

## THE BELARUSIAN ASSOCIATION OF JOURNALISTS

### Mass Media Week in Belarus

December 05 – 11, 2011

As reported on **December 5, 2011**, Deputy Prosecutor General of Belarus Alaksey Stuk refused to take part in an on-line conference on the Web-site of '*BelGazeta*' independent weekly at the last moment. (It's worth mentioning that he was the chief prosecutor at the trial against Kanavalau and Kavalou.) The conference announcement caused a barrage of questions from the newspaper readers, concerning the criminal case on the blast in Minsk metro.

However, on December 5, 2011, the '*BelGazeta*' Web-site informed the readers that A. Stuk "wouldn't be able to answer the Web-site visitors' questions for some valid reasons beyond his control."

On **December 5, 2011**, the second sitting of the court on the administrative case against the Editor and Publisher of 'Kryvinka' local small-circulation newspaper George Stankievich took place in Bieshankovichy District Court (Mahilou region). The Editor expressed no-confidence to the court and challenged the judge Volha Bielavus. He explained his distrust by the fact that V. Bielavus had fined him 700,000 Belarusian rubles on similar charges two years before. The motion was dismissed after all.

The judge noted later on that the police report had been drawn incorrectly and returned it as requiring improvement.

The 'Kryvinka' Editor was detained, while delivering the newspaper to the district center dwellers on November 5, 2011. The police officers stated that they had received complaints from the local residents, who felt reluctant to find 'Kryvinka' in their mailboxes, being non-subscribed to the periodical edition. A police protocol was drawn in relation to Mr. Stankievich on the base of these complaints. In particular, the Editor was accused of breaking the procedure of distributing periodical editions without the output data.

A delegation with members from Norwegian PEN (boardmember William Nygaard, publisher Trygve Åslund and secretary general Carl Morten Iversen) and Danish PEN (board member and journalist Niels-Ivar Larsen) was denied visas at Minsk-2 international airport and had to return home on **December 5, 2011**.

Over the following two days, they were supposed to meet the representatives of PEN Belarus, the Belarusian Writers' Union, BAJ, and local writers and publishers.

Upon arrival at Minsk airport at around 01.00 a.m., the Scandinavian guests wanted to obtain tourist visas for a two days' stay in Minsk. All the paperwork was correctly presented to the visa-officer at the International Airport.

Firstly, the officer wanted to talk to the person who was going to pick us up and drive us to Minsk. Then he wanted to talk to representatives from the travel agency that invited us, despite the fact it was 3.00 p.m. local time then.

The officer seemingly started processing the visa applications. At one point he asked for the visa fee and received a total of 360 Euros for four visas. Some time later, a border guard

officer came to the foreigners and told them that the Belarusian consul had decided to refuse their visas and the decision could not be challenged. She also said that it was the right of Belarusian authorities to ban entry, while still claiming the visa fee.

The PEN activists were kept in a place with no access to food or water till the following morning, waiting for the flights back to Europe.

On **December 6, 2011** in the morning the police started detaining the young people, who could have relation to a flash-mob action near the premises of Belarusian State TV and Radio Company on December 3, 2011. In particular, there was detained an activist of the organizing committee on foundation of the National Bolshevik party Yauhien Kontush and a minor Uladzislau Lobau. Both of them were taken to the Piershamayski City District Department of Internal Affairs in Minsk and accused of 'dishonest conduct' (article 17.1 of Belarusian Code on Administrative Infractions). Police reports were drawn in relation to them.

On behalf of Belarusian national Bolsheviks, the youngsters fouled the central entrance to the Belarusian State TV and Radio Company in Minsk with noodles and spread leaflets.

The reminded the state media workers that 'the journalists' primary objective is connected with ensuring the receipt of truthful and accurate information by means of fair coverage of objective reality.'

As reported on **December 7, 2011**, Krychau District Tax Inspection fined the Editor of 'Volny Horad' non-registered newspaper Siarhei Niarouny 10 base amounts (i.e., 350,000 Br). The journalist was found guilty of ignoring his wife's profit in his tax declarations for the years of 2009 and 2010. According to the tax inspectors, the wife's income had to be presented as his additional profit.

*Prepared by BAJ Monitoring Service*