I said," Surikov told journalists in Minsk.

See: <http://www.rferl.org/newsline/2007/08/3-ccc/ccc-290807.asp>

29/08/2007 Youth Activist Faces Criminal Charges for Political Graffiti in Baranavichy



The office of the public prosecutor in the city of Baranavichy has opened a criminal case against Viktor Parnachow, an activist of the unregistered youth pressure group Malady Front (Youth Front). He is charged with painting a political graffiti. Viktor Parnachow was arrested in Baranavichy in the night of August 11 when he joined several fellow members of the Malady Front to paint "Stop Persecution of Malady Front!" and "Stop Persecution of Democratic Youth!" on the building of the local city court. Police managed to arrest Parnachow only.

See: <http://www.belradio.fm/en/220/news/7943/>

Economics

11/07/2007 Venezuela to increase Oil Productivity Helped by Belarus



State-run Petroleos de Venezuela (PDVSA) announced today it will achieve higher production and reserve volumes with joint drilling in several fields together with Belarus company Belarusneft.

PDVSA leadership confirmed in a press release it is currently evaluating the possibility of operating five or six mature fields with modern technologies which will allow to improve productivity in existing deposits.

See: <http://www.plenglish.com/article.asp?ID=%7B64E0732D-CB9D-4835-B22A-13143FF4A1F7%7D&language=EN>

13/07/2007 Belarusian Foreign Trade Deficit Doubles in 5 Months

Belarus' foreign trade deficit more than doubled to \$881.6 million in January-May 2007 compared to the same period of 2006, the Belarusian Statistics and Analysis Ministry told. The Belarusian Federal Customs Committee said earlier that the foreign trade deficit was \$435.1 million in January-May 2006.

See: <http://www.interfax.com/3/292861/news.aspx>

24/07/2007 Belarus to Sell to Venezuela Weapons for \$1bln

Belarus is willing to sell to Venezuela weapons for a total worth of \$1 billion. The deal will provide for production of infantry combat vehicles and selling the armaments made in time of the former Soviet Union, Associated Press reported.

The respective contracts are expected to be concluded by August, said Belarus' Security Council Chief Viktor Sheiman. Venezuela's President Hugo Chavez has approved the contracts that were sealed earlier, Sheiman specified.

See: http://www.kommersant.com/p-11073/Belarus_Venezuela/

25/07/2007 Gazprom Buys Stake in Belarusian Gas Transportation Company



An irregular shareholders' meeting of Beltransgaz opened in the Belarusian capital Minsk on Wednesday.

The shareholders are to elect a new supervisory board of the gas transportation company, in which Gazprom has brought a stake.

The Russian gas monopolist is to place its people on the board of the already joint company and find a solution to the problem of Belarus' gas debt.

See: <http://www.itar-tass.com/eng/level2.html?NewsID=11743684&PageNum=0>

31/07/2007 Russia Refuses to Bail Out Lukashenko

Refusal of \$1.5 billion Loan from Moscow Signals Gloomier Prospects for Belarusian Regime.

The failure of negotiations on a new loan to Belarus, held in Moscow on July 30, make clear that this time Moscow is serious about making its western neighbour and ally switch to market principles in bilateral economic relations.

See: <http://www.russiaprofile.org/page.php?pageid=Politics&articleid=a1185881141>

01/08/2007 Belarusian Premier Says One-Third Of Economy Is Loss-Making

Prime Minister Syarhey Sidorski said at a government conference in Minsk on July 31 that "one-third of the economy" in Belarus is actually unprofitable. Sidorski said the share of unprofitable enterprises now amounts to some 17-18 percent of the total number in the country, but added that among large companies subordinated to the Ministry of Industry loss-making ones account for 31 percent.

See: <http://www.rferl.org/newsline/2007/08/3-cee/cee-010807.asp>

Economics

07/08/2007 Iran and Belarus Plan 100 Million Euro Hydro-Electric Project

Energy officials from Iran and Belarus are in discussions on a 100 million Euro (137 million dollars) hydro-electric project. The announcement came during a visit to the former Soviet republic by Said Mohammed Mehdi Shahrabi, a member of the energy committee of the Iranian parliament.

Trade between Iran and Belarus currently is miniscule at some 50 million dollars annually. Both countries in recent months have increased diplomatic contacts in response to economic and political isolation from European nations and the US.

See: <http://www.earthtimes.org/articles/show/90909.html>

16/08/2007 Belarus Ruble's Ambitions



Belarus will unhook its currency from the Russian ruble to tie it to the US dollar beginning in 2008. What motivated Belarus, political or economical reasons? "Beginning in 2008, the National Bank intends to refrain from the policy of coupling the official exchange rate of the Belarusian ruble to the Russian ruble," the bank said in a statement. Indexing the Belarusian ruble to the US dollar will help stabilize the Belarusian currency, and help Belarus increase its international trade, Belarus concedes.

See: <http://www.russia-ic.com/news/show/4557/>

16/08/2007 Syria and Belarus to Establish Joint Industrial and Investment Projects

Minister of Industry Fouad Issa al-Jouni discussed on Thursday with Belarus Deputy Minister of Trade Ivan Stepanenko and the accompanying delegation aspects of industrial cooperation and ways of developing them in the interest of the two friendly countries. Both sides also conferred on the possibilities of cooperation in manufacturing machines, cars and tractors in addition to establishing joint investment and industrial projects.

See: <http://www.sana.org/eng/21/2007/08/16/134546.htm>

22/08/2007 Belarus Receives Sovereign Credit Ratings

The financial services company Standard and Poor's has assigned a B+ foreign-currency long-term sovereign credit rating, a BB local-currency rating, and a B short-term sovereign rating to Belarus. Standard and Poor's said the ratings reflect the state's domination of the Belarusian economy, the country's weak external liquidity, and the uniquely centralized nature of the Belarusian political system, which reduces the predictability of policy choices.

See: <http://www.rferl.org/newsline/2007/08/3-cee/cee-220807.asp>

29/08/2007 British American Tobacco Hoping to be Allowed to Supply 97 Million Cigarettes to Belarus



The British American Tobacco Trading Company, Belarus' subsidiary of the BAT cigarette maker, hopes that the Belarusian government will allow it to supply 97 million cigarettes to the country in September. "As far as we know, (the government) is considering such a decision and it is likely to be made," Syarhey Bury, head of the company's corporate relations department.

See: http://naviny.by/rubrics/inter/2007/08/29/ic_articles_259_152501/

30/08/2007 International Finance Corporation and Detroit Investments Company invest \$20 mln. in Juice Production in Belarus

International Finance Corporation (IFC) and Detroit Investments company plan to invest \$20 mln. in the creation of juice production capacities in Belarus. Oskar Chemerinskiy, the Director of Agri-Business Department, IFC, shared this information during the press conference in Minsk. "IFC has already agreed to provide a loan worth to \$8 mln. to create juice production in Belarus", he said. According to Sergey Levin, the representative of Detroit Investments company, on the first stage the plant capacity will be 1 mln. hectoliters per year. "This volume exceeds twice the total volume of juice consumption in Belarus recorded past year", he observed. The equipment is planned to be supplied to the plant in October 2007.

See: <http://www.lol.org.ua/eng/showart.php?id=49241>

Economics

31/08/2007 600,000 Belarusians Work Abroad

Nearly 600,000 Belarus nationals are currently outside the country working in foreign lands, Belarus Economy Minister Mikalay Zaychanka told a cabinet meeting on Friday.

He stressed that his agency was not aware where exactly the Belarusians were employed. According to Zaychanka, since 2000 Belarus, Russia and Kazakhstan have seen a trend of higher pay growth over labor productivity.

"If we could pursue a policy of cutting jobs, we would significantly increase the productivity of labor. Many enterprises in Belarus could reduce the number of jobs," Minister noted, according to Interfax.

31/07/2007 IMF Executive Board Concludes 2007 Article IV Consultation with the Republic of Belarus

MF Executive Board Concludes 2007 Article IV Consultation with the Republic of Belarus

Public Information Notice (PIN) No. 07/108 **Public Information Notices (PINs)** form part of the IMF's efforts to promote transparency of the IMF's views and analysis of economic developments and policies. With the consent of the country (or countries) concerned, PINs are issued after Executive Board discussions of Article IV consultations with member countries, of its surveillance of developments at the regional level, of post-program monitoring, and of ex post assessments of member countries with longer-term program engagements. PINs are also issued after Executive Board discussions of general policy matters, unless otherwise decided by the Executive Board in a particular case.

For the full text see: <http://www.imf.org/external/np/sec/pn/2007/pn07108.htm>

Announcements

Belarusian Rock Festival “The Right to be Free”, Lutsk (Ukraine), September 22

Belarusian Rock festival “The Right to be Free” will take place nearby the Belarusian-Ukrainian border on September 22. The aim of the event is to attract attention to such issues as the rights of artists for freedom of expressions, the right of favourite music independent the government.

“The Right to be Free” will city of Lutsk under authorities. Performances September 22 from 15.00. Park named after Lesya guests there will be space



take place in the Ukrainian patronage of the local are to be staged on Saturday, until 24.00, in the Central Ukrainka. For Belarusian organized for camping.

As for today, agreements to participate have been reached with the following bands: Krama, Neuro Dubel, ULIS, Tav.Mauzer, B:N:, Scyana and Tsin Sontsya (Ukraine). Negotiations are being held with N.R.M. and some Ukrainian rock starts.

Ukrainian TV suggested to provide coverage of the event. Later in the fall, it will possible to see the concert on the newly created “BelSat” channel, which is due to start working at the end of the year. Among partners of the festival are “The Belarusian Music Alternative”, youth initiative “StudFormat” and the European Radio for Belarus (ERB).

If interested to get more details, don't hesitate to write to the organizers: fest.svabody@gmail.com

Culture

Plastic Surgery for Belarusian Towns



The wave of demolition sweeps over the country...

In about a week Minsk will celebrate its 940's birthday. Although probably the word "birthday" is totally inappropriate in this case. It was, in fact, the doomsday of the Belarusian capital, which happened in 1067. The first mentioning of Minsk in the ancient chronicle describes the city's demolition during the battle between the warring Slavic dukes. Since then, it seems, destroying Minsk has become some kind of a perverted tradition. Eastern and Western powers often solved their disputes on the Belarusian soil. However, the recent history shows that Belarusian authorities can be just as barbarian as the uninvited foreign guests.

For Minsk, the WWII became a turning point. The city heavily suffered from bombings. As a result, the Soviet government decided not to reconstruct the old Minsk, but to build a new city from scratch. Vast areas of the old city centre were demolished, giving the way to the gargantuan Soviet buildings and broad avenues. The pitiful remains of the old city were turned into some kind of architectural ghetto.

The Soviet propaganda promoted the image of the Belarusian capital as "the young city". The village youth poured into Minsk, hoping to find place in its faceless boxes of flats and get jobs at its new industrial plants. This exodus

(which also continues today) brought a certain change in psychology of the capital's population. Usually a person who is rooted in the city finds special pleasure in walking down the twisted paved streets, watching the old buildings, so beautiful in their imperfectness. On the contrary, a person from the village usually sees things from a rather practical angle. A new barn is better than the old one, so they say. For instance, why keep some rotten synagogue which no one attends (Nazis took care of that), if you can build a brand-new concrete office tower instead? Combined with the Soviet arrogance towards the pre-communist history, this psychology resulted into another massive wave of demolition in the 60's and the 70s. In Minsk the whole ancient Niamiha neighborhood was sacrificed to the enormous ugly apartment block.



Parking complex in Niamiha (Minsk) has not only deviated from the original project, but also spoiled the unique skyline. (Siarhey Hareuski)

The same happened in other Belarusian cities and towns, with churches and other historic landmarks blown into the air. In the southern town of Mazyr, for example, the whole market square with its many stores, craftsmen shops, resident houses, old trees and gymnasium was torn down.

The short period of democratization in the early 90s brought

hope that the old centers of Belarusian towns would be restored some day. However, the last couple of years brought the new wave of demolition. It sweeps over Belarus, swallowing the last remnants of the nation's architectural memory. Like the soviets, the regime of Lukashenka tries to get rid of any reminders of the pre-soviet times. New is the fact that the Belarusian officials and businessmen seem to have created an alliance, which threatens to bring down everything, which stands on the way of turning Belarus into the land of parking lots and hypermarkets. They see Belarus as the land of happy consumption, bringing a lot of profit and little trouble.

The demolition fashion has plagued most of Belarusian urban areas. Minsk and Hrodna (Grodno) suffer from this "beautification" policy the most. In Hrodna (Grodno) more than 30 historic buildings are scheduled for being torn down. In Minsk, the new multi-storied parking complex built in Niamiha district completely buried the last remains of the old buildings in the heart of the Belarusian capital. The buildings with protective plaques in the old Upper Market district are lying in ruins. By sad coincidence, one of them hosted the archive of the Minsk historic museum. As a result, more than 300 000 archaeological items were simply sent to the garbage dump.

Today there remain only about a dozen of authentic buildings in Minsk, which are more than 100 years old.

The plans to turn the former St. Joseph's monastery in Minsk into a casino and a hotel became the last drop, which caused regular protests – not only from Catholics. More than 20 000 people signed the

Culture

Plastic Surgery for Belarusian Towns...

petition demanding to return the monastery to the Catholic church.



St. Joseph's church and monastery in Minsk

Belarusian counterculture singers have launched the campaign "Musicians against the Demolition of Hrodna". They give regular underground concerts in the Western Belarusian city, calling for people to resist the demolition of Hrodna (Grodno). The town has seen many pickets and flash-mobs aimed at raising awareness of what is happening. Usually, such actions result in arrests.



Police arrests picketers in Hrodna (Photo Ales Zaleuski)

"Neither after the war, nor now does the Belarusian nation clearly see its future. That is why it is so negligent about its history", writes Siarhej Hareuski, culture scientist, who is one of the most active persons opposing the destruction of

the old city centers.

The architectural tastes may vary, but one thing remains clear: the authorities are so arrogant toward their people that they don't even attempt to explain or justify their actions. As a rule, the "reconstruction" of historic buildings is done without any discussion with the wider public.

In Belarus with its authoritarian rule no one is taken by surprise when the state interferes with political and cultural life of people. However, the destruction of the urban habitat is a rude intrusion into the intimate sphere of Belarusians, that many feel very offended. Not all of them treat architectural landmarks as old barns. In some way, by ruining the old city centres, the regime destroys Belarus which we know since we were small kids. Bulldozers kill our childhood memories. Those who fight against them form a new circle of active and responsible – a good foundation for the future civil society.

Meanwhile, the architectural policy of the Belarusian authorities has already interested foreign media. ORT, the Russian TV channel recently broadcast a report about the "reconstruction" of Hrodna (Grodno). The city Mayor Aliaksandr Antonenka told the correspondent, "If you show me a single building which was demolished and not rebuilt, or won't be rebuilt, I will eat your neck-tie!" We can only advise the Russian journalist to hold on to his apparel. The appetites of the Belarusian authorities are growing.

Prepared by

Ales Kudrytski for the Office for a Democratic Belarus



"Musicians against the Demolition of Hrodna"

Hrodna – some of the buildings to be demolished (Julia Darashkevich)



We on the WEB

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