

Belarus Headlines

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Belarus Before and After Chernobyl Explosion. Radio-ecological, Demographic and Medical Aspects

*Excerpts from article by
Prof. Yury Bandazheusky*

Radio-Ecological Situation in Belarus before the Chernobyl Explosion

Today, after more than 20 years after explosion at the Chernobyl power plant, people continue to experience the consequences of this accident. Many questions that came with this tragedy remain unanswered. Above all is the question of what will happen to the people who face radioactivity every day living their lives in polluted areas.

The aim of this article is to demonstrate some little-known, and possibly kept back on purpose, facts and proofs of medical affects on big groups of people who encounter radioactive agents. The information below sheds some light on health problems experienced by people living on the European territory of the former USSR.

It is important to determine the first time when population of these territories was affected by radioactivity. When defining that, one has to keep in mind that there is so-called natural radioactivity which has existed long before the first human being appeared on Earth. But there is also another kind of

radioactivity caused by nuclear arms tests and functioning of nuclear power plants.

Nuclear weapon tests started in 1945 and were very intensive in the period of 1945-1958 and in 1961-1962. Beginning with 1963 some countries began underground testing of nuclear weapons.

Most widespread and therefore dangerous for people's health radioactive elements are caesium-137, zirconium-95, carbon-14, ruthenium-106, strontium-90, cerium-144, tritium, and iodine-131. These elements come from nuclear weapons tests and work of nuclear power plants.

If looking at the tissue doses formation and radio-biological consequences of global fallouts, the leading element is isotope Cs-137, which mainly penetrates into the environment together with radioactive waste or nuclear blasts' products. Main sources of the nuclear waste containing Cs-137 are nuclear reactors and factories refining exposed to rays fuel. The most intense pollution of the environment with Cs-137 occurs through explosions on nuclear power plants, one of which happened in Chernobyl in 1986.

The level of Cs-137 concen-



tration in human body depends on the level of pollution and thereof on the quality of food consumed by the population, the nutrition structure, age and sex distinctive features [18].

In the former USSR Cs-137 was first registered in 1963. Researchers of the Institute for Biophysics of the USSR Healthcare Ministry made more than 1000 tests of cow milk in different districts of Palesie (territory of modern southern Belarus and part of Ukraine) [18]. Based on this research they developed a so-called "milk-caesium" map showing that the strongest concentration of Cs-137 at that time was in Gomel region of Belarus. To compare, on the territory of Ukraine, numbers reflecting radio-caesium in cow milk were much lower. As a result, annual dosage received by the population of Belarus in those years was 2,5 higher than of the Ukrainians. Analyzing yearly data about the Cs-137 fallouts and its presence in food (cow milk) and in human bodies, it can be concluded that **1963 was the year of the maximal fallouts**

of the given element on the territory of Belarus before the Chernobyl explosion.

Radio-ecologic Situation in Belarus after Chernobyl Explosion in 1986

According to conclusions of the USSR principal specialists in nuclear engineering [24], the explosion at Chernobyl power plant occurred at the end of an active working zone of the reactor containing the maximum quantity of radioactive products. These elements polluted large parts of territories of Belarus, Ukraine, Russia and reached some other countries.

The most badly affected areas of Belarus were Gomel and Mahileu regions. Almost every district of these two voblasts (*region, Belarusian—ODB*) was heavily polluted by radioactive elements. It is important to say that the compulsory evacuation to the so-called “clean” from Cs-137 territories was ineffective because the soil there was polluted with plutonium 238, 239, 240 (more than 3,7 kBq/m²).

Keeping in mind that contamination of Gomel and Brest regions was discovered long before the Chernobyl explosion [18], it is possible that similar situation could have been observed in Grodno and Minsk regions given the high level of Cs-137 contamination registered there in 1990s. This fact leads to conclusions that are fully contradictory to forecasts given by some researchers who calculated collective doses of exposure to radiation for the population based only on results of the 1986 accident. Information about previous years’ pollution was kept secret.

Once thrown into the atmosphere, radioactive elements continue to penetrate into organisms of people and animals through natural ways. Iodine-131 gets into human body with food and air, unlike caesium-137 and strontium-90, which can affect human body predominately through contaminated nutrition. ***Products of animal and plant origin from the polluted areas are the main sources of radionuclides in human bodies.***

During the first few years after Chernobyl no measurement of radioactive caesium doses within large groups of population was conducted. All the estimates were based on territory pol-

lution rates and collective doses of radiation. Possibility to conduct mass screenings arose only in 1992 when a special device invented at the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences was delivered to Gomel voblast thanks to the active support of the Belarusian Engineering Academy.

Demographic Indexes and Population Health Conditions before and after 1986

Demographic situation in Belarus before radioactive caesium pollution of 1960s was a favourable one. Even during the hard after-war period (after 1945) the birth rate was higher than the death rate (the natural growth of the population in Belarus reached 13,7% in 1940 and 11,2% in 1945). In 1960 Belarus experienced the maximum natural growth of population in the after-war period – 17,8%. However, beginning with 1965, constant decline in birth rate and an increase in deaths can be seen, which resulted in only 5,9% of natural growth in 1985.

After the explosion at the nuclear power plant on 26 April, 1986 the situation became even worse and in 1993 the death rate exceeded the birth rate. Progressive decline in birth rate with 9,3% and the growth in death rates by 14,2% led to the situation when the natural growth reached -4,9% [16], which could no longer be called a growth but a decline (- 5,9% in 2002, - 5,3% in 2005). The death rate grew up to 32,7% (from 10,7 to 14,2 per 1000 people) in the period of 1990-1999.

Belarus also witnessed permanent deterioration of people’s health condition. In the period from 1990 to 1999, the primary illness rate grew by 43% [32] and was connected mostly to blood circulation disorders and neoplasm (*cancerous tumours-ODB*)[2]. The blood circulation disorders enjoyed steady growth in the last three decades. Since 1980 to 1994 it grew 5,5 times while general sickness rate increased 4,2 times [17]. The general sickness rate is intensively increasing in the polluted areas and has the highest index in Gomel voblast since 1988.

It is the blood circulation disorders that bear major responsibility for people’s deaths in Belarus. In 1997 it took 50,4% [33] of lives, in 1998 – 51,9% [34], 1999 – 52,9% [35]. In the period from 1989 until 1998 the number of death cases connected to blood circulation disorders

grew by 24%. [34]

During the last three decades there has been permanent increase in cancer with Gomel voblast as a leading region [1]. Thyroid cancer has become the world community’s concern as it dramatically increased within several years after the Chernobyl catastrophe. Thyroid cancer cases reached 9,2 per 100.000 people in Belarus in 1997 that constitutes 513% if compared to 1986 [13].

The general rate of thyroid cancer cases diagnosed in Belarus in 1998 2-2,5 times exceed that of 1990. Among teenagers under 19 years old it grew 25 times in 1990-1998. It also grew more than 4 times among adults. Total number of thyroid cancer cases diagnosed between 1986 and 1999 was 6030, with 1083 of them children and teenagers suffering from the disease [21].

Gomel region has the largest number of thyroid cancer cases in the country--around 54% of the total. Despite the leading role of I-131 responsible for this disease, scientists discovered the link between thyroid cancer and Cs-137 pollution [25].

Works cited by the author when preparing this article can be found on our web-site:

<http://www.democraticbelarus.eu/node/2993>

To be continued

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Translation and photo by

the Office for a Democratic Belarus

05/12/2007

Politics and Society

UN Rights Panel Condemns Belarus on Human Rights

A United Nations panel condemned Belarus on Wednesday for human rights abuses, including jailing opposition politicians, silencing independent media and rigging elections.

The resolution, which overcame an attempt by Russia to block it in the U.N. General Assembly's human rights council, passed by a vote of 68-32, with 76 abstentions.

The non-binding resolution will go to the 192-member General Assembly, which generally votes the same way as the council.



"The government seems determined to continue repressing its people, and to prevent them from realizing the freedoms and rights that citizens of other countries take for granted," U.S. representative Grover Joseph Rees said in a statement.

The resolution highlighted the continuous use of judicial means to "silence political opposition and human rights defenders through the use of arbitrary detention, lack of due process and closed political trials."

21/11/2007

Source: Reuters

Belarus to Ban More than 100,000 People from Travelling Abroad



More than 100,000 people — roughly one of every 100 citizens — will be banned from leaving Belarus after Jan. 1, the Interior Minister told journalists.

The list of those unable to travel abroad will include people who are serving suspended sentences, have access to state secrets, owe alimony or are otherwise in debt, Interior Minister Uladzimir Navumau said.

"It is not possible to say the list will

be short," he said. "More than 100,000 people will be on it.

Opposition leader Aliaxandr Milinkevich expressed fears that the "black list" could be used to prevent opposition activists from maintaining contacts with Western politicians.

"I have had problems on the border more than once and would not be surprised if Aliaxandr Lukashenka's government will try to put opposition members on the list," Milinkevich said.

24/11/2007

Source: PR-inside.com

Belarusian Delegation Visiting Turkish Parliament

The Belarusian parliamentary delegation headed by Anatol Malafeeu, chairman of the Standing Committee for Regional Policy and Local Self-Government of the Belarusian Parliament, met Thursday Yasar Yakis, Chairman of the EU Adjustment Commission of the Turkish Parliament.

Yakis told the delegation that Turkey attaches great importance to relations with Belarus. Malafeeu said relations between the two countries should be improved. "Trade volume between the two countries has tripled over the past three years but this is not satisfactory. 150 million USD of annual trade volume should be increased," he said.

23/11/2007

Source: Turkish press.com

Belarusian Presidential Administration Attracts Banned Rock Musicians



Aleh Pralyaskouski, an aide to President Alyaksandr Lukashenka, on November 21 promised the leaders of four Belarusian rock bands informally banned from public performances that the ban might be removed. A number of Belarusian musicians were

banned from performing publicly in Belarus after they played at concerts during an opposition demonstration in 2004. Pralyaskouski reportedly promised the leaders of

Palats, Krama, N.R.M., and Neuro Dubel that there would be no problems with concerts in Belarus and performance on state-run television if the musicians "do not get into politics." "That was an attempt by the authorities to use us, because the current political situation suggests that it is us who they need," Pit Paulau of the N.R.M. band said on November 23. "Nobody offered us 30 pieces of silver," he added, commenting on the avalanche of criticism from fans that followed the meeting with Pralyaskouski.

26/11/2007

Source: Radio Free Europe

Politics and Society

Alexander Lukashenko: Belarus to Modernize its Weapons



Belarus' own military industry will be the main source of modernization of the country's armaments though some of its weapons will be purchased abroad, President Alexander Lukashenko said on Tuesday.

"The defence capability of the country is an extremely important element for us and for the entire society. To keep up with the times, one should buy new weapons and systems or modernize one's available armaments. We have opted for a third path: we will buy what we need, but the modernization of armaments must be the main goal," Lukashenko said during a visit to Belarus' defence industry agency.

"This is on the whole cheaper for us, and today we have set ourselves the goal of modernizing complex systems," he said. This will give "an impetus to our industry and make military engineers work more intensively."

"We have achieved certain success in modernization as regards the air force, the land forces, surface-to-air missile systems," Lukashenko said.

"If we learn to do this here, we will be able to provide services [to other countries] where such weapons are used," he said.

27/11/2007

Source: Interfax

Belarus KGB Keep Persecuting Youth Oppositionists



Kaciaryna Salauyova, a second year student of historical and philosophical faculty of Polatsk State University,

a Young Front activist, has become a victim of Belarus State Security Committee (KGB) persecution, online paper Charter'97 reports. The girl was detained on November, 26, when graffiti "Nobody can stop us!", "Long Live Belarus!" and others appeared in Polatsk.

Kaciaryna was questioned for several hours by the investigators on the

criminal case brought up for disrespect to state symbols and participation in the unregistered organisation Young Front. The dean's office received a telephone call from the KGB with the request to expel Salauyova, however, they had no formal order for expulsion as yet.

Policemen and KGB agents searched a room in the hostel, where Salauyova lives. They took away some leaflets and all data storage devices. The investigators didn't give her mobile phone back for three days and demanded names of action participants.

According to the activist, Ales Krut-

kin, another youth oppositionist, was detained at the same place and was accused of "damaging the state property," and the trial is to take place in a few weeks.

Recently prosecutor's office in Gomel area has closed cases for participation in an unregistered organisation against some activists of the Young Front, online paper adds.

30/11/2007

Source:

Eurasia Secret services Daily Monitor

Secretary Rice Meets With Belarus Human Rights Defenders



US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice met today with a delegation of Belarusian human rights and democracy defenders. She reiterated the support of the United States for the democratic aspirations of the Belarusian people and stressed that the United States will continue to speak out for the cause of freedom in Belarus.

The delegation consisted of individuals who are leading the fight to overcome the Lukashenka regime's denial of basic rights and pervasive repression, including the arbitrary use of state power to suppress independent media and prevention of free speech and assembly. The group discussed ways in which they can use their strength and unity to achieve a democratic Belarus.

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The delegation included Aleksandr Milinkevich, the 2006 opposition presidential candidate of the Unified Democratic Forces and recipient of the 2006 Sakharov Prize for Human Rights; Sergey Kalyakin, Anatoliy Lebedko, and Anatoliy Levkovich, political party leaders and Co-Chairs of the Unified Democratic Forces; Pavel Severinets, Chairperson of Belarusian Christian Democracy, and former political prisoner; Enira Bronitskaya, a human rights advocate and former political prisoner; and Dmitry Fedaruk, Acting Chairperson of pro-democracy NGO, "Youth Front".

04/12/2007

Source: US Department of State

Belarusian President To Consider Pardoning Jailed Kazulin, if Asked

President Alyaksandr Lukashenka said in an interview with the Spanish daily "El Pais" that he would consider pardoning former presidential candidate Alyaksandr Kazulin if the jailed politician asks him to do so. Kazulin, who ran in the March 2006 elections, was arrested during demonstrations that followed the polls and sentenced to 5 1/2 years in prison for organizing events that

disturbed the public order. Interior Minister Uladzimir Navumau claimed that protesters set off a bomb at the demonstration, but numerous reporters present at the scene could not confirm that claim. Lukashenka noted that Kazulin's prison term is a short one. "We have both life imprisonment and the death penalty," he said. "If he had not been a presidential candidate, he would have received 10 or 12 years,

not 5 1/2, for a blast on our streets. But as an ex-candidate, he aroused some sympathy," Lukashenka added. Dzmitry Harachka, a lawyer for Kazulin, told Belapan that Kazulin has not considered asking Lukashenka to pardon him, as he does not consider himself guilty.

04/12/2007

Source: RFE

Comments by Cristina Gallach, Spokesperson of Javier Solana, EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, on the Libel Suit against Novi Chas Newspaper

"We have been following this issue very closely, and with increasing concern.

The importance of the freedom of the media is one of the key issues the European Union has repeatedly raised with the Belarusian authorities.

The libel case against Novi Chas and

journalist Alexandr Tamkovich raises serious questions in this regard. A court has been asked to order them to withdraw an article published on Belarusian politician Charhinets and pay the latter damages amounting to USD 280 thousand, as well as decree the freezing of the assets of both the publisher of Novi Chas' and the journalist. These demands are clearly excessive. They point at a politically motivated

case, with the aim of closing down Novi Chas.

We will follow closely the court proceedings tomorrow, and hope that they will be conducted with Belarus' international commitments on the freedom of expression and the media in mind."

05/12/2007

Source: consilium.europa.eu

Economics

Atomstroyexport in Talks to Build Nuclear Plant in Belarus

Atomstroyexport, Russia's nuclear power equipment and service export monopoly, has begun talks on building a nuclear power plant in Belarus, the company's first vice president said.

Speaking at an international nuclear conference, Alexander Glukhov said Russian and Belarusian experts are discussing a water-cooled reactor project, and that Atomstroyexport could also build new nuclear plants in other Eastern and Central European countries.

Economics

Atomstroyexport in Talks to Build Nuclear Plant in Belarus...

Glukhov gave a presentation on construction opportunities in a number of countries, including Vietnam, Indonesia and Morocco. "But Central and Eastern European countries, particularly the Czech Republic, Bulgaria and Slovakia, are the most interesting markets," he said, also mentioning Ukraine and Belarus.

The Belarusian side earlier said the location could be selected in mid-2008 and that a tender would be announced the same year.

The official said his company is planning to double its order portfolio to \$25 billion by 2030, primarily through new Asian and European projects.

"Atomstroyexport currently accounts for 20% of the global nuclear construction market, and we hope to increase the share by building new power units in China, India and Eastern and Central Europe," he said.

26/11/2007

Source: RIA Novosti

Lithuania Decides on Locality of Entombment for Radioactive Waste

Lithuania has made the decision on the locality of the construction of an entombment for low-level and medium-level radioactive waste. "The government has decided that it will be built near the site of the Ignalina nuclear power station," Dainius Janenas, the director of the state-run Radioactive Waste Management Agency (RATA), told Itar-Tass.

The entombment will be built near a deserted settlement. "Safety was the main reason for choosing the site," Janenas said. "It is preferable from the geological viewpoint, because of its closeness to the source of waste - the nuclear power plant, as well as because of the social aspect, its being uninhabited," he said. The agency's director said the opinion of

Belarus had been taken into consideration. The facility is four kilometres removed from the Belarusian border. The other proposed site for the entombment (Galilauk) is two kilometres away from the Belarusian border.

Radioactive waste is presently deposited in the temporary storage on the territory of the Ignalina nuclear power station. The construction of the entombment on an area of 40 hectares will begin in 2013, and it will be put to use in 2016. When the Ignalina nuclear power station is shut down in late 2009, low-level and medium-level radioactive waste accumulated will amount to 100,000 cubic metres.

26/11/2007

Source: Itar-tass

Biogas Comes to Belarus



German engineering company Biogas Nord said on Friday it will open two biogas plants in Belarus over the next few weeks, providing the ex-Soviet state with a popular source of environmentally friendly energy.

"The Belarusian government approached us for these plants and we have had a really good cooperation with them," Michael Hauck, head of marketing at Biogas Nord, which specializes

in biogas plants, told Reuters.

The plants -- the first of their kind in the country -- have been ordered by state farms, and will be fed with chicken, pig and cow manure, which ferments to form biogas, Hauck said.

Another name for methane, biogas as a source of electricity cuts man's contribution to global warming by burning the potent greenhouse gas, otherwise released into the atmosphere.

One plant, near the capital Minsk, will have a 340 kilowatt capacity (2.68 million kw/hour annually), with plans to increase this next year. The second, near Brest, will have a capacity of 340 kw, to be extended to 520 kw sometime next year, he added.

Hauck said orders for more plants in Belarus were being negotiated.

While Biogas Nord would not comment on the price, such plants usually cost over 1 million euros (\$1.48 million) each.

Like liquid biofuels -- used to power cars -- biogas involves generating energy from organic matter. It has the same structure as natural gas, is transported the same way and is becoming increasingly popular in Europe and Asia.

Belarus has long expressed interest in diversifying its energy supplies away from Russia, which provides Belarus with almost all its gas.

30/11/2007

Source: Reuters

Economics

Three Companies from Turkey, USA and South Africa Become Main Investors of High-Tech Park Development



Three companies— from Turkey, the USA and South Africa, have been chosen as the main investors to develop the Belarusian High-Tech Park (HTP), Valery Tsepkalo, the director of the HTP Administration, told reporters on November 30.

According to him, on December 3, one of the companies will be determined as the main investor, the other ones will become co-investors. Valery Tsepkalo noted that eight companies-residents of the High-Tech Park expressed their wish to fund the preparatory works to develop the Park. The housing and scientific-production zones of HTP will be designed by the Minskgrazhdanproekt.

Belstroicentre Company will control the construction works and monitor the implementation of the project.

The construction of the HTP facilities is expected to be started in the spring next year, the director of Belarus High-Tech Park noted.

30/11/2007
Source: BelTA

EU and Belarus

Signatures for Belarus' Accession to Council of Europe Handed to Slovak Charge d'Affaires

The organizers of an opposition campaign for Belarus' accession to the Council of Europe on Thursday met with Slovakia's charge d'affaires, Lubomir Rehak, to hand him 100 signatures in support of their aim.

The signatures were reportedly gathered during an opposition demonstration

European March that was held in Minsk on October 14.

Taking part in the meeting were Ihar Rynkevich, an associate of imprisoned former presidential candidate Alyaksandr Kazulin; entrepreneur Ihar Lednik and human rights defender Katsyaryna Sadowskaya.

The meeting was focused on a proposal for cooperation between members of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and members of Belarusian civil society on the implementation of the European Union's 12-step document.

22/11/2007
Source: BelaPAN

Belarusian President Accuses Europe of 'Unacceptable Terms'

Alyaksandr Lukashenka on November 26 said in an interview with the Spanish daily "El Pais" that the European Union does not want normalization of relations with Belarus. Lukashenka said that "Europe has gone too far and does not know today how to get out of this, saving its face." "If the European Union has had enough determination to do that, we will be sitting at one table and holding a dialogue to be closer. We want to do so, but

the EU does not want and puts forward unacceptable terms," he said. The Kyiv-based European Commission delegation to Belarus and Ukraine issued a statement last week on the occasion of the first anniversary of the European Commission report titled "What the European Union Could Bring to Belarus." "The EU's offer to Belarus remains valid," the delegation said, adding that the

conditions for the improvement of relations between Belarus and the EU include "the release of all political prisoners, respect for freedom of speech and of association, the holding of free and fair elections, the investigation of the cases of missing persons, and respect for the rights of minorities."

27/11/2007
Source: ERB

PACE President Calls On Belarus to Commute Three Death Sentences



Rene van der Linden, the president of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), has called on the Belarusian authorities to commute three

death sentences to milder sentences. A Belarusian court in 2006 sentenced Syarhey Marozau, Ihar Danchanka, and Valery Harbaty to death for running an organized crime group. Van der Linden also called on President Lukashenka to immediately place a moratorium on the death sentence. "The intention to introduce a moratorium on the death sen-

tence and its future abolition are preconditions for joining PACE," van der Linden added. The Belarusian authorities recently executed Alyaksandr Syarheychyk, a former police officer sentenced to death for serial killings.

29/11/2007
Source: Radio Free Europe

Culture

T & V . Two Sides of the Belarusian Design



Vladimir Tsesler

If you happen to dig through the Louvre collection of modern prints, you will come across some sheets signed with letters “T & V”. They stand for “Tsesler & Voichenko”, which has already become the brand name of the Belarusian design. Sergej Voichenko and Vladimir Tsesler created their first poster in 1979, and have been inseparable since then. In 2004 Sergej Voichenko passed away, but it is still impossible to think about them separately.

Vladimir Tsesler was born in 1951 in the ancient Belarusian town of Slutsk. His future colleague Sergey Voichenko was born in 1955 in Mariupol, Ukraine. His family moved to Minsk when he was 4 years old. Both studied at the Belarusian Academy of Arts, at the Department of Design, where their artistic liaison began. The first joint work of Voichenko and Tsesler was a poster for the music band “Pesnyary” in 1979.

Provocative allegory and grotesque irony is the trademark of T & V. Their “social posters” became instant classics. In the late 1980’s they addressed such burning issues as Soviet repressions by drawing the knife shaped as Stalin’s profile (1987) and depicting Karl Marx shaving off his beard as a sign of the coming change (1987). A beggar’s hat full of medals is another sad symbol, – sad irony on the fate of the veterans, neglected and often fooled by the regime they defended („Victory Day“) In 1999, with the authoritarian regime in Belarus getting more and more brutal,

they created a poster titled “Good morning Belarus!” – the rising sun formed with the bars, so common on Belarusian windows. A less political, but still socially charged poster is titled „Sarcoma lights“, which is an anti-ad powerful enough to put anyone off smoking for good.

As designers, Tsesler and Voichenko earned their living with such things as advertising new Peugeot cars (double sunset over sea) or creating posters for musical companies and events. No matter if it was a posters for the Belarusian Military orchestra or for a jazz festival, they turned them into real pieces of art.

Tsesler and Voichenko are authors of many logos and trademarks, which you simply can’t help coming across in Belarus. They created a logo for such critical and freethinking newspapers as BDG m2 and “Imya”, as well as for the oppositional United Civic Party, but also for the First National TV Channel, the notorious propaganda mouthpiece of the current political regime. How do they explain this paradox? In their manifesto Tsesler and Voichenko explain that they don’t take sides and represent no one but themselves. Still, if you analyze their works carefully, you would see that the critical approach prevails in their works.

The creative couple is obviously fond of “design hooliganism”. For example, they create a mocking logo “Mentsk”, which combines the name of the Belarusian capital with the word “ment” (‘cop’), hinting at the oversized presence of uniformed people on the streets. Or they draw a series of pseudo-“lubok” pictures, grotesque remakes of the old-time Russian coloured woodcuts. More than a century ago “luboks”, combining pictures and short naive stories or verses, were sold to common Russians as a form of mass entertainment. Voichenko and Tsesler use this style to address modern phenomena. Mona Lisa turns into the red-cheeked Manya Lisa, “the Italian beauty who knew L.D. Vinchi in person”



Sergej Voichenko

Riot policeman Kolka fights a Japanese ninja warrior, wolves and piglets dance in a manner of the famous Henri Matisse’s “Dance”, Lenin “who liked children and have built a cradle for the revolution but already died”, pets a cat. The artists accompany their luboks with texts, which mock both the old-time Russian style as well as the present-day reality.

Tsesler and Voichenko enjoy creating three-dimensional objects (no computer graphics, everything is hand made!). Here you find another “Manya Lisa” in the shape of “matryoshka”, a typically soviet 3-liter glass can filled with “Coca-Cola”, a hand grenade “lemonade” and, yes, a toothy toothbrush

The artists experiment in painting. Their pictures remind of photo collages with the beautifully naked bodies spread in front of industrial landscapes, ornamented by miniscule lettering and objects reminding of Slavic medieval times.

“Project of the Century. 12 from the 20th” (2000) has become the final project of Tsesler and Voichenko. They created twelve objects in form of an egg representing 12 artists of the 20th century. They called it a form of “mail-art”, a message to the next century. The centerpiece is the gold-coated egg, representing Salvador Dali. When you look into the reflection, you see that

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T & V . Two Sides of the Belarusian Design

the solid reality melts before your eyes, as it does on Dali's paintings.

“This project is the result of creative comprehension and evaluation of the events that took place in the world of art of the past century”, write Tsesler and Voichenko. “The twelve sculptural portraits — images depict the greatest artists of the 20th century who expressed and to some extents shaped consciousness, taste and destiny of millions of their contemporaries. The modification of the modulus in each portrait puts an accent on the key idea of the given person. The creating of most of the objects required search for new technological inventions. Besides semantic adequacy, the use of high tech stands for an additional sign of the time, mark of the century, address of the senders.”

Who are Tsesler and Voichenko — artists or designers? Probably both. One is not perceivable without another, like two sides of the same coin.

More works by Voichenko and Tsesler can be found at <http://www.tsesler.com/>

By Ales Kudrytski
for the ODB

We on the WEB

www.democraticbelarus.eu



“Mona Lisa” in the shape of “matryoshka”



Typically soviet 3-liter glass can filled with “Coca-Cola”



Ulyanov-Lenin pets a cat



A toothy toothbrush



The gold-coated egg, representing Dali



About Roads Safety...



One of the paintings by T&V



About Mills...



Dances with wolves



Lemon-shaped shell called “limonka”