

## The Belarusian Association of Journalists

### MASS MEDIA WEEK IN BELARUS

#### Info-Posting No. 1

*January 02 – 08, 2006*

The main issue within the first week of 2006 was connected with the highly discriminative conditions for distribution of non-governmental periodical editions. Thus, one of most popular independent Belarusian newspapers – “Narodnaya Vola” – couldn’t be delivered to its readers in time, as the whole print-run of this periodical had been detained at the Belarusian-Russian border. The responsible officials referred to some incorrectness in the supporting documents. The print-run got released a day later. However, the story has repeated this week.

*More detailed information about these and other events can be found in our weekly Info-posting below.*

#### **Contents:**

- *The “Brestski Courier” Newspaper Editorial Got Robbed*
- *The Murdered Journalist’s Son Pressurized by the Police*
- *The “Narodnaya Vola” Print-Run Got Detained*
- *“Belposhta” Will Not Distribute “Viciebski Courier”*

#### **THE “BRESTSKI COURIER” NEWSPAPER EDITORIAL GOT ROBBED**

The “Brestski Courier” non-governmental newspaper editorial got robbed on **January 7-8, 2006**. There was stolen accounting documentation, included in the editorial’s electronic data-base. The office building was under control of security guards. However, the latter didn’t notice anything suspicious when they were on duty then.

#### **THE MURDERED JOURNALIST’S SON PRESSURIZED BY THE POLICE**

The relatives of arrested Anton Filimonau, the son of murdered lady journalist Vieranika Charkasava, are urging the authorities to stop putting pressure on the teenager. Vieranika Charkasava’s mother Dyjana Charkasava and step-father Uladzimir Mialeshka pronounced this appeal at a special press-conference on **January 6, 2006**.

They claimed that their grandson was constantly being persuaded to confess that he had killed his mother.

It should be reminded that the 16-year boy was detained on December 27, 2005. Together with four friends of his he was suspected in counterfeiting the Belarusian money. Several banknotes were taken away from the guys, when they attempted to pay with them, reportedly, for a joke. As a result, there was filed a criminal case against the teen-agers according to article 221 of the Criminal Code of Belarus. The youngsters had to spend 3 days in a confinement cell. On December 30 all the guys but for Anton were released.

#### **“REHIJANALNYJA NAVINY” SEIZED IN SVIETLAHORSK**

The police seized 297 copies of “Rehijanalnyja Naviny” newspaper from the periodical’s Editor-in-chief Telman Maslukou on **January 5, 2006**. Maslukou was convoyed to the local

police station. The police station Deputy Head Piotr Zykun informed Maslukou that the police would verify if the newspaper contents didn't break the Belarusian legislation. Together with the newspaper, the police seized 1,289 postcards "The New Year – The New Opportunities" with the New Year wishes of the united democratic candidate for presidency Aliaksandar Milinkievich as well as three pocket calendars "Love Belarus!"

### **THE "NARODNAYA VOLA" PRINT-RUN GOT DETAINED**

The detention of this special New Year double issue, printed in 27 thousand copies, took place on **January 3**. The whole print-run was detained by the Anti-Smuggling Department while crossing the Belarusian-Russian border on the basis of the fact that one of the necessary documents was drawn up in an incorrect way. In the evening the print-run was delivered to Dubrouna Police Office. The newspaper copies were released after the documents got corrected on the following day.

### **TV CHANNELS WILL LEARN THEIR RATING**

It is planned to commence sociological surveys, aimed at learning the popularity of TV channels with the Belarusian public, as stated Aliaksandr Karachun, the head of Electronic Media Department at the Ministry of Information of Belarus. Due to these surveys, it will become possible to get precise information about the Belarusian TV-viewers' preferences and to learn the level of the TV channels' competitiveness, - as reported the Belarusian Internet Portal [tut.by](http://tut.by) on **January 3, 2006**.

### **"BELPOSHTA" WILL NOT DISTRIBUTE "VICIEBSKI COURIER"**

The "Belposhta" Unitary Enterprise refused to distribute the "Viciebski Courier" non-governmental newspaper by subscription after the appearance of the first periodical's issue in 2006. This decision was stated in an official letter to the newspaper editorial, send by Mikalaj Smuniou, the head of Viciebsk Branch of "Belposhta" at the beginning of **January 2006**. It should be noted that as soon as it came to the newspaper readers' knowledge that their favorite edition wouldn't be put on sale at the "Belsayuzdruk" news-stalls, the number of "Viciebsk Courier" subscribers increased by several hundred people in comparison with the previous year.

*Prepared by the BAJ Monitoring Service*

## **The Belarusian Association of Journalists**

### **MASS MEDIA WEEK IN BELARUS**

#### **Info-Posting No. 2**

*January 09 – 15, 2006*

*The main issue in the media field within the reporting period was connected with the detention of the “Narodnaya Vola” print-run that was transported from a Printing House in Smolensk, Russia. It was the second time already, when the periodical print-run got arrested for several days, as the customs and police officers expressed doubt as for the originality of accompanying notes. Only after the “Narodnaya Vola” Editor-in-chief Josif Siaredzich came to the frontier station himself and proved there were enough documents for transporting the print-run to Belarus, the newspaper copies were returned to the editorial.*

*There was filed a criminal case against Pavel Krasouski, the “Nabludatel” newspaper publisher last week. He was blamed for printing caricatures in his officially non-registered edition (that according to the Belarusian legislature can be distributed maximally in 299 copies). It was the third case of prosecution of journalists for publishing caricatures lately. Similar accusations were brought against the “Zhoda” newspaper for satirical collages and the “Tretsi Shlach” NGO for cartoons.*

*More detailed information about these and other events can be found in our weekly Info-posting below.*

#### **Contents:**

- *The Russian State Broadcasting Company Will Have Its Representation in Minsk*
- *A “Miestnaya Gazieta” Distributor Detained in Vaukavysk*
- *The House of Representatives Thinks It Is Necessary to Introduce “Some Legal Framework For a Number of Internet Editions”*
- *The Court Refused to Change the Measure of Detention for Anton Filimonau*

### **RUSSIAN STATE BROADCASTING COMPANY WILL HAVE ITS REPRESENTATION IN MINSK**

The Council of Ministers of Belarus decided to let the Russian State Broadcasting Company work in Belarus again. This information was announced by Aliaksandar Tsimashenka (the Prime Minister's press secretary) on January 12.

The work of the Russian State Broadcasting Company in Belarus was stopped in July-August 2004. The reason for it was Dmitry Petrov's report about a picket organized by the opposition on July 21. According to Belarusian authorities, the reporter increased the number of the action's participants by several times and thus provided people with false information. That is why Belarusian authorities deprived Russian journalists of their accreditation and closed down the representative office of the Russian State Broadcasting Company.

## **"THE DISTRICT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE IS NOT ON FRIENDLY TERMS WITH YOUR NEWSPAPER..."**

The deputy editor-in-chief of "Hazeta Slominskaja" Syarhey Chyhryn and a newspaper photographer Tatiana Plahetka were not allowed to attend a meeting, dedicated to commemoration of those who died in concentration camps. The meeting took place on **January 12**.

Syarhey Rahozyk, the head of Slonim District Council of Deputies urged Syarhey Chyhryn and Tatiana Plahetka to leave the room. He explained his request by the fact that "the District Executive Committee was not on friendly terms with their newspaper." The meeting started only after the journalists had left the assembly hall.

## **A "MIESTNAYA GAZIETA" DISTRIBUTOR DETAINED IN VAUKAVYSK**

The police seized 69 copies of "Miestnaya Gazieta" from the newspaper distributor Marharyta Makaviej in Vaukavysk on January 12. The lady had an official authorization for selling the edition at the "Druzhba" mini-market as well as special coupons.

The police composed a protocol of detention and let the distributor free.

## **A CRIMINAL CASE STARTED BECAUSE OF NEWSPAPER CARICATURES**

A criminal case for insulting officials was started against Paval Krasouski (the publisher of the "Nabludatel" newspaper (Zhodzina)). The publisher's flat was searched and all media were taken away. The reason for such actions was caricatures displaying local officials. They were printed in issue #4 of the edition. According to the law, P.Krasouski's newspaper did not have to be registered. Its circulation was 299 issues. The last issues were dedicated to the presidential election, - informed radio "Liberty" on **January 12**.

## **THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES THINKS IT IS NECESSARY TO INTRODUCE "SOME LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR A NUMBER OF INTERNET EDITIONS"**

The House of Representatives thinks it is necessary to introduce "some legal framework for a number of Internet editions". "It is necessary to make the existence of Internet editions legal, there is no intention to interfere into their work ", - informed BelTA. The meeting took place on January 11. Journalists from "Narodnaja Gazeta" and BelTA were present there.

The participants of the meeting concluded that the existing law had become obsolete. Nevertheless, a new wording of the Law on mass media is not planned to be discussed by deputies in 2006.

U.Kulakouski thinks that journalists' rights are not protected by the existing law. "I think it is wrong to make journalists subjects to prosecution for articles written 10 years ago.", - thinks the head of Permanent Committee on human rights, national diversity and mass media.

## **THE COURT REFUSED TO CHANGE THE MEASURE OF DETENTION FOR ANTON FILIMONAU**

**On January 10**, the Pershamaiski District Court of Minsk rejected the claim of Uladzimir Myaleshka. He asked to change the measure of detention for his grandson Anton Filimonau, the son of Veranika Charkasava, a journalist who was murdered in October 2004. (Uladzimir Myaleshka is a legal representative of the 16-year-old youth). According to Anton's grandmother Diana Charkasava, they are going to appeal this decision.

At the moment Anton Filimonau is in the confinement cell in Valadarskaga Street in Minsk. He was detained on December 27 as a suspect in the case of counterfeiting of Belarusian money. Several 5 and 10 thousand banknotes were taken away from him and four his acquaintances. A criminal case against them was started according to art. 221 of the Criminal Code of Belarus. They had to spend 3 days in the confinement cell. On December 30 they were released and only Anton had to stay.

On January 6 Diana Charkasava and Uladzimir Myaleshka held a press-conference in Minsk. They claimed that their grandson was constantly being persuaded to confess that he had killed his mother.

## **"NARODNAJA VOLA" GOT DETAINED AGAIN**

**On January 9** the whole circulation of a new double issue of "Narodnaja Vola" was detained near the Belarusian-Russian Border. This time no explanation of the accident was given.

27 thousand copies of the issue printed in Smolensk Publishing House were detained by customs officers in Rudnya. The circulation of "Narodnaja Vola" was delivered to Dubrouna District Police Office.

A policeman who was on duty in Dubrouna District Police Office said he did not have any information about it. When he was asked who could answer the question he first said that BAJ Press Service should turn to the Economic Crime Prevention Department and then said to call the deputy head of Dubrovnski District Police Office (yet he added that at that moment he was not at work).

Last time the whole circulation of "Narodnaja Vola" was detained on January 3 on the basis of the fact that one of the necessary documents was drawn up in an incorrect way. The circulation was detained for a whole day and it was returned only after all the necessary documents were in order.

After a 7-hour negotiation with Dubrouna District Police Office Head Viktor Kahanouski the newspaper print-run was released on January 11, 2006.

## **AN IDEOLOGIST DIDN'T LIKE NEWSPAPER HEADINGS**

The Ideology Department Head of Viciebsk Regional Executive Committee Mikhail Kuzmich called for a talk Uladzimir Bazan, the Editor-in-chief of "Vitebski Courier M" non-governmental social and political newspaper on **January 9**. The state official was indignant over the periodical's headings. He treated them as "negative." However, when the Editor drew the official's attention to the refusals of "Belposhta" and "Belsayuzdruk" to

distribute the periodical, the ideologist retorted that these were internal problems of the economic subjects and advised to solve the problems without his assistance.

## **CONSTITUTIONAL COURT REFUSED TO GIVE ACCOUNT OF AMENDMENTS TO THE CRIMINAL CODE**

**January 10, 2006**

The Constitutional Court of Belarus refused to assess the compatibility of "The law on making amendments and changes in acts concerning actions directed against human rights and public security " with the Constitution. That was the official answer to a request of BAJ, submitted to the Court **at the beginning of January 2006**. The deputy head of the Constitutional Court Mr. Maryskin referred to the fact that at the moment they received the request the statutory act had not entered into force.

BAJ legal experts stress that at that moment (the answer to the request is dated December 29, 2005) the legislation had already been signed by the President and had entered into force before BAJ received the answer. The organization is going to send the request again.

## **AN "INTEX-PRESS" JOURNALIST GOT DEPRIVED OF ACCREDITATION**

An "Intex-press" independent newspaper's journalist was not given accreditation at Baranavichy District Executive Committee.

A letter dated by **January 4, 2006** and signed by the Deputy Head of Baranavichy District Executive Committee I. Stelmashka, informed the head of "Intex-press" Publishing House Uladzimir Yanukevich that: "Taking into account the fact that a lot of journalists from the state editions received their accreditation at the District Executive Committee, we do not think that we should give accreditation to journalists from the "Intex-press" independent newspaper. The journalists from your newspaper will be invited to some events, if necessary."

## **MINSK-LOCATED POST OFFICES HAVE TO RESTORE THE CIRCULATION OF "SOVIETSKAYA BYELORUSSIA"**

Several Belarusian Internet Resources published a copy of instruction, issued by the "Minskaya Poshta" Production Head Valiancina Puhach on **January 4**. It was addressed to all heads of Minsk-located post offices and urged the officials to prolong the subscription to the "Sovietskaya Byelorussia" daily, founded by the Presidential Administration, till January 10. The necessity of these changes was explained by the decreased number of subscribers in comparison with January 1, 2005.

Correspondingly, each post office is "to subscribe approximately 50 people to "Sovietskaya Byelorussia." Otherwise, the newspaper copies will be directed to the post offices for selling them by retail.

*Prepared by the BAJ Monitoring Service*

## **The Belarusian Association of Journalists**

### **MASS MEDIA WEEK IN BELARUS**

#### **Info-Posting No. 3**

*January 16 – 22, 2006*

*There happened several cases of detention of non-governmental periodical editions, printed outside of Belarus. The “Volny Horad” regional non-registered edition print-run was seized at the frontier customs officer on its way from a printing house in Russia.*

*In the bulletin editor’s opinion, the interest of policemen and customs officers to the periodical was caused by the contents of published articles, covering the current Presidential election campaign. Also, there was partially arrested the print-run of “Magazyn Polski Abroad” at the Polish-Belarusian border.*

*The state authorities express extreme interest to the non-governmental periodical editions. Thus, the editorials of local newspapers in the city of Brest have to submit precise data regarding their financial and logistic background, the distribution schemes and even the advertisers. This dubious curiosity was reasoned by “the necessity of collecting information for a thematic session at the Brest Executive Committee.”*

*More detailed information about these and other events can be found in our weekly Info-posting below.*

#### **Contents:**

- *Will the Printed Media Be Accountable For the Internet Editions?*
- *A Lady from Minsk Attempts to Sue a State Belarusian TV Program Presenter*
- *Official Notification Given for Nothing*
- *The “Volny Horad” Newspaper Print-run Seized by the Customs Office etc.*

### **BREST CITY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE COLLECTS INFORMATION ABOUT LOCAL NEWSPAPERS' SOURCES OF FINANCE**

**January 19** was the deadline for Brest-located periodical editions to send detailed information about their sources of financing to the Brest City Executive Committee. All editorials had received this order from the authorities.

In particular, the Executive Committee is interested in information about the periodicals' founders, sources of finance, publishing houses, the ways of distribution and the circulation.

Also, the local authorities wanted to get information about “the relevance and quality of articles, their accordance with the editorial policy.”

The necessity of this information is explained by a future meeting of Brest City Executive Committee members where the role of mass media in creating the region's information policy will be discussed.

## **WILL THE PRINTED MEDIA BE ACCOUNTABLE FOR THE INTERNET EDITIONS?**

The Minister of Information of Belarus Uladzimir Rusakievich called upon the Belarusian journalists "to be tactful during the election campaign." In his opinion, the Belarusian journalists work sooner tactful than tactless. The Minister informed the public that there had been finalized "The Instruction on the Media Use of Candidates to Presidency during the Election Campaign." Also, he considered the Internet to be "an influential mass media tool." He noticed that the Ministry is going to sue the periodicals, which will dare re-print incorrect materials from the Web-sites. "There will be carried out investigations in any case," – stressed U. Rusakievich. This information was disseminated by the *ByBANNER.com* Internet Portal.

## **"MAGAZIN POLSKI ABROAD" GOT DETAINED**

50 copies of "Magazyn Polski Abroad" (Editor-in-chief - Andrzej Pachobut) were detained by the police on **January 17**. Now the issues that were to be brought to members of the local affiliate of the Union of Poles in Belarus can be found in Hrodna District police office.

The car with Andrzej Pachobut and Andrej Lisouski was stopped by the police at about 3 p.m. in Hrodna District. The detained were taken to the police office and the car was searched. No lawyers were allowed to be present during the search, - informed BelaPAN. Andrzej Pachobut was given a report of attachment of 50 issues of the magazine without any other explanation. The editor-in-chief is going to lodge a complaint. An interview with the Polish authorities containing some critical remarks on the actions of Belarusian authorities regarding the Union of Poles in Belarus was published in the detained issues.

In the morning of January 17 the police came to A. Pachobut's parents and said they had to detain their son. Andrzej Pachobut claimed he had not been informed about such an order. Let us remind you that A. Pachobut is one of the suspects in the case of intimidation of the head of Shchuchyn House of Poles V. Bogdan. A.Pisalnik, Y.Pazhetski and V.Keuliak are the other suspects.

## **VERANIKA CHARKASAVA'S SON WILL STAY IN THE CONFINEMENT CELL**

Anton Filimonau, a 16-year-old son of Veranika Charkasava (a lady journalist murdered in October 2004) will stay in a confinement cell. This decision was taken by the City Court of Minsk on **January 17**. Thus, the appeal, submitted by the teen-ager's grandfather and legal representative Uladzimir Myaleshka got declined.

On January 10, the Pershamaiski District Court of Minsk also declined Uladzimir Myaleshka's appeal. A. Filimonau has been kept behind the bars since December 30. He is accused of money counterfeit (article #221 of the Criminal Code). Five people were detained, but only Anton Filimonau had to stay in the confinement cell. Anton's relatives claimed that he was constantly being made to confess by legal investigators and KGB-men that he had killed his mother.

## **A LADY FROM MINSK ATTEMPTS TO SUE A STATE BELARUSAN TV PROGRAM PRESENTER**

A Minsk dweller Aksana Novikava appealed to the Public Prosecutor of Minsk with a claim on **January 17**. She demands to file a criminal case against Yauhien Novikau, a State



Belarusan TV Program Presenter, for his statements in "The Political Technologies" program broadcast on January 12, 2005. The TV-man informed the viewers about the attempts of NATO, Poland and Lithuania "to start a war against Belarus." A. Novikava urges the Public Prosecutor's Office to initiate a criminal case on part 1, article 123 of the Criminal Code of Belarus – "The Propaganda of War" – that presumes punishing the law abuser with a fine or a three-year imprisonment.

## **OFFICIAL NOTIFICATION GIVEN FOR NOTHING**

The "Nash Smarhonski Kraj" bulletin publisher Aliaksandr Dzierhachou was summoned to the Public Prosecutor of Smarhon district Mikalaj Malinouski on **January 16**.

A. Dzierhachou was presented an official notification that he is officially notified "in order to prevent possible violation of the Press Law, the Electoral Law and other Belarusan legislative acts." The bulletin, published by A. Dzierhachou, covers the current electoral campaign and presents quotations from other printed editions.

## **THE "VOLNY HORAD" NEWSPAPER PRINT-RUN SEIZED BY THE CUSTOMS OFFICE**

The Belarusian customs officers arrested the recently printed of "Volny Horad" regional non-governmental newspaper at the customs house in the Klimavitski district on its way from Russia on **January 13**. The formal reason was that the number of transported copies exceeded the bulletin's stated circulation (299 copies). The "Volny Horad" Editor-in-chief Siarhiej Niarouny still considers the real reason of this detention was the content of publications in the seized bulletin, dedicated to the coming Presidential election.

## **"BRETSKIJ KURJER" HAS PROBLEMS WITH DELIVERY TO READERS IN THE REGIONS**

Brest affiliate of "Belposhta" refused to sign a contract for distribution of "Brestskij Kurjer" in the regions. The head of the affiliate Hienadz Tsitou claimed that he considered the contract to be "inexpedient."

The newspaper's editorial staff turned to Brest affiliate of "Belposhta" and asked for a contract because the edition was not brought to the news-stalls in some districts of Brest Region **at the beginning of 2006**. The subscription for "Brestskij Kurjer" was restored at the end of the year.

## **TWICE MORE MONEY ALLOCATED FOR THE STATE MEDIA FROM THE BUDGET**

More than 60 million USD will be allocated from the budget for the state-owned media development **in 2006**. The sum has increased by 20 million USD in comparison with the last year and it will be twice more than in 2004.

According to the law "On Belarus' Budget 2006," about 60.55 million USD were allocated for the state media. 43.89 million USD will be given to radio and TV channels; printed editions will receive 11.53 million USD; 5.12 million USD will be provided to cover "the other expenses."

Cf.: about 40.7 million USD were allocated to the state-owned media in 2005 (33.73 million USD were given to TV and radio; 5.85 million USD – to printed editions and 1.1 million USD were allocated for other expenses). 29.7 million USD got allocated to the state-owned media (23.9 - to TV and radio; 5.2 - to printed editions and 0.7 - for other expenses) in 2004.

*Prepared by the BAJ Monitoring Service*

## The Belarusian Association of Journalists

### MASS MEDIA WEEK IN BELARUS

#### Info-Posting No. 4

*January 23-28, 2006*

*The main part of media news during the reporting period was connected with the informational confrontation. This issue was dwelt upon by the President of Belarus A. Lukashenka at his meeting with the representatives of state-owned media. The head of state emphasized that the Belarusian TV and radio companies are ready to hold active counter-propaganda and to repel the information attacks from abroad.*

*There was announced the winner of European Commission tender for holding TV and Radio broadcasting to the territory of Belarus. It is a consortium of broadcasters with the "Media Consulta" Company (Germany) at the head. The group includes "The European Radio for Belarus" (Poland), "The Baltic Wave" Radio (Lithuania), the RTVI Independent TV Channel as well as "the Belarusian NGOs and journalists." Apart from the TV and radio broadcasting and the Internet-resources, the two-year project suggests support of printed periodical editions and training courses for journalists.*

*The project aims at "providing the Belarusians with independent information about the events in Belarus and other countries, to raise awareness as for the democracy issues, pluralism of thoughts, media freedoms and human rights."*

*As before, the editions, published outside Belarus face difficulties with dispatching their periodicals' print-runs to the country.*

*More detailed information about these and other events can be found in our weekly Info-posting below.*

#### **Contents:**

- *KGB Will Study the Ukrainian Journalists' Materials*
- *TV and Radio Make Parts of Ideology*
- *The Central Election Committee Head: "INTERNET ABUSE IS A PROBLEM..."*
- *The "Magazyn Polski" in Emigration" Editor-in-Chief Called to the Public Prosecutor's Office*
- *etc.*

### **KGB WILL STUDY THE UKRAINIAN JOURNALISTS' MATERIALS**

KGB will study the video tapes taken away from Ukrainian journalists by Belarusian customs officers. A number of Internet sites informed about it with reference to "Interfax".

The State Customs Committee press service informed "Interfax" that "according to art. 226 of the Customs Code the tapes have been sent to KGB to be examined in order to find out where they contain any data of anti-state character".

The detention took place on **January 27**: customs officers stopped a Hyundai driven by a Ukrainian citizen and searched it. Video tapes with "reports made in Belarus" were found in the car.

A little bit earlier "Interfax-Ukraine" was informed that the tapes contained information for reports about the election campaign in Belarus.

## **TELEVISION AND RADIO MAKE PARTS OF IDEOLOGY**

"Belarusian radio and TV are part of state policy and ideology, they are a powerful communication link", - thinks A.Lukashenka. He considers television to be one of the main ways to realization of political and economic goals of the country. It has a great "influence on the society and everything that happens in the country". The press, radio and television were called a "powerful means of influence on the society".

These statements were made on **January 26** during the ceremony of rewarding of journalists from state radio and TV-channels. The head of the board of directors of the State Broadcasting Company sports broadcasting department Barys Hersten, the head of the department of programme production Uladzimir Dziyakau, an ONT programme presenter Aliaksandar Averkau, a BT reviewer Nina Shoba and the deputy director-general of STV Uladzimir Shpitalnikau received their rewards.

## **"THE NATIONAL TV AND RADIO ARE READY TO FACE INFORMATON ATTACKS"**

"Many people are sure that ideology cannot be privatized and mass media should be controlled by the state, and many states envy us now", - claimed Aliaksandar Lukashenka during the ceremony of presentation of state awards to journalists from Belarusian TV channels on January 26.

At the same time he noted that "we are experiencing some problems with non-governmental mass media". "We know who gives their money and we know how much money they receive ..." "Nowadays Belarus receives a lot of information from abroad, national radio and TV are ready to face and resist information attacks ", - claimed A. Lukashenka.

A. Lukashenka also said that the government supported state mass media. "Only with their help the state can fulfill its main functions: providing political stability and resisting internal and external threats".

## **L. YARMOSHYNA: "INTERNET ABUSE IS A PROBLEM..."**

Nowadays the participants of the election campaign who "use the Internet as a means of propaganda cannot be punished", but "soon the situation will change", - claimed the head of Central Election Commission Lidziya Yarmoshyna in her [interview](#) to "Zvyazda" on **January 26, 2006**.

The head of CEC also warned that distribution of samizdat may cause problems for candidates.

"Internet abuse is a problem typical of many countries where it is widely used. Those states have laws that prevent uncontrolled propaganda through the Internet. I think our country will take into account their experience in this field", - assured L. Yarmoshyna.

## **THE “MAGAZYN POLSKI” IN EMIGRATION” EDITOR-IN-CHIEF CALLED TO THE PUBLIC PROSECUTOR’S OFFICE**

The “Magazyn Polski” In Emigration” Editor-in-Chief Andrzej Paczobut was called to the regional Public Prosecutor’s Office in order to provide certain explanations on **January 26**.

He was told that there had been held an expertise of information, published in two numbers of his periodical edition. The Public Prosecutor wondered if Andrzej Paczobut was the author of these publications. Also, he wanted to know why the output data was absent in the magazine. A. Paczobut refused to provide any explanations at all.

A local tax inspector was present during the talk. She wanted to learn if some Polish journalists had helped the journalist pay out his fine (5.1 million Belarusian rubles) for taking part in an unauthorized picket in 2005.

## **MIECHYSLAU HRYB ASKED TO BE ALLOWED TO MAKE A SPEECH IN “PANARAMA”**

The head of Aliaksandar Kazulin's election campaign headquarters Miechyslau Hryb sent an appeal to the head of the Central Election Committee Lydia Yarmoshyna on **January 26**. He demanded to be allowed to make a speech in the “Panarama” TV programme. He explained his demand by the fact that on January 24 Viktor Sheiman (the head of Aliaksandar Lukashenka's election campaign headquarters) had made a speech there. Among other, it was announced that the heads of other candidates' election campaign headquarters refused to give interviews and comment on the progress in the collection of signatures. M. Hryb referred to article 33 of the Election Code "On creating equal opportunities for all candidates."

## **THE COURT DID NOT CONSIDER THE CLAIM AGAINST “BELPOSHTA”**

The Homiel Regional Court dismissed a complaint, submitted by Uladzimir Nyapomnyashchykh about the refusal of Chyhunachny District Court of Homiel to consider the claim against “Belposhta” on **January 24**. Uladzimir Nyapomnyashchykh wanted to urge “Belposhta” subject to prosecution because he had not managed to subscribe for “Narodnaja Vola” as it had not been included in the “Belposhta” subscription catalogue. The Chyhunachny District Court of Homiel refused to consider the reader's claim referring to the fact that “Belposhta” State Enterprise is located in Minsk. The Homiel Regional Court also refused to do it. Uladzimir Nyapomnyashchykh tried to demand a compensation of 100 million BRB for moral damage.

## **THE PRINT RUN OF “VOLNY HORAD” GOT DETAINED**

The print run of Krychau unregistered newspaper “Volny Horad” got detained at the Belarusian-Russian border on January 13. It was not returned to the distributors yet. The edition's editor-in-chief Syarhey Nyarouny informed BAJ on **January 24** that it hadn't been returned to the distributors. Nevertheless, the readers received their newspaper in time because all the issues were printed again.

On January 13 the print run was detained by customs officers at the "Zvyanchatka" border crossing. The editor-in-chief was delivering the print run from Smolensk in his own

minibus. The minibus was stopped and searched at the border. The print run detention was reasoned by the excessive number of dispatched copies.

### **HOMIEL JOURNALISTS' APPEAL "GOT TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT"**

The Homiel Regional Executive Committee "took into account" the claim of the members of Homiel affiliate of BAJ, dated by January 12, 2006. The claim concerned the fact a journalist A.Paskannaja's accreditation certificate had been taken away. That was Anatol Katsila's (the head of the Ideology Department) response. On **January 21** he claimed that he did not have to give any explanations.

The official document sent to BelaPAN from Piotr Kirychenka, head of Homel Region Executive Committee, said that the decision had been taken because of "violation of terms of accreditation".

However, A.Paskannaja believes, the decision was taken in connection with the fact that she had published some information based on the State Control Committee's press-release informing about the results of harvesting in the region.

### **ANDREI KLIMAU GOT OFFICIALLY NOTIFIED FOR HIS INTERVIEW**

Krupki District Public Prosecutor's Office pronounced a warning to Andrei Klimau (a deputy of the Supreme Soviet of the 13th convocation) on **January 20**. The politician was warned about violating the law. The warning was reasoned by his interview to the Internet portal [www.euramost.org](http://www.euramost.org) entitled "I am often asked about Milinkievich."

The court claims that Klimau violated the law by speaking on behalf of Andrei Klimau's non-registered movement and causing civil unrest, - informed the BelaPAN News Agency. The Public Prosecutor Ihar Chernel, who signed the warning, stressed that the Criminal Code supposed responsibility for organizing and participating in actions that cause civil unrest and for discredit of the Republic of Belarus.

A. Klimau is serving his sentence in the village of Krupki (Minsk Region). On June 10, 2005 the Central District Court of Minsk sentenced him to a 1.5-year term for organizing a protest action in Minsk on March 25, 2005.

*Prepared by the BAJ Monitoring Service*

## The Belarusian Association of Journalists

### MASS MEDIA WEEK IN BELARUS

#### Info-Posting No. 5

*January 29 – February 05, 2006*

*More and more media-related news and analytical materials are dedicated to the electoral problematic. Thus, there appeared the first results of media monitoring activities, implemented by the Belarusian Association of Journalists on the eve of the Presidential Election. They show the biased character of covering the election campaign by the state-owned and state-supported media. The journalists of non-governmental media are never invited to attend official meetings, dedicated to the electoral process as well as to the preparation to the 3<sup>rd</sup> All-Belarusian Congress, arranged by the government,*

*There became clearer the perspectives of starting new information channels, which are supposed to bring the alternative information to the country's residents, including the objective news, regarding the current election campaign. Thus, it is expected that two radio and TV broadcasting projects – the EU TV and Radio Project and the "Radio Racyja" will be commenced in February 2006. On the other hand, the Minister of Information of Belarus Uladzimir Rusakievich announced the opening of a Sport TV Channel in the nearest future.*

*As before, the non-governmental press meets serious counteraction on the part of the state authorities. The list of prosecuted newspapers during the reporting period includes "Narodnaya Vola," "Tovarisch," and "Khimik."*

*More detailed information about these and other events can be found in our weekly Info-posting below.*

#### **Contents:**

- *The Candidates for Presidency Will Deliver Speeches on TV and Radio*
- *Anton Filimonau's Relatives Made a Public Appeal*
- *A. Pislalnik's Articles Get Considered by the Public Prosecutor's Office*
- *etc.*

### **THE "KHEMIEK" NEWSPAPER WILL NOT BE DELIVERED TO SUBSCRIBERS**

Starting from **February 10** Navapolatsk Post Office will not be distributing the independent regional newspaper "Khimik" anymore. It was written in the official letter sent to the newspaper's editorial office by Alena Klimava, the head of Navapolatsk Communications Center. A similar notification was sent to "Khimik" from Polatsk Regional Communications Center. The Center's head Mr. Paramonau asked "to overrule" the distribution contract for the year of 2006.

The cancellation was explained by "low selling rate" and, reportedly, a high discarding percentage of "Khimik". Polatsk Regional Communications Center did not comment on its decision.

The editorial staff informed BAJ that they were going to continue printing the edition and were trying to create their own distribution service to deliver the newspaper to subscribers. A bit later "Khimik" is going to create a subscription system of its own.

It should be reminded that starting from January 1, 2006 "Khimik" has been available to subscribers only, because the local affiliate of "Vitsiebskabsajuzdruk" refused to sell the edition at its news stalls.

## **IS "THE LAW OF THE POWERFUL" MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE LAW ON PRESS?**

On **February 3** Yanina Maslava, a "Hazeta Slonimskaja" independent newspaper journalist was not allowed in the local recreation center, where delegates for the Third All-Belarusian Gathering were to be chosen.

The security guard referred to an order of Valery Badzej (the head of personnel department of the District Executive committee) who said that those who "were not wanted at the meeting" could not be let in. Yanina Maslava asked Mr. Badzej to comment on his order but he refused to do it and sent her to the deputy head of the District Executive Committee Anatol Tsyarenin. Yanina Maslava reminded him that he was breaking the Law on Press, but he responded: "I know that I am breaking the law, but there is another law, that allows me not to let you be present at the meeting: it is the law of the powerful".

## **A NEW SPORT TV CHANNEL ABOUT TO APPEAR IN BELARUS**

The Minister of Information of Belarus Uladzimir Rusakievich announced the opening of a Sport TV Channel in the nearest future on **February 3**. He emphasized that the state TV channels have activated the broadcasting of sport events since recently. In particular, the Belarusian State TV and Radio Company broadcast all large international sport competitions, which take place on the territory of Belarus.

## **THE CANDIDATES FOR PRESIDENCY WILL DELIVER SPEECHES ON TV AND RADIO**

The Central Election Committee head Lidziya Yarmoshyna informed the public that the candidates for presidency will have an opportunity to present their election programs on TV and radio. According to L. Yarmoshyna, "all nation-wide state-owned newspapers are obliged to publish the candidates' election programs on a first-served basis." "It is planned to give the candidates an hour on the First National TV Channel and another hour on the radio to deliver their election speeches," – stressed L. Yarmoshyna.

All the speeches will be broadcast on working days. The time of broadcasting will be settled by means of casting lots, as reported the BelTA News Agency on **February 3**.

## **BAJ PRESENTED THE FIRST RESULTS OF MEDIA MONITORING**

On **February 2**, BAJ presented the first bulletin from the series "Mass Media Monitoring: "Covering the presidential election 2006 in Belarusian mass media" which is entitled "The election topic and political subjects in Belarusian mass media before the registration of candidates" (from January 16 till January 27, 2006). Moreover, "An analytical monitoring of the violation of the rights of mass media" since January 16, 2005 till February 1, 2006 was also presented to journalists. Both documents can be found on the site of BAJ ([www.baj.by](http://www.baj.by)) in the "Choice-2006".



The programmes of three national channels, several regional BT programmes (in Mahileu and Hrodna), the First Radio Channel programme "Radiofact" and a number of state and independent newspapers were analyzed. The conclusion was that the "calm" election campaign as covered in the state mass media is focused on A.Lukashenka while the opposition is practically ignored. Independent mass media present various points of view. Nevertheless some independent editions seem to concentrate on only one alternative candidate.

### **ANTON FILIMONAU'S RELATIVES MADE A PUBLIC APPEAL**

Anton Filimonau (Veranika Charkasava's son) has spent a month in the confinement cell. During this period there has not been a single investigation of his case (money forgery). The public appeal was made by Diana Charkasava and Uladzimir Myaleshka - Anton's grand-parents. They draw attention to the fact that the youth is the only one of all the suspects that is still detained. During this time he lost 7 kilos that can lead to "irreversible consequences and even to disability" because he has heart and lung problems. Moreover, Anton's relatives say that the police admitted that some people who were not connected with his case were allowed to visit Anton in the confinement cell.

Several dozens of Belarusian journalists put their signatures under an appeal to Mikalaj Kulikou, Public Prosecutor of Minsk with a request to change the restrain measure for Anton Filimonau and release him from the lock-up ward. The campaign of collecting signatures was initiated by Sviatlana Zavadzkaja, a wife of Dzmitry Zavadzki, an ORT cameraman and a BAJ member, who disappeared in 2000.

### **MORE NEWS ON TV AND RADIO BROADCASTING TO BELARUS WILL BE KNOWN IN MID-FEBRUARY**

Moscow Branch of RTVi Channel announced on **February 1** that there will be known more details on the independent TV broadcasting to Belarus in mid-February. The TV channel is a member of a consortium that won in the European Commission's tender and obtained the right of TV and radio broadcasting to Belarus. By now, it is known that the first programs will be dedicated to the coming Presidential election. With the time passing, the radio programs will be broadcast on the daily basis, while the TV programs will be presented once a week. It is planned to broadcast the programs in Russian and Belarusian. The RTVi TV programs can be viewed with the use of a satellite receiver. Also, they are relayed by some cable operators in Belarus.

### **JOURNALISTS FROM INDEPENDENT MASS MEDIA ARE NOT ALLOWED AT ACTIONS CONNECTED WITH THE ELECTION**

Another stage of creation of election committees was carried out without journalists from independent mass media. Neither journalists from "Hantsavitski chas," nor the people chosen by citizens to become members of election committees were not allowed at the meeting of the Executive Committee on January 31, because they were not informed about the time of the meeting.

Since January 27 till January 31 the journalists were told they should ask Mikhalai Zazheika about the time of the meeting. He said they should ask Mikhalai Valynets (deputy head of the Executive Committee) who, in his turn, sent them to Uladzimir Stolyar. It

turned out that the meeting was held on January 31 and lasted for 30 minutes. 250 protocols were to be studied during that time.

### **A.PISALNIK'S ARTICLES ARE CHECKED BY THE PUBLIC PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE**

**On January 31**, "Glos znad Niemna in exile"'s editor-in-chief Andrzej Pisalnik was called to the assistant of the regional prosecutor Veniyamin Lukyanau. It happened after his articles in "Glos znad Niemna in exile" and in "Magazyn Polski in emigration" had been studied. The journalist refused to give any explanations concerning the articles.

### **"NARODNAJA VOLA" HAS PROBLEMS WITH DISTRIBUTION**

**On January 31** distributors of "Narodnaja Vola" faced some problems in Minsk. The edition was being distributed for free by UDP activists in the pedestrian subway of "Pushkinskaja" station. The police demanded that they should leave the place. The distributors refused to do it and the police called for reinforcement. As a result, the distributors had to continue their action in another place. They gave out about 1000 issues.

### **A PENSIONER WANTS TO READ "NARODNAJA VOLA"**

A Minsk pensioner Halina Hancharyk turned to the Kastychnitski District Court asking to recognize her right to access information in "Narodnaja Vola" which she cannot buy in news stalls or subscribe for. The response was that the complaint should be sent to the Leninski District Court. But this court demanded to pay 5 base amounts for the suit. The pensioner could not pay this sum of money and the complaint was returned to her, - informed the site of the UDP ([ucpb.org](http://ucpb.org)) on January 31.

### **THE POLICE CREATE OBSTACLES FOR DISTRIBUTION OF "TOVARISHCH" AND "NARODNAJA VOLA"**

On January 30 Zhlobin police stopped the car of Uladzimir Katsora (one of the activists) and took away 694 issues of "Tovarishch" and 282 issues of "Narodnaja Vola". At about 9 p.m. on the route Minsk-Homel the police stopped his car again and detained him because he refused to let them search his car without a protocol. Part of the newspapers' print-run was found in the car. U.Katsora was delivering free issues of the newspapers to Homel.

On January 31 "Tovarishch"'s editor-in-chief Syarhey Vaznyak sent a complaint to the head of Zhlobin District Police Office Aleh Praharenka and asked to return the issues. Both newspapers are legally printed, they have the necessary date-line and a mark "For advertising matters".

It has been the third detention of U.Katsora in Zhlobin District after the start of the election campaign.

*Prepared by the BAJ Monitoring Service*

## The Belarusian Association of Journalists

### MASS MEDIA WEEK IN BELARUS

#### Info-Posting No. 6

*February 6-12, 2006*

*More and more media news are related to the use of media in the election campaign. Within the reporting period the Central Election Committee of Belarus determined the rules of presenting the candidates' for presidency election statements in the state-owned media. However, the main generally discussed issue was connected to the statement delivered by the Central Election Committee head Ms. Lidziya Yarmoshyna. She notified all candidates that it was forbidden to use the non-governmental media in order to present their election programs. The Belarusian Association of Journalists sent a protest letter to Lidziya Yarmoshyna with a number of questions, related to her dubious explanations of Belarus' legislature.*

*As before, the police did its best to counteract the distribution of unbiased information materials. Thus, a local councilor Yury Hlushakou was detained in Homiel for distributing caricature leaflets. Uladzimir Levanieuski was fined 3 base amounts (approximately USD 40) for distributing the "Pradprymalnik" bulletin.*

*A number of programs on "the Polish issue," presented by the Belarusian State TV company, met broad civil response in the country. Some civil activists appealed to the police and the Public Prosecutors' offices with a demand to evaluate the contents of such provocative programs.*

*More detailed information about these and other events can be found in our weekly Info-posting below.*

#### **Contents:**

- *The "Solidarnasc" Newspaper Got Awarded the Gerd Bucerius Prize*
- *Aksana Novikava's Appeal Is Sent to KGB*
- *Lidziya Yarmozhyna: "The Independent Mass Media Will Account for Everything in Case of Any Legal Abuse..."*
- *BT Accuses the Polish Embassy of Espionage*
- *etc.*

### **YURY HLUSHAKOU GOT ACCUSED OF ILLEGAL PRODUCTION OF PRINTED MATERIALS**

A Homiel City Councilor Yury Hlushakou was urged to come to the Public Prosecutor's office of Chyhunachny city district of Homiel on **February 10**.

A deputy public prosecutor Aliaksei Skarachod inquired the deputy on the nature of 11,000 caricature leaflets with the images of Belarusian state TV presenters, which had been seized from him some time before. Consequently, there was composed a protocol, accusing Yury Hlushakou of "illegal production and distribution of printed production that can cause harm to the state and civil order" (article 172, part 3 of the Belarus' Code on Administrative Torts).

## **BAJ SENT AN INQUIRY TO LYDIA YARMOSHYNA**

On **February 9** BAJ sent an inquiry to the head of the Central Election Commission Lydia Yarmoshyna. According to BAJ, her statement that using independent mass media during the election campaign "will be regarded as moneyed assistance which is forbidden by the law" is only an interpretation of the ambiguous Electoral Code and contradicts the legislation on mass media.

BAJ stresses that art. 33 of the Election Code gives the Central Election Commission the right to define the order of using only state mass media during the election campaign. But it does not concern independent mass media.

BAJ stresses that according to art. 3 of the Law on press and other mass media: "Belarusian citizens have the right to search, get and distribute information through mass media and to express their opinion and thoughts".

The organization reminds that according to art. 58 of the Basic Law nobody can be made to resign their rights. Forcing journalists to distribute or to refuse to distribute information is a violation of the freedom of mass media according to art.48 of the Law on mass media.

In connection with it BAJ asked L. Yarmoshyna to explain:

- Whether her statement was a personal idea or the official position of the Central Election Commission;
- If it is the official position of the Central Election Commission BAJ asks to explain what is meant by "using independent mass media"; what laws forbid publishing information about candidates or interviews with them ; according to what kind of laws will mass media have to account for their actions. Let us remind you that on February 8 Lydia Yarmoshyna claimed that "the selective legislation does not give candidates an opportunity to use independent mass media during their election campaign. It is regarded to be moneyed assistance which is forbidden by the law" and that "in case of any violation of the law it would be independent mass media to account for everything".

## **THE "SALIDARNASC" NEWSPAPER GOT AWARDED GERD BUCERIUS PRIZE**

The "Salidarnasc" weekly was announced a winner of Gerd Bucenius Prize for the year of 2006, as reported the Radio Liberty on **February 9, 2006**. The awarding ceremony will take place in Hamburg on May 19, 2006.

The prestigious prize was founded by "Die Zeit" newspaper (Germany) and "Fritt Ord" NGO (Norway) in 1999. It is aimed at awarding the best East European periodical editions and journalists.

The "Salidarnasc" newspaper was founded in 1991. Its circulation amounted to 5,400 copies. However, the periodical editorial announced about the termination of its publishing as the "Belposhta" and "Belsayuzdruk" State distributing enterprises cancelled their agreements with "Salidarnasc" at the end of 2005.

## **AKSANA NOVIKAVA'S APPEAL IS SENT TO KGB**

Aksana Novikava was informed that the Republican Office of Public Prosecutor had sent her appeal to the Pershamaiski District Office of Public Prosecutor and then to Minsk and Minsk District KGB department. Aksana demanded to start a criminal case connected with Yauhen Novikau's programme "Politicheskije Tehnologii". On January 12 some intention of NATO, Poland and Lithuania to start a war against Belarus was mentioned in the programme. A. Novikava asked to start a criminal case according to part 1 of art.123 of the Criminal Code of Belarus (war propaganda) which may lead to a 3-years' sentence.

Together with the information concerning her claim A. Novikava was informed that the criminal case against her was restarted (it was closed in summer 2005). The case is connected with the fact of using a forged passport during her stay in Dzyarzhynski District, - informed BelaPAN on **February 9**.

### **LIDZIYA YARMOSHYN: "THE INDEPENDENT MASS MEDIA WILL ACCOUNT FOR EVERYTHING IN CASE OF ANY LEGAL ABUSE..."**

"The electoral legislation does not give candidates an opportunity to use independent mass media during their election campaign. It is regarded to be moneyed assistance which is forbidden by the law," - stressed Lydia Yarmoshyna, the head of the Central Election Commission at a meeting with journalists on **February 8**. She added that in case of any law violation it would be independent mass media to account for everything. The Central Election Commission has approved the decision about the order of using state mass media by candidates during the election campaign.

According to the legislation, candidates have the right to publish their election programmes in such newspapers as "Belaruskaja Niva," "Zvyazda," " Narodnaja Hazeta," "Respublika," "Znamya Yunosti," "Sovetskaja Byelorussia," "7 Dnej" and they can also deliver their election speech twice on the First national TV channel (BT) and on the First State Radio Channel. The text of the program should not exceed five typewritten pages. Pre-election platforms are to be presented till February 26. They will be published in their turn.

Each candidate's election speech may last up to 30 minutes. They will be broadcasted on weekdays: from 18 o'clock till 19 o'clock on TV and from 8 o'clock till 9 o'clock on the radio. Date and time of broadcasting will be assigned after a casting of lots. All performances will be recorded and broadcast later. The Central Election Commission representatives emphasize that candidates have the right to decide what exactly they are going to say but their speeches must correspond to the requirements of the Electoral Code of Belarus: they should not contain war propaganda, appeals to a violent coup d'etat, to infringement of territorial integrity of the country, to social enmity, religious animosity and race-hatred. There should not be any insults and slander concerning officials and the other candidates. Otherwise, the head of any mass medium may refuse to broadcast the candidate's speech.

### **A COMPLAINT ABOUT AROUSING RACE HATRED IS SENT TO THE OFFICE OF PUBLIC PROSECUTOR**

**On February 8** Andrej Pachobut (an activist of "The Union of Poles in Belarus" and the editor-in-chief of "Magazyn Polski") turned to the Republican Office of Public Prosecutor. He asked for explanations concerning the contents of the programme "Commentarij Dnya" that was shown on the First National Channel. A. Pachobut demanded to make the author of the programme Yury Prakopau give account for arousing national hatred.

“The national flag of Poland was shown covered with black stars. It is disrespect for the national symbols of the neighbouring country. I am an ethnic Pole and it insulted me. I think such things arouse national hatred”, - claimed A.Pachobut to BelaPAN. The founder of the Union of Poles Tadeush Havin is also going to go to law.

## **BT ACCUSES THE POLISH EMBASSY OF ESPIONAGE**

On **February 7** an idea that "fixed-post spies from Polish national special services have long been working at the Polish Embassy" was pronounced in the programme "Commentarij Dnya" on the First National TV channel. It was said that "they were spying using their diplomatic privilege and performing actions aimed at interference into the Republic's internal affairs". This idea was pronounced by a person presented as a KGB counterespionage department member.

On February 8 Monika Sadkowska (the Embassy Press-Secretary) claimed to BelaPAN that such statements correspond to the general policy of Belarusian authorities as regards the neighbouring country. "Belarusian authorities have already tried to present Poland as an enemy country in some other programmes. Similar accusations were also pronounced to Embassies of some other EU member states". Ms. Sadkowska supposed that all this "was in some way connected with the presidential election which is to be held in March".

## **THE AMBASSADOR OF LITHUANIA REFUTED THE INFORMATION PRINTED IN "ZVIAZDA" AND "RESPUBLIKA"**

The ambassador of Lithuania refuted the information printed in "Zviazda" and "Respublika" on **February 7**. It was written that militants for the Belarusian opposition were being trained in Lithuania. "I would like to claim that all the statements about militants for the Belarusian opposition being trained in our country are not true", - is said in the letter written by P.Vaitsakunas and sent to "Zviazda"'s editor-in-chief Uladzimir Narkevich. A similar letter has also been sent to other ambassadors and to the editor-in-chief of "Respublika" Anatol Lemyashonak.

## **THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF "BARANAVITSKAJA HAZETA" FINED FOR AN ARTICLE ABOUT THE SOLIDARITY DAY**

**On February 6**, Uladzimir Hundar, the Editor-in-chief of "Baranavitskaja Hazeta" was fined by the Court of Baranavichy and Baranavichy District. He was returned guilty of violating part1 of art.167 of the Administrative Code of Belarus (organizing or participating in an unauthorized mass action) and fined for 20 base amounts (580 thousand BRB). The reason for it was an article containing a photo from an action dedicated to the Day of Solidarity. The article was published in an independent edition "Intex-press". A Baranavichy opposition activist Syarhey Marchyk was also fined for participation in that action.

## **A SLOVAK JOURNALIST FORBIDDEN TO ENTER BELARUS**

The Belarusian Embassy in Bratislava refused to give a visa to a journalist from a Slovak newspaper "Sme" Mirek Toda. He was going to cover the presidential election in our country.

According to the Belarusian consul Antanina Struneuskaja, the journalist asked for a private visa but he was going to do his job in Belarus. She claimed that he had to get his accreditation first and added that she might change her decision after that. Meanwhile, Mr. Toda says that in October he managed to visit Minsk using a private visa regardless of the fact that he had mentioned in the questionnaire that he was a journalist from "Sme", - informed radio "Liberty" on **February 6**.

### **ONT ACTION IS NOT PROPAGANDA**

The Central Election Commission of Belarus does not consider the ONT action "For Belarus" as propaganda. Mikhalai Lazavik (the CEC secretary) informed BelaPAN about it on **February 6**. M.Lazavik thinks this phrase is not propaganda because it does not contain any personal names. The CEC secretary noted that the action "For Belarus!" is aimed at arousing interest in the election campaign.

The action started in Hrodna on February 5 and it will last for 6 weeks. Russian and Belarusian pop singers will take part in it and give concerts in all region centers. During the concert people were many times asked to "make the right choice" and vote "For Belarus". The appeal "For Belarus!" was made use of during the preparation for the referendum that let A.Lukasheka run for the President for the third time.

### **ULADZIMIR LEVANEUSKI GOT FINED AGAIN**

The Administrative Committee of Leninski City District of Hrodna issued a statement on penalizing Uladzimir Levanieuski for distributing the "Pradprymalnik" bulletin **at the beginning of February**.

The civil activist was accused of distributing the bulletin without the output data that causes harm to the state and civil order on December 22, 2005. U. Levanieuski was fined three base amounts (approximately USD 40) for breaking article 172, part 3 of the Code on Administrative Torts. It is the second fine for the bulletin distribution this year.

*Prepared by the BAJ Monitoring Service*

## **The Belarusian Association of Journalists**

### **MASS MEDIA WEEK IN BELARUS**

#### **Info-Posting No. 7**

**February 13 – 19, 2006**

*The Central Electoral Committee settled the air-time for the candidates for Presidency on the state radio and TV. However, the speeches are to be broadcast as a record. The Central Electoral Committee turned down the proposals of several initiative groups to put the speeches in the live mode and to arrange TV-debates.*

*The recent stage of the election campaign has been covered by the state media in the distinctly biased manner. The facts got reflected in the press monitoring, held by the Belarusian Association of Journalists.*

*There appeared the Public Prosecutor's response to the public appeals with demands to change the measure of detention for Anton Filimonau, a son of the murdered lady journalist V. Charkasava. The official institution didn't find good reasons for releasing the teen-ager from imprisonment.*

*More detailed information about these and other events can be found in our weekly Info-posting below.*

- *A "Gazeta Wyborcza" Newspaper Correspondent Got Banned Entrance to Belarus*
- *Photo Correspondents Banned to Attend the Registration Ceremony of Candidates for Presidency*
- *A Journalist Not Allowed to Attend St. Valentine's Day Celebration at a Local Recreation Center*
- *The "Narodnaya Vola" and "Tovarisch" Editors-in-Chief Appealed to the Minister of Interior Uladzimir Navumau*

#### **A POLISH JOURNALIST BANNED ENTRANCE TO BELARUS**

On February 19 a journalist from "Gazeta Wyborcza" Waclaw Radziwinowicz was not allowed to visit Belarus. Belarusian customs officers informed him that he did not have the right to enter the country. However, Mr. Radziwinowicz had an annual Belarusian visa and a journalist accreditation till April 2006.

The journalist was making his trip by train going from Kuznica Bialostocka to Hrodna. At the border his passport was taken away and in Hrodna he was told he could not enter Belarus. The journalist was made to depart to Bialystok on the same train.

W. Radziwinowicz visited Belarus many times and wrote articles about it. Until February 19 there had not been any problems of the kind. This time he was going to collect some material about the Presidential election campaign and, reportedly, to interview A. Lukashenka.



## INTERVIEWING OF DISTRICT OFFICIALS IS TO BE AUTHORIZED BY THE STATE IDEOLOGISTS

Sciapan Yushkievich, the head of Kholmiech Village Council (Rechytsa district, Homiel region) refused to give information to an independent journalist Iryna Makavietskaya. The latter was collecting data for her article in "Narodnaya Vola." "I don't like your newspaper. I am fond of the present authorities. Therefore, I won't give any information to you," – retorted the local official. S. Yushkievich didn't react on the journalist's arguments that his actions violated the current Press Law.

I. Makavietskaya made a phone call to the Rechytsa District Executive Committee on **February 19, 2006**. Surprisingly, a receptionist stated that in accordance with "the new rules for journalists" a correspondent has to inform the District Executive Committee prior to meeting or interviewing local officials. In particular, if I. Makavietskaya would like to have a talk with the head of Kholmiech Village Council, she should phone the Ideological Department head at the Rechytsa District Council first.

## THE DEPUTY ATTORNEY GENERAL COMMENTED ON THE CASES OF VERANIKA CHARKASAVA AND VASIL HRODNIKAU

The Office of Public Prosecutor "is most likely to check the arguments of Vasil Hrodnikau's brother once again." Mikalai Hrodneu doubts that his brother died a natural death. This statement was made by the deputy Attorney General Viktor Prus, - informed "Respublica" on **February 17**. Mr. Prus said that he was also worried about the fact that the murderers of Veranika Charkasava were still free. But he denied any connection between this case and the detention of Veranika Charkasava's son Anton. He stressed that he cannot "interfere in the investigation".

Mr. Prus is worried about the fact that the murderers of Veranika Charkasava are still free, - informs "Respublica." The deputy Attorney General claimed that he "always remembers how much responsibility is laid on the law machinery and on him personally." "- The idea that Anton Filimonau is kept in the detention cell because the authorities want to accuse him of the murder of his mother has been distributed through the Internet. But Anton was detained according to art.221 of the Criminal Code (producing and distributing forged banknotes). This is a serious crime and the youngster has to stay in the detention cell. I understand Anton's grandparents but I cannot interfere in the case", - claimed V. Prus.

## THE CENTRAL ELECTION COMMITTEE HAS ALLOCATED AIRTIME FOR THE CANDIDATES FOR PRESIDENCY

On February 21 and 22 Belarusians will be able to see the first speeches of presidential candidates on TV. On **February 17** the Central Election Commission allocated airtime to each candidate. According to the Election Code, each candidate will be able to make two 30-minute speeches on the First National TV Channel and on the First Radio Channel. The organizers of A.Milinkevich's and A.Kazulin's election campaigns asked to broadcast the speeches live but the head of the Central Election Committee claimed that that possibility was not mentioned in the Election Code.

## PHOTO CORRESPONDENTS BANNED TO ATTEND THE REGISTRATION CEREMONY OF CANDIDATES FOR PRESIDENCY

Neither the Belarusian, nor foreign photo correspondents were permitted to attend the registration ceremony of candidates for presidency that took place at the Republic Palace on **February 17, 2006**. Reportedly, the BelTA state-owned news agency was the only organization, accredited to make photos during the ceremony. It should be mentioned that the Presidential Administration Press Service was responsible for accrediting journalists to the event.

## **BORDER GUARDS CONFISCATED A JOURNALIST'S PASSPORT**

The Belarusian border guards confiscated a passport, belonging to Andrzej Pisalnik, the Editor-in-Chief of "Glos znad Niemna" in Exile" magazine, on **February 16, 2006**.

A. Pisalnik was coming back home from Warsaw, where he took part in a meeting of the Council on the Poles' Diaspora Affairs. Moreover, during the check at the customs house, the officers seized from him the meeting materials, information leaflets from the museum of Warsaw Rebel in 1944 as well as some other publications of the Poles' associations abroad.

A. Pisalnik was told that his passport would be passed to the Department of Visas and Authorizations, as there expired a stamp in his passport, permitting his foreign trips.

## **THE PUBLIC PROSECUTOR SEES NO REASON FOR CHANGING THE MEASURE OF DETENTION FOR V. CHARKASAVA'S SON**

Minsk Public Prosecutor's Office sees no reason for changing the measure of detention for Anton Filimonau. It was written in the letter signed by the deputy prosecutor L. Litviniuk on **February 16, 2006**. The letter was sent to BAJ and to Sviatlana Zavadskaja who started collecting signatures to support the persecuted youngster. A letter containing several dozen signatures of Veranika Charkasava's colleagues had been sent to the Public Prosecutor on February 1.

"Taking into account that Anton Filimonau is accused of a serious crime described in part 1 of art. 221 of the Criminal Code, there is no reason to change the measure of detention for him according to art. 126", - is said in the reply from the Office of Public Prosecutor. "According to the results of the medical check the accused may remain in the confinement cell".

It was said in the appeal that the detention can lead to irreversible consequences and even to disability because the youngster had heart and lung problems. Veranika's colleagues were sure that Anton would not hide from the court and asked to release him. It should be reminded that the 16-year-old boy was detained on December 27 as a suspect in the case of counterfeiting the Belarusian money. Several 5 and 10 thousand banknotes were taken away from him and four his acquaintances. A criminal case against them was started according to art. 221 of the Criminal Code of Belarus. Moreover, they had to spend 3 days in the confinement cell. According to Anton's grandmother Diana Charkasava, only her grandson was arrested despite the fact that the adults were involved in the case. Anton was left behind the bars, whilst the others were allowed to go home.

## **A JOURNALIST NOT ALLOWED TO ATTEND ST. VALENTINE'S DAY CELEBRATION AT A LOCAL RECREATION CENTER**

On **February 14**, a "Hazeta Slonimskaja" photo-correspondent Tatiana Plakhetka was not allowed to visit the celebration of Valentine's day in the local recreation center. It was the order of the centre's director Mikhalai Adamchyk. He said that the journalists would not be let in until she got a ticket. T.Plakhetka left a complaint in the complaint book.

## **THE "NARODNAYA VOLA" AND "TOVARISCH" EDITORS-IN-CHIEF APPEALED TO THE MINISTER OF INTERIOR ULADZIMIR NAVUMAU**

The editors-in-chief of "Narodnaya Vola" and "Tovarisch" independent newspapers Josif Siaredzich and Siarhej Vazniak sent an open appeal to the Minister of Interior Uladzimir Navumau on **February 14**. They proposed the Minister to help in arranging an educational seminar with the participation of heads of district police stations on the essential norms of the Belarusian Press Law. The Editors noted that the appeal was caused by "the systematic cases of legal abuse" in relation to the "Narodnaya Vola" and "Tovarisch" periodicals on the part of the police officers. The editors stated that the police regularly confiscated the periodicals, partially disseminated for free, and detained their distributors for no good reason. J. Siaredzich and S. Vazniak expressed their hope that the proposed educational seminar would allow to prevent eventual incidents of the kind in the future.

## **THE US EMBASSY EXPRESSED INDIGNANCE AT THE BELARUSIAN STATE TV STATEMENTS**

The US Embassy in Belarus made an official statement on **February 14**. The US diplomatic representation expressed especial concern regarding the articles, TV and radio programs, recently broadcast and printed by the state-owned companies, which contained deceitful statements and conclusions in relation to the US government. The most serious indignation was caused by "The Agent 590" TV program, presented by the Belarusian State TV on **February 7, 2006**. The program author falsely blamed the US government for "financing the actions, aimed at discrediting Belarus at the international level." The US Embassy in Belarus has emphasized that all diplomatic activity is held openly and transparently, and that the Belarusian government regularly receives information on the programs and actions, implemented by the Embassy. Also, the US Embassy expressed anxiety at the fact the Belarusian government continued keeping monopoly on informing the Belarusian society.

## **BAJ MONITORING: THE COVERAGE OF ELECTION CAMPAIGN BY THE STATE MEDIA IS BIASED**

The Belarusian Association of Journalists presented *MEDIA MONITORING: "2006 Presidential Election Coverage in the Belarusian Mass Media" – Political Subjects' Representation in the Belarusian Media Prior to the Candidates' Registration (January 28 — February 10, 2006)*.

The conclusions were as follows:

As previously, the State owned electronic and print media imposed the positive image of just one potential candidate for the Presidency.

The alternative pretenders to the Presidency were practically absent in the same media. In a way an exception was A. Milinkievich, an extremely negative image of whom the State-run media started creating.

At the same time the State owned electronic media increased the time devoted to a non-personified subject “opposition”, which is portrayed in a negative or very negative light.

There increased also the number of media effects in the State owned electronic and print media.

The appearance of new and widely advertised TV projects aired on prime time is indicative of the beginning of campaign launched against the Belarusian opposition and its leader. These projects show also that the election campaign in favor of the current President has stepped into more active phase.

Independent press demonstrated restrained approach towards the representation of potential candidates. In addition, it gave a quite wide picture of the election process and its different actors.

*Prepared by the BAJ Monitoring Service*

## The Belarusian Association of Journalists

### MASS MEDIA WEEK IN BELARUS

#### Info-Posting No. 8

**February 20 – 26, 2006**

*The main topics in the Belarusian media field within the reporting period were connected with the “caricature” scandal that developed owing to the “Zhoda” weekly as well as the counteraction in distributing campaigning materials of alternative candidates for presidency and the highly critical contents of their TV speeches.*

*The “Zhoda” weekly re-printed caricatures on the Prophet Mohamed, which arose mass protests in the Muslim world. Consequently, the periodical has faced the danger of closure. There has been initiated a criminal case upon the fact of publishing the caricatures and there was held a police search at the “Zhoda” editorial office.*

*Two informational projects for Belarus started their activities within the reporting period – “The European Radio for Belarus” and “Radio “Racyja.”*

*More detailed information about these and other events can be found in our weekly Info-posting below.*

- *The Central Election Committee Head Replied to BAJ*
- *BAJ Presented the Newest Press Monitoring Results*
- *The Programs of “Rossija” TV Channel Will Be Overridden in Belarus*
- *The Investigation on Veranika Charkasava’s Case Got Renewed*
- *etc.*
- 

#### **“THE EUROPEAN RADIO FOR BELARUS” STARTED BROADCASTING PROGRAMS**

“The European Radio for Belarus” started broadcasting its programs on **February 26**. Its informational program “A Window to Europe” is transmitted by “The Baltic Waves” radio station at a wavelength of 612 kHz from 8 am till 9 am on the daily basis. The radio programs can be found at [www.belradio.fm](http://www.belradio.fm).

The first one-hour air included a news program as well as such mini-programs as “The Topic of the Day,” “The Calendar,” “Have Your Say,” “Show-biz,” “The European Salad Bowl” and others. One of the project coordinators – Dzmitry Novikau – informed the Radio Liberty that the radiostation would major in the informational and musical programs. It is mainly aimed at the young audience. Apart from that, the RTVi Russian TV Channel, broadcasting its programs from abroad has started presenting a weekly half an hour program under the same title – “A Window to Europe.” It is broadcast on Sundays at 5 pm (Minsk time) with repeats on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. The programs for Belarus will be prepared in Cologne (Germany).

## **“NARODNAYA VOLA” DISTRIBUTORS GOT DETAINED IN VICIEBSK**

The police detained two distributors of a non-governmental periodical “Narodnaya Vola” – Dzianis Dzianisau and Maksim Volkau, who distributed the newspaper in the city center. They were convoyed to the local police station. The policemen asked the distributors for explanations of their actions. Afterwards, the police officials informed the distributors they would pass the copies of “Narodnaya Vola” and the police protocol with explanations to the Public Prosecutor’s Office that will have to decide if to punish D. Dzianisau and M. Volkau or not, as reported the Radio Liberty on **February 26**.

## **ISSUES OF “GLOS ZNAD NIEMNA” ABROAD” CONFISCATED IN MINSK**

**On February 25**, 25 issues of “Glos znad Niemna” abroad” were confiscated by the police in Minsk. They were found during the search of the car of the edition’s editor-in-chief Andrej Pachobut and his colleagues Jusef Pazhetski and Anton Borys. The special police officers explained that they had been informed that the journalists were transporting weapon. No weapon was found and the car was taken to Frunzenski District Police Office. A protocol was drawn up but the issues were not returned because they did not contain any date line.

## **THE CENTRAL ELECTION COMMITTEE HEAD REPLIED TO BAJ**

The Belarusian Association of Journalists received a reply to its inquiry from Lidziya Yarmoshyna, the Head of Central Election Committee of Belarus on **February 24, 2006**. BAJ asked the official to explain the rules of using non-governmental media by the candidates for Presidency.

The CEC Chairperson noted in her reply that according to article 48 of the Electoral Code of Belarus, if the candidates for Presidency publish their electoral programs in the non-governmental media as well as if they distribute the newspapers for free, it can be regarded as “providing material support to the candidates for Presidency.” However, L. Yarmoshyna added that “the Central Election Committee wouldn’t adopt any documents regarding the use of non-governmental media in the election campaign, since the latter are not mentioned in the Belarusian Election Code.”

## **"ZHODA" IS UNDER THREAT OF CLOSURE**

The Ministry of Information pronounced a warning to "Zhoda" according to art. 5 of the Law on Press and other Mass Media for the publication of caricatures of Prophet Mohammed in issue No. 6 of **February 18-26, 2006**. The newspaper has been warned for the second time this year and that is why it is now under threat of closure. According to BelTA, on February 23 the Office of Public prosecutor made a statement concerning the publication and sent appeals to the Ministry of Information asking to close the newspaper.

According to the head of the department of information and communication of the Office of Public Prosecutor Andrej Shved, the editorial staff of "Zhoda" violated art. 5 that forbids the usage of mass media in order to arouse national, social or religious animosity. Andrej Shved claimed that "the publication of caricatures insults religious feelings of Muslims, whereas Belarus has always been characterized by toleration".

A. Shved also reminded that a criminal case had been started in connection with the publication according to part 1 of art. 130 of the Criminal Code. Only 6 criminal cases were started according to this article in the past 5 years. Andrej Shved stressed that Belarus is the only country where a criminal case concerning the publication of the scandalous caricatures has been started. The accused and suspects have not been named yet.

In Belarus criminal responsibility for arousing religious animosity is determined according to art. 20 of the International Pact on Civil and Political Rights (1966) and art. 4 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965).

## **BAJ PRESENTED THE NEWEST PRESS MONITORING RESULTS**

The Belarusian Association of Journalists presented MEDIA MONITORING: "Presidential Election 2006 Coverage in the Belarusian Mass Media"

### **THE CANDIDATES AND OTHER POLITICAL SUBJECTS' REPRESENTATION IN THE BELARUSIAN MEDIA PRIOR TO THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION 2006**

*(February 11 — February 21, 2006).*

The main findings of this monitoring were as follows:

- The President of the Republic of Belarus and one of the registered candidates for the Presidency remained the main political subject of the country as covered by the State owned electronic and print media. As previously, he was represented either positively or extremely positively in the same media. The fact of candidates' registration did not change the share of time and space dedicated to him and the three other candidates in the State owned media.
- By a series of pop-concerts *All-Nation TV Channel (ONT)* and the *First National Channel – BT* launched an election campaign in favor of just one candidate.
- While at the prime time there were advertised and shown propaganda films directed against Belarusian opposition and Western democracies, the State owned TV channels mentioned above did not make any announcements as regards the election speeches by the candidates on TV and radio scheduled in advance by the Central Election Commission.
- The general trend in the State owned electronic and print media was to represent western observers in a negative way and to portray CIS observers in positive colors mainly. More time and space to cover CIS observers' activities was also devoted in the same media.
- Non-governmental press wrote about practically all monitored subjects of the election process in a balanced way and tended to cover them neutrally.

## **RADIO "RACYJA" HAS RESUMED BROADCASTING**

The Radio "Racyja" resumed broadcasting on **February 22, 2006**. The radio station activity is funded by the government of Poland. The radio programs are prepared by the Belarusian journalists from the Bialystok region and from Belarus.

Firstly, the Radio "Racyja" will broadcast its programs at the mid-waves from 7 till 7 pm on the daily basis. Moreover, it will be possible to listen to the programs at 103.8 FM partially in the Hrodna region as well as in Lithuania.

## **A CRIMINAL CASE STARTED IN CONNECTION WITH THE PUBLICATION OF CARICATURES OF PROPHET MOHAMMED IN "ZHODA"**

After the publication of caricatures of prophet Mohammed a search has been carried out in the office of "Zhoda" on **February 22**. All the equipment and financial documents were confiscated, - informed BelaPAN. The editor-in-chief Aliaksey Karol and the deputy editor-in-chief Aliaksandar Zdvizhkou were interrogated.

According to A.Zdvizhkou, the criminal case was started after check-up made by KGB and the Office of Public prosecutor. The search was made after the appeal of Muslims and the Committee on religious matters.

The case was started according to part 1 of art. 130 of the Criminal Code of Belarus (national and religious animosity) which may lead to a 6-months' term of sentence or to a fine and even to a 5-years' term of sentence. A.Zdvizhkou informed BelaPAN that on February 22 the investigator Ivan Yarafejeu talked to him in KGB. The journalist had to make a signed statement of confidentiality of data and that is why he could not tell anything about their talk. Mr. Zdvizhkou also claimed that he had published the article without the consent of the editor-in-chief. "I think I published caricatures of Islamic terrorists, not of prophet Mohammed. I am absolutely sure that the whole "scandal" was a provocation of the Islamic terrorism ", - claimed A.Zdvizhkou.

According to the deputy editor-in-chief, he did not have to give a written undertaking not to leave Belarus, but he was recommended to stay in the country.

## **DETENTION FOR DISTRIBUTION OF "NARODNAJA VOLA" AND "TOVARISHCH"**

**On February 21**, the police took away 3985 issues of "Tovarishch" and 600 issues of "Narodnaja Vola" from a distributor in Rahachou. On the same day distributors of these editions were detained in Vetka (a district centre).

At about 7 p.m. police officers Syarhey Buhajeu and Syarhey Hurevich detained the head of Zhlobin affiliate of the Communist Party of Belarus Valery Rybchanka. He brought issues of "Narodnaja Vola" and "Tovarishch" in his own car to Rahachou. He had all the necessary documents allowing the distribution of the issues. During the search of the car the police confiscated 3985 issues of "Tovarishch" and 600 issues of "Narodnaja Vola" with the alleged purpose of studying their contents and authenticity. Mr. Rybchanka had to spend more than 3 hours in the police station. The activist lodged a complaint to the Office of Public Prosecutor.

In the evening Uladzimir Shantsau (the organizer of A. Milinkevich's election campaign) was detained in Mahilieu. He brought 26 000 leaflets and 400 issues of "Tovarishch" to the region. The activist was taken to Leninski District police office of Mahileu where 36 police offices counted all the leaflets and issues till morning. The issues and leaflets were taken away in order to check their contents. The activist is going to lodge a complaint. Later all the leaflets were given back, but the issues were not returned.



On February 21 Marya Bahdanovich and Ludmila Sudzilouskaja were detained by the police in Vetka. They were giving out issues of "Narodnaja Vola" and "Tovarishch". The police explained the reason for the detention by the fact that they did not know such editions. Later the distributors were set free.

## **THE PROGRAMMES OF THE TV CHANNEL "ROSSIA" WILL BE OVERRIDDEN IN BELARUS**

Starting from February 21 the STV TV channel will be broadcasting a Belarusian propaganda series "Modern History" at the frequencies of "Rossia". On February 21 the first part of the series was shown instead on the documentary "The world after Osventsim". Every day Yury Kaziyatka's news programme "Politica" will be broadcasted instead of the news programme "Vesti+".

## **A.LUKASHENKA DID NOT USE HIS RIGHT TO DELIVER A TV SPEECH**

On February 21 the candidate A. Lukasheka could make a speech on TV from 18.30 till 19 o'clock. But he refused to do it. His press secretary Dzmitry Kostsin could not explain it. Instead of his speech the film "The Theory of plot. Controlled chaos" from Yury Azaronak's series "Spiritual War" was shown.

## **THE CZECH EMBASSY ACCUSED BT OF LYING**

On February 29 the Czech Embassy distributed a press release saying they were worried about the fact BT broadcasted "false statements and ideas concerning the actions of the diplomatic mission in Minsk ". The reason for it was the information distributed on February 19 which was aimed at discrediting the Embassy. The point was the distribution of propaganda materials for the election campaign. The Embassy distributed booklets containing the text of the UN resolution # 13/2005 in Belarusian. The Embassy stressed that the right to distribute true and impartial information is one of the necessary conditions for democracy.

On February 22 the Czech Embassy's chargé d'affaires ad interim received a protest in connection with the distribution of propaganda material before the presidential election. Such actions were considered as interference in the internal affairs of the Republic of Belarus.

## **THE INVESTIGATION ON VERANIKA CHARKASAVA'S CASE GOT RENEWED**

The investigation of the case of Veranika Charkasava got renewed. The head of the Investigation Department at the Public Prosecutor's Office Syarhey Ivanou informed BAJ about it. Mr. Ivanou refused to answer what was the reason for it and whether it was connected with the detention of Veranika Charkasava's son Anton Filimonau.

Let us remind you that on **February 17** the "Respublica" newspaper published the statement of V.Prus (deputy Attorney General) who said that he was also worried about the fact that the murderers of Veranika Charkasava were still free. But he denied any connection between this case and the detention of Veranika Charkasava's son Anton. He

stressed that nobody could "interfere in the investigation", - maybe ha meant the appeal of Anton's grandparents distributed through the Internet.

On February 20 Anton Filimonau's grandparents - Diana Tcharkasava and Uladimir Myaleshka sent an appeal to Mr. Aparyn (investigator) who is pleading the case of the youth. In the letter they quoted fragments of their correspondence with people working in law enforcement bodies of different levels that could prove that Anton had been interrogated in connection with the murder of his mother. They also sent some documents asking to attach them to the criminal case concerning money forgery.

"We understand, that deputy Attorney General wanted to say that that we were trying to interfere in the course of investigation. All this is mere slyness. Since December 30, 2005 till February 13, 2006 no investigation of the case was carried out, and there was nothing to interfere into. Letters written by different people (Anton's teachers and schoolmates), signatures that people put under the appeal sent to the Office of Public Prosecutor cannot be called pressure. " Victor Prus is worried about the fact that the murderers of Veranika Charkasava are still free. The responsibility will be laid on law enforcement bodies. But it is terrible to fill in blank spaces with fates of innocent people: the teenager who lost his mother and two old people ..." According to A.Filimonau's relatives, Mr. Aparin declared that he was not going to change Anton's preventive punishment though during the interrogation on February 13 he told Anton that he would be released a few days later.

It should be reminded that the preliminary investigation of the case of Veranika Charkasava's murder was suspended at the end of December 2005 "in connection with the fact that suspects could not be defined."

### **U.LABKOVICH DEMANDS EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IN USING MASS MEDIA FOR ALL PRESIDENTIAL CONTENDERS**

On February 20 Uladzimir Labkovich (an authorized representative for Aliaksandar Milinkevich) sent an appeal to the CEC asking to give presidential contenders equal opportunities in using mass media. The reason for the appeal was ONT's broadcasting of the concert "For Belarus!". The whole concert was propaganda of A. Lukashenka: singers and spectators were shouting "For the father!" and the scene was decorated in a similar style. Uladzimir Labkovich asks the CEC to explain how such a concert had been allowed to organize and asked to allow a similar concert to support A. Milinkevich.

### **TEN BASE AMOUNTS FOR DISTRIBUTION OF CARICATURES**

Yaraslau Paremski (a judge from Chyhunachny District Court of Homel) fined Yury Hlushakou for 10 base amounts (290 thousand BRB). On February 7 he was accused of violating part 3 of art. 167 of the Administrative Code and detained by police officers in mufti. At that moment he was transporting 11 thousand leaflets containing caricatures of Belarusian TV and stickers "They lie". The judge considered this to be an appeal not to vote for A. Lukashenka. Yury Hlushakou is going to lodge a complaint.

### **"BLACK LIST" OF BELARUSIAN JOURNALISTS**

A black list of Belarusian journalists that may be forbidden to leave Belarus has been distributed through the Internet. It can be found at [belpropaganda.freewebsites.com](http://belpropaganda.freewebsites.com) There

are reporters and heads of the First National TV Channel, ONT, "Sovetskaja Belorussia", "Obozrevatel", "7 Dnej" among the journalists. There are U. Matvejchuk, Y. Azaronak, Y. Nivukau, Y. Kazijatka and others on the list.

Let us remind you that this idea was pronounced by the deputy head of Lithuania delegation in the Council of Europe Emmanuelis Zingeris, - informed the UDP Press Service. Mr. Zingeris claimed that he was ready to draw a list of Belarusian citizens that may be forbidden to visit the EU. He turned to a number of independent Belarusian organizations and asked to provide him with information about the people who are trying to conceal the truth about the disappearance of the President's political opponents and who support the actions of Belarusian authorities regardless of the fact that they contradict the standards of the international law. The list will be laid before the heads of the Council of Europe.

At the end of January the EU was planning to simplify the procedure of getting a visa for Belarusian citizens, especially for students.

*Prepared by the BAJ Monitoring Service*

## The Belarusian Association of Journalists

### MASS MEDIA WEEK IN BELARUS

#### Mass Media Week

#### BAJ Information List #9, 13-27.02-05.03.2006

*The main topic in Belarusian mass media was the beating of journalists in Minsk on March 2. Among them were Dmitry Madorski – a reporter from "Reuters" (Moscow), a «BelaPAN» journalist Syarhey Pulsha, Syarhey Hryts ("Associated Press"), Vasil Fedasenka ("Reuters"), Yulia Darashkevich ("Nasha Niva"), Aleh Ulevich "Komsomolskaya Pravda v Belorussii", Dzmitry Brushka "Belhazeta", Valery Kalinouski (radio "Liberty") and Henadz Barbarych ("Belorusy I Rynok"). The authorities did not let Ukrainian journalists cover the events of March 2 – they were let into the country without their cameras. Later the whole issue of "Narodnaja Vola", dedicated to the events of March 2, was detained at the Russian-Belarusian border.*

*Other important events: cutting down the speech of Aliaksandar Kazulin on the First National TV Channel and the words on the CEC head Lydia Yarmoshyna, who said that "Narodnaja Vola" violated the Election Code by printing the programme of A.Milinkevich.*

- Other topics:
- "Zhoda"s editors may be imprisoned
- A.Milinkevich's programme will not be published in state mass media
- "Pahodnya"s editor-in-chief detained for the second time
- BT showed "the results of exit-polls" of March 19
- etc.

#### THE PRINT-RUN OF « NARODNAJA VOLA » DETAINED AGAIN

On March 3 the whole print-run of "Narodnaja Vola" was detained on the Russian-Belarusian border. The issue was dedicated to the events that took place in Minsk on March 2 - the beating of a presidential contender A.Kazulin and surrounding circumstances, and to the meeting with electors organized by A.Milinkevich. According to <http://belaruspartisan.org> the police have nothing on the edition and its printing house.

#### THE EDITORS OF «ZHODA» MAY BE IMPRISONED

The «Zhoda» newspaper may be closed down and its editors may be imprisoned. This idea was pronounced by A. Lukashenka on March 3. "As far as I understand, that dolt's newspaper printed the caricatures ("Zhoda" is the edition of the Belarusian Social Democratic Party whose leader is A.Kazulin ). The day after tomorrow I will have to go to Europe and give account for all that I have done. That is why he printed those caricatures in his leaflet. A criminal case has already been started and if necessary everybody will be imprisoned because this is a provocation aimed against the state ", — noted A.Lukashenka.

Let us remind you that "Zhoda" published caricatures of prophet Mohammed in issue #6 of February 18-26, 2006.

## **UKRAINIAN JOURNALISTS FORBIDDEN TO DO THEIR JOB IN BELARUS**

On March 2 Ukrainian journalists from the organization "Pora" were forbidden to enter Belarus. Reporter from TV channels «Tonis», «1+1» and «Pyatyj Kanal» were also threatened with deportation. Journalists were later let into the country without their cameras.

## **DETENTIONS AND BEATING OF JOURNALISTS**

On March 2 representatives of Belarusian and foreign media were beaten hard by the special police force in Minsk. Among them were Dmitry Madorski – a reporter from "Reuters" (Moscow), a «BelaPAN» journalist Syrhey Pulsha, Syarhey Hryts ("Associated Press"), Vasili Fedasenka ("Reuters"), Yulia Darashkevich ("Nasha Niva"). At about 12 p.m. a reporter from "Komsomolskaya Pravda v Belorussii" Aleh Ulevich, Dzmitry Brushka "Belhazeta" and one of the organizers of A.Milinkevich's campaign (Andrey Maksimau) were detained near Kastychnitski District Police Office. A "Reuters" reporter Dzimtry Madorski got an eye trauma and now he is in the 9<sup>th</sup> Hospital. A reporter from "Belgazeta" Dzmitry Brushka was released right after he had been delivered to Leninski District police Office. No protocol was drawn up and he even did not have to show his journalist certificate.

A. Ulevich was beaten during the detention and got into the 9<sup>th</sup> Hospital. On March 2 he was visited by the head of Information and Communications Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs Henadz Klepcha and the head of the Department of Information of Minsk City Executive Committee Aleh Slepchanka. They made there excuses and called everything that had happened "an awful mistake". Then they asked the journalist whether he would be able to recognize the people that had beaten him. When no clear answer was received they asked Aleh if it was possible that he had run into a fence while making pictures. On March 2 Aleh Ulevich sent a complaint to the police.

During A. Milinkevich's meeting with electors that took place not far from the Nyamiha underground station, police officers used force against two journalists: Valery Kalinouski (radio "Liberty") and Henadz Barbarych ("Belorusy i Rynok").

Valery Kalinouski says that at about 6.40 p.m. he approached colonel D. Paulichenka with a microphone and asked him a question. Instead of answering it, Paulichenka grabbed him by his coat and dragged towards the other policemen. According to V. Kalinouski, Natallya Radzina (the editor-in-chief of "Charter-97" web site) saw it and was outraged by the use of force. D. Paulichenka got confused and V. Kalinouski managed to escape.

According to BAJ, a journalist from "Belorusy i Rynok" Henadz Barbarych was batoned. When he was passing by a line of policemen one them struck him and now the journalist has a bruise on his arm.

The actions of unknown civilians, who were beating and detaining journalists near the Railway Workers' House of Culture as well as at the Kastychnitski City District Department of Minsk on March 2, 2006 can be regarded as the legal abuse, according to article 198 of the Criminal Code of Belarus (Prevention of journalists from carrying out their legal professional duties, carried out with the use of violence or with the threat of force. Causing destruction or damage to journalists' property. Infringement upon journalists' rights and legitimate interests.)

The Belarusian Association of Journalists demands to identify the guilty of arresting and beating the journalists and to call them to account for their illegal actions.

### **A.KAZULIN'S SPEECH IS CUT DOWN**

The speech of Aliaksandar Kazulin on the First National TV Channel was cut down by 9 minutes. According to the candidate's press-secretary Nina Shydouskaja, on March 2 she went to BT to settle all the matters and was told that some ideas pronounced by A.Kazulin were not true, and some of them insulted Belarusian citizens (namely Victor Lukashenka and Dzmitry Lukashenka). The deputy head of the Belarusian Broadcasting Company Alaiksandar Martynenka informed "Komsomolskaya Pravda v Belorussii" that the organizers of A.Kazulin's campaign could not find any proof of truth of A.Kazulin's ideas.

### **A.MILINKEVICH'S PROGRAMME WILL NOT BE PUBLISHED IN STATE MASS MEDIA**

A.Milinkevich's programme will not be published in state mass media because it was not sent to the offices of state newspapers in time. On March 1 Syarhey Kaliakin (the head of organizers of A.Milinkevich's campaign) informed BelaPAN that they were experiencing some problems in their work. He mentioned that independent mass media and opposition activists were going to help in the distribution of A.Milinkevich's programme.

According to the Election Code and CEC candidates' programmes should be published in 7 state newspapers: "Sovetskaja Byelorussia", "Zvezda", "Respublica", "Belorusskaja Niva", "Znamya Unosti", "7 Dnej" and "Narodnaja Gazeta".

### **HAS "NARODNAJA VOLA" BROKEN THE LAW?**

The CEC head Lidziya Yarmoshyna said that "Narodnaja Vola" violated the Election Code by printing the programme of A.Milinkevich. According to L.Yarmoshyna, the possibility to print programmes in independent mass media is not mentioned in the Election Code. Such publications can be considered as moneyed assistance to candidates. L.Yarmoshyna thinks that "state mass media are impartial", while independent mass media are very subjective.

### **"PAHODNIA"'S EDITOR-IN-CHIEF DETAINED FOR THE SECOND TIME**

On February 28 Barys Vyrvich (the editor-in-chief of an unregistered newspaper "Pahodnia") was detained for the second time for the past two weeks.

In the morning a protocol was drawn up against Barys Vyrvich. It was said that he "was using bad language and threatening". Nevertheless, the judge (Uladzimir Huz) refused to try the case and B. Vyrvich was released.

Two weeks ago B. Vyrvich had a cautionary talk with the head of the District Executive Committee Aliaksandar Ilianau. Mr. Ilianau was sure that "Pahodnia" (that started being published after a very long break) "was a threat in the period of the election campaign".

## **THE CEC DEFINED THE PROCEDURE OF ACCREDITATION OF JOURNALISTS IN THE INFORMATION CENTRE ON MARCH 19-20**

On February 28 the Central Election Commission defined the procedure of accreditation of Belarusian journalists who are going to work in the Information Centre during the election on March 19-21.

All the necessary documents should be sent starting from March 6 till March 17, 2006. (On March 17, 2006 till 1 p.m. only) to the National Press Centre: 330, Kastyrychistkaya Str. 5, Minsk.

In order to get accreditation the original of a written appeal sent to the National Press Centre and signed by the head of the mass media should be presented. Any mass media can only ask for accreditation of 3 journalists.

## **A. LYABEDZKA WOULD LIKE TO FINE THE AUTHORS OF "THE THEORY OF PLOT. CONTROLLED CHAOS" FOR 1 BILLION BRB**

The head of UDP A. Lyabedzka would like to fine the authors of "The Theory of Plot. Controlled Chaos" shown on the First National TV Channel on February 20 for 1 billion BRB. He sent an appeal to Pershamaiski District Court of Minsk, - informed the site of UDP on February 28.

Some ideas arrogated to A.Lyabedzka were the reason for it. It was said that he pronounced the phrase «thousands of victims will not stop us». The head the UDP asks to refute these words and demands a compensation of 1 billion BRB.

## **“THE AMATEUR’S TRAVELS” WILL NOT BE SHOWN ON BT ANYMORE**

On February 26 the programme “The Amateur’s Travels” was not shown on the First National TV Channel. The author of the programme says he was accused of presenting information in a wrong way.

In his interview to " Komsomolskaya Pravda v Belorussii" the executive producer of the First National TV Channel Aliaksandar Vavilau said that the programme was not interesting and was created on a low professional level.

## **BT SHOWED “THE RESULTS OF EXIT-POLLS” OF MARCH 19**

On February 26 the First National TV Channel showed “the results of exit-polls” of March 19, prepared in advance. The exit-polls were as if confiscated from the office of an unregistered organization “Partnerstvo.” According to them, A.Milinkevich rolled 53.7% votes, A.Lukashenka rolled 41.3% votes, A. Kazulin – 3.8% and S. Haidukevich – 1.2%.

The head of the Baltic affiliate of "Gallup Organization" Rasa Alishvskene claimed that the centre had nothing to do with exit-poll blanks shown on BT. Moreover, she claimed that their centre was not going to gather exit-polls during the presidential election in Belarus.

*BAJ Monitoring Service*

## The Belarusian Association of Journalists

### MASS MEDIA WEEK IN BELARUS

#### Info-Posting No. 10

March 6 – 12, 2006

*The main issue in the Belarusian media field within the reporting period was connected with the candidates' for Presidency election campaigns and their coverage in the mass media.*

*According to the newest BAJ Media Monitoring results, the state electronic and printed media have worked as one in favour of incumbent candidate. The latter was presented either in the positive or highly positive way.*

*At the same time, the non-state media faced numerous hindrances. Thus, the "Narodnaya Vola" print-run of 250 thousand copies was not released by the police last week. The police requested the Central Election Committee to evaluate the contents of this issue. However, the Central Election Committee replied that it wouldn't make such analyses anyway.*

*The Supreme Economic Court suspended the "Zhoda" newspaper from publishing prior to regarding the case. The verdict was grounded by an appeal on the part of the Ministry of Information of Belarus. The periodical was blamed for numerous violations of the Belarusian Press Law. The Ministry's repressive activity is roundly abhorred. Both the Minister of Information Uladzimir Rusakevich and his Deputy Liliya Ananich are likely to be forbidden entrance to the European Union, as the Radio Liberty reported last week.*

*More detailed information about these and other events can be found in our weekly Info-posting below.*

- *A Ukrainian TV Journalist Got Detained for Several Hours*
  - *Songs about "The Father on State TV"*
  - *The Central Election Committee Allowed Distribution of Campaigning Materials at Any Place*
  - *-The Head of BAJ Affiliate in Hrodna received a Warning From the Public Prosecutor's Office*
- etc.*

#### **A UKRAINIAN TV JOURNALIST GOT DETAINED FOR SEVERAL HOURS**

"The 5<sup>th</sup> Channel" (Ukraine) TV journalist Hanna Haradzhenka was detained by the riot police in Minsk in the evening on **March 12, 2006**. She was arrested with the use of violence during her live report from a meeting of the Belarusian united democratic opposition candidate for Presidency Aliaksandr Milinkevich with Minsk dwellers. The lady journalist was released only after the Ukrainian consul had come to the police department. It should be mentioned that Ms. Haradzhenka was officially accredited as a journalist at the Belarus' Ministry of External Affairs. The TV correspondent informed the Radio Liberty that the riot police had broken "The 5<sup>th</sup> Channel"'s professional camera and a microphone. "I have never heard such ugly words uttered in relation to a human. I was shocked," – confessed H. Haradzhenka in her interview to the Radio Liberty, while commenting on the riot policemen's actions.



The journalist is planning to stay in Belarus till the end of the election campaign. However, the last decision has to be taken by “The 5<sup>th</sup> Channel” management.

### **BAJ PRESENTED ANOTHER REPORT ON MEDIA MONITORING: “PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION 2006 COVERAGE IN THE BELARUSIAN MASS-MEDIA”**

The Belarusian Association of Journalists presented the fourth report on Media Monitoring: “Presidential Election 2006 Coverage in the Belarusian Mass-Media” for the period from February 21 through March 05, 2006.

The Summary of Findings included the following facts:

- The candidates’ presentations on TV and radio, as scheduled by the Central Election Commission, were broadcast at an inconvenient time for many voters. Moreover, they were not advertised in advance and as a result a significant portion of Belarusian voters could not get acquainted with the candidates’ election programs. There were also established facts of editing recorded speeches by two candidates.
- At the scheduled time the speeches of the candidate A. Lukashenka (him being also the President of the country) did not make their appearance. Instead, the propaganda materials in favor of the President and against the opposition and some its leaders were broadcast.
- In the meantime few days later all State-owned electronic media put on the air the 3-hour speech by the President of the country at the Third Pan-Belarusian People’s Congress. The same day the speech, although made two times shorter, was rebroadcast by the State owned TV channels at the prime time. It replaced the news TV programs. Comparative analysis of the speech and the printed program of the candidate A. Lukashenka show that both texts are similar in their basic theses and some wordings are the same.
- The State owned print media represented the election programs of A. Lukashenka and two other candidates in different ways. Thus, the program of A. Lukashenka was published on the front page, while the programs of other candidates made their appearance on pages 3, 14 and 15 of the monitored newspapers.
- As previously, the President of the Republic of Belarus remained the main political subject of the country. He was presented either positively or extremely positively in all State owned media.

Маніторцы прыйшлі да высновы, што з прычыны нязручнага часу трансляцыі запісу выступаў альтэрнатыўных кандыдатаў па телебачанні і на радыё значная

### **THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT PROPOSES TO BAN THE BELARUS’ MINISTER OF INFORMATION ENTER EUROPE**

The Radio “Liberty” disseminated a list of people, proposed for the ban of entrance to Europe by the European Committee on **March 10**. Among over 40 people, mentioned in the list there could be found Uladzimir Rusakevich, the Minister of Information of Belarus,

Lilia Ananich, the Deputy Minister of Information of Belarus and Siarhei Atroshchanka, the "Obozrevatel" newspaper publisher.

## **ONE MORE ACT OF FORCE AGAINST JOURNALISTS**

People in mufti used force against journalists in Maskouski District Court of Minsk on **March 9, 2006**. When Vintsuk Vyachorka entered the courtroom (one of the organizers of A.Milinkevich's campaign, detained on March 8) a police-officer in plain clothes started pushing people with dictaphones away.

According to Yulia Darashkevich (a "Nasha Niva" photo-correspondent), people in mufti tried to create obstacles to journalists even when they were in the street. Later, when Yulia Darashkevich was walking along a corridor with a camera, a stranger hit her with his foot from behind.

According to witnesses, all the aggression was directed toward journalists only. There were representatives of Associated Press, RenTV, "Nasha Niva", radio "Liberty" and other mass media.

## **SONGS ABOUT "THE FATHER" ON TV**

The first National State TV Channel broadcast a concert of "Syabry" music group (Belarus) that performed a new song "Listen to Your Father!" ("Slukhaj batsku!") The music band head Anatol Yarmolenka denies any political connotation of this song and declares as if it was composed some time ago and its first performance simply coincided with the Presidential election campaign.

## **THE PRINTING OF "ZHODA" GOT SUSPENDED**

The Ministry of Information sent a suit to the Superior Court asking to close down the "Zhoda" newspaper. The edition's editor-in-chief Aliaksey Karol got to know about it from an official letter from the court. The printing of "Zhoda" has already been suspended.

The suit is dated March 6 and it says that the reason for closing down "Zhoda" is the fact that it has many times violated art. 5 of the Law on Mass Media (the newspaper was warned about it on November 9 and February 23). Furthermore, the Ministry asked to suspend the printing of the newspaper even before the final decision of the court because during this time "the defendant might violate the law again".

On **March 7** the judge Aksana Mihnuik decided to grant the petition of the Ministry and suspend the printing of "Zhoda" "until the final decision was taken". The preliminary hearing is assigned for March 15.

## **THE CENTRAL ELECTION COMMITTEE WILL NOT EVALUATE ARTICLES FROM THE DETAINED PRINT-RUN OF "NARODNAJA VOLA"**

The deputy head of the Central Election Commission Mikhalai Lazavik said that the CEC would not evaluate articles from the detained print-run of "Narodnaja Vola". He informed

BAJ about it on **March 6**. Mr. Lazavik believes that such issues should be considered by the Ministry of Information.

Nevertheless, an appeal to give evaluation of the articles was sent to the CEC on March 6. It was said that the police suspected "NV" of violation of articles 45 and 48 of the Election Code (equal opportunities for all candidates).

It should be reminded that 250 thousand copies of "Narodnaya Vola" were seized by the Belarusian police at the Belarusian-Russian border near Dubrouna.

The issue's banner headline was "March 2. Minsk. All-Belarusian seizure". A special article "Black Thursday" was dedicated to the events that happened on March 2, there were interviews with the participants (A.Kazulin and V.Fralou), photos etc.

### **THE CENTRAL ELECTION COMMITTEE ALLOWED DISTRIBUTION OF CAMPAIGNING MATERIALS AT ANY PLACE**

The organizer of A.Milinkevich's campaign in Homiel Uladzimir Katsora received a response from the CEC. It was written that "campaigning materials can be distributed at meetings with voters in specially organized places and at other places." The reason for the inquiry was the fact that an activist Uladzimir Hadasevich was fined for distributing A.Milinkevich's campaigning materials in Rahachou on February 26. 560 leaflets and 60 issues of "Narodnaja Vola" were confiscated and the distributor was fined 10 base amounts (310 thousand BRB).

### **CANDIDATES' ELECTION SPEECHES ON THE RADIO WERE SHORTENED**

The election speeches of A.Kazulin and A.Milinkevich that were broadcasted on the First National Radio Channel on March 6 were shortened. A.Kazulin's speech was shortened by 7 minutes. Organizers of the candidates' election campaigns have already expressed a protest.

### **THE HEAD OF HRODNA BAJ AFFILIATE RECEIVED A WARNING FROM THE OFFICE OF PUBLIC PROSECUTOR**

**On March 3** the head of Hrodna BAJ affiliate Anatoli Hatouchyts was called to the Region Office of Public prosecutor and officially warned. He was accused of violation of art. #9 of the provision on professional activity of foreign journalists in Belarus and of art. # 40 of the Law on mass media.

In the Office of Public Prosecutor the head of the Department of general supervision A.N.Yeliseyeu demanded to turn off the journalist's dictaphone (though the dictaphone was in the journalist's bag and was not turned on). In the beginning he told A. Hatouchyts about the complaints of the deputy head of administration of the Soviet District of Homel N.I.Maly and the deputy head of the Central department of Internal Affairs S.M.Yafimenka. They complained that A. Hatouchyts had asked them questions over the phone and had not warned them that the conversation was being recorded and later gave the material to radio "Liberty".

The journalist explained that he had phoned the officials, told them he was a BAJ member and warned both of them that the talk was being recorded. Moreover, A. Hatouchyts said that the board of directors of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty repeatedly (in September, 2005 and in January, 2006) sent appeals for his accreditation to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Belarus, but in both cases no official reply was received.

## **INTERNET-TV LAUNCHED IN BELARUS**

**At the beginning of March** an Internet-portal BRANDING.BY announced that the first entertaining Internet TV-channel - Zebra Internet Television – would be launched in Belarus. ZebraITV uses flash-technologies. Most programs are updated every day. Viewers can watch 5 or 6 entertaining programs per day at any time that suits them. Now ZebraITV retransmits Russian programs but soon Belarusian programs will also be added.

*Prepared by the BAJ Monitoring Service*

## The Belarusian Association of Journalists

### MASS MEDIA WEEK IN BELARUS

#### Info-Posting No. 11

**March 13 – 19, 2006**

*The main issues within the reporting period were connected with the journalists' coverage of the last stage of presidential election campaign as well as the presidential election in Belarus on March 19, 2006.*

*The remaining independent press, published outside the country didn't reach its reader. The print-runs of "Tovarisch" and "Narodnaya Vola" newspapers were detained by the Belarusian police close to the Belarusian-Russian border.*

*A number of foreign journalists, including representatives of "Radio Bialystok" and "The 5<sup>th</sup> TV Channel" (Ukraine), weren't permitted to enter the territory of Belarus, despite being officially accredited by the Belarusian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Also, there took places detentions of Belarusian journalists and professionals from various press services. Moreover, the Belarusian authorities decided to cancel the temporary residence permit, issued to a Russian political analyst Andrei Suzdaltsau, who regularly contributes to "Narodnaya Vola" independent daily.*

*Just like during the previous presidential election 5 years ago, the Belarusian Internet users had very restricted or no access at all to a number of information Web-sites, presenting the alternative news.*

*The Belarusian Supreme Court decided to close down the "Zhoda" newspaper two days before the election date.*

*More detailed information about these and other events can be found in our weekly Info-posting below.*

- *A. Milinkevich's Press Group Representative Got Detained*
  - *L. Ananich: All the Candidates Had Equal Opportunities*
  - *Two "Sovetskaya Byelorussias"*
  - *Andrej Suzdaltsau Is Urged to Leave Belarus*
  - *"Zhoda" Newspaper Closed Down*
  - *Cable TV Broadcasting of RTVi Channel Interrupted*
  - *"Volny Horad" Office Equipment Confiscated*
- etc.

#### FROM CONFINEMENT CELL TO HOSPITAL

**On March 19** a journalist from Hrodna Andrej Pachobut, who went on a hunger strike on March 14, started feeling bad. His wife was told that he had been delivered to hospital to put a medicine dropper. After that he was delivered to the Kastychnitski District confinement cell in Hrodna (it was said that the living conditions were better there). A.Pachobut's wife was asked to bring him water, juice and a blanket because it was cold there. On March 18 the lawyer of A. Pachobut tried to persuade him to stop the hunger strike but he refused to do it.

It should be reminded that on March 14 the judge of the Leninski District Court of Hrodna Natallya Kozel returned A. Pachobut, the editor-in-chief of "Magazyn polski na uchodźstwie", guilty of misdemeanor and sentenced him to 10 days of detention . After that the journalist went on a hunger strike. He was accused of using bad language near the office of Hrodna Region Police, - informed pahonia.promedia.by. A.Pachobut was detained by KGB on March 13 in Minsk and later delivered to Hrodna.

#### **A. MILINKEVICH'S PRESS GROUP REPRESENTATIVE GOT DETAINED**

On **March 19** armed policemen and KGB entered A.Shein's flat and searched it. They took away some of his personal belongings. Then he was taken to a police office in Akrestsina Street where he had to stay overnight. According to A.Milinkevich's web site ([www.milinkevich.org](http://www.milinkevich.org)) A. Milinkevich's Press Group Representative is accused of violation art. 156 of the Administrative Code - "misdemeanor".

#### **L.ANANICH: ALL THE CANDIDATES HAD EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES**

All the presidential candidates had equal opportunities to use mass media in Belarus. On **March 19** the statement was made by the deputy Minister of Information Lilia Ananich. She said that all the candidates were given air time on TV and radio according to the existing law.

L. Ananich stressed that the state mass media fulfilled all demands of the Central Election Commission. She also noted that one of the candidates did not use his right to publish his programme in the leading mass media.

#### **"RADIO "SWEDEN" INCREASES THE AMOUNT OF BROADCASTING IN BELARUSIAN**

Starting from March 26 the Belarusian service of "Radio "Sweden" will be going on the air four times a week for half an hour: on Mondays, Tuesdays, Saturdays and Sundays. Starting from January 2006 Belarusian programmes are broadcasted in FM-diapason (Belarusians living near Stockholm can also receive them). On **March 19** the radio will prepare a special 1-hour programme.

#### **THREE DAYS OF DETENTION FOR A. SHANTAROVICH**

The editor-in-chief of Vaukavysk newspaper "Mestnaja Gazeta" Andrej Shantarovich is sentenced to three days of detention. Vaukavyski District Court returned him guilty of misdemeanor– using bad language about the head of Smarhonski District Department of the Interior.

#### **ANDREJ SUZDALTSAU IS URGED TO LEAVE BELARUS**

On **March 17** a Russian citizen Andrej Suzdaltsau's residence permit was cancelled and he was asked to leave the country till March 23. Andrej Suzdaltsau wrote articles criticizing Belarusian authorities and published them in the Internet and in independent editions including the "Narodnaja Vola" newspaper.

It is unknown for what country Andrej is going to leave. He came to Belarus 13 years ago. He has a wife and two children living in Minsk.

### **THE PRINT RUN OF "TOVARISHCH" GOT DETAINED**

On **March 17**, the police detained the print run of "Tovarishch" that had been printed in Moscow and delivered to Belarus without any problems.

The edition's editor-in-chief Syarhey Vaznyak informed the BAJ press service that at about 8 a.m., when they were unloading the issues from the truck to Syarhey Kaliakin's private garage in Karystajanava Street, a police patrol was passing by. When they noticed what was going on they immediately called for reinforcement. The police ordered to stop the unloading, close the truck and drive it to bus fleet #7. It is still unknown what is going to happen there but S.Vaznyak said they had managed to unload most of the issues. S.Kaliakin closed the garage and said he would not let anybody search his property. Journalists have already gathered on the spot.

According to S.Vaznyak it was a regular issue of "Tovarishch" that was to come out on Tuesday. After the Smolensk printing house refused to cooperate with the newspaper the edition found a printing house in Moscow. On Thursday 200,000 copies of the edition were printed there. The truck with the print run was not even stopped at the Russian-Belarusian border.

### **NEW DETENTION OF "NARODNAYA VOLA" PRINT-RUN**

On **March 17**, there was detained again the latest print-run of "Narodnaya Vola" independent daily (50,000 copies) on its way from a Printing House in Smolensk (Russia) to Minsk. The detained print-run was convoyed just as before to the Vitsiebsk Regional Department of Internal Affairs at the corresponding Regional Executive Committee.

Josif Siaredzich, the newspaper Editor-in-Chief, informed the BAJ Press Service that the editorial had published repeatedly the daily's doubled issue #44-45 with the uncensored speech, delivered by a candidate for Presidency A. Kazulin on the Belarusian State TV on March 2, 2006.

### **TWO POLISH JOURNALISTS FORBIDDEN ENTRANCE TO BELARUS**

On **March 17**, the Belarusian authorities didn't permit two journalists of Radio 'Bialystok' to enter Belarus. The correspondents Yurka Lashchynski and Marek Zabrotski were going to Belarus in order to cover the events during the recent Presidential election. Both of them had valid Belarusian visas and authorizations, issued by the Belarus' Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Having checked the journalists' documents at Babrouniki – Bierastavitsa border crossing, the border officers returned their passports with nullified Belarusian visas.

### **"ZHODA" NEWSPAPER CLOSED DOWN**

On **March 17**, the judge of Supreme Economic Court Aksana Mikhniuk satisfied the Ministry's of Information demand to close down the "Zhoda" newspaper. The initiated closure had been reasoned by two notifications of breaking article 5 of the Belarusian Press Law by the newspaper. However, the term for appealing against the second

notification hasn't expired so far. A BAJ lawyer A. Bastunets represented the "Zhoda" editorial's interests in the court. According to him, the judicial authorities violated a legal norm, allowing an editorial to appeal against official claims to the court.

It should be reminded that the Ministry of Information submitted a claim to the Supreme Economic Court on March 6, 2006. The state authorities demanded to close down the "Zhoda" weekly. In the Ministry's of Information opinion, the closure of "Zhoda" was reasoned by "repeated violations of article 5 of the Press Law by the newspaper editorial." The first notification of November 9, 2005 was grounded on the publication of satirical collages, depicting the supreme state officials. The second notification of February 23, 2006 was reasoned by the re-print of pictures, which had caused "the caricature scandal" in Europe.

### **A PINSK JOURNALIST DETAINED FOR 5 DAYS**

On **March 15** Viktor Yarashuk, the head of the office of the correspondent of the "Myastsovy Chas" newspaper ("Intex-Press" Printing House Ltd.) was detained by the police. On the same day he was sentenced to a 5-days' detention.

The reason for detention is not clear yet. The police refuse to give any comments. The deputy head of Pinsk Municipal Department of the Interior Valeryj Hrynko said he "was not kept advised of what was happening". The colleagues of V.Yarashuk, who is a person empowered to act for A.Kazulin, think that the detention was connected with his political activity. On March 15 5 activists of Milinkevich and Kazulin were detained in Pinsk.

### **CABLE TV BROADCASTING OF RTVI CHANNEL INTERRUPTED**

Since **March 15, 2006**, the "Cosmos-TV" cable operator's clients have had to watch TV programs of "Noslagie" instead of the RTVI Channel. The creeping line says that the explanation can be found in the web site [www.cosmostv.by](http://www.cosmostv.by). In section "News" the administration informs that there are some technical problems that are to be solved in a few days. The RTVI Channel plans to broadcast a series of programmes "Okno v Evropu" that will touch upon the elections in Belarus. Many journalists think that "the technical problems" will not be solved until the end of the election campaign.

"The RTVi access card is disabled. It will take a few days to get a news card", - is said in the site of "Cosmos-TV". "In several hours we are going to organize negotiations with the channel's right holders".

It should be noted that the forum in the site of "Cosmos-TV" has also been closed lately. The administration says that users were complaining about bugs.

### **"VOLNY HORAD" OFFICE EQUIPMENT CONFISCATED**

On **March 15** at 2 p.m. KGB representatives, Krychau District police officers and special police troops (about 20 people under the command of Aliaksandar Rabyka) entered the private flat of Uladzimir Kudrautsau- the editor and founder of an unregistered newspaper "Volny Horad" - and confiscated all the office equipment. The editor of the edition Syarhey Nyarouny informed BAJ about it.



The police explained their actions saying that they suspected that the equipment had been stolen from the Central Hospital of Krychau. Syarhey Nyarouny thinks the only reason is the intention to stop the printing of the edition that was distributed in three regions. At the moment the printing of "Volny Horad" is suspended.

### **“NARODNAYA VOLA” PRINT-RUNS GOT DETAINED AGAIN**

**On March 14, 2006**, the Belarusian police detained two print-runs of “Narodnaya Vola” on its way from Smolensk Printing House (Russia) to Belarus (#44-45 and #46-47), each in 27,000 copies. The detained print-run was conveyed to the Vitsiebsk Regional Department of Internal Affairs at the corresponding Regional Executive Committee.

### **THE UKRAINIAN “5 CHANNEL”CAMERA CREW NOT ALLOWED TO ENTER BELARUS**

**On March 14** Belarusian customs officers made Andrej Zhyhulin (journalist) and Vital Darashenka (cameraman) get off the train Kiev-Minsk without any explanation. They had all the necessary documents that allowed them to cover the presidential election in Belarus. The customs officers took away the journalists' passports and accreditation cards, delayed them for 2 hours and then returned all the documents and made them get on the train Minsk-Kiev.

### **A.MILINKEVICH DEMANDS THAT THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF "ARSHANSKAJA HAZETA" SHOULD PRINT HIS ELECTION PROGRAMME**

A presidential candidate Aliaksandar Milinkevich sent an appeal to the editor-in-chief of "Arshanskaja Hazeta" and to the Central Election Commission asking to publish his election programme in "Arshanskaja Hazeta", - Informed "Belaruskija Naviny" **on March 14** ([www.naviny.by](http://www.naviny.by))

A. Milinkevich thinks it was a good idea to give readers additional information about presidential candidates and, according to art. 46 of the Election Code (equal opportunities for all candidates) asks "Arshanskaja Hazeta" to publish his programme on just like A. Lukashenka's programme was published on March 4.

### **TWO "SOVETSKAJA BYELORUSSIAS"**

**On March 15** Belarusian citizens found a special issue of "Sovetskaja Byelorussia" in their letter-boxes. It was dedicated to the Constitution Day. Half of the front-page was taken by the motto "We are the state!" The issue contained A.Lukashenka's congratulation. But in fact the whole issue was dedicated to praising the actions of the President. Meanwhile, BelTA informed that on March 14 65 thousand false issues of "Sovetskaja Byelorussia" were detained at the Russian-Belarusian border.

Referring to the information received from KGB, BelTA stressed that the logo, the dateline and the names of journalists from the real "Sovetskaja Byelorussia" were used there. It was also written that the newspaper had been printed in Smolensk. KGB claimed that "the articles in the newspaper were mendacious and insulted the President". BelTA informed that the print-run was being transported by two Belarusian citizens in a minibus. One of

them was the deputy head of BNF Ales Mikhalevich. The issues were confiscated. An investigation of the case has been started.

Mr. Mikhalevich informed radio "Liberty" that he had been detained in Mstislauski District. He noted that the newspaper had been printed by activists of the campaign "Hopit!". Another deputy head of BNF Victor Ivashkevich stressed that BNF was not engaged in printing false issues of newspapers.

### **ANTON FILIMONAU'S PREVENTIVE PUNISHMENT IS CHANGED**

On **March 13** Anton Filimonau's preventive punishment was changed. Now it is bailment instead of custodial placement. Anton returned home yesterday evening.

The investigating authorities took into account that fact that "during the preliminary investigation there were a lot of demands to change Anton Filimonau's preventive punishment because he suffered of chronic diseases".

"Bailment would never be possible without the countenance and moneyed assistance of many people who were not indifferent", - say Anton's grandparents, Diana Charkasava and Uladzimir Myaleshka.

### **"VOLNY HORAD" EDITOR-IN-CHIEF IS FINED**

On **March 13** Klimavitski District Court fined Syarhey Niarouny (the editor-in-chief of an unregistered edition "Volny Horad") for 20 base amounts (620 thousand BRB). Mr. Niarouny informed BAJ that the judge Iryna Hurynovich returned him guilty of having violated unit 8 of part 1 of art. 172 of the Administrative Code – printing and distribution of an edition's surplus issues.

The print-run of "Volny Horad" was detained at the Russian-Belarusian border on January 13. The detention took place at "Zvyanchatka" crossing, at the border of Klimavitski District and Smolensk Region. Syarhey Niarouny was transporting the print-run in his own minibus. The police counted all the issues of "Volny Horad". There were about 1 thousand issues. But the number of issues mentioned in the dateline was only 299 (unregistered newspapers are not allowed to surpass this number of issues).

### **A.KAZULIN LODGED A COMPLAINT AGAINST BELARUSIAN STATE TV**

On **March 13, 2006**, a candidate for Presidency A.Kazulin lodged a complaint about the actions of BT and the Central Election Committee. This information can be found on the candidate's Web site. The reason for the complaint was the shortening of his election speeches on March 2 and 6 that violates his right to use state mass media during the election campaign.

A.Kazulin claims that the shortening of his election speeches on TV and radio is an infringement on his rights. He asks the court to admit that the actions of L.Yarmoshyna who did not do anything to prevent the problem were unlawful. He demands that the CEC and the chairman of BT A.Zimouski should let him make his speech again within 3 days. He demands 7 minutes of air time on the radio and 9 minutes on TV.

## **INDEPENDENT PERIODICALS CANNOT GET PRINTED IN SMOLENSK**

On **March 13, 2006**, Smolensk Printing Plant cancelled all at once its contracts with three Belarusian independent publications – “Narodnaya Vola,” “Tovarisch,” and “BDG. Delovaya Gazeta.” Officially the actions were reasoned by “the absence of productive capacity” and “the lack of floating assets.” The “Tovarisch” Editor-in-Chief Siarhei Vazniak doubts about the sincerity of official explanations, provided by Smolensk Printing Plant management, as the enterprise Accounting department sent an Invoice to the “Tovarisch” newspaper editorial on March 13, 2006 and didn’t mention any claims to the periodical publisher. The “Tovarisch” editorial is planning to file an action against Smolensk Printing Plant to the Economic Court of Russia.

*Prepared by the BAJ Monitoring Service*

## The Belarusian Association of Journalists

### MASS MEDIA WEEK IN BELARUS

#### Info-Posting No. 12

**March 20 – 25, 2006**

*Around 40 Belarusian and foreign journalists were detained during the reporting period in Belarus. Almost all of them were sentenced to different terms of detention. Pavel Sharamet (detained on March 25) was released on March 27 and asked to leave Belarus. The whole list of detained journalists can be found at <http://baj.by/Z2zv/f2.asp>*

#### **Contents:**

- A journalist from "Wall Street Journal" is beaten
  - U. Navumau made an announcement for the press but did not answer journalists' questions
  - The police detained and released P. Mazheika
  - A reporter from a French newspaper "Libération" Lorraine Millieu is released
  - Andrej Suzdaltsau is forbidden to enter Belarus
- etc.

#### **P. SHARAMET IS DETAINED IN MINSK**

Pavel Sharamet, the head of the "Pervy Kanal"'s Special Projects Department is now in the confinement cell in Akrestsina Street. According to the web site "Belaruski Partyzan", his mother is not allowed to bring him any medicine regardless of the fact that Pavel is suffering from double pneumonia. The day before the diagnosis had been determined in Minsk City Isolation Hospital and the journalist was proscribed to receive in-patient treatment there. But on the evening of March 25 policemen made him leave the hospital. Pavel was accused of misdemeanor (using bad language). Nevertheless, there are several witnesses of his detention that claim that the journalist did not even have time to pronounce a word - the detention took a few seconds.

On March 27 Pavel Sharamet was set free from imprisonment. However, the Belarusian authorities urged him to leave the country in 48 hours. The journalist disseminated this information himself immediately after his release from prison in Minsk at 1 pm on March 27, 2006. According to P. Sharamet, the order on setting him free was signed by Uladzimir Navumau, the Belarusian Minister of Internal Affairs.

#### **A JOURNALIST FROM "WALL STREET JOURNAL" IS BEATEN**

**On March 25** an American journalist was beaten in Minsk. According to the radio "Echo Moskvyy", it is Allan Callison, a reporter from "Wall street journal" (USA). It was said that the journalist had «some injuries». Earlier BelaPAN informed that the journalist was beaten in the centre of Minsk before the meeting in Yanka Kupala Square.

## **U. NAVUMAU MADE AN ANNOUNCEMENT FOR THE PRESS BUT DID NOT ANSWER JOURNALISTS' QUESTIONS**

**On March 25** at about 6.30 p.m. the Minister of Internal Affairs Uladzimir Navumau made an announcement for the press in the National press centre. He said that the police had taken adequate measures regarding citizens "inclined in favour of the opposition and rioting in the centre of the city". He claimed that A.Kazulin "was urging to violence directed at the President and to a takeover". U. Navumau said that a criminal case would be started against A. Kazulin. Contradicting witnesses of those events he said that the police had been using a special technique and added that 8 policemen had been injured. He denied any injuries among the meeting's participants.

Afer a short announcement U. Navumau left without answering journalists' questions.

## **THE POLICE DETAINED AND RELEASED P. MAZHEIKA**

According to radio "Liberty", Ina Kulej (A.Milinkevich's wife) informed them that the car with A.Milinkevich's press-secretary Pavel Mazheika was detained. They were trying to bring all the necessary equipment for the meeting in Yanka Kupala Square. Aliaksandar Milinkevich and Ina Kulej headed for the Central District Police Office to find out what had happened to the detained.

Reportedly, the Press Secretary was released without charges at 6 pm.

## **VALERY SHCHUKIN DETAINED AT VITSEBSK RAILWAY STATION**

On March 24 Valery Shchukin, a journalist from "Narodnaja Vola" was detained at the moment he was going to leave for Minsk. The official reason for the detention is misdemeanor and using bad language in a public place.

According to radio "Liberty", Mr. Shchukin returned to Vitsebsk confinement cell from which he had been released on March 23 after a 7-days' detention for "misdemeanor".

## **A REPORTER FROM A FRENCH NEWSPAPER "LIBÉRATION" LORAINE MILLIEU GOT RELEASED**

A reporter from a French newspaper "Libération" Lorraine Millieu is released. The "Viasna" press centre informed BelaPAN about it. Let us remind you that the journalist was detained on March 24 at Kastychnitskaja Square in Minsk.

## **ANTON TARAS GOT SENTENCED TO 11 DAYS OF ARREST. ALENA LUKASHEVICH IS FINED**

A BAJ member Anton Taras was sentenced to 11 days of arrest and his mother, a journalist Alena Lukashevich was fined two base amounts for committing "minor acts of hooliganism." These verdicts were taken by the Leninski District Court of Minsk and Kastychnitski District Court of Minsk correspondingly.

The journalists were arrested on their way from the Kastychnitskaya Square on March 23, 2006. At 10.20 am Alena Lukashevich had a phone call from her husband, a journalist Vital Taras. After that, they couldn't be reached by phone. Only in the afternoon, it cleared out that Alena Lukashevich and Anton Taras were kept behind the bars in Akrestsin street.

### **ARTSIOM LIAVA, A JOURNALIST FROM "NASHA NIVA" IS SENTENCED TO A 15-DAYS' DETENTION**

On March 24 Artsiom Liava, a journalist from "Nasha Niva" was sentenced to a 15-days' detention. This decision was taken by the Frunzenski District Court of Minsk.

### **THE "PAHONIA" WEB SITE ADMINISTRATOR DETAINED BY HRODNA POLICE**

On March 24 at about 10 p.m. the administrator of the web site "Pahonia" Aliaksey Saley was detained by the police. He will probably be detained till Monday and then he will stand trial for "misdemeanor".

On the same day at about 10 p.m. Iryna Charnyauka, a journalist of the web site www.euramost.org was temporarily detained by the police. She was heading for the railway station to take the last train to Minsk that was to leave at about 11 p.m. Policemen approached her and asked her to get into their car. Iryna wanted to see their documents but they said she would have to get in the car and then everything would be explained to her. After that she was taken to the Dzeviatouka Police Office (which is very far from the railway station) and then released. That is why Iryna was late for her train. Iryna thinks that it was done on purpose. The police did not want her to go to Minsk.

### **GEORGIAN JOURNALISTS DETAINED IN MINSK**

**On March 24** journalists from the Georgian TV were detained in Minsk. The journalists were interviewing relatives of detained participants of the meeting in Minsk.

### **ANDREJ SUZDALTSAU IS ASKED TO LEAVE BELARUS**

**On March 17** a Russian citizen Andrej Suzdaltsau's residence permit was cancelled and he was urged to leave the country till March 23. Andrej Suzdaltsau wrote articles criticizing Belarusian authorities and published them in the Internet and in independent editions including the "Narodnaja Vola" newspaper.

It is unknown what country Andrej is going to leave for. He came to Belarus 13 years ago. He has a wife and two children living in Minsk.

### **A REPORTER FROM "NYAMETSKAJA HVALIA" GOT SENTENCED TO A 7-DAYS' DETENTION**

On March 23 Vital Vasilkou, a BAJ member and a reporter from "Nyametskaja Hvalia" was detained in Mahileu and sentenced to a 7-days' detention for "misdemeanor".

The journalist was probably being watched because he was detained in the morning. It had happened 15 minutes before the arrival of the fast train "Mahileu-Minsk". The journalist had his certificate proving he was a reporter from "Nyametskaja Hvalia". When the police officials saw the document they consulted somebody over the phone but continued drawing up the protocol of detention.

The BAJ Monitoring Service informs that the journalist had been watched since March 7 when he returned to Mahileu after an international conference in Germany. (On that day he was detained by people in mufti who said they suspected him of transporting counterfeit money. They confiscated all the money he had on him and said they would return it "after an expertise").

Vital Vasilkou's colleagues think the detention is connected with his professional activities and are going to send appeals to the Region Office of Public Prosecutor and, if necessary, to the Prosecutor General's Office.

### **A NEW DETENTION IN HRODNA**

On March 23 Ivan Roman, a freelance reporter of "Salidarnast" was detained in Hrodna and sentenced to 13 days of detention for "misdemeanor".

Let us remind you that for the first time he was detained in Minsk on March 18, and nobody knew what had happened to him for several days. I. Roman phoned his colleagues on Monday morning and told them he was in Lida. He said that on Saturday he was taken to the Pershamaiski District Police Office. A stranger in mufti was constantly threatening him with a gun there. At about 8 p.m. he was delivered to Lida. On March 20 he was fined for 2 base amounts for using bad language.

### **PART OF "GLOS ZNAD NIEMNA" IN EXILE" PRINT RUN OF GOT DETAINED**

On March 23 Hrodna police detained part of the print run of "Glos znad Niemna" in emigration" (the exact number of issues is unknown).

The police stopped the car in which several activists of the Union of Poles in Belarus (unrecognized by the authorities) including Ines Todryk – a journalist from "Glos znad Niemna") transported the edition. All of them were taken to the Dzeviatouka District Police Office: the print run was taken away, Ines Todryk was interrogated and released, the activist of the Union of Poles A.Lisouski was sentenced to a 10-days' detention, the car will not be returned till "an expertise is carried out".

Let us remind you that the edition's editor-in-chief Andrzej Pisalnik is serving his second sentence now: on March 21 he was sentenced to a 12-days' detention 21. He was detained on the day he was released after his 5-days' detention for "misdemeanor".

It became known that a journalist from Hrodna Andrej Pachobut, the editor-in-chief of "Magazyn polski" in emigration" has been released. From March 14 till today he served his administrative sentence for "misdemeanor".

### **THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF "MYASTSOVY CHAS" IS DETAINED AGAIN**

On March 22 Aliaksey Yarashuk, the editor-in-chief of "Miastsovy Chas" was sentenced to 6 days of detention. The journalist was accused of using bad language and misdemeanor. On the day of detention he was going to the school to attend a parents' meeting. Later the journalist phoned his relatives and said he was detained by the police.

### **S.SALASH GOT DETAINED FOR 13 DAYS**

A journalist from a Barysau newspaper "Offside", a BAJ member Syarhey Salash was detained on March 22. He was detained in Kirava Street in Minsk together with Syarhej Satsuk (an activist from Barysau who has the same name as a well-known journalist from "Narodnaja Vola"). According to the "Viasna" Press Centre, a criminal case for organizing mass riots may be started against S.Salash.

### **"BDG. DELOVAJA GAZETA" SUSPENDED FROM PUBLISHING**

The publisher and editor-in-chief of the independent edition "BDG. Delovaja Gazeta" Piotr Martsau decided to suspend the printing of the newspaper "until the working conditions become clear". Despite the fact that on March 21 the print run of the edition was delivered to Belarus, the editorial staff was let to know that "that was not the end", - informed Mr. Martsau.

He said the edition was suspended because of many problems with printing, delivering to Belarus and distribution. He noted that the newspaper had been printed in Smolensk since 2003 and was devoid of any possibility to be distributed. The Smolensk Printing House refused to print the last issue of the newspaper despite the fact that the contract had not been cancelled (unlike the contract of "Narodnaja Vola" and "Tovarishch"), - said P.Martsau.

The edition's Internet version will continue to be created.

### **I. BANTSAR GOT SENTENCED TO 10 DAYS OF DETENTION**

**On March 21** the editor-in-chief of "Glos znad Niemna na uchodzstwie" Ihar Bantsar was returned guilty of misdemeanor and sentenced to 10 days of detention.

### **A UKRAINIAN JOURNALIST DETAINED FOR 15 DAYS**

**On March 22** a reporter from "Karpatski Golos" Andrej Lubka was sentenced to 15 days of detention. The journalist was detained on March 21 at about 3 a.m. in Minsk. At that moment he was leaving a cafe at Nyamiha. On March 22 (during the trial) Lubka said that people who detained him dragged him into a minibus, spat him in the face and insulted his nation and the Ukrainian President..

### **A REPORTER FROM AN INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER STOOD TRIAL IN VISTEBSK**

**On March 22** a reporter from "Vistebuskij Kurjer" Serzhuk Serabro stood trial in Vitsebsk. He was detained together with other 15 people who had participated in a protest action in the centre of the city. Serzhuk Serabro was delivered to the Kastrychnitski District Police



Office where a protocol as drawn up. The court discharged the reporter and admitted that he had been doing his job at the moment of detention.

### **A JOURNALIST FROM "BELORUSY I RYNOK" IS SENTENCED TO 10 DAYS OF DETENTION**

On March 22 Vadzim Aleksandrovich (a journalist from "Belorusy I Rynok") was sentenced to 10 days of detention. He had been detained near Kastychnitskaja Square on March 22. The hearing of his case took place in the Zavodski District Court of Minsk. His relatives were told that the trial would take place in the Central District Court of Minsk and that is why neither relatives, nor the lawyer could attend the trial.

### **THE "NASHA NIVA" EDITOR-IN-CHIEF SENTENCED TO 10 DAYS OF ARREST**

The Savietski District Court of Minsk sentenced Andrej Dynko, the "Nasha Niva" Editor-in-Chief to 10 days of administrative arrest for "a minor act of hooliganism." The judge Alena Krajchyk got convinced by the evidence of two policemen, who stated that the Editor-in-chief "was cursing and didn't react on repeated remarks of policemen" in the Kastychnitskaya Square on March 21, 2006.

The judge took into consideration the policemen's arguments (Mr. Shyshko and Mr. Pochtennyj), despite the fact they were contradictory. Thus, e.g. the policemen mentioned different places, where they detained A. Dynko. At the same time, the judge fully ignored the evidence provided by two witnesses –Vieranika Dziadok and Ales Kudrytski. The colleagues of Andre Dynko were going to the Kastychnitskaya Square in the same route bus and saw the moment of his detention. In one voice, they told the riot policemen pushed the journalist back to the route bus immediately after he had got off. Thus, the latter simply didn't have a mere possibility to commit the mentioned administrative tort.

### **A "POLONIA" RADIO STATION FREE-LANCE CORRESPONDENT GOT DETAINED**

Dzmitry Hurnievich, a "Polonia" Radio Station free-lance correspondent got detained in Minsk on March 21, 2006. According to Radio Liberty, the journalist was covering the protest action in the Kastychnitskaya Square.

D. Hurnievich was convoyed to the Minsk-located Frunzienski District Department of Internal Affairs. Some time later he was sentenced to 10 days of administrative arrest.

### **A REPORTER FROM "ODNAKO" NEWSPAPER GOT FINED**

On Marchj 21 a reporter from the "Odnako" newspaper Volha Dzemchnka was fined for 20 base amounts for participation in an illegal protest action. V. Dzemchnka was detained on the night of March 21 near Kastychnitskaja Square.

### **FROM CONFINEMENT CELL TO HOSPITAL**

**On March 19** a journalist from Hrodna Andrej Pachobut, who had gone on a hunger strike on March 14, started feeling bad. His wife was told that he had been delivered to hospital to put a medicine dropper. After that he was delivered to the Kastychnitski District

confinement cell in Hrodna (it was said that the living conditions were better there). A.Pachobut's wife was asked to bring him water, juice and a blanket because it was cold there. On March 18 the lawyer of A. Pachobut tried to persuade him to stop the hunger strike but he refused to do it.

Let us remind you that on March 14 the judge of the Leninski District Court of Hrodna Natallya Kozel returned A. Pachobut, the editor-in-chief of "Magazyn polski na uchodźstwie", guilty of misdemeanor and sentenced him to 10 days of detention . After that the journalist went on a hunger strike. He was accused of using bad language near the office of Hrodna Region Police, - informed pahonia.promedia.by. A.Pachobut was detained by KGB on March 13 in Minsk and later delivered to Hrodna.

## **DETAINED JOURNALISTS**

A number of journalists got detained **between March 19 and 25**. The whole list can be found at <http://baj.by/Z2zv/f2.asp>

### **List of Arrested Journalists:**

1. **Andrej Pachobut** ("Magazyn polski in Exile," Hrodna). Sentenced to 10 days of arrest on March 14, 2006.
2. **Ihar Bantsar** ("Glos znad Niemna in Exile," Hrodna). Sentenced to 10 days of arrest on March 21, 2006.
3. **Andrzej Pisalnik** ("Glos znad Niemna in Exile," Hrodna). Sentenced to 12 days of arrest on March 21, 2006. *The journalist was detained again after 5 days of arrest.* Firstly, A. Pisalnik was sentenced on March 15, 2006.
4. **Aliaksei Rads** (Internet-resource [forum.grodno.net](http://forum.grodno.net), Hrodna). Sentenced to 10 days of arrest on March 21, 2006.
5. **Andrej Dynko** ("Nasha Niva," Minsk). Sentenced to 10 days of arrest on March 22, 2006.
6. **Vadzim Aleksandrovich** ("Belorusy i Rynok," Minsk). Sentenced to 10 days of arrest on March 22, 2006.
7. **Sviatlana Stankevich** (a free-lance journalist, Smarhon). The journalist was detained in Kastychnitskaya Square in Minsk around 3 am on March 24, 2006 and sentenced to 8 days of arrest on March 27, 2006.
8. **Yury Chavusau** (a journalist of the Assembly of NGOs Internet Portal, an author of "Palitychnaya sfera" and "ARCHE" magazines). Sentenced to 10 days of arrest on March 21, 2006.
9. **Siarhej Salash** (an "Offside" newspaper journalist (Barysau), A. Milinkevich's Election Team activist). The journalist was detained in Minsk on March 22, 2006 and sentenced to 13 days of arrest on March 23, 2006.

10. **Ivan Roman** (A “Salidarnasc” newspaper free-lance correspondent). The journalist was fined 2 base amounts on March 20, 2006. The journalist was threatened with a gun at the Piershamajski District Department of Internal Affairs in Minsk by some unknown civilian (!). *On March 23, 2006 the journalist was detained again by the police in Hrodna for no apparent reason and sentenced to 13 more days of arrest.*

11. **Viktar Yarashuk** (“Miastsovy Chas,” Pinsk). The journalist was sentenced to 5 days of arrest on March 15, 2006. *The journalist was detained again by the police on March 23. He has been sentenced to 6 days of arrest.*

12. **Anton Taras** (a free-lance correspondent). The journalist was detained in Minsk on March 23, 2006 and sentenced to 11 days of arrest.

13. **Vadzim Kaznacheyeu** (a free-lance correspondent). The journalist was detained in Kastychnitskaya Square in Minsk around 3 am on March 24, 2006 and sentenced to 10 days of arrest on March 27, 2006.

14. **Tatsiana Vanina** (a BAJ member). Detained in Kastychnitskaya Square in Minsk around 3 am on March 24, 2006 and sentenced to 10 days of arrest on March 27, 2006.

15. **Artsiom Liava** (a “Nasha Niva” staff photo correspondent). Detained in Kastychnitskaya Square in Minsk around 3 am on March 24, 2006 and sentenced to 15 days of arrest on the same day.

16. **Vital Vasilkou** (“Deutsche Welle,” Mahileu). The journalist was sentenced to 7 days of arrest on March 23, 2006.

17. **Aliaksei Salej** (“Pahonia” Internet Site, Hrodna). The journalist was detained in Hrodna on March 24, 2006 and sentenced to 6 days of arrest on March 27, 2006

18. **Valery Shchukin** (“Narodnaya Vola,” Viciebsk). Sentenced to 7 days of arrest on March 17, 2006. The journalist was released from arrest on March 23. However, he was detained again on his way to the railway station on March 24, 2006.

19. **Darja Kastenka** (free-lance, cooperates with the “Asvieta i Adukacyja” magazine). The journalist was detained in Kastychnitskaya Square in Minsk around 3 am on March 24, 2006. She was sentenced to 10 days of arrest on March 27, 2006.

#### **List of Released Journalists after Arrests:**

20. **Andrej Shantarovich** (“Miestnaya Gazieta”, Vaukavysk). The journalist was sentenced to 3 days of arrest on March 18, 2006.

21. **Siarhej Niarouny** (“Volny Horad,” Krychau). The journalist was sentenced to 3 days of arrest on March 18, 2006.

22. **Mikalaj Gierdziy** (“Volny Horad,” Krychau). The journalist was sentenced to 2 days of arrest on March 18, 2006.

23. **Aliaksei Shein** (A. Milinkevich’s Press Group, Minsk). Sentenced to 5 days of arrest on March 20, 2006.

24. **Tatsiana Snitko** (a “Nasha Niva” free-lance correspondent). The journalist was detained in Kastychnitskaya Square in Minsk around 3 am on March 24, 2006 and fined 30 base amounts (around USD 430).

### **List of Fined Journalists:**

25. **Volha Dziemchanka** (“Odnako” newspaper, Minsk). The journalist was fined 20 base amounts (approximately USD 290) on March 21, 2006.
26. **Alena Lukashovich** (a free-lance correspondent). The journalist was detained in Minsk on March 23, 2006 and fined two base amounts.
27. **Iryna Laurouskaya** (“Brestski Courier”). Fined two based amounts by the Kastychnitski City District Court of Minsk on March 23, 2006

### **List of Prosecuted Foreign Journalists:**

28. **Andrij Lubka** (“Karpatski Holos,” Ukraine). The journalist was sentenced to 15 days of arrest on March 22, 2006.
29. **Dzmitry Hurnevich** (a “Radio Polonia” (Poland) free-lance correspondent). The journalist was sentenced to 10 days of arrest on March 21, 2006.
30. **Frederick Lavoie** (a Canadian free-lance journalist, worked without an official accreditation). The journalist was detained in Kastychnitskaya Square in Minsk around 3 am on March 24, 2006. He was sentenced to 15 days of arrest on March 27, 2006.
31. **Nino Giorgabiani** (Public TV of Georgia). Arrested near the Police Prison in Akrescin Street in Minsk on March 24. The journalist was sentenced to 5 days of arrest on March 27, 2006 and released on March 30, 2006.
32. **Georg Lagidze** (Public TV of Georgia). Arrested near the Police Prison in Akrescin Street in Minsk on March 24. The journalist was sentenced to 15 days of arrest on March 27, 2006.
33. **Aleksandr Podrabinek** (“Prima-News” Human Rights Information Agency, Russia). The journalist was arrested in Kastychnitskaya Square in Minsk. He was sentenced to 15 days of arrest on March 27, 2006.
34. **Loren Milo** (“La Liberation” newspaper correspondent, France). The journalist was detained in the evening on March 24. However, she was released some time later.
35. **Alan Kallison** (“Wall Street Journal,” USA). The journalist was beaten in the city center of Minsk on March 25, 2006.
36. **Wieronika Samolinska** (“Gazeta Wyborcza,” Poland). The journalist was detained in Kastychnitskaya Square in Minsk around 3 am on March 24, 2006 and sentenced to 10 days of arrest.
37. **Paval Sharamet** (“The First Channel,” Russia). The journalist was detained and beaten hard by the riot police in the city center of Minsk on March 25, 2006. He was conveyed to the 2<sup>nd</sup> City Clinic of Minsk. Afterwards, the journalist was released and urged to leave Belarus within 48 hours.
38. **Aleh Kazlouski** (“Pravoye Delo” periodical, Russia). The journalist was sentenced to 15 days of arrest on March 27, 2006.
39. **Eduard Glezin** (“Pravoye Delo” periodical, Russia). The journalist was sentenced to 15 days of arrest on March 27, 2006.

**40. Pavel Salyha** (a free-lance correspondent, Ukraine). The journalist was sentenced to 10 days of arrest on March 27, 2006.

**Discharged Journalists**

**41. Siarzhuk Sierabro** (“Vitsiebski Courier,” Vitsiebsk). It has been the only case so far, when a judge decided to release a journalist and acknowledged that the correspondent carried out his professional duties.

**42. Iryna Charniuka** ([www.euramost.org](http://www.euramost.org) News Internet Site, Hrodna). The journalist was detained by the police on her way to the Hrodna railway station on March 24, 2006. However, she was released some time later.

Prepared by the BAJ Press Service

*The BAJ Monitoring Service*

## Mass Media Week

### The Belarusian Association of Journalists

#### **Info-Posting #13**

March 27 – April 2, 2006

*During the reporting period, all attention was drawn to sentences journalists got as a result of detentions after the election. International organizations expressed their protest. Some journalists were released after having served their sentences. Flash mob in the centre of Minsk.*

#### Contents:

- *Paval Sharamet is released. The authorities urge him to leave Belarus*
- *A criminal case in connection with the fact of throwing snowballs at BT journalists is started*
- *BT is forbidden in Lithuania*
- *See below for these and other topics:*

## JOURNALISTS STAND TRIAL

**On March 27** Alaksandr Padrabinek, the "PRIMA-news" Information Agency's Editor-in-Chief and a "Novaya Gazeta" reporter sentenced to a 15-days' detention for "misdemeanor". A. Salej was detained by the police at the Hrodna railway station before his departure to Minsk on March 24, 2006.

**On March 27** Alaksandr Padrabinek, the "PRIMA-news" Information Agency's editor-in-Chief and a "Novaya Gazeta" reporter was arrested for 15 days. According to the "Viasna" Human Rights Center, this decision was taken by the Savietski City District Court of Minsk. As reported the [www.prima-news.ru](http://www.prima-news.ru) Web-site, the judges refused to provide the journalist with an attorney. But for that, no representatives from the Russian embassy were present at the court session. On the same day Charter-97 distributed the statement of "Novaja Gazeta"'s editorial staff. "An observer from "Novaja Gazeta" Aliaksandar Padrabinek is detained in Belarus just like a hooligan. We assure you: Padrabinek is not a hooligan, he is a political prisoner detained for his professional activities", - is said in the statement. "Aliaksandar Padrabinek is one of the most influential Russian human rights defenders and has an excellent reputation. We consider the detention of A.Padrabinek a purposeful anti-Russian demarche".

**On March 27** Oleg Kozlovskij and Eduard Glezin - journalists from a Russian edition "Pravoe Delo" were sentenced to a 15-days' detention. The Russian Embassy verified this information for BAJ. The journalists did not have accreditation in Belarus, but they had their journalist certificates.

**On March 27** a journalist from "Gazeta Wyborcza" Weronika Samalinska was sentenced to 10 days of arrest by the Leninsky City District Court of Minsk "for participation in an unauthorized action" (article 167 of the Code on Administrative Torts.) Mr. Krzysztof Swiderek, the head of Consular Department of the Embassy of Poland in Minsk was present at the court session. "The lady journalist left the court room with a smile," – reported the "Gazeta Wyborcza" Web-site. An hour before, the same court sentenced the former Ambassador of Poland in Belarus Mr. Mariusz Maszkiewich to 15 days of arrest.

Both Mr. Maszkiewicz and Ms. Smolinska were detained during the riot police attack on the protesters' camp in Kastrychnitskaya Square around 3 am on March 24, 2006.

**On March 27** Savetski District Court of Minsk sentenced Georgian journalists Nino Giorgibiani and Geogij Lagidze for 5 and 15 days of detention respectively. They were detained on March 24 near the court where they were interviewing relatives of the detained at Kastrychnitskaja Square. After the detention they managed to contact their colleagues and tell them what had happened. Despite the fact that they had all the necessary documents, the journalists were detained. Then their phones were disabled. According to BAJ, they spent some time in the confinement cell in Akrestsina Street. Georgian authorities demanded to release the journalists. According to the REGNUM agency, the Director-General of the Georgian TV Company Tamar Kintsurashvili and the Prime Minister Zurab Nagidaeli expressed their indignation at the fact of detention. The Georgian national TV sent appeals to international organizations that covered the election in Belarus. The Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia "expressed indignation at the fact of detention of Georgian journalists that had happened without any reason". The Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia claimed that it refused to cooperate with Belarusian police until the journalists were released. The Georgian Ombudsman Sozar Subary turned to Belarusian authorities and international organizations and demanded to do everything possible to release the journalists. He said that the detention was "obvious persecution of independent journalists by the dictatorial regime of Belarusian authorities".

**On March 27** the Leninsky City District Court of Minsk sentenced a journalist Vadzim Kaznacheyeu to 10 days of arrest. Reportedly, he was accused of taking part in an unauthorized mass event. Mr. Kaznacheyeu was detained during the riot police attack on the protesters' camp in Kastrychnitskaya Square around 3 am on March 24, 2006. Till the last moment possible, he was making reports for the [www.ucpb.org](http://www.ucpb.org) Internet Web-site, administered by the United Civil Party of Belarus. He was released on the night of April 3.

**On March 27** the Zavodski City District Court of Minsk fined a journalist Tatsiana Snitko ("Nasha Niva," "PRIMA-news) for taking part in an unauthorized mass action (article 167-1 of the Code on Administrative Torts). The journalist was fined for 30 base amounts.

**On March 27** a Ukrainian journalist Pavel Salyha was sentenced to a 10-days' detention. Ukrainian diplomats are trying to release him, but it is very unlikely that their efforts might change something.

**On March 27** Tattiana Vanina (a freelance journalist, a BAJ member) was sentenced to a 10-days' detention. She was detained on the night of March 24 at Kastrychnitskaja Square during the liquidation of the campground. For a long time nobody knew where she was. Only on Monday morning BAJ was informed that she was being kept in Zhodzina confinement cell.

**On March 27** one more journalist was detained at Kastrychnitskaja Square. It is Sviatlana Stankevich - a freelance journalist, former reporter of "Novaja Gazeta Smorgoni". (It is still unknown whether she was doing her job in the campground or just participating in the meeting). According to the "Viasna" press centre, on March 27 she was sentenced to 8 days of detention. She was released on March 31

**On March 27** Darya Kastsenka (a freelance reporter of "Asveta and Adukatsija", the author of "March diaries" in LiveJournal - <http://bullochka.livejournal.com/186406.html>) also stood trial in Minsk. She was also detained on the night of March 24 and sentenced to 10 days of detention. She was released on the night of April 3.

## VALERY SHCHUKIN'S TRIAL GOT SUSPENDED

Valery Shchukin's trial was delayed till March 31, 2006. According to "The Belarusian Partisan" Web-site, the politician requested an attorney. Finally, Shchukin was released until the trial. Valery Shchukin, a "Narodnaya Vola" journalist and a human rights defender was detained in Vitsiebsk on March 24, 2006. The newspaper correspondent was going to Minsk. Valery Shchukin was officially detained for committing "a minor act of hooliganism" and "using bad language in a public place." It should be reminded that the journalist had been released after 7 days of arrest on March 23, 2006. The previous charges were identical.

## PAVAL SHARAMET RELEASED. THE AUTHORITIES URGE HIM TO LEAVE BELARUS

**On March 27** Pavel Sharamet was set free from imprisonment. However, the Belarusian authorities urged him to leave the country in 48 hours. The journalist disseminated this information himself immediately after his release from prison in Minsk at 1 pm on March 27, 2006. According to P. Sharamet, the order on setting him free was signed by Uladzimir Navumau, the Belarus' Minister of Internal Affairs.

## A CRIMINAL CASE IN CONNECTION WITH THE FACT OF THROWING SNOWBALLS AT BT JOURNALISTS GOT INITIATED

The Central District Police Office will be searching for "hooligans" who had supposedly beaten an operator of the First National Channel Dzmitry Chumak. On March 27 the police office received a forensic report about it. The information about the kind of traumas received by the operator is still vague. - I am a dependent person, - he said. - The doctor will not tell you anything. The police won't either. Still, a criminal case has already been started. It is unknown according to which article it has been started and who is accused of the beating. Some man answered phone calls in Dzmitry's flat saying that he was in hospital and was soon to return home. - He has injuries on the head and body..., - said the man. - I think he got them on Saturday. Dzmitry's colleagues do not know the details of the incident either. They only say that political reports are no one's responsibility and that they do them according to the schedule. That time it was Dzmitry who had to do it. Dzmitry Chumak refuses to give any comments. He only answers: "No. Sorry. Good bye". Maybe there is nothing to say about the injuries... and nothing to show?.. If there were injuries, they would certainly be shown on BT. Witnesses say that some people were simply throwing snowballs at BT journalists. Only snowballs can be seen in pictures taken at that moment. Nevertheless, the state-supported Belarusian Union of Journalists claimed that "young hooligans beat the journalists black and blue which caused many injuries". They hope that "the police will find the hooligans and punish them". There is no doubt they will. Independent journalists are quite another matter. They always have to prove that they are doing their job and are not causing any disorderly conduct.

**On March 29** the Prosecutor General Piotr Miklashevich said gave a press-conference. Journalists noticed that only a few days were necessary to start a criminal case concerning the battery and assault of BT journalists while it's been a month since the beating of journalists from independent mass media and the case has not been started yet. P. Miklashevich said that in the case of BT journalists, "the reasons for starting a criminal case were obvious". He also says that an investigation of all the facts is being carried out now. "We will take charge of it. I have received an appeal from the International



Association of Journalists (apparently from the International Federation of Journalists, - n. BAJ). Of course we will find out whether the police violated the law ", - said P. Miklashevich. Answering the question why only a few days were necessary to start a criminal case concerning the battery and assault of BT journalists while it's been a month since the beating of journalists from independent mass media and the case has not been started yet, the Prosecutor General said that in the case of BT journalists, "the reasons for starting a criminal case were obvious". In the case of beating of journalists near the office of Kastychnitski District Department of the Interior "the circumstances are not so obvious".

## **THE CANADIAN MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS DEMANDS TO RELEASE THE CANADIAN JOURNALIST DETAINED IN BELARUS**

The Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs Peter McCay demanded to release the Canadian journalist Frederick Lavoie from "La Presse" who is detained in Belarus. On March 27 Mr. McCay met the Belarusian ambassador in Canada and demanded to release Frederick Lavoie and let him leave the country. According to CBC News, 22-year-old Frederick Lavoie was detained on Friday "while covering the meeting in Minsk". (Probably he was present during the assault of the campground at Kastychnitskaja Square on the night of March 24). On March 24 he stood trial and was sentenced to 15 days of detention. Before the election Frederick Lavoie came to BAJ because he was interested in the problems of Belarusian mass media. He has a good command of Russian. According to CBC News, Minister McCay discussed the presidential election with the Belarusian ambassador. The head of the Ministry of foreign Affairs "condemned the total neglect of democratic principles during the election on March 19". "The election was not free ", - is said in the statement. Mr. McCay also claimed that Canada would limit its diplomatic relations with Belarus to human rights and international security.

**On March 28** the Belarusian Ministry Of Foreign Affairs commented on the issue. "It's a pity that Canada is trying to free its citizen using political pressure and blackmail", - that was the official comment of the Ministry distributed on March 28. That is the reaction of Belarus to the demand of the Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs Peter McCay to release the journalist Frederic Lavoie. He was detained in Minsk and is serving his sentence in Akrestsina Street. The head of the press service of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Maria Vanshyna claimed that "Lavoie arrived in Belarus at the beginning of March 2006 and he wrote in the questionnaire that he arrived "for meeting friends and traveling"... He did not ask for accreditation, - said M.Vanshyna. She also noted that the journalist had to leave Belarus till March 23. "We do not understand why he did not leave the country and on March 24 participated in the meeting at Kastychnitskaja Square in Minsk... "The court "gave an adequate legal treatment to the actions of the Canadian citizen", - thinks M. Vanshyna.

22-year-old Frederick Lavoie was detained on Friday "while covering the meeting in Minsk". (Probably he was present during the assault of the campground at Kastychnitskaja Square on the night of March 24). On March 24 he stood trial and was sentenced to 15 days of detention. Before the election Frederick Lavoie came to BAJ because he was interested in the problems of Belarusian mass media. He has a good command of Russian.

## **INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS' REACTION TO THE PRESSURE ON MASS MEDIA IN BELARUS**

OSCE media freedom representative concerned over persecution of journalists covering the demonstrations in Belarus. VIENNA, 28 March 2006 - The OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Miklos Haraszti, today described the detentions and convictions of Belarusian and foreign journalists in the aftermath of the presidential elections as infringement on OSCE safeguards of free reporting. Already on 23 March, Haraszti provided the Belarusian authorities information on the reported cases, and asked them to comment and provide details. Until now, the authorities have neither confirmed nor denied any of the reports. State television reported about their crew's abuse by some demonstrators on 25 March, but not of the other cases. Since then, although the exact number of violations is still not available, it is independently confirmed that dozens of Belarusian and foreign journalists were prevented from reporting, arrested, physically assaulted, and sentenced to short-term detention in summary procedures. Journalists from Canada, Czech Republic, France, Georgia, Russian Federation, Poland, Ukraine and the United States have been reportedly assaulted, detained, and some of them sentenced to a maximum of 15 days arrest under the country's Code of Administrative Offences. The Representative stressed that the protection of journalists performing their professional duties, and guarantees of their safety, are fundamental OSCE commitments. "It must be a pro-active role of the Government to ensure safe working environment for journalists, even when they cover unauthorised events. The lack of permission for an actual event should be not be a reason to prosecute the journalists covering them," said Haraszti. "Society has the right to be informed about all issues of public importance. This right can only be fulfilled if the press is guaranteed access to them," added the Representative. The Representative will continue monitoring the developments in Belarus. He hopes that violation of freedom of reporting will be investigated and stopped by the authorities in all cases, regardless of who the violators were.

**On March 29** the World Association of Newspapers sent a protest letter to A.Lukashenka in connection with persecution of journalists. "We call on you to do everything in your capacity to ensure the unconditional release of all detained journalists and that all attacks on the press cease immediately. These acts are an abuse of power and sanctioning them will only serve to further tarnish your country's international standing. We urge you to do everything possible to ensure that in future your country fully respects international standards of freedom of expression. We look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.", - was said in the letter.

**March 30** - The International Press Institute considers the problems of Belarusian journalists to be "the worst in the region". Persecution of journalists, closing down newspapers and distribution prohibition of independent editions like "Narodnaja Vola", "Nasha Niva", "Zhoda", "Tovarishch", "Salidarnast", "BDG", "Birzha Informatsii" are recalled in the official report. Detentions, battery and assault of journalists after the presidential election were also mentioned.

### **FLASH MOB AGAINST PROPAGANDA IN STATE MASS MEDIA IN MINSK**

**On March 28** a flash mob was organized in the centre of Minsk. Its participants expressed a protest against propaganda on Belarusian TV-channels. They put various kinds of pasta in a box with the inscription "BT".

**On March 28** one more flash mob was organized during a news programme on ONT. People gathered near a big screen and put black blinkers on their eyes.

## BT IS FORBIDDEN IN LITHUANIA

The Belarusian Minister of Information Uladzimir Rusakevich thinks that Lithuania "is afraid of objective Information about Belarus". That was his comment on the decision of the Lithuanian Commission on Radio and Television to forbid broadcasting BT programmes in the country. On the other hand, the head of the Lithuanian Union of Journalists thinks that this decision was taken because BT was constantly distributing misinformation.

"I think it was a symbolic decision. Those who want to receive information about Belarus can get it from alternative mass media. But the interdiction shows our attitude to the fact that TV is used for propaganda in Belarus. This is inadmissible. There is a representative from the Lithuanian Union of Journalists in the Commission and it also shows our attitude", - claimed D.Radzevichus to the BAJ press service. He said that the channel distributed misinformation part of which concerned Lithuania. "Like in any normal country misinformation is not allowed in Lithuania", - noted D.Radzevichus.

Let us remind you that on March 29 broadcasting of BT programmes was forbidden in Lithuanian cable networks. The head of the Lithuanian Commission on Radio and Television Neryus Malukiavichus said that BT "has been distributing a lot of misinformation lately", moreover, "part of the information was directed against Lithuania", - informs "Interfax".

## SOME JOURNALISTS GOT RELEASED

On March 29 Nino Giorgibiani was released after 5 days of detention. She arrived in Kiev accompanied by the Georgian Consul in Ukraine Zurab Kvachkadze. Nino Giorgibiani said that at the moment of the detention an opposition member was giving an interview to them. When police officers saw that we were Georgian journalists they immediately phoned their chief", - said the journalist. She is going to return to Georgia soon. The Georgian journalists were detained on March 24.

**On March 31** journalists Dzmitry Hurnevich (radio "Palonia"), Andrej Dynko ("Nasha Niva"), Vadzim Aleksandrovich ("Belorusy I Rynok") and Yuryj Chavusau (the web site of the Assembly of Non-Governmental Organizations, the "ARCHE" magazine) were released. Dzmitry Hurnevich was detained on March 21 and sentenced to 10 days of detention. Andrej Dynko was detained on March 21 and was also sentenced to 10 days of detention. On the evening of March 21 Vadzim Aleksandrovich was detained at Kastychnitskaja Square; he was sentenced to 10 days of detention. Yuryj Chavusau was detained on the night of March 21 and sentenced to 10 days of detention.

## "NARODNAJA VOLA" IS OUT

On March 31 a new issue of "Narodnaja Vola" (##48-49) was delivered to Belarus. 11 thousand issues of the newspaper were published in Smolensk. On the night of March 31 it was brought to Minsk despite problems at the border.

The newspaper contained photos of Kastychnitskaja Square on March 19 and an article by Iosif Syaredzich "Towards Liberty" where he explained why the newspaper had not been published for some time and asks readers to support the newspaper. In the section "No Comment" there were letters to different officials where the editor asked to be allowed to print the edition in Belarus. There were also interviews with witnesses of the events of March 25, comments and photos.

## **KGB DOES NOT ALLOW M.MARKEVICH TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY**

A Hrodna journalist Mikola Markevich is not allowed to leave the country, - informed radio "Liberty" on April 2. The journalist was told that KGB did not want him to leave Belarus. M.Markevich thinks it is against the law and says it is connected with his work in the radio "Ratsyja".

*The BAJ Monitoring Service*

## **The Belarusian Association of Journalists**

### **MASS MEDIA WEEK IN BELARUS**

#### **Info-Posting No. 14**

***April 03 – 09, 2006***

*During the reporting period, the Belarusian and foreign journalists were being released from jail. All of them had been detained during the period of after-election civil protest in Minsk and other cities throughout Belarus. Most of them were sentenced to 8 – 15 days of administrative arrest “for committing minor acts of hooliganism.”*

*On April 6 - 9, the Piershamajski City District court of Minsk was considering the suit of A.Liabedzka (the leader of the United Civil Party of Belarus) against the National State Broadcasting Company that broadcast a film "The theory of plot. Ruled chaos" with malicious calumny in relation to the Belarusian politician.*

#### **A NUMBER OF BELARUSIAN JOURNALISTS GOT RELEASED**

*April 3, 2006- Anton Taras (after 11 days in jail), Eduard Brokarau (after 10 days in jail), Darja Kastenka (after 10 days in jail)*

*April 4, 2006 – Siarhei Salash, a free-lance correspondent from Barysau (after 13 days in jail)*

*April 5, 2006 – Ivan Roman, a “Salidarnasc” free-lance correspondence from Hrodna (after 13 days of arrest)*

*April 7, 2006 – Artsiom Liava, a “Nasha Niva” photo-correspondent (after 15 days of arrest).*

#### **“TOVARISCH” WEEKLY HAS RETURNED TO READERS**

*On April 3, 2006, the “Tovarisch” newspaper Editor-in-Chief Siarhei Vazniak informed the public that the second after-the-election issue of his periodical had been freely delivered to Belarus. As before, the publication is being printed in Moscow.*

*The police refused to file a criminal case on the fact of detaining a part of “Tovarisch” print-run in Minsk on March 17, 2006.*

*It should be reminded that the seizure happened when the editorial members were unloading the issues from the truck to a private garage on the outskirts of Minsk.*

#### **A NUMBER OF FOREIGN JOURNALISTS GOT RELEASED**

*On April 5, Andrej Lubka, a reporter from "Karpatski Golas" was released after 15 days of detention. He was arrested “for participation in an unauthorized protest action.”*

*The journalist was detained at in Minsk about 3 a.m. on March 21. At that moment he was leaving a cafe in Nyamiha Street. On March 22 (during the trial) Lubka said that people*

who detained him dragged him into a minibus, spat him in the face and insulted his nation and the Ukrainian President.

One more Ukrainian journalist, Pavel Salyga and a Russian editor Aliaksandr Padrabinek ("PRIMA-news) were released on **April 7, 2006**.

Two more Russian journalists – Aleh Kazlouski and Eduard Glezin ("Pravoje Delo" newspaper) as well as a Canadian journalist Frederic Levoie were released after 15 days of arrest on **April 8, 2006**.

*All mentioned foreign journalists were deported from the country immediately after their release from jail.*

## **A POLITICAL SCIENTIST ANDREI SUZDALTSAU GOT DEPORTED FROM BELARUS TO RUSSIA**

A political scientist Andrei Suzdaltsau was made to leave Belarus on **April 5, 2006**. The decision on his deportation had been taken before the recent Presidential election. The professional was groundlessly accused of "endangering the national security of the Republic of Belarus." A. Suzdaltsau believed the decision was connected with his articles, dedicated to the situation on the eve of Presidential election in Belarus. The political scientist was residing in Belarus together with his family for 13 years. He is a citizen of Russia, while his wife and children are citizens of Belarus. The latter remained in Minsk. A. Suzdaltsau is strictly forbidden to enter Belarus for 5 years.

## **THE COURT CONSIDERED A.LIABEDZKA'S SUIT AGAINST BELARUSIAN STATE TV**

**On April 6** the Piershamajski City District court of Minsk started considering the suit of A.Liabedzka (the leader of the United Civil Party of Belarus) against the National State Broadcasting Company.

The suit was reasoned by a film "The theory of plot. Ruled chaos," shown on the Belarusian State TV on February 20 and February 21, 2006.

A. Liabedzka considered phrases like: "Now members of the opposition listen with servility to the instructions given to them by Caucasian guys that have grown fat after the revolution"; "The camera catches Anatol Liabedzka who is also eager to bring the distracted crowd in the street", and the statement that "the opposition will not stop even if it can cause thousands of victims," which were presented in the film in relation to his personality, to be insulting and false. He demanded 1 billion BRB for moral damage.

Finally, the Pershamaiski District Court of Minsk rejected the claim of Anatol Liabedzka against BT on April 10, 2006. Completely groundlessly, the court decided that "the defendants had managed to prove that the information in the film was true and claimed that the facts were not insulting for A.Liabedzka."

The plaintiff's representative Syarhey Alfer thinks that it was a political decision. He said that on April 7 the head of the State Broadcasting Company Aliaksandar Zimouski personally assured him that the claim would be rejected. The lawyer said he would lodge a complaint but at the same time he added there was practically no hope, taking into consideration the Belarusian courts are totally controlled by the state authorities these days.

*Prepared by the BAJ Monitoring Service*

## The Belarusian Association of Journalists

### MASS MEDIA WEEK IN BELARUS

#### Info-Posting No. 15

*April 10 – April 16, 2006*

*Last week Pershamaiski District Court of Minsk rejected Anatol Liabedzka's claim against the Belarusian State TV Company. The court decided that the defendants had managed to prove that the information in the film "The theory of plot. Ruled chaos" was true and claimed that the facts were not insulting for the United Civil Party of Belarus leader A.Liabedzka. On April 12 a resolution urging the Belarusian authorities to stop persecution of Belarusian and foreign journalists was adopted at the annual conference of European Federation of Journalists. Minsk State Executive Committee did not find any violations of journalists' rights during their detention in the confinement cell in Akrestsina Street.*

**On April 10** Pershamaiski District Court of Minsk rejected the claim of Anatol Liabedzka against BT. The court decided that the defendants had managed to prove that the information in the film "The theory of plot. Ruled chaos" was true and claimed that the facts were not insulting for A.Liabedzka.

The plaintiff's representative Syarhey Alfer thinks that it was a political decision. He said that on April 7 the head of the State Broadcasting Company Aliaksandar Zimouski personally assured him that the claim would be rejected. The lawyer said he would lodge a complaint but at the same time he added there was practically no hope.

**On April 11** Anton Filimonau has been sentenced to 2.5 years of imprisonment with suspension of sentence for 2 years. The other accused have been sentenced to 2 years of imprisonment with suspension of sentence. The court reconsidered the case again and decided that the youngsters should be accused according to part 1 of art. 221 of the Criminal Code of Belarus.

Anton Filimonau was returned guilty of money forgery; Andrej Tamkovich and Dzmitry Drazdovich were returned guilty of pushing the money off and keeping it; Aleh Tarasenko was returned guilty of pushing it off. The judge Larysa Fraliankova did not find any aggravating circumstances in their crime and took into account the fact that they confessed of everything.

All of them had to give a written undertaking not to leave Belarus. All appeals may be lodged during the next 10 days.

Anton's grandparents Diana Charkasava and Uladzimir Mialeshka consider the decision to be adequate. Still, they think that the 2.5 months that Anton had to spend in the confinement cell had their consequences for him. His state of health has significantly aggravated and at the end of the month he will have to spend some time in hospital.

**On April 10** a criminal case against "a stranger" that beat Aleh Ulevich (a journalist from "Komsomolskaya Pravda v Belorussii") on March 2 was started. BAJ was informed about it

in an official letter signed by the head of the City Department of Internal Affairs A. Kuliashou.

It was written that the case was started on March 31 according to part.1 of art. 149 of the Criminal Code of Belarus. The physical injuries received by A.Ulevich were defined as "less serious" ("according to the duration of his illness"). A.Kuliashou promises to inform BAJ when the person who beat the journalist is found.

On March 7 the Belarusian Association of Journalists directed official appeals to the Prosecutor General of Belarus Piotr Miklashevich and the Minister of Internal Affairs of Belarus Uladzimir Navumau with a request to sue the police officials, who beat journalists and prevented them from carrying out their professional duties on March 02, 2006.

**On April 10** the Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili decorated the Georgian journalists (Nino Giorgabiani and Georgij Lagidze) that had served their administrative sentence in Belarus with the Order of Honour, - informed the "Novosti-Gruzija" news agency referring to the President's public relations service.

"Georgian journalists proved their devotion to democracy while the Belarusian authorities imprisoned them because they did not want to hear the truth ", - claimed the Georgian President.

The journalists were detained on March 25 near the court where they were interviewing relatives of those who had been detained at Kastychnitskaja Square. They were accused of misdemeanor and on March 27 Savetski District Court of Minsk sentenced Nino Giorgabiani and Geogij Lagidze to 5 and 15 days of detention respectively.

**On April 10** an article entitled "The price of life (a new version of the murder of Veranika Charkasava)" was published on the site "Belaruski Partyzan". The article was written by the Creative Workshop "Journalists' Detective Agency". "Unlike state investigators, journalists managed to collect a lot of information proving that Veranika had been murdered because of her professional activities".

The authors think that Veranika appeared in the epicenter of struggle between two clans in Belarus. They suppose that Veranika found out something that could cause a lot of financial troubles to one of the clans.

**On April 12** a resolution urging the Belarusian authorities to stop persecution of Belarusian and foreign journalists was adopted at the annual conference of the European Federation of Journalists that took place from April 7 till April 9 in Bled (Slovenia). The resolution, initiated by the Danish and Norwegian Unions of Journalists was adopted unanimously. During its discussion the head of the Belgian Association of Journalists Philippe Leruth stressed that the problems of independent mass media in Belarus aggravated after the election. That is why the international community cannot stay away from the issue.

**On April 12** Minsk State Executive Committee did not find any violations of journalists' rights during their detention in the confinement cell in Akrestsina Street. It was said in a letter received by BAJ and signed by A. Naidzenka. The letter was sent in response to the complaint of BAJ.

"The arguments listed in the complaint are ungrounded", - is said in the letter. Naidzenka claimed that the police detained people only if they had all the necessary documents



allowing them to do it. He also said that the relatives of the detained had been informed about everything in time. "The detained were given good food, beds, newspapers and magazines. They could wear their own clothes and take all the necessary medicine".

Let us remind you that on March 24 the Belarusian Association of Journalists submitted a claim to the Head of the Special Police Prison in Minsk, the Head of Minsk City Department of Internal Affairs and the Official Prosecutor of Minsk Among other, BAJ urged the officials: to stop violating the rights of journalists, kept behind the bars in the Special Police Prison of Minsk; to inform a.s.a.p. the detained journalists' relatives about the location of their arrested family members; to pass food and warm clothes from the relatives to the arrested people; to sue the officials, who are responsible for breaking the arrested people's rights etc. BAJ is drawing the officials' attention to the numerous facts of legal abuse in the process of detaining journalists and common people during the recent protest actions.

**On April 13** it became known that Hrodna authorities do not think that journalists' rights are violated. It can be understood from the letter received by BAJ in response to its appeal to reconsider the court's decision according to which journalists had been detained.

On March 22 BAJ turned to Hrodna Public Prosecutor in connection with numerous detentions of journalists in the region: namely, Andrej Pachobut, Andrzej Piscalnik, Ihar Bantsar, Aleksey Rads and Andrej Shantarovich. The organization demanded that the decisions of the court should be reconsidered and that a check of the circumstances of the detentions should be carried out.

The letter dated April 6, 2006 and sent to BAJ by Hrodna City Executive Committee says that a check has been carried out. The decisions of the Leninski and Vaukavyski District Courts are considered to be right and no appeals can be sent now.

The Department of the Interior of the Leninski District of Hrodna also considered the appeal and came to the conclusion that "no violation has been found in the actions of the police during the detentions". "They acted according to the law", - is said in the letter dated April 3, 2006.

Let us remind you that on March 13 the editor-in-chief of "Magazyn polski na uchodzstwie" Andrej Pachobut was detained, returned guilty of disorderly conduct and sentenced to a 10-days' detention. The following day his colleague Andrzej Piscalnik, the editor of "Glos znad Niemna na uchodzstwie" was detained in Hrodna. On March 15 he was sentenced to a 5-days' detention for the same reason. On the day he was released (March 20) he got detained again and sentenced to 12 days of detention. On March 20 Aleksey Rads (the administrator of forum.grodno.net) and Ihar Bantsar ("Glos znad Niemna na uchodzstwie") were detained in Hrodna together with Andrzej Piscalnik. Both of them were sentenced to a 10-days' detention. On March 17 the police detained Andrej Shantarovich (the editor-in-chief of "Mestnaja Gazeta") in Vaukavysk (Hrodna Region). A freelance reporter from "Salidarnast" Ivan Roman was detained on the same day in Minsk. On March 19 Mr. Shantarovich was sentenced to 3 days of detention for misdemeanor. Ivan Roman was fined for 2 base amounts. On March 23 the journalist was detained again and sentenced to 12 days of detention for misdemeanor.

**On April 13** the Ministry of Foreign Affaires claimed that the fact that BT is forbidden in Lithuania to be a violation of the bilateral agreement.

"The decision of the Lithuanian authorities violates the bilateral agreement between Belarus and Lithuania, namely the Declaration of principles of neighbourly relations and the agreement on cooperation between Belarus and Lithuania according to which Belarusians in Lithuania have the same rights as all other citizens of both countries ", - is said in the statement. The authors of the statement think that the decision also violates the Helsinki Agreement of OCSE. "After this decision all efforts of the EU to organize alternative broadcasting for Belarus look ridiculous", - think the authors of the statement. They urged the OCSE Representative on the Freedom of the Media and the OSCE Higher Commissar on National Minorities to influence the decision.

*The BAJ Monitoring Service*

## The Belarusian Association of Journalists

### MASS MEDIA WEEK IN BELARUS

Info-Posting No. 16

*April 17 – 23, 2006*

*The Public Prosecutor's Office of Minsk following the City Department of Internal Affairs stated that the rights of the journalists, detained and arrested on March 21-24, hadn't been violated. In the meantime, the state authorities continued putting pressure upon the non-governmental mass media. The most scandalous news within the reporting period was connected with the illegal decision of Ideological Work Department at Minsk City Executive Committee to reject the location of "Nasha Niva" editorial office on the territory of Minsk. These draconian measures were motivated by an administrative arrest of "Nasha Niva" Editor-in-Chief Andrei Dynko after the recent Presidential election. It should be mentioned that "Nasha Niva" is the oldest Belarusian-language newspaper. It celebrates its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year.*

*One more independent journalist was baselessly detained in Minsk last week. Vadzim Dounar, a "Kommersant" Russian newspaper correspondent was arrested by the police near the Presidential administration. He has been accused of "minor hooliganism."*

### **MINSK PUBLIC PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE DOES NOT THINK THAT THE DETAINED JOURNALISTS' RIGHTS GOT VIOLATED**

Minsk Public Prosecutor's Office replied to BAJ on **April 17, 2006** and stated that it had not found any violations of rights of journalists, detained at the end of March. It was signed by the Public Prosecutor's senior assistant Mr. Siamyonau.

Among other, it was said that the detained journalists' relatives had been informed about everything. "The detained were given good food, beds, newspapers and magazines. They could wear their own clothes and take all the necessary medicine."

The text of this letter nearly totally repeats the reply from the City Department of Internal Affairs at Minsk City Executive Committee.

It should be reminded that on March 24 the Belarusian Association of Journalists submitted a claim to the Head of the Special Police Prison in Minsk, the Head of Minsk City Department of Internal Affairs and the Official Prosecutor of Minsk. Among other, BAJ urged the officials: to stop violating the rights of journalists, kept behind the bars in the Special Police Prison of Minsk; to inform a.s.a.p. the detained journalists' relatives about the location of their arrested family members; to pass food and warm clothes from the relatives to the arrested people; to sue the officials, who are responsible for breaking the arrested people's rights etc. BAJ was drawing the officials' attention to the numerous facts of legal abuse in the process of detaining journalists and common people during the recent protest actions.

## **“PASIAZELKI-2006” (“AFTER-IMPRISONMENT MEETING”)**

**On April 17**, BAJ organized and held an informal meeting with the journalists, who had been released after different terms of administrative arrests. It took place in a forest not far from Minsk and gathered several dozens of press representatives from different Belarusian regions. According to the repressed journalists, the reality differed completely from the described by the state officials to BAJ. Thus, according to a journalist Tatsiana Vanina, her related learnt about her fate and location three days after her detention.

## **THE IDEOLOGICAL DEPARTMENT IS CLOSING DOWN "NASHA NIVA"**

**On April 18, 2006**, the "Nasha Niva" weekly received a letter from Minsk City Executive Committee, dated by April 10, 2006, that stated that "the location of "Nasha Niva" editorial in the city of Minsk is inexpedient." This decision was motivated by the fact that "...on March 22... the "Nasha Niva" Editor-in-Chief was sentenced to 10 days of administrative arrest."

It should be reminded that the Editor-in-chief Andrei Dynko was detained by the riot police, as he was leaving a route bus #100 in Kastychnitskaya Square during the after-the-election civil protests in Minsk on March 21, 2006. As a result, he was groundlessly accused of "cursing" and sued.

**On April 10**, after a long delay with reply, the Ministry of Communication rejected the "Nasha Niva" editorial's claim for getting a license that permits holding subscription on its own.

The "Nasha Niva" editorial emphasized in the appeal to its readers that it hasn't broken the law and that the newspaper hasn't had any official notifications from the Ministry of Information of Belarus.

Among other, the "Nasha Niva" editorial has mentioned that "the state authorities are closing down the first Belarusian newspaper that is a symbol of the Belarusian national identity. The state authorities are closing down the last independent newspaper, published in Belarusian."

Taking into account the highly repressive conditions, the "Nasha Niva" Editorial addressed the Lithuanian Ministry of Culture with a request to apply to UNESCO for including the newspaper "Nasha Niva" into the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

The groundless persecution of "Nasha Niva" has been decisively condemned by such influential international organizations as the Committee to Protect Journalists and the Reporters without Borders.

## **PERSECUTION OF HRODNA JOURNALISTS CONTINUES**

A Hrodna journalist from "Glos znad Niemna na uchodzstwie" Ines Todryk has been accused of violating article 172 of the Belarus' Administrative Code ("Violation of terms of use, purchase and sale of office equipment. Illegal distribution of printed editions"). The journalist was informed about it on April 18. People working at the Leninski District Department of the Interior (Hrodna) came to her office and gave her a protocol about an administrative infraction. A notice of appointment would be sent to her soon.

Ines Todryk was detained on March 24, when she and one more activist of the Union of Poles in Belarus (Andrzej Lisouski) came to meet Andrej Pachobut that was to be released after 10 days of detention. Their car was stopped; Andrej Pachobut managed to get out and run away. The police searched the car and found 400 issues of "Glos znad Niemna na uchodzstwie" and 80 issues of "Magazyn Polski na uchodzstwie" there.

### **“VICIEBSKI COURIER” IN COURT**

**On April 20**, Viciebsk Economic Court will consider a claim on the business reputation defense, submitted by a House Constructing Plant against the “Viciebski Courier” non-governmental newspaper for publishing an article “The Dictatorship of Authority.”

The claimant stated that the newspaper published an article by Tatsiana Chabatarova on March 21 with information about a special order No.153 that was reportedly issued by the House Constructing Plant Head Anatol Stryk. The mentioned order instructed different department heads “to campaign and propagate the expediency of pre-term voting and rendering support to the incumbent president A. Lukashenka.” The House Constructing Plant’s legal advisor retorted there has never been issued such an order at all. On the other hand, the correspondent told she couldn’t name the person, who had brought a Xero-copy of the order to the editorial office. A copy of this order can also be found in the Internet: [http://www.belnews.info/2006/03/17/zagad\\_pa\\_vtsebskamu\\_dsk](http://www.belnews.info/2006/03/17/zagad_pa_vtsebskamu_dsk) The next sitting of the court on the case will take place on May 5, 2006.

### **DISTRIBUTORS OF "HAZETA SLONIMSKAJA" UNDER THREAT OF LOSING JOB**

The editor-in-chief of "Hazeta Slonimskaja" Viktor Valadashchuk got to know on **April 21, 2006** that Ihar Trafimovich (the head of the Trade and Personal Services Department at Slonim District Executive Committee) had told distributors of "Hazeta Slonimskaja" that they were going to be forbidden to work as private entrepreneurs.

As a result, a private entrepreneur Viktor Kastusik has cancelled his contract with the editorial saying he was told that it would cause troubles. As a businessman, Viktor deals with the distribution of books, magazines and stationery. "If I continue the distribution of "HS" I risk losing everything", - confessed the entrepreneur.

The other six private entrepreneurs decided to ignore the local official’s threats.

### **A “KOMMERSANT” CORRESPONDENT GOT DETAINED**

A “Kommersant” Russian independent newspaper journalist Vadzim Dounar was detained in Minsk on **April 21** at about 1 p.m. He and his acquaintance were heading for an Internet-cafe in Karl Marx Street (which is not far from the President's Residence). They were passing by a group of people in mufti when one of them asked them to stop. V. Dounar and his acquaintance were detained and delivered to the Leninski District of Minsk Department of the Interior.

On Friday BAJ representatives tried to find out what had happened to V. Dounar. They turned to the Leninski District Department of the Interior and to Minsk City Executive Committee. The officials responded there hadn’t been brought anyone to them.

According to "Kommersant", Vadzim Dounar spent several hours in the police office. At about 6 p.m. he was called to the investigator and a protocol was drawn up. It was written that he had insulted A. Lukasenka. After that V. Dounar was sent to a cell (his belt and shoe laces had been taken away). But later another protocol was drawn up. He was accused of misdemeanor. Then the journalist was released and told to return on April 24. The person detained together with V. Dounar was released at about 4 p.m. No accusation was brought against him.

*Prepared by the BAJ Monitoring Service*