

**Dear colleagues and friends,
Since May 1, 2009
the “Belarus-Live” Editorial will
suspend publishing its weekly
analytical e-newsletter, subject
to the change of editorial policy.**

*Yours sincerely,
“Belarus-Live” Editorial Team*

**Belarus Authorities Ban
to Import Animal Produce
from Mexico and
the United States**

**Leanid Zlotnikau: “Belarus
May Not Come Out of the
Crisis at All”**

**Individual Entrepreneur
Mikalay Autukhovich
Keeps Hunger Strike in Jail**

**Vatican Doesn’t Comment
upon Lukashenka’s
Initiative**



The Belarusian and numerous foreign and international mass media highlighted Lukashenka’s visit to the Pope of Rome in Vatican as well as the Belarusian President’s unofficial meeting with the Prime-Minister of Italy Berlusconi in Italy last week. Lukashenka’s arrival in Italy made it clear

that the previous 14-year-long political self-isolation of Belarusian authoritarian regime from the West had come to an end. However, it should be taken into consideration that a range of economic sanctions, introduced on political reasons in relation to Belarus by the EU and the United States remains to be in effect. Independent experts note that for the sake of saving a dialogue with the Belarusian official authorities, commenced more than half a year ago, the EU political leadership decided to “miss” its famous 12 pre-requisites for normalization of relations with Belarus as well as to disregard completely 5 remaining pre-requisites that the Belarusian government was expected to meet sooner.

Lukashenka’s regime managed to impose its own tempo for normalization of relations on the European Union.

At that, the authoritarian regime wasn’t changing anything significantly in its internal anti-democratic and repressive policies that the united Europe had considered to be unbearable not long ago.

Numerous opponents of Lukashenka’s regime believe that due to the meeting with the Pope of Rome, the dictator was given a free hand to carry on his political life.

It appears that most EU member-states' governments prefer to disregard the political risks, created by the policy of appeasement in relation to "the last dictator of Europe".

The surprising tolerance towards Lukashenka, has been mainly caused by the EU fears of Russian aggressiveness, reinforced after its war with Georgia.

However, it should be noted that during the recent meeting with the delegation of Belarusian opposition activists in Warsaw, the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs acknowledged the presence of risks in the present policies towards Lukashenka. However, he expressed his hope that the potential of the present dialogue with the Belarusian regime in power hasn't been exhausted by 100%.

As for the Belarusian Head of State, the meetings with the Pope of Rome and the Prime-Minister of Italy Berlusconi made him even more confident of his potential and historical perspectives.

Presently, different rumors and talks are heard as for Lukashenka's potential coming to the EU summit in Prague on May 7, 2009, where "the Eastern Partnership" initiative, presented by Sweden and Poland would be presented to the invited governmental officials from the states, included in the program. In the meantime, it has become known that the Belarusian – Ukrainian summit with participation of Lukashenka and Yuschenko is to take place in the Belarusian city of Homiel on May 6, 2009. Reportedly, it will be aimed at consolidation of Belarusian and Ukrainian positions on the eve of the Eastern Partnership initiative presentation in Prague.

Against the background of the carried on dialogue between Belarus and the EU, there happened certain events that could upset the process considerably. The Belarusian official relations with the neighboring EU states are meant here.

Ivar Lasis, the Spokesman at the Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that the Latvian government would "evaluate all possible consequences of increasing tariffs for the imported goods [by Belarus – www.belarus-live.eu] and prepare for respective actions in reply." Ivar Lasis noted that being a neighbor of Belarus, Latvia was "highly concerned with the rise of tariffs," as this policy "could lead to a more continuous process of getting out of the crisis."

The spokesman emphasized that it was possible to overcome the crisis with common efforts only. All national markets have to be left open in order to meet the goal more efficiently.

It should be mentioned that A. Lukashenka signed an ordinance on increasing the import taxes for range of imported commodities on April 23, 2009. Consequently, the entrance duties have risen by 25% - 40%.

Reportedly, a similar dramatic situation can be observed in relations with Lithuania.

A scandalous situation with Poland took place in another field. The Belarusian customs officers detained a car with the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials at the Polish – Belarusian border crossing "Bruzgi" on April 24, 2009. The diplomats were going to visit the Consulate of Poland in Hrodna and the Embassy of Poland in Miensk. The Polish

governmental officials refused to be searched. They held negotiations with the Belarusian customs officers for around 12 hours in a row. Despite their protests, the Belarusian customs representatives seized the diplomatic mail from them. Consequently, the Polish diplomats were expelled from the territory of Belarus, "Gazeta Wyborcza" reports.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland is investigating the incident. However, the ministerial officials feel reluctant to make the scandal public.

Speaking about the tendencies in the Belarusian economy, independent experts note that even if the government manages to cover the optimistic deficit in 2009 and 2010, the situation will deteriorate considerably in 2011 and 2012, as it will be necessary to return the credit funds, borrowed from IMF. To be precise, the government of Belarus will have to repay over USD 1 billion a year.

Independent experts believe that it will be next to impossible to cover the present balance-of-payments deficit without devaluation. The main problem is that devaluation stirs up inflation. Even the toughening of



monetary policy will not terminate the rocketing inflation. There remains the only hope for the intensive economic rise since 2010 that may lead to considerable increase of export and the corresponding attraction of short-term investment.

Various experts note that presently the devaluation doesn't lead to the export rise. However, it helps to shrink the import.

The export is "dying" much quicker than import that creates additional pressure in the currency market. The export costs diminished by 47.8% in January – February 2009 in comparison with a similar

period of time in 2008. At the same time, the cost of import shrunk by 32.1%.



At the same time, the Head of the National Bank of Belarus Piotr Prakapovich noted that the exchange rate of Br will be kept within 1% in relation to the basket of foreign currencies in the second quarter 2009. It

means that the Br – USD exchange rate may amount from Br 2630 to Br 3053 per 1 USD.

OFFICIALLY

Belarus Authorities Ban to Import Animal Produce from Mexico and the United States

The Belarusian government has introduced a temporary ban on import of animal produce from Mexico, the United States, Canada, New Zealand, Spain, France and Israel. The list of countries may be broadened, the Ministry of Agriculture Spokeswoman Darya Kazlouskaya said.



The ban concerns the countries, where the swine flu has been revealed. The biological security measures have been reinforced at all live-stock enterprises in Belarus.

Interfax

ECONOMY

Leaid Zlotnikau: "Belarus May Not Come Out of the Crisis at All"

Independent economist Leaid Zlotnikau commented on Lukashenka's affirmation that Belarus would be the first to come out of the crisis and would take merchandise markets of other countries: "There is no doubt that Belarus will not come out of the crisis at all if the current economic policy is maintained. The countries which are very competitive with their products, and which streamline their manufacturing processes and management are the ones to come out of the crisis. All this is very archaic in Belarus. Our system of management and enterprises remain from the Soviet times."

The economic liberalization boasted by Alaksandar Lukashenka in his annual address have not engaged the main aspects yet - pricing discretion and protection of private property, Leaid Zlotnikau believes.

It should be reminded that on April 23 the Belarusian leader made several statements during his annual address to the nation and the parliament.

In particular, he called Belarusians "to work round the clock, not to sleep and not to eat but to preserve production". Alaksandar Lukashenka called exports at loss and work "for warehouse" criminal, and also announced that he would "stop any moods of "if I want I work, and I don't want to - I don't".

Radio Liberty

SOCIETY

Individual Entrepreneur Mikalay Autukhovich Keeps Hunger Strike in Jail



photo.bymedia.net

A small businessman from Vaukavysk (Hrodna region) Mikalay Autukhovich went on hunger strike in Miensk investigative isolation ward on April 16, 2009. He demands the responsible authorities either to pass his case to court immediately or to release his colleagues Yury Lavonau and Uladzimir Asipienka and him before the court session. It should be reminded that the individual entrepreneurs were arrested in Vaukavysk on February 8, 2009. They were convoyed to a police prison in Miensk. The small businessmen are allegedly suspected of firing private estates of local governmental officials in the district center.

According to attorney Pavel Sapielka, M. Autukhovich's state of health has aggravated. Presently, he is kept at the medical unit of Akrestsina investigative isolation ward in Miensk.

Radio Liberty

POLITICS

Vatican Doesn't Comment upon Lukashenka's Initiative



press.korzhina.blogspot.com

Vatican hasn't responded officially to A. Lukashenka's suggestion, regarding a possible meeting of Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia with the Pope of Rome in Belarus.

According to an information source from Vatican, such meetings are normally prepared at the top clerical level.

At the same time, the Russian Orthodox Church representatives have commented reservedly upon the Belarusian President's statement about the would-be "meeting in Miensk", underscoring that such an event "mustn't be pre-determined by the current political situation."



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EUROPEAN RADIO FOR BELARUS



Polish aid

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.