

Belarus Headlines

Issue XVII

October 22– November 5, 2007



Office for a Democratic
Belarus

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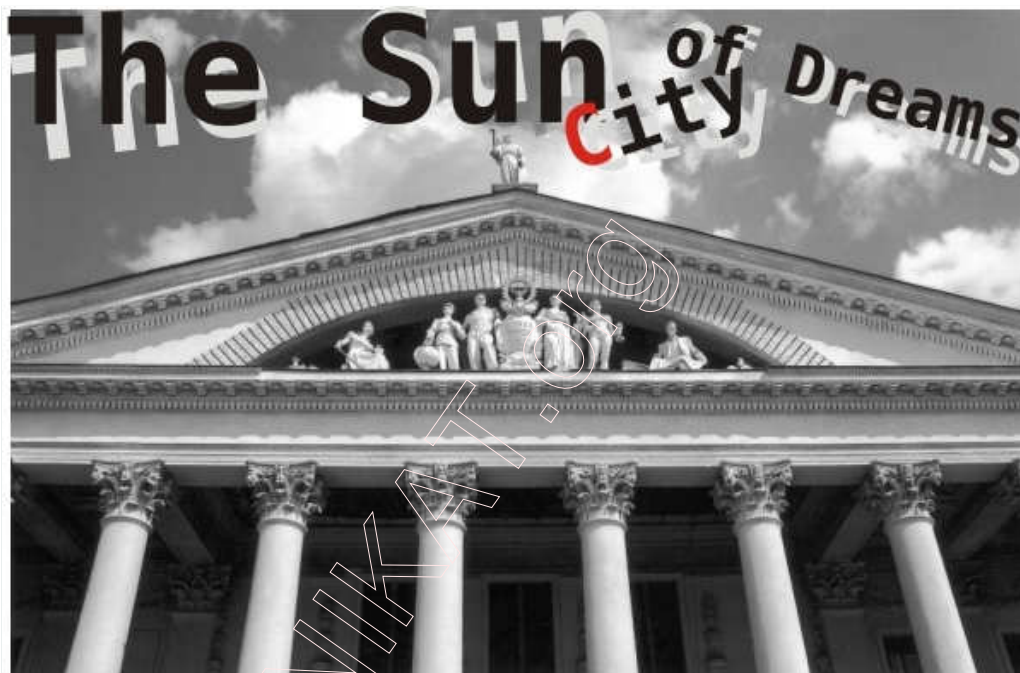
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Take a trip to the country of Utopia.

Visit the city of the dream,
which has become reality.

Experience the Belarusian capital
the way you've never seen it before.

Artur Klinau, Belarusian architect,
conceptual artist and writer
presents his new book
"Minsk. The Sun City of Dreams".

The reading, slide show and discussion
with the author will take place
at the **Hanse-Office**
Avenue Palmerston 20
B-1000 Brussels

Monday, November 12, 2007
Free admission
and snacks **19.00**

translation from Belarusian into English is provided
learn more about Artur Klinau here: <http://www.democraticbelarus.eu/node/1621>

We hope to welcome you in Minsk, the Sun City of Dreams!



OFFICE FOR A
DEMOCRATIC BELARUS
BRUSSELS



HANSE-OFFICE
Avenue Palmerston 20
B-1000 Brussels

directions:



SPARK OF BRAVERY Exhibition in Brussels

**The Permanent Representation of the Czech Republic
the Prague-based organization
People in Need
the Office for a Democratic Belarus**

have the pleasure of inviting you to the

**SPARK OF BRAVERY
Opening of the Photo Exhibition by
Alexandr Polo**

Time: Thursday, November 8, 2007 - 18.30.

Venue: Czech Permanent Representation to the EU



Programme:

18:30 Meeting and Debate on political repression in Belarus with special guest Darya Korsak - representative of the Committee for Defence of the Repressed "Solidarnasc" (Minsk, Belarus)

19:00 Documentary film "Lesson of Belarusian"

20:00 Opening of the Exhibition - Spark of Bravery

For more info about the event, please go to: <http://www.democraticbelarus.eu/node/2700>

22/10/2007

ODB

Documentary on Forced Disappearances, Screening in Brussels



On October 24, the Office for a Democratic Belarus and the Hanse office in Brussels organized screening of the documentary "The Wild Hunt"-- a film by the Russian journalist Pavel Sheremet, which tells the story of forced disappearances in Belarus. The movie screening was followed by a discussion on the cases of politically motivated

kidnappings of the former Minister of Interior, Yury Zakharenko, former head of the Central Election Commission, Viktor Hanchar, businessman and close friend of Hanchar, Anatol Krasowsky and journalist Dmitry Zavadsky. Sudden death of the former Vice-Speaker of the Parliament, Henadz Karpenka was also mentioned during the debate. In addition to the film and the lively discussion-- with more questions than answers-- that took place after the movie presentation, guests of the evening were also able to see a photo exhibition kindly provided by the Civil Initiative We Remember (www.ciwr.org). The event was possible also thanks to efforts of the Dmitry Zavadsky Foundation



(www.zavadsky.org), which supplied the organizers with a copy of the film. All copy rights for the movie belong to the First Channel (Russia).

24/11/2007

Office for a Democratic Belarus

EU and Belarus

Lithuanian Politician Proposes to Form a Group on Belarus



declared his willingness to initiate a

The former Lithuanian Foreign Affairs Minister, deputy head of the parliamentary commission on relations with the European Union, Antanas Valionis, de-

group in the EU, which would deal with the Belarusian issue.

"We should think of more efficient European policy towards Belarus. We need to form a group of experienced politicians able to estimate the situation in Belarus and to propose a new and more efficient approach for the EU relations with Belarus," he said.

According to Mr. Valionis a "need for such group is evident".

He also said that it was too early to mention the names of members of the group but promised to give more details in a few weeks. He only said that the former Polish president, Mr. Kwasniewski, was suggested to chair the initiative.

29/10/2007

Source: BelaPAN

Politics and Society

Russia and Belarus to Jointly Oppose U.S. Missile Defence Shield in Europe

NATO's extension and the plans to station components of the U.S. missile defence shield in Europe prompt Russia and Belarus to cooperate more aggressively in the military and political fields, Russia's Defence Minister Anatoly Serdyukov announced Tuesday.

"NATO's extension, the plans to station missile defence system and aggravation of the situation in the Middle East confirm the need to closely coordinate our actions both in military-political and in political fields," Serdyukov announced when opening in Moscow the joint board of defence ministries of the two countries.

Having emphasized active work that defence authorities of Russia and Belarus carry out in this direction, Serdyukov

specified that this work is based on the programme of actions aimed at implementing the Treaty on Creating the Union State.

"This work is continued by considering the list of issues entered into the agenda of today's meeting of the joint board," the minister said, pointing out that constructive discussion of these issues would help creating the system of protecting the Union State as a single area of defence.

23/10/2007

Source: Kommersant

Belarusian Opposition Marking the Ancestors Day



On the Ancestors Day, representatives of the Belarusian opposition have come to Kurapaty, forest on the outskirts of Minsk where a vast number of victims of the Stalin's Great Purge are buried.

As the demonstrators marched through the northeastern part of Minsk, they displayed dozens white-red-white flags, Malady Front banners and signs

demanding the release of imprisoned opposition politicians Zmitser Dashkevich and Alyaksandr Kazulin, as well as sang Belarusian national songs and chanted "Long Live Belarus!"

According to various estimates, from 30,000 to as many as 200,000 victims of the Soviet political repressions lay in the forest.

28/10/2007

Source: Interfax

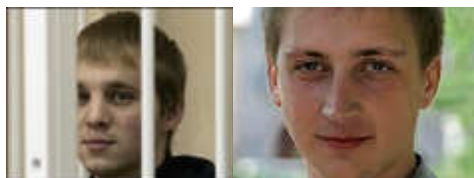
Belarusian Supreme Court Denies Registration to Human Rights Group

Belarus' Supreme Court upheld the denial of the registration of the Vyasna human rights group, which is a successor of the prominent human rights organization Vyasna closed by the authorities in October 2003. The Justice Ministry refused in August to register the group, claiming that its charter does not meet the requirements specified in a law on nongovernmental organizations. "It is absolutely clear that this decision is political. All of the flaws that led to the registration denial could be eliminated within a day," Vyasna founder Ales Byalyatski said.

29/10/2007

Source: Radio Free Europe

Belarusian Authorities Bring New Charges against Youth Activists



Zmitser Dashkevich, a leader of the Youth Front organization, will stand trial on November 6

on new charges. Dashkevich is already serving an 18-month term in a correctional facility in Shklou, Mahilyou Oblast, for running an unregistered organization. Under the new charges, authorities accuse Dashkevich of refusing to give testimony in a case against another Youth Front activist, Ivan Shyla. He could face a prison sentence of up to three years. Dashkevich

maintains that the Belarusian Criminal Code gives him the right not to testify against himself or those close to him.

Dashkevich's trial is to be held at the correctional facility where he is incarcerated. In a related case, the Prosecutor's Office in Mahilyou has charged Artur Finkevich, a Youth Front activist already serving a two-year term for spraying political graffiti, with violating the internal regulations of the correctional facility.

31/10/2007

Source: Radio Free Europe

Politics and Society

IFHR Will Establish Committee for Support of the Imprisoned Opposition Politician Klimaw



The International Federation of Human Rights (IFHR) will set up a committee for support of the imprisoned Belarusian opposition politician Andrey Klimaw, IFHR President Souhayr Belhassen said at a news conference held in

Minsk on November 1.

Ms. Belhassen described Mr. Klimaw's conviction for posting an Internet article as unprecedented. She expressed surprise that the Belarusian government would not amnesty him or other people whose sentences are widely believed in the West to be politically motivated.

Ms. Belhassen noted that Mr. Klimaw had developed a serious heart condition because of maltreatment while in prison. She said that the IFHR holds Belarusian officials responsible for the psychological and physical state of the prisoner.

According to Ms. Belhassen, Mr. Klimaw wrote from the prison that he was afraid of remaining alive because of mistreatment. She said that the politician's mother cannot visit him because she is disabled and could not cope with the strains of such a long trip. Ms. Belhassen noted that Mr.

Klimaw's family and she had vainly appealed to the government to transfer him to another correctional facility.

Ms. Belhassen said that she would refer the issue of political prisoners in Belarus to the UN Human Rights Committees and the UN Committee against Torture.

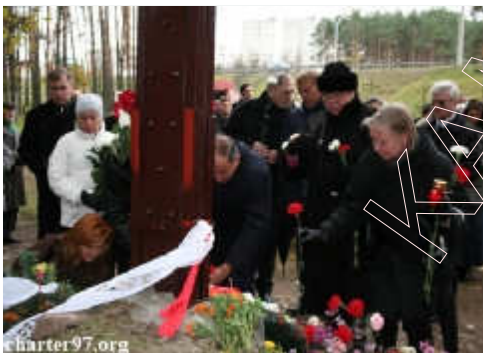
Mr. Klimaw, who turned 42 on September 17, was arrested on April 3, about three months after he had been released from an open-type correctional facility.

On August 1, he was sentenced to two years in a maximum security correctional facility for allegedly making calls through the media for overthrowing the government or changing the constitutional system. The charge was based on his article posted on the United Civic Party's Web site, which was titled "Revolution Forever [in English] or The Correct Way of Flaying a Gypsy Hog in the Year of Pig." "There is no way of coming to power under dictatorship but by violent opposition to the present regime," the article read.

01/11/2007

Source: BelaPAN

Foreign Diplomats Commemorate Stalinist Terror Victims at Kurapaty



Heads of the diplomatic missions of European Union countries, Israel and the United States on November 2 laid flowers at Kurapaty, a Stalin-era massacre site just outside Minsk.

The Slovak embassy, which has been the EU's local representative on behalf of Portugal since July 1, 2007, earlier said that on this day, when many Europeans traditionally honour their dead, the diplomats would commemorate the height of Stalin's terror against innocent Belarusians, Poles, Russians, Jews and people of other nationalities 70 years ago.

The gathering prayed, sang the Mahytny Bozha anthem and laid flowers at the Cross of Sufferings, memorials to Poles and Jews, the Clinton Bench and the memorial stone fixed at the highest point at Kurapaty.

The prayer services were conducted by Roman Catholic priest Yury Sanko and the priest of the Minsk-based Holy Spirit Orthodox church, Alyaksandr Shymbalyow.

Historian Ihar Kuznyatsow, an expert in the topic of Stalin repressions, addressed the gathering. He said that Kurapaty was on the government's list of protected sites, but memorials that had been put up there were not protected by the government.

He said that three investigations had found that Stalin's NKVD police had executed people at the site between 1937 and 1941. "Apart from Belarusian nationals, people from many European countries and the United States lie in the 510 graves," he said.

02/11/2007

Source: naviny.by

Politics and Society

Communist and Anti-Communist Forums Taking Place in Minsk

An international forum of communist and labour parties took place in Minsk on November 2. The leaders of the Russian and Belarusian communist parties Gennady Zyuganov and Tatsyana Golubeva addressed the forum's delegates. Meanwhile, representatives of pro-democracy parties and movements held another forum under the title "Future Without Com-

munist", which opened at the headquarters of the Belarusian Popular Front. The organizers of the anti-communist forum had approached the administration of the Palace of Culture at the Minsk Auto Works, seeking a venue for their event but their request was rejected.

The forum was attended by scientists, some victims of the communist re-

gime's repressions, politicians, public figures, religious figures and foreign guests. The list of invitees included Alexander Milinkevich, leader of the For Freedom Movement, Stanislau Shushkevich, former chairman of the Supreme Council of Belarus, Protestant priest Ernest Sabila and others.

03/11/2007

Source: ERB

Chinese Premier Arrives in Belarus for Official Visit



Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao arrived in Belarus on Sunday to start an official visit on the invitation of Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko.

Wen will hold talks with Lukashenko and meet with acting Prime Minister Vladimir Semashko during his stay in

the country.

The two sides will exchange views on bilateral relations, regional and international issues and other issues of common concern, according to a source with the Chinese Foreign Ministry.

A number of agreements on bilateral cooperation are expected to be signed during Wen's visit, the source said.

In a written statement delivered at the airport upon his arrival, Wen spoke positively of the growth momentum for bilateral cooperation, noting that the China-Belarus relationship has entered a new stage of all-round development and strategic cooperation.

"I hope my visit to Belarus will help to step up the bilateral relations and push the two-way cooperation to a higher level," Wen said.

Wen's visit also coincides with the 15th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two countries.

During the same tour, Wen has also visited Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan and attended the sixth Meeting of Prime Ministers of the Member States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in the Uzbek capital city of Tashkent.

04/11/2007

Source: Xinhua

Opposition Stages Social March



Belarus' opposition staged a Social March in Minsk on Sunday to protest against the government's economic and social policies, including the forthcoming abolition of benefits and privileges for certain categories of people.

The March participants gathered in front of the National Academy of Sciences on the Minsk's main street, the Independence Avenue, where a banner saying, "No to Violations of Working People's Rights!" was held.

At about 1 p.m. a crowd of several hundred people headed towards the Peoples' Friendship Park near Bangalore Square on the city outskirts where the Minsk government had allowed a rally.

While the demonstrators were walking along Surhanava Street, a group of up to 30 young men dressed in black

caused a fight on the roadway. They ran away as police approached.

04/11/2007

Source: BelaPAN



Economics

Khristenko Opposes 2nd Gas Link via Belarus



Russia's Energy Minister Viktor Khristenko said on Thursday he believed it made no economic sense to build a second branch of a pipeline to Germany via Poland and Belarus, known as Yamal-Europe-2.

Khristenko's statement contradicted an earlier comment by the Russia's Prime Minister Viktor Zubkov, who said last month he supported the idea of building the second link.

"I think there is no justification for Yamal-Europe-2," Khristenko told reporters.

Belarusian officials have said the second Yamal-Europe link could cost \$2-3 billion, much lower than the 5 billion euro (\$7.21 billion), slated for the underwater section of the Nord Stream.

Gazprom has said it would not revive the idea of the second link until gas demand in Belarus and Poland increases.

It has also said that the Nord Stream would allow it to reduce dependence on

transit states and improve Europe's energy security, which suffered badly from gas supply cuts following Gazprom's pricing disputes with Ukraine and Belarus.

The first Yamal-Europe link was commissioned early this decade and is transshipping around 30 billion cubic metres of gas per year. The second stretch could in theory double its capacity.

01/11/2007

Source: Reuters

Korea and Belarus Agree to Widen Economic Cooperation



Korea and Belarus, celebrating the 15th anniversary of their establishment of diplomatic ties, agreed to expand cooperation in trade, investment, information technology and science, the office of President Roh Moo-hyun said Monday.

Roh met with visiting Belarusian Prime Minister Sergey Sidorsky at the presidential office Cheong Wa Dae and reached the agreement after discussing ways to enhance practical cooperation between the two sides, Roh's deputy spokesperson Kim Jeong-seop said.

"The two leaders agreed to accelerate Korean enterprises' inroads into Belarus and shared the view that Korea's planned opening of its embassy in Belarus this month will provide important momentum for deepening bilateral relations," the spokesman said.

Sidorsky arrived in Korea on Sunday for a three-day official visit. He was to hold separate talks with Korean Prime Minister Han Duck Soo late Monday afternoon for discussions on detailed measures to boost bilateral cooperation.

According to government officials, trade between Korea and Belarus is quickly growing, with the volume reaching \$90.6 million in the first seven months of the year.

05/11/2007

Source: Korea Daily

Belarus and China Sign \$530m Bilateral Documents

During the visit of China's Prime Minister Wen Jiabao to Belarus on November 5 the two countries signed bilateral documents to the tune of \$530 million. The ceremony of signing was held after the meeting between China's Prime Minister Wen Jiabao and Belarus' President Alexander Lukashenko.

Among the documents signed are intergovernmental framework agreements on a \$500m loan to Belarus for purchase of three cement producing lines and a \$27 million preferential loan, an intergovernmental agreement on \$2.7 million gratuitous assistance to Belarus, letters of exchange on China's granting \$4 million for reconstruction of Gomel oblast cardiology dispensary.

The Ministries of Culture of Belarus and China signed a protocol of cooperation in 2007-2011, Beltelecom and Chinese company Huawei signed a contract for delivery of data transmission equipment and components.

05/11/2007

Source: BelTA

Culture

Animal Dances

Innovative theatre "InZhest" from Minsk challenges the Belarusian public with its performances



People in Minsk are not used to surprises. "Looking normal" is the basic rule of life in this city of clean streets and vigilant police patrols. Don't stick out, behave yourself, dress like everybody else – the echo of this Soviet-era mantra is still very powerful. However, even in Minsk there's place for the unexpected. The outdoor performances of "InZhest" theatre are something even a spoiled Westerner would remember for a very long time, let alone a Minsk resident.

...The concert hall "Minsk" is a massive concrete building, which is settled on the bank of river Svislach like a giant white turtle. It's a warm summer evening of 2006. The courtyard of the concert hall, usually deserted, is full of spectators. The people are speechless. They are staring at the odd figures in tuxedos and bow ties. They resemble some weird clowns, holding on to their black umbrellas as if just about to be blown away by the wind. The clowns are followed by the new set of characters, which enter the open-

air stage walking on stilts. It takes some time for the public to realize, that the figures on stilts exist in a different dimension. They are wondering around, intensively peering into the public with their blind eyes, trying to lighten up the imaginary darkness with torches. Though being seen by everyone, they don't see anybody.

The background music changes its tone, and another character emerges. Using all of its limbs, it is walking on four stilts. The creature is reminiscent of both Salvador Dali paintings and Venice carnival characters. Suddenly, its stilts erupt with sparks. They grow stronger and stronger, until the whole scene is drowned in the fire...

A performance by "InZhest" can enrapture or startle you, but it definitely will not leave you indifferent. Founded in 1980 by a student group of the Belarusian University of Culture, the theatre was first called "Zhest" ('gesture'). Its actors began with exploring different forms of pantomime, and later turned to commedia dell'arte and Japanese butoh dance. Since 1995 they fused all these approaches into the original system of training, which they called "Dances of Animals".

All performances of "InZhest" are very different, ranging from solo actions to full-scale shows, such as "Reversio", a play, which uses a stadium as a stage and involves the deployment of fire trucks and lifting cranes. Indeed, the theatre is often changing its stages, but not always for artistic reasons. In Belarus, "InZhest" is often a small grain of sand in the eye of the all-seeing state control. One of the very first performances of the thea-

tre, "Adventures of the Good Soldier Schweik" (1983), was banned by the authorities of the Institute of Culture for allegedly containing a great number of "political mistakes". In 2006 the new performance "DK Dance" was thrown out of the state-owned theatre in Minsk with a scandal. A school teacher brought a group of school kids to the theatre and was outraged to see "a naked body on stage". She filed a written complaint to the Ministry of Culture, and the reaction was immediate: the theatre has to go.

However, "DK Dance", mistaken by the teacher for pornography, is, in fact, a play about freedom. It tells a story of a crawling man, who is striving to take possession of stilts, which belong to some superior creatures. But, having received the desired ability to walk, he realizes that the stilts only limit his movements, and decides to shed them. Finally, a new person is born, dancing like mad, fully naked. And – this episode is played by Vyachaslau Inazemtsau, director and spiritual inspirer of the theatre.

Despite some problems at home, the theatre is often given the best stage abroad. On November 1, 2007 "DK Dance"



Culture

Animal Dances



Dance” will be performed in Moscow, on the stage of the renowned Meyerhold Center.

“It is not possible to describe with words what Inazemtsau creates. His theatrical language is not connected to our everyday language, and his images do not correspond to our intellectual clichés. His element is sub-consciousness”, writes Andrey Kureychyk, one of the most famous contemporary Belarusian playwrights, in his interview to “Belorusskaya Gazeta”.

“InZhest” sticks to the principles of the pure, archaic theatre, where the action is being born within an actor. For Vyachaslau Inazemtsau, many elements, which exist in a dramatic play – such as the script, scenery, and music – are extraneous features, acquired with time. “Let’s take away everything unnecessary – and we will see a “naked” actor on the “naked” stage. Come on now, show what you can do without extra means at your disposal!” says the theatre’s director. Official recognition is definitely not his top priority.

On evenings, Vyachaslau In-

azemtsau teaches young people in a theatre studio, situated in a modest panel building on the outskirts of Minsk. The participation fee is not high even according to Belarusian standards. Inazemtsau obviously doesn’t make a fortune with his lessons, but finds new talents



for his theatre.

Does “InZhest” consider the possibility of receiving state support? Its director always knew that it would be impossible. The state lacks money for culture, but at the same time it demands from the theatre to become its structural entity, follow the plans, and produce at least one play every year. “But what if I have no new ideas for 5 years in a row?” asks Inazemtsau. “InZhest” doesn’t like to be constrained with some obligations or instructions. Preparing the play “Reversio” took 3 years. Another performance, “Elka Y” was ready in just a week.

The future of the theatre is not clear. “The main thing is to play”, believes Vyachaslau Inazemtsau. “You can keep on saying what a genius you are, but if you have no opportunity to perform on the stage, show yourself to the public, then all this is just empty words.

The theatre exists only in contact with the audience. This is our plan for the future”.

By Ales Kudrytski

For the Office for a Democratic Belarus

Official WebSites of “InZhest”:

<http://belorus.by/inzhest/main-news-en.htm>

<http://inzhest.narod.ru>

“InZhest” performances (video):

<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=7413914691156472721>

<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=9221732906849102044>

Photos by belorus.by



We on the WEB

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