

# Belarus Headlines

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Office for a Democratic  
Belarus

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We on the Web

[www.democraticbelarus.eu](http://www.democraticbelarus.eu)

## Campaign in Support of the European Parliament's Initiative on Visa Costs Reduction



The campaign initiated in the European Parliament by



Genowefa Grabowska (PL), Justas Vincas Paleckis (LT) and Hannes Swoboda (AU) under the slogan "Say YES to Cheaper Visas for Belarusians" is gaining popularity both within the European Parliament and in Belarus. More than 80 signatures have been already collected in support of the written declaration introduced by the three members of the Parliament. If more than 391 members of the organization favour the declaration, the text will be sent to the EU Council and the Commission.

The Office for a Democratic Belarus actively supports this initiative through collecting letters from Belarusian non-governmental groups, political parties and civil initiatives. ODB members visited Stras-

bourg during the Parliament's session on February 18-21 in order to inform as many MEPs as possible about the current problems with

Schengen visas experienced by Belarusians.

Belarus remains the only country of the EU Eastern neighbourhood whose citizens have to pay €60 for a single-entry Schengen visa. This sum amounts to almost one third of the average monthly salary in the country. Lowering visa costs and easing visa-issuing procedures would assist enormously in preventing the isolation of the Belarusian people. It would also help



implement the EU's policy of supporting the democratisation process, through facilitating people-to-people contacts between Belarusians and EU citizens.



The Office members distributed in Strasbourg an appeal with this message and encouraged members of the Parliament to put their signature under the Declaration N12.

The campaign will continue during the upcoming session on February 10-13.

23/02/2008

## Politics and Society

### Andrei Klimau Released



Belarusian authorities released an opposition leader on Friday, February 15. President Aliaksandr Lukashenka described this act as a gesture meant to help improve his government's ties

with the West.

Mr. Andrei Klimau, a former law-maker, was sentenced to two years of imprisonment for posting an article in the Internet. The article allegedly contained "appeals via the mass media to overthrow or forcibly change the constitutional regime in Belarus".

When in prison the politician suffered a heart attack. In August he was sentenced to 2 years in strict-schedule prison. Journalists and human rights activists were not informed about the

trial time, and the sentence became known to the public only a month later.

Previously, Klimau, an active opponent of Aliaksandr Lukashenka, spent 4 years in prison on the ground of economic criminal charges. He was sentenced to 15 months of corrective labour for staging street protest rallies on Freedom Day in 2005. Amnesty International recognized Andrei Klimau prisoner of conscience.

15/02/2008

Source: ERB, nn.by

### Belarus Softens Position over NATO Expansion



Belarus appeared to soften its position on NATO's eastward expansion on Thursday when its defence

minister said he saw no threat from the alliance.

President Aliaksandr Lukashenka, a fierce critic of U.S. foreign policy, has long said NATO's two recent waves of

expansion to include adjacent Poland, Latvia and Lithuania threatened Belarus' security.

But Defence Minister Leanid Maltsau said he believed the proximity of the alliance posed no military threat to the country of 10 million.

"No one is saying there is a military threat. There is no military threat. Our military doctrine lists no one as a likely

enemy for Belarus," Maltsau, quoted by local media, told a news conference.

"If we are talking about a military danger, this has risen, of course. The task to be undertaken by any state is to do everything to ensure it does not turn into a military threat."

21/02/2008

Source: Reuters

### Belarusian Journalist Released

Belarusian authorities released an independent journalist from prison on Friday, his lawyer said, a decision that appeared to be part of the authoritarian president's efforts to improve ties with the West.

Aliaxandr Zdzvishkou, a former deputy editor of the Zgoda newspaper,



had been convicted in January of inciting religious hatred by publishing caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad and been sentenced to three years in prison.

Belarus' Supreme Court mitigated Zdzvishkou's sentence Friday, reducing it to three months, which he has

already served, said his lawyer, Maya Aliaxandrava.

Several opposition figures have been released since the start of the year in what President Aliaxandr Lukashenka has called "an unprecedented step of goodwill" toward the United States and the European Union.

22/02/2008

Source: Media News

### Belarus Says Last "Good-Bye" to Iryna Kazulina



Iryna Kazulina, the wife of imprisoned former presidential candidate Aliaksandr Kazulin, died on February 23 at the age of 48 after a long struggle with breast cancer.

The Office for a Democratic Belarus is deeply saddened by the loss of Iryna. She will remain in our thoughts and prayers.

## Politics and Society

### Belarus Says Last “Good-Bye” to Iryna Kazulina



In September 2007, Iryna Kazulina was one of the organizers of an international conference on breast cancer. She wrote a book about her struggle with the disease but did not manage to complete it. “The fact of illness is not a reason for self-isolation, to speak of accepting any sacrifice from my relatives,” she said. “I believe that life should go on and the illness is not a good reason to disturb its course. It’s necessary to

try to do everything possible and continue to live a full life.”

Mrs. Kazulina died in an ambulance on the way to hospital on February 23.

The administration of the Vitsba 3 correctional institution near Vitsebsk, where her husband is being kept, first denied Mr. Kazulin a permission to attend his wife’s funeral. The opposition leader went on a hunger strike, his two daughters and three other supporters joined him.

The United States and the European Union called for the release of all political prisoners in Belarus, including Mr. Kazulin.

The U.S. Embassy in Minsk in its statement offered condolences to Kazulin and his daughters, Volha and Yulia, and said it “repeats its call for the release of all political prisoners.” The White House reiterated the demand, calling Belarus’ refusal to release a hunger-striking Kazulin incomprehensible.

Benita Ferrero-Waldner, the European Union’s Commissioner for external relations, also urged authorities to release Kazulin: “Putting an end to the practice of detaining citizens on political grounds in Belarus would be a significant step on the Belarusian side.”

On February 24 about five hundred people came to support Aliaksandr Kazulin’s family. Earlier Volha and Yuliya Kazulin had urged Belarusians to gather in the Kastrychnitskaya Square in the centre of Minsk to commemorate their mother.

The grief united people of different views and beliefs. Among those attending the gathering were head of the Belarusian Union of Writers, Ales Pashkevich; a famous Belarusian actress Zinaida Bandarenka; members of the organisational committee of the civil campaign “European Belarus” Mikola Statkevich and Zmitser Bandarenka; leader of the “For Freedom” movement Alyaksandr Milinkevich with his wife Ina Kuley; youth activists Yauhen Afnahel, Artur Finkevich, Zmitser Barodka, Zmitser Khvedaruk; leader of entrepreneurs Ales Makaev; human rights activist Aleh Vouchak; ecologist Valer Dranchuk, and others.



The former lawyer of Alyaksandr Kazulin made a joint statement with the politician’s daughters who claimed that they would not bury their mother until their father is allowed to

attend the funeral.

At the beginning of the peaceful and sad demonstration the police tried to warn the people that the action was unsanctioned and the central square was not the right place to express sorrow. The cars passing by beeped in solidarity with those who gathered in the square.

After initially refusing Mr. Kazulin’s request to attend the funeral, the government granted him a three-day leave, after which he had to return to prison to serve the rest of his sentence.

The decision appeared partly as a result of pressure by the United States and the European Union on President Aliaksandr Lukashenka.

Iryna Kazulina was buried on Wednesday in a cemetery not far from Minsk.



About 3,000 Belarusians defiantly joined opposition leader Aliaksandr Kazulin at his wife’s burial ceremony.

“Many people here had not known Iryna personally, but they came to

offer their respect to this fragile and courageous woman they learned about when her husband got into prison,” politician Valiantsina Svyatskaya told AFP. “She courageously fought for her husband and was always uncompromising with the regime, though she knew of her fatal illness,” she said.

Overnight, thousands came to offer their support and farewell as Iryna Kazulina’s coffin was exposed in the main Minsk Catholic church.

On February 28 Aliaksandr Kazulin returned to prison.

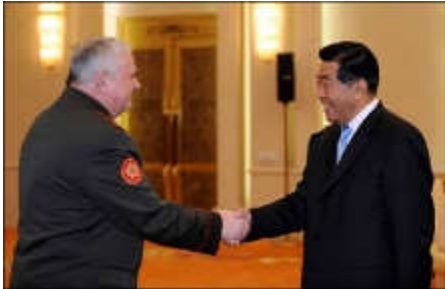
23-28/02/2008

Source: AFP, BelaPAN, Reuters. nn.by, IHT, ERB



## Politics and Society

### Chinese Top Political Advisor Meets Belarusian Defence Minister



One of Senior Chinese political figures, Jia Qinglin met on Sunday with the Belarusian Defence Minister Leanid Maltsova, and called for the promotion of bilateral relations to a higher level.

Jia, chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), expressed appreciation for Belarus' long-term adherence to the one-China policy and support for China on the Tibet and Taiwan issues.

The Chinese government values friendly and cooperative relations with Belarus and would make efforts to promote bilateral relations based on the principles of mutual respect, mutual benefit and non-interference in each other's internal affairs, Jia said.

Jia also briefed Maltsova on China's

economic and social development.

Maltsova said Belarus was satisfied with the expansion of relations with China, and would make the utmost efforts to promote relations between the nations and their military forces.

Maltsova's visit to China took place on the invitation of the Chinese Defence Minister Cao Gangchuan.

02/03/2008

Source: Xinhua

### Belarus and Ukraine PMs to Meet in March-April



Belarus Prime Minister Syarhey Sidorski and Ukraine's Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko are preliminary scheduled to meet in March-April this year, Belarus first vice prime minister Uladzimir Syamashka said in a statement.

"The prime ministers have recently held consultations and reached this agreement", he noted.

04/03/2008

Source: ERB

### Three Charged with Staging January 10 Protest



Mikhail Kryvau, Mikhail Pashkevich and Uladzimir Syarheyev, the youth activists from the Young Democrats group of the United Civic Party, today were charged with a criminal case. They are being accused of organizing a protest of entrepreneurs in downtown Minsk on January 10. The rally was not authorized by the city authorities.

ties.

BelaPAN news agency reports that the young men were summoned to come and answer questions at the Minsk City Police Department and were later formally charged.

They are charged with taking active part "in collective actions which violated grossly the public order". All three youngsters made a written declaration about not leaving the country while the case is under investigation.

A total of 12 people have been charged in connection with the January 10 protest. One of the activists, Andrei Kim, has remained in a police custody since January 31.

04/03/2008 Source: ERB, Charter'97

### Criminal Case against Polatsk "Malady Front Activist" Sent to Court



A criminal case against a 19-year-old activist of the youth democratic movement,

Katsyaryna Salauyova, was sent to Polatsk court on March 4.

Salauyova is being accused of acting on behalf of an unregistered organization. She may be fined, arrested for three

months or sentenced to 2 years of imprisonment for that.

Previously, Salauyova was announced suspected of acting on behalf of an unregistered organization and disrespect for state symbols. The first criminal case is connected with "Malady Front", and the second with events that took place on October 30 when strangers took down the state flag from Polatsk Office of Public Prosecu-

tor, tore it apart and attached to the door of the office.

The second criminal case against Salauyova (disrespect for state symbols) has been suspended.

05/03/2008

Source: ERB

## Economics

### Belarus Increased Export of Chemical and Petrochemical Products in 2007

Ministry of Statistics and Analysis of Belarus announced the results of 2007 as regards exports of chemical and petrochemical products. Over a year, Belarus exported 15.1 million tons of oil products: 14.4 million tons - to overseas countries (up 3 % on 2006), 0.7 million tons - to CIS countries (down 17.2 % on 2006).

Exports of potash fertilizers in 2007 totalled 4,354 thousand tons (up 99 % on 2006), nitrogen fertilizers - 236.4 thousand tons (up 5.1 %), chemical fibres - 160.9 thousand tons (up 5.1 %).

20/02/2008

Source: FIS

### Belneftekhim to Create Baltic Trade Company in Kaliningrad



The Belarusian concern 'Belneftekhim' is creating a subsidiary in Kaliningrad. The concern is set to invest RUR500 thousand into the share capital of the Baltic Trade Company. The Belarusian state oil and chemical concern comprises 40 enterprises, of which 35 are joint-stock companies and five - republican unitary enterprises. The concern accounts for 30% of Belarus industrial production, almost 35% of exports and foreign currency revenues and more than one-fourth of the republic's taxes and budgetary payments.

03/02/2008

Source: RCCNews.ru

### Belarus Abolishes Import Duties on Cement from April 2008 - January 2009

Belarus has abolished import duties on cement for the period between April 2008 and January 2009, the National Legal Information Centre said citing a presidential decree.

The decree also allows the government to purchase cement without tenders.

The Belarusian Architecture and Construction Ministry told Interfax that cement supplies to the Belarusian market (production and imports) would total 5.443 million tonnes this year, up 47% from 2007.

Cement imports will make up 1.243 million tonnes of this amount. A tender has been announced for cement imports. Offers will be accepted until March 11, 2008.

Belarusian construction companies produced 3.82 million tonnes of cement in 2007, up 9.3% from 2006, the Statistics and Analysis Ministry said. Cement production in Belarus is to grow to 9.5 million tonnes per year by 2010 due to an increase in production capacity.

03/03/2008

Source: Interfax

### Belarus Abandons Notion of State "Golden Share"



Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko on Tuesday rescinded the 1990s concept of a "golden share" with which the state could control private companies.

Lukashenko's press service said a presidential decree had done away with the practice, seen by Western investors as a hindrance to increased interest in the ex-Soviet state.

"Abandoning this practice will help create favourable conditions for direct foreign investment in the Belarusian economy's real sector, the achievement of 2008 growth forecasts, an improved international rating for Belarus and the defence of investors on the securities market," it said in a statement. Lukashenko and other senior officials have called for improved

relations with the West, including an influx of investment, since Belarus last year quarrelled with traditional ally Russia over energy prices.

Lukashenko, accused in the West of crushing fundamental rights, has pursued economic policies of heavy state intervention in the economy, including substantial subsidies and benefits. But authorities have also called for increased borrowing on international markets and selective privatisations.

Elena Rakava of the Institute of Privatisation and Management, discounted the effects of the "golden share" in post-Soviet Belarus but welcomed its disappearance.

"The very fact it existed, the fact that at any time the state could start issuing orders to a company someone had bought amounted to a scarecrow for all foreign investors," she said.

"But a real inflow of investment will depend on how consistent government policies will be," Rakava added.

04/03/2008

Source: Reuters

### National Bank of Belarus Earns \$773,000 from Polished Diamond Sales

The National Bank of Belarus (NBB) sold 461.06 carats of polished diamonds for approximately \$773,000 between mid-December 2007 and March 3, according to NBB spokesperson Mikhail Zhuravovich. A total of 2,663 stones were tendered and sold since December 14.

From mid-December 2005 to July 2007, the bank sold a total of 1,491 diamonds weighing 259.34 carats, worth a total of \$453,000.

05/02/2008

Source: IDEX

## EU and Belarus

### Brussels Urges Belarusian Authorities to Release Aliaksandr Kazulin

In response to news of the death of Mrs Iryna Kazulina, [Javier SOLANA, EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy \(CFSP\)](#), issued the following statement extending his condolences following the death of Iryna Kazulina, wife of the detained former Belarusian presidential candidate, Aliaksandr Kazulin, and calling for Mr. Kazulin's immediate and unconditional release: "It is with great sadness that I received the news of the death of Iryna Kazulina, the wife of the imprisoned former Belarusian presidential candidate Aliaksandr Kazulin. I express my heartfelt condolences to Mr. Kazulin and his daughters. I urge the Belarusian authorities to free Mr Kazulin from prison immediately and unconditionally, so that he can be reunited with his family and attend his wife's funeral..."

[The Presidency, on behalf of the European Union](#), expressed its condolences to imprisoned former Belarusian presidential candidate, Mr Aliaksandr Kazulin and his daughters on the death of Iryna Kazulina. The European Union takes note of the release of Mr. Kazulin from prison for three days so

that he can say farewell to his wife. "The European Union reiterated its call upon the competent Belarusian authorities for the permanent and unconditional release of Mr. Kazulin."

[Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy, Benita Ferrero-Waldner](#) appealed to Belarusian authorities to permit Mr. Kazulin to attend his wife's funeral:

"I offer my condolences to Mr. Kazulin and his close ones on the occasion of the passing away of Mrs. Kazulina. I hope and I would appreciate this as an important signal, that the Belarus authorities will let Mr. Kazulin attend his wife's funeral in Minsk.

[Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Jacek Saryusz-Wolski \(EPP-ED, PL\)](#) made the following statement in a session of the committee. The committee welcomed this statement and indicated its support for the ideas contained within.

"I would like to express, on behalf of the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the European Parliament, my deep sadness about the death of Mrs Iryna Kazulina, the wife of Aliaksandr

Kazulin, former presidential candidate in Belarus and political prisoner of the Lukashenka regime..."

[Chairman of the Delegation for relations with Belarus in the EP Jacek Protasiewicz](#) offered "deepest condolences to the entire family of Mrs. Iryna Kazulina" and urged "the Belarusian authorities to allow Mr Alyaksandr Kazulin to attend the funeral of his wife and to finally take a decision regarding his definite release".

[PACE Rapporteur Andrea Rigoni](#) also called on the Belarusian authorities to release Mr. Kazulin : "Since Mr. Kazulin's unjust condemnation, the entire family has been through a terrible ordeal. This must come to an end. The authorities cannot bring Mrs. Kazulina back to life but they can and must give Aliaxandr Kazulin his unconditional freedom. His release should be ordered immediately, in time for him to attend his wife's funeral," he said.

25-27/02/2008

Source: [consilium.europa.eu](http://consilium.europa.eu), [EC, euparl.europa.eu](http://EC.euparl.europa.eu), [coe.int](http://coe.int)

### Belarus Week to be Held in the European Parliament Next Week



A series of events collectively named The Belarus Week will take place in the European Parliament in Strasbourg between March 10 and 13 on the occasion of the 90th anniversary of the Belarusian National Republic (BNR).

According to the office of the initiator of the Belarus Week, Polish MEP Jacek Protasiewicz, the program of the

events features a screening of a documentary by Yury Khashchavatski, exhibitions of works by artists Alyaksey Marachkin and Ryhor Sinita and photographers Ihar Krasewski and Adam Tukhlinski, and a concert by prominent folk rock singer-songwriter Zmitser Vaytsyushkevich and his W-Z Orchestra.

The program also includes meetings with members of the Belarus' pro-democratic opposition, a press conference, and a round-table discussion "Independent Belarus as an Integral Part of Europe."

Guests of the Belarus Week are expected to include the European Parliament President Hans-Gert Pöttering; Joseph Daul, chairman of the Group of the European People's Party (Christian

Democrats) and European Democrats; and Jacek Saryusz-Wolski, chairman of the European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs.

Twenty-four Belarusians have been invited to Strasbourg, including former presidential candidate Alyaksandr Milinkevich; Ivonka Survilla, the Canada-based chairwoman of the BNR Rada (government in exile); Lyavon Barshchewski, leader of the Belarusian Popular Front; and Yaraslaw Ramanchuk, deputy chairman of the United Civic Party.

The Belarus Week is being organized and financed by the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and European Democrats.

06/03/2008

Source: [naviny.by](http://naviny.by)



## Culture

### Chansonnier from Biarouzauka

Zmitser Vajtsiushkevich is the prodigy of Belarusian music. This 37-old artist managed to cross the strictly guarded line which separates pop, rock, and folk music and successfully exists on the borderlands of different music styles and traditions. Zmitser's indefatigable creative energy helps him produce one, sometimes even two new albums every year. While other musicians stick to a guitar, saxophone, or violin, he can grab pretty much any musical instrument and immediately produce a melody. He not only plays, but also writes music himself, sings, directs his own concerts, works as radio host and plays in a musical. Critics say that Zmitser's erotic voice helps him to conquer hearts of thousands of his female fans, although the artist also has enough exciting music for men to offer.

Zmitser was born in a small town of Biarouzauka in Western Belarus. In the early 90's he came to Minsk to study music at the University of Culture. Zmitser takes special pride in the fact that he is not a "minchuk" (Minsk native). "I can't say I don't like Minsk. A lot of things in my life are connected to this city. However, I am proud that I managed to achieve something here on my own", he says.

Zmitser Vajtsiushkevich began his music career in 1992 with "Palac" folk-rock group, which still enjoys great popularity in the country. However, Vajtsiushkevich's talent demanded new experiences and challenges. In 1997 he joined another folk-rock group "Kriwi". Since 2001, Zmitser pursues a solo career. For him, singing solo doesn't mean being alone: Zmitser has created a whole new band "WZ-Orchestra", which accompanies him during concerts (sometimes up to 50 a year).

Zmitser Vajtsiushkevich belongs to the group of the so-called "blacklisted musicians", who, until recently, had



problems with working in Belarus because they refused to adhere to the state ideology line. A couple of months ago the "blacklist" policy has been abandoned, which brought relief to many musicians. Zmitser, however, has a rather sarcastic point of view in this regard. "Everyone chooses his own way. I believe that the authorities did a great favour to musicians by blacklisting them. This has helped musicians to grow and develop their spirit. I wouldn't have become an artist I am today without being "blacklisted". I am even grateful to the state TV for refusing to broadcast my video clips. I don't need their services. I don't see any connection between genuine popularity and video clip rotation on TV", he says.

Now, let's take a closer look at the music world of Zmitser Vajtsiushkevich. His first album "Tsatsachnaya Krama" ('Toy Shop') appeared in 2001. It came out as a surprise – nobody expected that the singer would dedicate his premiere album to the smallest listeners – children. Each song is about an animal, which tells the child its own story: for example, you can listen to a clever Crow, or industrious Horse, or a Wolf, who claims he is not angry but simply hungry.

In his next album, "Balady" ("Ballads", 2002), Zmitser Vajtsiushkevich collected folk ballads and sad songs telling of the women's fortunes, adventures of young men and fights with dragons. "Balady" embody the experience I have accumulated", says Zmitser Vajtsiushkevich, who collected the songs for this album during his time with "Palac" and "Kriwi". Zmitser took part in ethnographic expeditions, during which he recorded old men and women in faraway villages singing folk songs.

The next album, "Paraviny Hodu" ('Seasons of the Year') was recorded in 2003. The goal of Zmitser Vajtsiushkevich and his "WZ-Orchestra" was to create elite music, that would be enjoyed by

masses. He has written 12 songs to the lyrics of Ales Kamotsky, a contemporary Belarusian poet, telling about love and life, about hopes and temptations. The songs are ordered in four thematic blocks, according to the year's four seasons.

Here is an example: "I Was Walking to You" [http://music.fromby.net/mp3/wz\\_orkiestra\\_ja\\_iszou\\_da\\_ciabie.mp3](http://music.fromby.net/mp3/wz_orkiestra_ja_iszou_da_ciabie.mp3)

In 2004 Zmitser Vajtsiushkevich turned to the patriarch of the Belarusian poetry, Ryhor Baradulin, asking whether he would be interested to take part in preparation of his new album. Ryhor Baradulin was so excited about the idea and about the work of Vajtsiushkevich in general, that he has written a poem "New Year" exclusively for him. It gave start to the album "Paravoz Kahannia" ('Steam Locomotive of Love'), with songs written to the poems of Baradulin. The poet also recorded audio epigraphs that introduce every song of the album to the listener. There are thirteen songs bringing together two creative men, who belong to different generations and different spheres of art but still exist in the same creative dimension of the Belarusian life. Vajtsiushkevich and Baradulin are looking for answers to such eternal questions as the meaning of love and life. These are questions, which, on one hand, have no answer, but on the other – too many of them. The music of Vajtsiushkevich reflects this multitude of variations, with jazzy motives unexpectedly turning slightly groovy, sometimes with a touch of reggae.

Here is an example: "Spring Day" [http://music.fromby.net/mp3/vajciuszkievich\\_viasnovy\\_dzien.mp3](http://music.fromby.net/mp3/vajciuszkievich_viasnovy_dzien.mp3)

## Culture

### Chansonnier from Biarouzauka

In 2005 Vajtsiushkevich carried out another music experiment – he wrote songs to the poems of Vladimir Mayakovsky, prominent Russian futurist poet from the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Working with the Russian-language lyrics was an experiment per se. “I wanted to see for myself what it means to sing in Russian”, says Zmitsier, who usually speaks and sings in Belarusian. Another challenge for Vajtsiushkevich was to discover Mayakovsky in his music, and to discover himself in Mayakovsky’s poetry.

2005 was a fruitful year for Vajtsiushkevich. He recorded another album “Mesiats i Sontsa” (‘Moon and Sun’). The singer tried to find parallels in Belarusian and Japanese cultures by uniting classical Japanese poetry and contemporary Belarusian music. “In this album two new worlds were created. Which one is Belarusian, and which one is Japanese, — it is difficult to tell. Our Belarusian poetry usually sets off good against evil, white against black, love against hatred. The Japanese do something different in their songs – they observe life as it is. This contrast between two worldviews makes the album so exciting”, believes Zmitsier. Just a week ago, on February 23, 2008, Vajtsiushkevich presented his album in Japan.

In his 2006 album “Tanga z Ruzhaj” (‘Tango with a Rose’), Vajtsiushkevich poses as a chansonnier singing “urban romances” with his main characters: poets, prostitutes and drunkards. The lyrics belong to Uladzimer Niakliajeu, another contemporary Belarusian poet.

“The Road” [http://music.fromby.net/mp3/vajciuszkievicz\\_daroaha.mp3](http://music.fromby.net/mp3/vajciuszkievicz_daroaha.mp3)

“The 9<sup>th</sup> Cry” [http://music.fromby.net/mp3/vajciuszkievicz\\_placz.mp3](http://music.fromby.net/mp3/vajciuszkievicz_placz.mp3)

In 2007 Vajtsiushkevich prepared one more gift for children by recording the UNICEF-sponsored album “Kalyhanki” (‘Lullabies’). His most

recent project is the album “Liryka” (‘Lyrics’), which brings together songs written to the poems of Henadz Buraukin.

As one can see, Vajtsiushkevich is as an active popularizer of the contemporary Belarusian poetry. Most of the poets he promotes are not favored by the state ideology. They are not allowed to give lectures in schools or universities, their poems are excluded from schoolbooks. But apart from that, the most serious challenge to poets is changing reading habits of Belarusians. People barely read poems today. Vajtsiushkevich brings the poetry to those who are more likely to appreciate it listening to their iPods rather than reading books.

“I never liked crowded spaces, in music as well”, says Zmitsier Vajtsiushkevich. “Now I have found my “space” where I can feel myself free as a bird. Every time I write music, I turn into a real egoist. I do only what I feel like doing. I don’t pay attention to any scandals in the music scene. I would never agree to “bath in dirt” in order to create a name for myself. Music is sacred for me. It is due to music I have become someone. I am a happy person because I decide for myself how to live and what to do”.

*You can download some other Vajtsiushkevich’s songs for free from the main Belarusian independent music web-resource Tuzin Hitou (‘dozen hits’):*

“Like Wind” [http://music.fromby.net/mp3/vajciuszkievicz\\_jak\\_viecier.mp3](http://music.fromby.net/mp3/vajciuszkievicz_jak_viecier.mp3)

“Village Holiday” [http://music.fromby.net/mp3/vajciuszkievicz\\_sviata\\_uvioscy.mp3](http://music.fromby.net/mp3/vajciuszkievicz_sviata_uvioscy.mp3)

“My Ramanya” [http://music.fromby.net/mp3/vajciuszkievicz\\_romagna\\_mia.mp3](http://music.fromby.net/mp3/vajciuszkievicz_romagna_mia.mp3)

“Venus Star” [http://music.fromby.net/mp3/todar\\_zorka\\_venera.mp3](http://music.fromby.net/mp3/todar_zorka_venera.mp3)

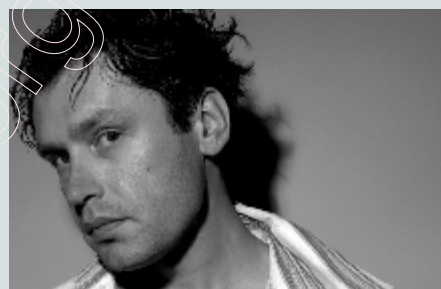
“Sea” [http://music.fromby.net/mp3/vajciuszkievicz\\_mora.mp3](http://music.fromby.net/mp3/vajciuszkievicz_mora.mp3)

Official web-site of Zmitsier Vajtsiushkevich: <http://www.todar.net/>

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By Ales Kudrytsky for the ODB

Photos by todar.net



Projects' covers

