

### **The Mandate for OSCE Office in Miensk Activity Prolonged till December 31, 2009**

### **Reprimand as the Only Punishment**

### **“Nasha Niva” Returned to the State Press-Distribution Networks**

### **Belarus Renounces the Dollar**

### **“The Golden Apostrophe” Presented to the Winners**

### **The Police Makes Use of “Experiments” As Before and Feels Reluctant to Get Rid of Them**

**T**he return of “Nasha Niva” and “Narodnaya Vola” independent newspapers to the “Belsayuzdruk” news-stalls and the “Belposhta” subscription catalogues was a highly important event in the Belarusian media field within the period under consideration. Though the move didn’t change the initial core of relations between the state authorities and the independent press, by all means it manifested a minor improvement of political climate in the country.

Consequently, the “Narodnaya Vola” newspaper signed contracts has signed contracts with “Belsayuzdruk” and “Belposhta”. The state monopolists will deal with the newspaper distribution through their networks. Moreover, Iosif Siaredzich, the “Narodnaya Vola” newspaper’s Editor-in-chief signed a contract with the State Printing House in Miensk (previously the newspaper got printed in Smolensk, Russia).

The newspaper has already appeared in the “Belsayuzdruk” news-stalls all over the country.

According to Andrei Dynko, the “Nasha Niva” weekly’s Chief Editor,



photo.bymedia.net

the newspaper signed contracts with “Belposhta” and “Belsayuzdruk” as well.

The conditions of returning the periodicals, mentioned above, to the state monopolist press distribution system are quite rigid. “Belposhta” and “Belsayuzdruk” take 55% from retail prices; the contracts can be cancelled in case the newspapers’ distribution appears to be unprofitable; the contracts can be nullified in case more than 30% of copies are not bought by readers; the number of

copies, taken by “Belsayuzdruk” for retail sale can be decreased in case more than 30% of copies, aimed at distribution through the news-stalls, remain unsold.

It should be noted in this respect that it appears to be hardly possible to evaluate independently the profitability of retail sale of independent periodical editions, conducted by the state monopolist enterprises. Moreover, it is next to impossible to get the real number of unsold copies of these periodicals nowadays.

Among other, it should be emphasized that the “Belsayuzdruk” state enterprise has agreed to distribute maximum 2,500 copies of “Narodnaya Vola” and 1,400 copies of “Nasha Niva” in the city of Miensk.

As for the general relations between the media and the state, no perspectives of their fundamental change can be seen these days.

The conditions of journalist accreditation, introduced by the new media law remain as rigid as before; the state-owned and independent media have unequal economic and administrative working conditions; the state officials’ arbitrariness in their consideration of contents of newspaper publications is completely non-restricted. (Thus, a copy of “ARCHE” magazine, officially registered in Belarus, has been seized at a border crossing recently. It was regarded as a publication with the “extremist content”).

The return of “Nasha Niva” and “Narodnaya Vola” to the state-owned press distribution networks has evoked controversial remarks in the Belarusian civil society with minor optimism, expressed by the Belarusian Association of Journalists and some experts on the one hand and accusations of conformism and betrayal of Belarusian democratic society on the other hand.

A draft bill on introduction of amendments and changes into the Belarus’ Law on Monetary Regulation and Monetary Control was sent for consideration and adoption to the Chamber of Representatives of the National Assembly of Belarus by A. Lukashenka last week.

Among other, it contains a legal norm, aimed at prevention of “capital fleeing” from the country. In particular, all monetary operations, connected with issuing and getting credits and mortgages will have to be authorized, regardless the term of their implementation. (Presently, it is enough to submit a corresponding note to the state authorities.)

The National Bank of Belarus informs that the pure income of capital due to the held operations with capitals and financial operations in the first half year of 2008 decreased by 24.5% to USD 1.296 billion. The national balance of payment statistic data for three quarters 2008 will be published on December 15, 2008.

It is planned that the draft bill will be considered by the lower chamber of Belarusian Parliament after the 1st reading during the autumn session in 2009.

Among other, it should be noted that A. Lukashenka ordered to provide significant assistance to “Belagraprombank” not long ago.

Some experts believe that the banking institution appeared on the verge of bankruptcy, because of enormous expenses this year. Reportedly, the bank was obliged to spend too much to provide support to the agricultural system in Belarus. According to information from confidential information sources, “Belarusbank” has similarly appealed for considerable support from the state authorities.

## POLITICS

### The Mandate for OSCE Office in Miensk Activity Prolonged till December 31, 2009

*A decision to prolong the mandate for OSCE Office in Miensk activity was taken during the OSCE Standing Board Meeting on November 27, 2008.*

According to the Belarus’ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Belarusian government approved the decision within a remarkably brief period of time, the BelaPAN News Agency reports.

## OPPOSITION

### Reprimand as the Only Punishment

*Tacciana Shapucka and Anastasija Lojka, members of the unregistered organization “Malady Front” were reprimanded by the dean’s office of the faculty of law of the Belarusian State University for having participated in the picket “Communism on Trial” which was held next to the KGB headquarters in Miensk on November 7.*

The management of the Department of Law convoked a special council at which the case of activists was examined. The decision of the Council to reprimand students is recommendatory. The final decision will be taken by the rector of the Belarusian State University who has authority even to expel the students.

## SOCIETY

### “Nasha Niva” Returned to the State Press-Distribution Networks

*A non-state “Nasha Niva” newspaper appeared in the*

*news-stalls, located in Miensk, on December 4, 2008. The recent issue #45 got published in 5,126 copies. 1,400 of them were sent to "Belsayuzdruk" news-stalls. The rest will appear in the state press distributor's kiosks in the regions.*



articles with the use of the Soviet (i.e. official) orthography, instead of the classical one, dating back to the beginning of the 20th century. Also, it should be noted that the cover page of "Nasha Niva" #45 appeared in full color for the first time in the newspaper's history.

Another nation-wide state-owned newspaper "Narodnaya Vola" was returned to the state distribution system as well. It appeared in the news-stalls of Miensk and Homiel on November 27, 2008. According to the "Narodnaya Vola" newspaper's Editor-in-chief Iosif Syaredzich, the newspaper editorial has managed to sign contracts with all "Belsayuzdruk" branches in the regions. Consequently, it can be found in the state monopolist's news-stalls in all regions of Belarus.

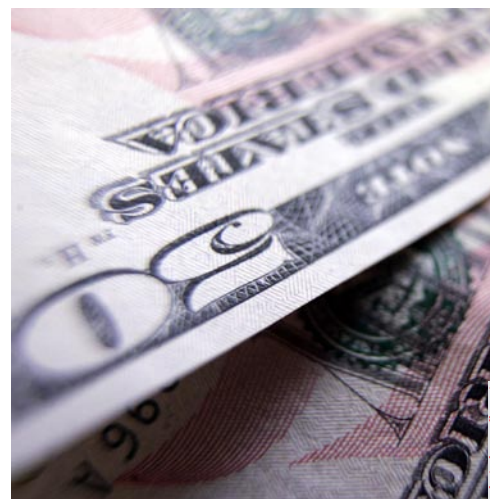
I.Syaredzich complained that 55% of retail price of each newspaper

copy will be taken by "Belposhta" and "Belsayuzdruk", according to the signed contracts. "The monopoly dictates its conditions," he noted in despair.

## ECONOMY

### Belarus Renounces the Dollar

*It was announced on November 28, 2008 by Pavel Kalaur, First Deputy Chairman of the Board of the National Bank of Belarus, who was speaking before the deputies of the Chamber of Representatives.*



He noted that, starting from 2009, Belarusian rouble would not be pegged to US dollar only, as it was before, but to a "basket of currencies" (dollar, euro, and Russian rouble).

Dollar's dynamics have been changing sharply this year, therefore it has been decided to peg Belarusian rouble to a basket of currencies.

Mr Kalaur said that the guidelines of the State financial policy stipulate that this year US dollar will be worth from 2100 to 2200 Belarusian roubles.

## CULTURE

### "The Golden Apostrophe" Presented to the Winners

*The Belarusian poets Iryna Belskaya and Andrei Khadanovich as well as a prosaic Kastus Tarasau received "The Golden Apostrophe – 2007" honorary award, founded by the "Dziewaslou" literary and artistic magazine. The honorary awards were presented to the winners in the framework of "Budzma" campaign at Miensk Palace of Arts on December 3, 2008, the BelaPAN News Agency reports.*

It is a peculiar feature of "The Golden Apostrophe" award that it is presented to the Belarusian writers and poets, who haven't received the Belarus' State Awards. According to Barys Piatrovich, the "Dziewaslou"

magazine's Editor-in-chief, this approach fosters appearance of new faces in the Belarusian literature.

## TRENDS

### The Police Makes Use of "Experiments" As Before and Feels Reluctant to Get Rid of Them



*Former deputies from the Chamber of Representatives made attempts to outlaw the so-called operative experiments, held by policemen in Belarus. However, the former MPs didn't manage to reach their goal. Therefore, the legal investigators still make use of them in their work.*

The new deputies are not going to discuss the lawfulness of such experiments in the near future, the European Radio for Belarus informs.



EUROPEAN RADIO FOR BELARUS



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](http://belarus-live.eu) fills this gap. The site allows to order weekly reception of news in English, Polish, Belarusian, Russian.