

On 4 November the Belarusian opposition has organized the Social Parade in Minsk.

The objective was to express people's protest against abolishing various allowances (the appropriate bill was passed in the parliament in spring of this year). However, according to analysts, the parade was not a very successful one, with only around 1,500 participants (by comparison, as many as 5-7,000 people took part in the European Parade).

The day before the Parade, authorities traditionally performed a "preventive purge" (opposition activists were arrested), information materials were being confiscated, the police made it difficult for activists from outside Minsk to join the parade. However, both during and after the parade, nobody was arrested. A group of youth activists managed to walk down the main street of Minsk and unfurl their banners before the building of the Council of Ministers. Observers explain this relative leniency of the authorities in terms of wanting to "ingratiate themselves with Europe".

According to them, not many people participated in the Parade mostly because of the fact that so far people they have not yet felt the consequences of abolishing social allowances, as the law comes into force in December. By that time, among other things, students and pensioners will lose their public transport discounts. According to forecasts, the public's discontent may rise in spring, as then also communal services will get more expensive, which stems from the rise in prices of Russian energy resources. Furthermore, a considerable rise in prices of food and other products is predicted. It is worth noting that recently dairy products have become more expensive, some other products are lacking, and inflation, according to independent economists, is far higher than in official statistics.

Coming back to the Social Parade, analysts point out the opposition's weaknesses. There is no unanimity among the activists of the United Democratic Forces. Right-wing parties did not participate actively in the preparations to the left-wing parties' initiative. The youth opposition was also reluctant to participate accusing the organizers of submissiveness (because of the fact that they accepted the route decided upon by the authorities, which lead to the parade taking place on the outskirts of Minsk, in a place, that is contemptuously called "the square for walking dogs" by the youth activists). The advertising campaign was weak and cliché.

Authorities, on the other hand, have organized the 1st Congress of Belarusian Scientist. In his speech made there, Alexander Lukashenka focused on the need of implementing innovative

POLITICS

- New sanctions against Belarus

OFFICIAL

- Belarus asks Venezuela for a loan

OPPOSITION

- Social Parade goes through the streets of Minsk
- Opposition plans further initiatives

ECONOMY

- Russia not to build a second leg of the Yamal-Europe pipeline
- Belarus not to trade in Venezuelan oil

SOCIETY

- EHU students establish own organization

CULTURE

- Exhibition of Belarus' renowned personalities' portraits

solutions in the country. As he said, time has come to strictly revise the economic outcome of scientists' work.

According to a political scientist, Valery Karbalevych, this is not feasible within the Belarusian socio-economic model. "The main problem is, the Academy of Sciences and all other scientific institutions in Belarus are not acting as competitive free-market entities. Thus the Academy of Sciences can be nothing other than a typical Soviet institution acting within a the framework of a socialist economy with all its attributes...In a system like this one, the products of scientific activity are not evaluated by the market, but by bureaucrats, and one does value renowned scientist, but people who are submissive to the authorities". A telling detail: according to the reports of independent media, the content of speeches made at the congress was agreed upon with the board of the Academy of Sciences beforehand (The board is headed by Mikhail Miasnikovych, former head of Lukashenka's administration, who designated him for his current position in 2002).

The former head of the Academy of Sciences, Alexandar Voytovych, currently opposition, has reminded that at the end of the 1990's he presented his project concerning boosting innovativeness to the government, creating a technology park, and using the country's own petrol. Back then, the authorities have not reacted to it in any way, waiting for further support form Russia. As is now evident, the right strategy has been grasped by the authorities much later. Moreover, Voytovych thinks that innovativeness will not thrive because of the political and economic conditions, and the reason for that is an outdated model of state management.

Russia, on the other hand, is set to continue the policy of bringing its relations with Belarus to the level of market pragmatism. This has been pointed out by analysts commenting on the press conference of the Russian ambassador to Belarus, Alexander Surykov, which took place 1 November. No statement confirming that Belarus will receive a \$ 1,5 billion loan was made, which Minsk has been demanding from Moscow in connection with a rise in prices of energy resources. Moreover, Surykov made it clear that the Russian side will not build a second leg of the Yamal-Europe pipeline through Belarus (such an offer together with a promise of transit discounts was made by Belarus' President), since it considers building the Northern pipeline a better solution, as it will make it possible to supply gas to Europe without intermediaries. Observers explain that such decision might have been made because Russia has learnt its lesson from the "gas war", during which Minsk blackmailed Moscow using the transit price of oil and gas and demanding cheap supplies.

At the same time the ambassador informed of the possible meeting of the Belarusian and Russian heads of state in December. Some analysts think, that Russia has not yet given up on its plans to incorporate Belarus and predict that during the meeting Lukashenka may be presented with an ultimatum: either Belarus becomes part of Russia, or a sharp rise in the price of energy resources will occur.

POLITICS

New sanctions against Belarus

The US intend to introduce new sanctions against Belarus, as David Kremer, deputy assistant to the Secretary of State, announced. He was

quoted by the internet portal Charter '97.

Kremer did not disclose what the sanctions will be. He only said that the public will be informed of them in the coming week. Kramer explained that introducing new restrictions is a result of the fact that Belarus did not release its political prisoners.

Kremer added that America will keep supporting the opposition in Belarus. “Lukashenka’s regime is under pressure from different entities – the US, the EU, as well as Russia, of which the rise in the price of energy resources is an evidence”, said David Kremer.

OFFICIAL

Belarus asks Venezuela for a loan

In connection with the rise in the price of energy resources, Belarus has asked Venezuela for a loan. The request has been forwarded to the Venezuelan Ministry of Finance during the visit of Belarusian officials to Caracas.

The Venezuelan authorities’ adviser on Belarus, Amerigo Dias Nunies emphasized that Venezuela and Belarus are close friends “and there should be real solidarity between friends, not only a declared one”.

OPPOSITION

Social Parade goes through the streets of Minsk

On Sunday 4 November the Belarusian oppositional forces organized the Social Parade. The main objective was to express discontent with abolishing different allowances for certain social groups, lowering the living standard, as well as a contractual approach to employment.

According to different sources the turnout was between several hundred and 1,500 people. The Social Parade ended in a manifestation in the Park of International Freedom.

During the event an unpleasant incident took place – anarchists got into a fight with members of the ultraconservative organization “White Will”. The president of the Parade’s organizational committee and one of the leaders of the Belarusian Communist Party, Valery Uchnalov, think that the incident was a provocation by the special services.

The municipal authorities gave the Parade the go-ahead. Police did not intervene.

Opposition plans further initiatives

The law „On state social allowances and right and guarantees for different social groups” will come into force on 17 December. The Belarusian opposition plans to organize around 1,500 protest actions in the whole country on this day.

At present opposition activists are collecting signatures under the appeal to the local government deputies, which concerns issuing statement regarding their activity and explaining why they supported abolishing the allowances.

ECONOMY

Russia not to build a second leg of the Yamal-Europe pipeline

There could be no justification for the construction of a second leg of the Yamal-Europe pipeline through Belarus, announced Russia’s Minister of Industry and Energy, Victor Christienko. The Belarusian authorities have made such an offer to Moscow, as an alternative to the construction of the Northern Pipeline.

Belarus promises Moscow considerable transit discounts for a period of 5 years, if Russia agrees to build a second leg of the Yamal-Europe pipeline through its territory.

Belarus not to trade in Venezuelan oil

Belarus has signed an agreement to extract Venezuelan oil but it will not be allowed to sell it , informs the bdg.by Internet portal. Branislau Siwy, representative of the Belnaftachim concern commented on the terms of the agreement.

Venezuela will have 60% of shares in the joint enterprise, he said. The takings from selling the oil will be divided according to the

percentage of shares owned by each party. According to the Venezuelan law, oil export can be executed only by the National Oil Company. The oil extracted by Belarusian will remain Venezuela's property, Belarus will only get its share of the dividends.

Belarus has long made attempts at creating a joint enterprise with the National Oil Company. Extraction sites have already been localized, a business plan has been drawn up, as well as a draft of an agreement concerning oil extraction and the division of the extracted amount.

It may be that President Lukashenka will sign appropriate documents during his visit to Venezuela.

SOCIETY

EHU students establish own organization

It's been three years since the European Humanitarian University started to operate in exile. The situation in Belarus leaves no hope for the students' return from Lithuania.

Meanwhile, EHU students have made a decision to establish own organization, the Students' Association, says initiator Kiryl Atamanchyk.

"I have informed the Students' Self-government of the idea. I think the students understand it – with 500 people the

university is growing and developing. This leaves us with a lot of work to do. I hope the students will present an active approach.

Kiryl Atamanchyk is an activist of the Youth Front. Because of this fact criminal proceedings against him are in progress in Belarus. However, he continues his activity in Lithuania – he intends to register the Students' Association in the Ministry of Justice.

CULTURE

Exhibition of Belarus' renowned personalities' portraits

An exhibition presenting portraits of renowned Belarusian personalities opened in the library of the Journalism Department of the Belarusian State University. The paintings include portraits of Eufrasinia Polacka, Barbara Radziwill, Tadeusz Kosciuszko, Mikolaj Husowski and others, 25 portraits altogether.

The exhibition features works of Zmitra Szapawalaw, as well as Walancin and Laila Warec.

The artists, together with their colleagues, have performed research allowing them to establish the details of the psychical features of the people depicted in the paintings. Some paintings feature family as well as own seals of the portrayed persons, as well as crests of the cities they had connections to.



There are various sites devoted to events in Belarus, which are, however, little known in Western Europe, and among people dealing with politics towards Belarus who do not understand the Russian or Belarusian languages.

The site belarus-live fills this gap. The site allows to order weekly reception of news in English, Polish, Belarusian, Russian.

