

# INFORMATION AGENCY “FOR HUMAN RIGHTS”

*All-Russian Nongovernmental Movement “For Human Rights”*

Executive Director Lev Ponomarev

Room 21, Bldg 1, House 7, M. Kislovsky Pereulok, Moscow, 125009

Tel: (095)291-62-33, Tel/Fax: (095)291-70-11, e-mail: [info@zaprava.ru](mailto:info@zaprava.ru); <http://zaprava.ru/>

## CHRONICLE OF POLITICAL PERSECUTION IN PRESENT DAY RUSSIA *News, statements, appeals, analysis, commentaries*

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## **The picket in defence of Mikhail Trepashkin took place!**

*From 17 to 24 March 2006 in the city of Yekaterinburg a public action was held – picketing at the building of the Sverdlovsk Oblast Court, as a token of solidarity and defence of the rights of political prisoner Mikhail Trepashkin.*

It was supposed to conduct the picketing of 17 and 20 March as a one-man event and from 22 March – picketing by a group of citizens – for an indefinite number of days, depending on the actions of the authorities in ensuring protection of lawful rights of Mikhail Trepashkin.

However, the conduct of the planned picketing appeared under the threat of disruption because of the actions taken by law-enforcement and other governmental agencies that tried through their actions to obstruct the implementation of the public action, this done with a blatant violation of the existing legislation of the Russian Federation and standards of international law.

On 17 March, at 11 A.M., after an hour-long picketing the organiser of the picket – V.A. Shaklein, head of NGO “Inter-Regional Centre of Human Rights” – was detained “to ascertain the information” and brought to the building of Verkh-Isetsk RUVD [police department] of the city of Yekaterinburg. Without any specific remarks and drawing up a record of violations at the site of holding the picket – as it should be under the Federal Law “On Rallies ..., Picketing” – after his detention and transportation to the police station the picketer was announced “commitment by him of an administrative offence” and an “accusatory” record was drawn up thereupon. Naturally, the picketer refused to sign such a record, which contradicted the requirements of the Federal Law “On Conduct of ... Picketing” because, pursuant to Art.15 Para. 1 “in the event of violation of law and order, which does not entail a threat to life and health of the “action” participants – “only an authorized representative of an executive body of government of the RF member or the local self-government body shall be entitled independently or together with an authorized representative of the Ministry of Internal Affairs department to demand from the organiser of the public event that this violation should be discontinued”.

The picket organiser expressed an oral protest against unlawful actions of the police and informed by phone the Commissioner on Human Rights in Sverdlovsk Oblast, T.G. Merzliakova, of his protest against the unlawful detention, ungrounded charges of offences, which he did not commit. Neither were any specific facts of offences given in the “Record of Administrative Offence” drawn up at the police station. This Record stated only one “argument”: “He violated the established procedure for conducting a picket (FZ No.54)”.

Nevertheless, the organiser and participant of the picket was on the same day, 17 March, at 15:30, brought to court premises No.3 of the Verkh-Isetsk District Court of the city of Yekaterinburg to Justice of the Peace O.A. Chernykh who was “appointed” to conduct the proceedings in the case “of administrative offence” under Art. 20.2 Para. 2 of the Code of Administrative Offences of the Russian Federation. The court session of 17 March with participation of lawyer V.S. Khaimin and witness for the defence G.P. Edelev did not hear the case. The hearing of the case was postponed to 22 March because of impossibility for V. Shaklein to conduct his defence owing to his state of health which deteriorated after the “emotional experience in connection with violation of law committed during his detention and bringing unfounded charges of the offence”.

On 21 March, V. Shaklein sent to Justice of the Peace O.A. Chernykh, Oblast Procurator P.P. Kukushkin, head of administration of the city of Yekaterinburg A.M. Chernetsky and the Commissioner on Human Rights in Sverdlovsk Oblast, T.G. Merzliakova, his “Statement of Unlawful and Criminal Actions that Violate the Constitutional Human Rights, of a Crime of Obstructing Participation in Public Action – Picketing ...”.

The picketing at the Sverdlovsk Oblast Court building on 23 and 24 March was conducted already by a group of citizens numbering up to 10 persons. During these days, there was already no obstructing of holding the public action (in defence of the rights of Mikhail Trepashkin and against violations of the rule of law in court proceedings) on the part of government representatives including that from law-enforcement agencies.

Further picketing was suspended by the public action participants. A decision of its continuation will be taken after obtaining additional trustworthy information related to defence of lawful rights of political prisoner M. Trepashkin.

As for the judicial persecution of the organiser and participant of the picketing, V.A. Shaklein in the case “Of Administrative Offence”, the situation is as follows: the court session of 22 March did not take place on initiative of Justice of the Peace O.A. Chernykh. The date of a new session is not known for the time being and what subsequent actions and decisions of the parties to the litigation are possible cannot be forecasted at this time.

*V.A. Shaklein, chairman of the board of coordinators,  
Coordinator of ARNGM “For Human Rights” in UrFO*

### **“Amnesty International” convinces Russian authorities to free Mikhail Trepashkin pending the review of his case.**

*Public statement:*

“Amnesty International” is concerned in connection with the presence of serious grounds showing that Mikhail Trepashkin was arrested and convicted as a result of unfair judicial proceedings on the basis of fabricated and, possibly, politically motivated criminal charges aimed at obstructing his continuation of investigative and legal activity in connection with the explosions of living houses in Moscow and other cities in 1999.

Mikhail Trepashkin, a lawyer and former KGB and FSB (Federal Security Bureau) officer, was found guilty of “divulging state secrets” and “unlawful arms keeping” by the Russian military court and sentenced to four years of deprivation of liberty. It looks like his treatment was of discriminatory nature when he was repeatedly arrested following his parole, which was an evident violation of the Russian procedures.

Also, “Amnesty International” is concerned with the fact that Mikhail Trepashkin who is currently held in a correctional colony is refused medical treatment, which is necessary for him, and that he is subjected to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment on the part of the colony administration as a measure, which is part of a more wide-scale effort aimed at intimidation of Mikhail Trepashkin so as to make him withdraw his complaints against the Russian authorities with respect of his criminal conviction and his treatment in conditions of confinement. “Amnesty International” is also concerned with the fact that Mikhail Trepashkin was subjected to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment in preliminary detention conditions as well as to intimidation attempting to convince him to recall his complaints against the conditions of his detention.

Taking into account presence of serious grounds to believe that injustice was committed in the case of Mikhail Trepashkin because of interference of the executive powers in the criminal trial system operation, “Amnesty International” calls to conduct immediate impartial and careful investigation of all these statements and a complete review of the case in accordance with the international standards of a fair court hearing. “Amnesty International” is trying to convince the Russian authorities to free Mikhail Trepashkin pending the review of his case. “Amnesty International” also calls on Russian authorities to immediately provide Mikhail Trepashkin with all necessary medical assistance and to ensure the compliance of the conditions for all convicts held in the correctional colony IK-13, including also the ShIZO [penal isolator], with international standards such as the UN *Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners*. The Russian authorities should also ensure that prison administrations undertook no attempts of intimidation of convicts to make them withdraw their complaints in connection with their criminal conviction or their treatment in the conditions of confinement. Any accusations of intimidation should be immediately, impartially and meticulously investigated.

See for additional information of “Amnesty International” concerns with respect of the case of Mikhail Trepashkin in: *Russian Federation, Issues of Concern of Amnesty International and*

### **The national Bolsheviks who stepped out in support of workers have been detained**

In the city of Zavolzhie (Nizhegorodskaya Oblast), prior to the beginning of an authorized rally, fifteen activists of the National Bolshevik Party were detained by UBOP and OMON officers. The National Bolsheviks should have taken part in the rally against the pending dismissals of work force at the Zavolzhie Motor Works owned by O. Deripaska.

We will remind that after a recent action of the NBP activists held at the administration department of the Gorky Automobile Plant, the owner of which is also Deripaska, the management of the plant gave up the plans to make 40 thousand workers redundant.

*NBP press service*

### **Liquefying liquid**

*Alexander Arkhangelsky, intellectual: It was a sad week for us, liberally disposed intellectuals.*

The accounts of “Open Russia” were arrested – that means that the decision was made to finish breaking down Khodorkovsky, erasing even public memory of him. Hopes for changes in Byelorussia, although vague even without it, are crushed finally – the rally in support of opposition initially shivered, then was dispersed completely. And all that being against the background of revolutionary protests that again flooded France, the police act tough there to stop the hooligans but no one interferes with the students in their expression of their position, protests against the government, and what mass protests! The contrast is amazing.

<...>

*Source: PROFILE*

### **Can civilization be arrested?**

*The projects of “Open Russia” continue to work despite the circumstances formed*

“23 March 2006 ...Today the “Trust” Bank notified the management of MOO “Open Russia” of an arrest imposed on monetary funds of the organisation held on its last operating rouble account. The arrest was imposed on the basis of a Decision of the Basmany Court of the city of Moscow of 22 March 2006, which satisfied a motion of the Procuracy General.

MOO “Open Russia” has to wrap up its programs of support to civil projects of 52 Russian non-profit organisations. On 1 April, actually no funds will remain on accounts of these organisations.

This will put in jeopardy the educational seminars of the regional schools of public policy; “...” the work of regional journalism club “First Hand Information”, programs for children and youth MOODiM “New Civilization”...”

Here we will interrupt the quotation. How strange this country is... I mean now not even the notorious law and fight of the state against NCOs. And not even simply Khodorkovsky, the shadow of struggle against whom fell on these pages. It is some generalizations – that are not commercial, not narrow political, but rather political-pedagogical.

... Still almost two years ago, in summer 2004, when I came to the camp of “New Civilisation” I thought: is it enough for the oligarch to initiate a serious national children-youth program that brings up really new citizens as he either dies right there like Alexander Panikin or appears behind the bars like Mikhail Khodorkovsky... It is some fatal coincidence, the more so that both the former and the latter threw a gauntlet to the government – one way or another.

A recollection suddenly came: it was sufficient for the communardom to become a serious All-Union movement in 60s-70s as this movement, despite its seemingly ostensibly declared

communist ideals, was immediately dispersed by decisions of the Central Committee of the Young Communist League and orders of the state security service.

It was not accidental that I thought of comunardom when communicating with the kids and adults of the “New Civilisation” established with financial and ideological patronage of the disgraced oligarch. In its creative, scientific and intellectual sense this inter-regional, practically federal-wide program became a full-value successor to those old, dispersed by former powers, children’s and youths’ communes. With a proper correction, of course, for business training in the form of games.

Strange as it may seem, but the comunardom, having practically gone into underground, still survived locally. It is simply because it is impossible to “arrest” a new type of civilization born first of all in real children, their attitudes to the world and to one another and not in the social and economic experiments of the adults...

That is why the best of them address children earlier of later.

Let us continue the quotation:

“In this situation “Open Russia” appeals to Russian and foreign donors, citizens, organisations with a request to support the NCO projects, which continue to work despite the circumstances formed”.

*Olga Marinicheva,  
Leader of comunard clubs  
Of 60s-70s of the XX century  
Source: NOVAYA GAZETA*

### **Who will open Russia**

*In principle, 15-20 percent is sufficient in the country so that again it became important who has what kind of reputation.*

*The sun from the emblem of the inter-regional nongovernmental organisation “Open Russia”, the accounts of which were arrested allegedly in execution of the verdict in the Mikhail Khodorkovsky case, has gone down. Deputy Chairperson of the Board and Director of the Fund projects Irina Yasina had to stop the machine but she did not cease her fight for open society (without brackets) in our country. And the mistress of the colossal civil net answered the questions of the “NOVAYA” in such a manner as if everything here was still possible to put right.*

***Irina Yasina:***

***“We are taking the matter to court. And what if?”***

- Irina Yevgenievna, what social projects did the country give up by freezing the accounts of the united and indivisible “Open Russia”?

- All: The School of Public Policy, “Help with Advice”, Regional Journalism Club, “New Civilisation”, the Institute of Independent Elections ...

- But there is strict logic: There was in Russia the “Open Society”, the state chased away Soros – Khodorkovsky’s “Open Russia” came in its place. What is the next step?

- The state did not look for Khodorkovsky – we arrived on our own. Since our state does not need any development of such initiatives in general, if there is no one in this field it gives a sigh of relief. Although it emphasized a number of times that it was ready to help develop the civil society even with money, the state offered a kind of “fried ice”, which does not exist in nature. It is difficult to criticize the one from whom you get the money – Putin said it personally.

In reality, the state can help the civil society only with development of a law on endowment (a fund, into which means or property are put to provide for income for required purposes, support of colleges, hospitals etc. – S.M.) and if it wishes it very much then to transfer

some government money there. And then already an independent board of directors formed of worthy and respected people – if such persons are found but not out of the Public Chamber members, rather, let us say. Liudmila Mikhailovna Alexeyeva – will distribute the funds for human rights activities.

- And why, properly speaking, they should not be out of the Public Chamber? Having constructed guided democracy in the country, the Kremlin can try to build with its aid also a guided civil society.

- It is a dream! A society may be either civil or no at all. Just like democracy. A guided society is no civil society by definition. When, I am sorry for comparison, a man takes a rubber woman to satisfy his certain needs, he does not calculate on that she will breathe? Similarly the civil society, which is helped by the state in its development... In England the state does not interfere into public affairs since XII century, that is why their civil society is an aquarium where different fish live and the Public Chamber is a broth cooked out of those who live in the aquarium.

- You have brought a lawsuit at the court, it seems, even to the Basmany Court calculating seriously that the decision of arrest of accounts will be repealed?

- Of course, we as honest citizens calculate on reversal of unfair decisions. I am trying to preserve optimism, which is inherent in me by nature. And what if? Could the people who were involved in the case of “Grand – Three Whales” (*Grand-Tri Kita*) expect that they would come across judge Kudeshkina who would try them under the law and not in the way she was told to? Still there happened such a person! We calculate now only on civil courage of individual people and on nothing else.

- A civil society needs Citizens. What percentage of them would be sufficient?

- It is difficult for me to estimate the percentage. I can only say that people now began to remember the word “shame”. I liked very much the statement of SPS with respect of “Open Russia”: judges, do not sign these papers even if your bosses ask you to do it – it is better to retire or to shoot oneself. One should not bend so much! For then we shall have to educate children and men will have to shave looking at themselves in the mirror and to think: “Here’s a scum”. What else should we count on but instincts? Institutes do not function here – a calculation may be only on an individual: whether his honour, pride, dignity wakes up in him or not. I think that in principle about 15-20 percent all over the country would be sufficient so as it became important again who has what kind of reputation.

### ***Direct speech***

*Anna Zelentsova (“Open Russia” in Volgograd) told the “NOVAYA” that she would lose one individual region by closing of the fund:*

- We had an operational centre of free legal consultations “Help with Advice”. On the average 100-200 persons received legal assistance including provision of defence at court every month. Mainly our clients are socially vulnerable sections of the population, those who cannot ask for paid services from a lawyer, most frequently they are elderly people. Now they will be deprived of this source of assistance.

The “Public Expertise” project is informing citizens of activities of the Volgograd Oblast deputies, both municipal and the State Duma deputies. We told them how the deputies vote on these or other questions, on what telephone numbers the public reception offices of the deputies could be reached. As it turned out, before we started our work the telephone numbers of the City Soviet deputies were not for public access at all, which contradicts the law in general.

As of this date, the club of leaders of TSZh [Partnership of Owners of Apartments] unites 58 partnerships of owners of apartments and about 20 housing groups, i.e. it is a real movement. Before our fund tackled it no one dealt so seriously with this issue in Volgograd – they did not inform citizens of entry into force of the Housing Code and that, for example, they have to select a method of management of their house. In February, thanks to our mediation and organisation

of hearings an acceptable agreement with the regional energy supply service was prepared although not signed yet, this service initially putting up quite steep and unlawful demands to the TSZh.

The School of Public Policy is an independent venue where representatives of the administrations (Oblast and City), journalists, businessmen discussed topical issues – both all-Russian and regional. Besides, there is a Regional Journalism Club. There is also a Legal Clinic – we gave an opportunity to beginning lawyers to get experience and practice, they participated together with our head of legal service in writing complaints, in court sessions.

*Natalia Taubina, director of the “Public Verdict” Fund:*

- The amount of financing, which we receive from “Open Russia”, was a substantial part of our annual budget. As a result of freeze on the accounts, we have not received the funds for 2006 to implement the projects. Now we have to close down the hotline on human rights (24-hour legal assistance by phone, which operated across the entire territory of Russia). We have practically no funds for lawyers’ support – free defence in courts of victims of arbitrariness of law-enforcement bodies. The federation-wide project of human rights hotline is unique. Of course, the human rights organisations in many regions conduct consulting but a possibility for a person to apply for assistance at any time of day or night, this was not provided by either of the currently functioning organisations.

*Author: Sergey Mulin,  
Source: NOVAYA GAZETA*

### **“Open Russia” appealed against the bank accounts arrest**

The Inter-regional Nongovernmental Organisation (MOO) “Open Russia” lodged and appeal to the Moscow City Court against the decision of the Basmany District Court that on 16 March imposed an arrest on bank accounts of the organisation following the General Procuracy demand. We will remind that on 19 March the “Trust” Bank where “Open Russia” has its accounts received the Decision of the Basmany Court, which stated that the MOO accounts were arrested within the framework of the criminal cases against Mikhail Khodorkovsky and Platon Lebedev (The “*Kommersant*” reported that on 20 March).

The accounts with about USD6 million were arrested by the procurators as property of the convicted ex-co-owners of YUKOS “acquired in a criminal way”. “During the last two years we were checked 22 times, nothing unlawful was found, that is why we are confused why our accounts are arrested”, told the “*Kommersant*” Irina Savchenko, director of public relations of “Open Russia”. “The arrested money is not connected with the suspects, it belongs to the Fund. We consider the court decision to be unlawful, issued with a blatant violation of procedural standards”.

*Author: Ivan Tiazhlov,  
Source: KOMMERSANT*

### **Mikhail Khodorkovsky went out from the isolator to court**

*Mikhail Khodorkovsky finished serving his regular administrative punishment*

Mikhail Khodorkovsky left the penal isolator of the IK-10 colony (Krasnokamensk Chita Oblast) having served his seven-day term by decision of the administration. He was punished for drinking tea in the service premises of the unit and not in the canteen. An hour later Mr. Khodorkovsky took part in a field session of the City Court of Krasnokamensk, which heard the appeal of his lawyer Natalia Terekhova concerning putting the ex-oligarch in the ShIZO [penal isolator] in January this year.

As lawyer Terekhova informed, she planned to file an appeal with the City Court of Krasnokamensk requesting to find the placement of Mikhail Khodorkovsky in the penal isolator on 17 March as unlawful. The administrative punishment was given for food taking outside the special place allocated for this purpose. Lawyer Terekhova believes that the colony administration “had not sufficient grounds” for that.

According to lawyer Terekhova, chairperson of the city court Larisa Zhukova, who conducted the trial, examined the documents submitted by the parties. The colony administration filed the reports and an opinion on service check of the January incident – then Mr. Khodorkovsky was placed in ShIZO for five days for his study of two orders of the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation and the instructions approved by these orders concerning the rights of convicts. According to the colony representatives, the convict used the documents of restricted access, for which he was punished.

The plaintiffs, in their turn, filed with the court the unfortunate orders of the Ministry of Justice, the information of their publication in periodicals (in particular, in the “*Rossiyskaya Gazeta*”) and the Regulations approved by the Government of the Russian Federation, which explain what documents shall be the information for service use only. According to the lawyer, the orders and instructions found with Mr. Khodorkovsky, do not get into this list.

We will remind that at the first session of the court hearing of this appeal, which was held on 20 March, the colony lawyer Dmitry Popov giving his arguments for the decision of the administration stated that the convict’s holding of these documents could lead “to unpredictable consequences for the officers and other convicts”, “posed a threat to their life and health”.

The court did not take any decision on the appeal. The judge announced that the court was adjourned to 29 March. Ms. Terekhova explained to “*Kommersant*” that the colony administration could not find one of the documents in relation to the appeal but refused to talk in more detail on this theme. The IK-10 administration does not communicate with “*Kommersant*” stating that they can give any information only at a “personal meeting”.

*Author: Sergey Berg,  
Source: KOMMERSANT*

### **To save a rank successor**

<...>

Last week Zhirinovskiy stated his intention to apply to the British parliament in connection with a possible interest of Premier Tony Blair’s family in maintaining immunity of the former Russian oligarch Boris Berezovsky and a number of other persons searched in Russia. And terrible details were disclosed. It turned out that “the prime-minister’s family of this so-called democratic country is materially supported by criminal elements”, stated the LDPR leader.

According to him, Blair’s wife Cherry is a member of a legal office, “which services our Russian swindlers including Berezovsky”. But not only those: it concerns tens of “extremists” with “Akhmed Zakaev among them and “also almost all the management of the YUKOS Company and ten more persons”. Possibly, now Blair will have to either extradite all these “extremists” to Russia to avoid a scandal or to come here in person and to agree somehow this issue with Vladimir Volfovich.

<...>

*Author: Vladimir Rudakov,  
Source: PROFILE*

### **“The situation in the Northern Caucasus and the condition of Balkar people”**

On 28 March from 12 to 14 o’clock in the Independent Press Centre (Tverskoi Boulevard, 20, 1<sup>st</sup> floor, accreditation on site) a round table “The Situation in the Northern Caucasus and the Condition of Balkar People” will be held.

Participants:

Rasul Soltan-Khamidovich Dzhappuev – chairman of the State Council of Balkaria, a founder of the “Balkaria” newspaper, the representative of Balkar people in the Federative Council of National Minorities of Europe;

Lev Alexandrovich Ponomarev – executive director of the nongovernmental movement “For Human Rights”;

Ruslan Sakhitovich Boziyev – deputy director of the Institute of Innovation Activity in Education;

Ismail Khakimovich Boziyev – a deputy of local self-government of the settlement of Khasania;

Alim Khazhdautovich Khubolov – expert of the nongovernmental movement “For Human Rights”;

Magomed Iliasovich Metov – director general of OOO “Apatit”;

Ali Amashevich Abdullaev – director general of OOO “Aliko”.

Political scientists and sociologists are also invited.

The round table is dedicated to the so-called “Day of the Balkar People Renaissance”, which will be attended by outstanding representatives of the Balkar people. Its main themes will be the “successes” of implementation of local self-government reform in Kabardino-Balkaria and the inter-ethnic component of the conflict of government and the Balkar people. In addition, it is planned to discuss the issues of enforcement of the federal laws in the Republic of Kabardino-Balkaria and the prospects of further development of the situation in the Northern Caucasus.

The reform of local self-government carried out by the authorities in the republics of Northern Caucasus caused numerous cases of interethnic unrest. In Kabardino-Balkaria, representatives of the indigenous people of the republic – the Balkars – protest against infringement on their lawful interests by the leadership of the republic under the pretext of changing the administrative-territorial “transformation” and in reality seizure of the territories of ethnic population of the Balkars.

The policy of leadership of the republic with respect of the Balkar people is based on multi-year militia arbitrariness under the guise of mopping-up and anti-terrorist operations, its discrimination in any possible way, infringement on its lawful rights and obstructing the conduct of events aimed at their protection. Implacable aspiration of the people to preserve its land manifested in numerous actions of protest against establishment of new borders of the municipal formations forced the leadership of the KBR to hold for the first time a meeting of the Kabardino-Balkar regional anti-terrorist commission only to prohibit holding rallies, pickets and other actions of protest. And all this was done under the pretext of prevention of allegedly possible terrorist acts.

The cause of dissatisfaction of the Balkar people is adoption by the parliament of the republic of the laws, under which the municipal formations of Balkaria are deprived of a considerable part of their territories – tourist and recreational, cropland and pastures that are vital for survival and existence of the local population.

The reaction of the Balkar people manifested at the first stage in the mass actions of protest that started in May 2005 could lead to unpredictable consequences in connection with the murder of the head of administration of the settlement of Khasania, Artur Zokaev, who exerted all possible efforts to prevent implementation of anti-Balkar laws of the KBR. Only thanks to wisdom and a great (but far from infinite) patience of the Balkar people there was a success in evading armed opposition with the authorities of the republic and as a consequence appearance of a new hotbed of tensions in the Northern Caucasus, which could easily go over onto the inter-ethnic plane and spread to other members of the Russian Federation.

With arrival of the new President of the Republic, Arsen Kanokov, the intensity of public unrest was somewhat diminished – after his statement that he would conduct the policy “meeting the interest of all peoples of the republic”. In reality, pressure was exerted on all heads of administrations of the Balkar settlements and as a result those who felt to be independent refused

to sign without agreement of the population any of the proposed variants considering them to be unlawful and demanded that the approach to that issue should be only from the position of Federal Law No. 131.

The All-Russian Nongovernmental Movement “For Human Rights” drew attention of the public and the federal government a number of times to the problems of Kabardino-Balkaria, to a high probability of growing of the opposition of the Balkar people to the Balkar government over into the plane of armed opposition and our forecasts proved to be correct a number of times.

The tendency of continuation by the new president of the KBR of the “former policy” that has taken shape, adoption of laws of the republic that contradict the Constitution of the Russian Federation and Federal Law No. 131-FZ, another attempt to seize Balkar land under the guise of implementation of local self-government reform, the latest events around the State Council of the Balkar people and the public-political newspaper “Balkaria” force us to warn of a possibility of growing public tensions in this member of the Russian Federation.

*IA “For Human Rights”*

*We publish a letter from Byelorussia. Our Byelorussian brothers ask us to disseminate it as widely as possible. We are glad that we can do our bit. “For your and our freedom!”.*

## **20-21 March MAIDAN [SQUARE]**

### **Part 1. Oginsky’s Polonaise**

I am writing these lines on 22 March at 0:48 A.M. During the last 24 hours I slept for only 2 hours. An hour and a half before I was let out from the police station. I still do not know where my brother is who carried food for the people standing on the square.

Probably, they are still standing there, on the Oktiabrskaya Square, linked up in a circle, holding firmly hand by hand around a small tent camp to protect it with their bodies. A ten degrees freeze fell on Minsk. Reinforcements will not come; no one will break through plain-clothed cops and secret service men blocking all entrances and exits to the square. No one will be able to bring them hot tea or a sleeping bag. I made sure of that on my own experience a couple of hours ago. Many of them have been standing for more than 15 hours. And some for more than 24 hours. Soon the freeze will start simply to kill them. It will be another “elegant victory” of the regime. During these two days I seem to have grown older by 10 years. These days stored very much and, possibly, changed my life more than I can now even think about.

In these days I learned the meaning of Stepping over Your Fear, the meaning of Love and the meaning of Hatred. And how it happens when the entire life goes down. I shall never, NEVER be able to forget something out of what I learned and felt. And I shall never be able to forgive something. These remembrances will burn me as long as I live. Certainly, these were the strongest shocks in my life. It was blue, so blue, I have never seen that kind of colour. When I come to death I will try to recall that wonderfully blue sky over the Oktiabrskaya Square in Minsk. On the evening of 20 March when our Byelorussian *Maidan* started.

Rivers of lies are already pouring on the participants of the tent camp. They say, it was all planned beforehand, and there stand high and drug-injected drunk-happy ruffians. And the authorities even name the amounts, which we were allegedly paid. And it is a shame that similar policy is pursued even by numerous Russian mass media. Personally for me – it is like a knife stabbed in the back by the man whom you believed to be your friend. Here I will write the truth and only the truth. You may consider it to be the most accurate information. I was among the first ten persons who began to put up the tents under the light of TV cameras and flashes of photo cameras. It just happened so. Now prison faces me all the same already and I shall not get off with only 15 days at that. But whatever the end to this is, I am not sorry about my decision.

So, the sky over Oktiabrskaya. When on 20 March there assembled 10 thousand people, it was transparently blue, there were born in it the first sparks of stars. Alexander Milinkevich standing on the steps of the Trade Unions Palace shouted into the microphone that the election was unlawful, that the voters had been pressured, that mass falsifications took place there. Then music was switched on and sad and strict there swam over the vast square Oginsky's Polonaise. "Razvitanne z Radzimai". We joined in singing, quietly, solemnly as if it were an anthem.

That is when something in me broke and left me. My throat was seized with a hard sob. Tilting my head, gazing through the veil of tears into the high sky I heard the words as if written about us:

*Rostan na rostaniakh krainy,  
Ranits dumki shlyakh abrazy,  
Pragne sertsy w rodnyia miastsiny,  
I radzimy vobraz azhyvae rastryvozhanyu ranai...  
Znow  
Zalunaye nash shtandar,  
Palykhne wnachy pazhar,  
I pakhodnayu truboi  
Znow paklichy nas z taboi na muzhny boi maya kraina -  
Krai adziny,  
Za yago w vygnanni  
Shliakh viartannya,  
Shliakh zmagannya..*

It was not simply a song – it called and appealed. And we did not fail it. After the song they spoke something there yet, on the steps. But the main events happened not there but in the very thick of people. When the people suddenly fell apart freeing the place and the fist tents fell on the asphalt. My tent was also among them. 5 persons started to put them up. I had no time to come up there – suddenly there sprang out from the crowd robust guys with thick expressionless faces in black caps. They stamped furiously on the tents, broke the bow-shafts, seized and carried away sleeping bags and tents, tried to strike those who unfolded them. They acted in great coordination and efficiently.

People managed to tear away something out of their hands but they carried away most of the things. Fortunately, it was only the first lot. Then the people simply stood around us forming a wall, linking up with their elbows firmly one to another and letting no one in. They squeezed out with their shoulders those who tried to break in. And there were many provocateurs, plain-clothed secret service men, a terrible lot of them. They stood around in batches. And some of them stuck on our badges, "for freedom" and tried stealthily to penetrate into the encirclement.

And so, behind that live wall – encirclement – we put up our tents. I remember clearly the moment when I stood in the encirclement hesitating if I should go in and my friend Svetka who already worked there called out for me.

I did not feel any special emotions at the time. I just stepped into the middle and took a bow-shaft helping to put up a tent. The shock came later. At first I hid my face under the hood because a multitude of video- and photo cameras aimed straight at our eyes. Then I decided that it is some kind of semi-decision: well, there is no use stopping half-way. And I took off the hood.

We put up the tents, spread the rugs and sat on them. It is then that I started to shake. The realization of WHAT we did came. And that all my previous life, very possibly, at this very moment was flowing down like sand through the fingers. All my life! And the intellectual games, and the children's club, which was my joy for so many years. And well-provided-for existence, and my work in a scientific journal, and my friends, and my books and my parents. And my beloved Minsk. And possibly, Belarus ... and, possibly, freedom. I tried to conceal my tears

under the hood so that the journalists could not see. It is an ugly sight when a person is shaking and twisting with sobs.

Then I calmed down: what has been done is done. There is no returning. Indeed, was it worth while when a child to read such good books and to hear such good songs so that later in life to appear “neither here nor there”?

There remained only one thing to do and I did it. I called a man whom I have loved for two years already and told him about it. I wanted to do it long time ago but could not bring myself up to it. And now there is nothing to fear already.

## **Part 2. “A beautiful far off” and something about lies**

In the beginning there were a lot of people around us, they stood in a dense circle. Music played on the porch, journalists came up for an interview with us. I spoke to the “Euronews” correspondent and Georgian TV journalists, to the NTV correspondent. Frankly speaking, it was not a great joy but they approached me quite often for some reason.

After 23:00 the music was switched off because the law prohibits loud music at night. We try to comply with the law in everything, even in trifles. It is because we know: any trifle may be turned against us. And if they fail to find some trifle, they will invent one.

After midnight the people started to go away because the metro would soon cease working. We were left in fewer and fewer numbers but the encirclement stood wonderfully, just to the bitter end.

At night there started to come people with thermos bottles of hot tea. These were, as a rule, elderly women and men from the nearest houses. It was not simple to reach us from the very beginning. In order to prevent the people from supporting us, the police detained at the approaches any one with whom they found a thermos bottle, food or a sleeping bag. But they still managed somehow. I remember two elderly women who brought three thermos bottles with hot water. They kissed us and said that they would pray for us. Close to the morning there came a very old granddaddy with a little crumpled cellophane bag. There was a piece of boiled sausage and bread in the bag. The granddaddy said: “I am sorry for it being so little: it was all I had in the fridge”.

Without these people it would have been much harder. Now the police intercept them and give them 10 days of detention for a thermos bottle or a sleeping bag. According to yesterday’s data on the Internet, more than 100 persons were already detained.

What did we do in the centre of the circle? We walked, communicated with one another. Sat in a circle and sang songs. The first one we sang was “The Beautiful Far Off”. It was also as if about us. Some radio-men pushed a mike to us and recorded.

My throat felt strained on the words:

“I hear the voice, the voice asking sternly:

And what have I done today for tomorrow?”

I shall also try to remember this song, being surrounded by people protecting us with their bodies, for all my life. This evening was, possibly, the best and most important in my life.

My story will be in many aspects a refutation of all the lies hurled at us by Byelorussian and some Russian mass media. So, it is a LIE that our action is anti-Russian, that we hate Russia. There were Russians from Moscow among us with the Russian tri-colour flag. Our *maidan* started not only to the tune of Byelorussian songs. We sang most harmoniously “Change”, “Blood Group”, “The Star Named the Sun” of Tsoi. And “She Whistled By” of DDT. We sang “Atlantes” of Gorodnitsky, “Bookish Children” of Vysotsky, and “Idiotic March” of Medvedev. We sang “Winged Swing”.

Our protest is against lies and dictatorship, against falsification of elections and disappearance of people, beating up of journalists. It is against the Soviet Union, which clings to our feet from its seemingly deep grave.

I would like to ask the Russians: do you really need such an ally as Lukashenko? An ally chosen by the principle “although a scum but it is our scum”? Such an ally is not needed for those Russians who stood shoulder to shoulder with Byelorussians in the encirclement.

And also there were with us several Ukrainians who still managed to penetrate through the border with their flag. There was a Georgian flag, but I do not think I saw any Georgians. There were many white-red-white flags and several flags of the European Union.

There were two young Estonian journalists who put up tents together with us. By the way, it is a LIE that all this was planned in advance. I will tell you how the idea of putting up the tents originated and how the initial brave six was formed. There is nothing to lose already: our mugs were filmed by all leading TV channels of Europe and, apparently, the secret service camcorders, too. Later they may beat out of me the testimony that everything was in a different way but here, I hope, I shall have time to tell the truth.

I rent a flat with Sasha and Tania. We lived with Tania together still in the journalism department hostel of the BGU [Byelorussian State University]. Sometimes Sveta, our friend from the time of the same hostel, comes to see us from Smorgon.

On 18 March at the concert held in support of Milinkevich, Tania and Sasha introduced me to two journalists from Estonia, K and S. They walked about asking where they could stay overnight because they did not want to go to a hotel. As K told us, at the border a KGB man interrogated them for three hours. A laptop was taken away from K. That is why they were apprehensive of official registration at a hotel.

Tania with Sasha brought them to our place. We talked until late at night, in the morning I left for election observation, then went to the square and thus did not return home. I stayed with Pasha for the night.

According to the figures that the Central Elections Committee started to issue already in the evening, it was clear that we were cheated. On 19th at night Sveta came to our place. She campaigned for Milinkevich in Smorgon and the election results at her precincts did not bring her any joy either. As Tania told me, at night they sat and talked in the kitchen about how they could express their protest. The tent idea came to their heads practically simultaneously. The most amusing thing is that such idea originated not only with them. I and Pasha also discussed such a possibility on that night, but it went no further than discussion with us. And with Sveta and Sasha it did. They called their acquaintances and guys from the “*Molodoi Front*” [Young Front]. It appeared that many had similar thoughts. They had only to agree at what time they should come to the square and how they should drag there the equipment through. K and S were surprised at first, and then said: “think on your own because it is your country. Of course, we shall help you to put them up but it is simpler for us. At the worst, they would deport us and that will be all. But you will have huge problems”.

Sveta and Tania agreed to the problems. So they became four. In the morning of 20<sup>th</sup> they called us with Pasha to ask for my permission to take my little tent, the sleeping bag and a rucksack. Naturally, I gave my permission. We decided with Pasha that we should also take some part in it; at the time it seemed to be not so serious a matter.

In this way there became six of us. Without counting the guys yet unknown to me.

Incidentally, the average age of the people on the Oktiabrskaya will be about my age. It is about 24. Quite young, there are students but not all. There are older people also, mostly robust men in the encirclement. Boys are more than girls.

So, I continue my story. We were filmed practically continuously; I closed my eyes so that flashes did not interfere with singing. In the centre of the camp, among the tents, we put tourist rugs. Initially we placed food and warm clothes on their middle, then these were too many and we allocated two tents for storage. When I handed around hot tea in the rows somebody presented me with two bouquets of flowers – irises and some other. We put them in a jug. Somebody brought and installed an icon nearby. We lighted two thick candles near it. We tried to keep this middle place tidy, removed litter from it. It was an icon anyway... We put nearby only thermoses with hot tea but they became empty soon. We sat in the middle little time – as soon as

hot tea or coffee was brought we poured it out into plastic cups and handed around to our encirclement.

Incidentally, one of the most disgusting inventions of the Byelorussian mass media is that we were all drunk and that beer was brought for us in the thermos bottles. It is a crude invention though: well, what fool would drink beer and not hot water at 3 A.M. in frosty weather?

But we foresaw such fibs. That is why there was a complete dry law in the tent camp and around it. We understood full well: God forbid to take at least a drop of alcohol – they would immediately film us and defame us as alcoholics. The people started periodically to chant: “I AM DRY! I AM DRY!” At about 4 A.M. some unknown guy brought us two bottles of vodka. We wanted to send him back with them and then thought: what if he really is not a provocateur and would fall into the hands of the cops? We did not even open these ill-fated bottles. We wrapped them up in what we could, shoved into a bag, hid in a tent and heaped things on it.

Throughout the night Alexander Milinkevich with his wife stayed with us. They descended the staircase, came up to our tents. Once they managed to carry through a thermos with hot tea from outside. And two sons of Milinkevich were detained at night on the Avenue when they tried to carry through some warm clothes.

It was very cold at night, especially, for the encirclement, which covered us also from wind. These people ... I am ready to kneel before them. They stood in a tight circle in a frosty weather all night and some of them even more – 14 HOURS AND MORE, never leaving and not moving from the place. At night a very young boy was brought to us who had light clothes on. He could hardly speak. We gave him hot tea to drink, rubbed his hands, on which he had no gloves.

How did we warm up ourselves? We sang songs, chanted slogans, danced to the rhythm beaten on the mugs. In various parts of the encirclement time and again the people also started dancing something like medieval circle dances rhythmically stepping and stomping. Somebody squatted and some did other exercises. Some people organized trotting around the ring trying to keep close to the standing people in the encirclement. They ran with flags, in front there was a guy with a Russian flag, then somebody with two flags – Byelorussian and Ukrainian, then Georgian. They periodically yelled joyfully: “*Moladz za zdarovy lad zhytsya!*” [Youth for healthy lifestyle!] I also took a short run with them. It warms up really.

A little later we had to solve one more problem. It was about a LAVATORY, however prosaic it is. Of course, many people from the nearest houses would let us in. The problem was that one could not pass there. There stood around the encirclement plain-clothed people and SOBR troopers [Special Force]. All entrances and exits from the square were blocked. I saw with my own eyes that in the streets adjacent to the square there stood whole “caravans”- vans for convicts, buses with OMON personnel. Just step away a little to some place – and it will be “the end of it”. We thought a lot to find a way out. The help came from a guy, a digger. Practically working with his bare hands, he opened the sewage hatch at the edge closer to the road. We put up a tent over the hatch, cut the floor in it. At first there was a strong stench from the well. I yelled encouragingly to the surrounding people: “And did you think that revolutions smell with roses?” and plunged into the tent.

And the Byelorussian TV said that the heinous oppositionists arranged a lavatory for themselves – right with a special purpose – “near the Museum of the Great Patriotic War”. Funny! The Museum is so far at the side from the circle and the journalists’ camera’s that the person who would decide to come up to it could apparently never come back.

One more lie should be mentioned. It is so clumsy and absurd a fib – and still many people believe it. It alleges that we simply stand there for money. Initially the figure of 20 thousand Byelorussian roubles was named. Then they understood that it looked just funny and absurd. The authorities “raised” our “pay” almost five times – to 50 dollars. Goodness gracious! Let those who believe it come and try to stand under the stare and cameras of the plain-clothed men. To stand for 14 hours stiffening in the freeze and waiting for the dawn as deliverance. To shout joyfully at daybreak. And to see in the morning that there were few reinforcements, the people cannot simply get through. And to feel how terribly thin grows the circle each minute because the

people cannot bear it any more and leave to go to sleep and there is no replacement. And every minute to wait for assault, beating up and provocations. And to know that, possibly, tomorrow you will be expelled from the university or from your job or you will be imprisoned.

Yes, in the morning there were very few of us left. When at 6 A.M. bus No. 100 went along the Avenue we devised the following thing. The side of the encirclement that faced the Avenue, each time when the “onehundred” approached bent down on one knee so that the tents could be seen. And the people chanted: “DA-LU-CHAI-TSES! DA-LU-CHAI-TSES!” (for those who do not know the Byelorussian language: it means “join in!”). They did it while they could physically do it.

We waited and waited for aid and it came in such small numbers!!! But at 9 A.M. it became clear already that the circle will remain standing. Some people were replaced. When we handed out hot tea and food to them they would say: “thanks, we are just from home”.

At 9 A.M I felt extremely bad. I wanted to sleep and shook with cold. Together with Pasha we found a chance, ran past the SOBR troopers and plain-clothed men, near whom journalists stood, jumped into the “onehundred” and were gone. And Sveta and Tania stayed there for the third day sleepless.

#### **Part 4. The sleeping bag as weapons of the proletariat. I hate.**

We slept for a couple of hours at Pasha’s place and then went to our jobs. It is so strange: you are already a different person and your life is already changing swiftly, but everything still runs mechanically, it is peace and quiet. Nobody knew anything in the editorial office yet. I could entertain a strange illusion for one more day as if the former cosy and measured life continued. A strange and sweet illusion as if you returned to previous life for half a day from prison or from a journey. I even did not fall asleep at my work place. I edited a confoundedly difficult article, cheerfully sorted out the work.

Then I went home – to change into warmer clothes and into different boots because devil made me go out of house in spring-time light shoes. I had no time for a real meal. I decided to go to the Oktiabrskaya, although there were doubts. I think I caught a heavy cold and in addition I felt very sleepy and wanted to write my diary. Because if they grab me in tomorrow – then farewell, “to be continued!”

Still I made up my mind. I wrapped myself up with the sleeping bag under the sheepskin coat, sewed the sleeping bag to the sweater and fixed with scotch.

I was detained in the metro at the Oktiabrskaya Square. It was easy and simple: the sleeping bag was seen from under the sheepskin coat. A policeman barred my way, asked for my documents and ordered to go with him to the base station in the metro.

There I had to do a forced strip-tease and take out everything out of my handbag. I tried to behave as calmly and good-naturedly as possible. I tried to start a human conversation with the uniformed people, and it clicked. This nice black-eyed uncle asked quite seriously how much I was paid. The other one was quite different. He shook out my handbag. Found floppies and asked maliciously what I had there. I said calmly: “well, take them and look” while personally I broke out in a cold sweat momentarily. I had there news from the website of *svaboda.org* and the “March Diary”. The second cop thought at length whether he should break my floppy disks (which I wished at the time most of all). As a result, they finally returned them. They also returned the business-card of K, in the Estonian language. Probably, they did not see the word “correspondent” there.

I talked with the policemen, I tried to explain my position to them, to give them understanding that we were not drunk ruffians. The policemen told me that on that night there would be a “capture”, the people would be beaten up and brought to the police stations. In general, they tried to intimidate me in all possible way. Only once I was almost on the verge of losing my temper – when plain-closed men, secret service officers came in. If I can understand and somewhere justify the policemen, as for those – I hate them! They look all somehow alike:

similar plumpish expressionless faces, similar complacency and assuredness of their impunity. They wear something dark and impersonal and are recognized by that.

THESE wore badges, OUR badges “for freedom”! They behaved in the station as complete masters. One of them who was a little taller and stouter looked at my sleeping bag and said with satisfaction: “Oh! Sleeping bag! Let me take it to Nikolaich in his car because he has been already frozen for 4 hours”.

And here I understood that I should keep myself under firm control otherwise I would lose my temper. They dug in my things, studied my passport for a long time. One of them took the book of brothers Strugatsky, which was in my handbag, turned it perplexedly in the hands (I was so eager to say: it is a book, it is for reading) and asked: “What is it? A detective story? Mysticism?”

At first they wanted to draw up a record and take me to the reception and distribution centre on the Okrestina St. But the taller one then said: “Ah, to hell with her! Let us go to those idiots, otherwise, while we transport her everything tasty will be eaten up in the encirclement without us”. And he pinned the white-red-white badge on the most conspicuous place.

I have never felt such hatred and pain yet. I would like to claw on his throat, this fat fed up cynical hog that arrests us and with clean conscience devours our food. The food that is brought to us by the people who risk getting 10 days of confinement for that. This food is distributed with frozen hands by the girls who stand on the *maidan* for the second day sleepless.

THIS is impossible to either forget or pardon. God, if you do exist! Send me to hell if you wish. But do one thing! Do a miracle – so that a next piece stuck like a pike in the throat of THIS.

This should not be pardoned and forgotten. The most disgusting thing achieved by the present power is that it divided its own people into “honest” and “dishonest”. The greater part of the people was thoroughly brainwashed. It meanly slandered for this part the cleanest, most honest and bravest, those who do not bear injustice, who cannot make peace with evil. And that same smallest, “dissident” part was made to see in each passer-by a possible provocateur and a secret service agent. And they made the entire people to fear and keep silent. To fear an arrest, being sacked from his work, being beaten up in the dark entrance to the building. To fear for oneself, friends and relatives. These days I am regularly called by my acquaintances and friends asking if I am still free and how I feel. They check if everything is O’K with me. Even if it is O’K, this is not for long. I do not entertain illusions. If I was held today for two hours and allowed to go, it does not mean that democracy triumphed in the country.

It is just unproductive for them to raise a clamour now when there are so many foreign journalists in Minsk. These guys from REITAR [*sic*], the Polish television and other mass media – it is only their presence that protects us now. We are free while there stands a ring on the square. I think as soon as it is all over, the “state security committee will remember our names”. The more so that we did not hide our faces.

## **22 March. Da-lu-chai-tses!**

Slept a littler at home. I hurry to finish my diary and leave for the square. There is an avalanche of calls from my acquaintances and relatives who saw me on NTV and “Euronews”. But there is something strange with the telephone; there are some noises and clicks in it. It is most likely that we are tapped.

Last night the Estonians, K and S, called us. The Estonian consul asked them to leave the country urgently. He said that they got in strong light near us and that the “tent-putters” were facing very great problems. They apologized for going away and abandoning us.

Hopefully, I shall be able to send this diary into the Internet; just I will get to the Internet-café. I shall send it to anyone I can.

I do not know what happens tomorrow. I want to ask those who read it. People! If you are Byelorussians, come to the square, those who can – stand together with us! DA-LU-CHAI-

TSES! If you live far from Minsk, disseminate this diary so that it was read by maximum number of people. You will help with this very much too. If you cannot stand alongside with us, then at least REMEMBER how all this was and tell others. Just in case, so long to all!

*Friends, if you do not wish to receive our news bulletins, please, advise us.*