



Belarussian
PEN
Centre

Cultural Resistance in Belarus

Issue 30 (43)

July 26-August 1, 2021

*ribbons
on trunks and branches
help to not go
astray
a little dress
red in a white window
not for the first month
is drying
helps
on the way*

Dmitri Strotsev

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1. RESULTS OF MONITORING OF CULTURAL RIGHTS VIOLATIONS FOR JANUARY-JUNE 2021

During the first half of 2021, PEN Belarus recorded 621 cases of human and cultural rights violations.



JANUARY-JUNE 2021 POLITICAL PRISONERS AND ILLEGALLY CONVICTED



Cultural figures	Total
Political prisoners <small>(as of 30.06.2021)</small>	39
Recognized as political prisoners <small>(during the first half of 2021)</small>	23
Illegally convicted <small>(sentenced to penal colony «khrimiy» or «house arrest»)</small>	24
Are serving a «khrimiya» <small>(with a referral to an open-type correctional institution)</small>	4

Беларускі ПЭН-цэнтр



2. PERSECUTION, CONVICTIONS, CULTURAL POLICY



Aleh Hruzdziłovič [Hruzdzilovich], journalist, author of a documentary book about the explosion in the Minsk metro in 2011, and **Ihar Iljaš** [Iliash], journalist, co-author (together with Kaciaryna Andrejeva) of the book "Belarusian Donbass", were released from Akrestsina prison on July 26. They have no right to disclose the details of their cases.



Photo: svaboda.org



Jula Čarniaŭskaja, a culture researcher and widow of TUT.BY founder Yury Zisser, remains under house arrest, by the decision of the investigators. She was detained on May 18 as a suspect under Art. 243 of the Criminal Code – Tax evasion.



Cleansing continues: in Hrodna the **Rock Club**, founded by Ihar Bancar in 2014, and the Studio of Useful Competences were eliminated.



At the registration address of **Natalla Zdanievič**, project manager of the **Brest Fortress Development Foundation**, a KGB search was held. The Foundation unites efforts of international experts in the field of studying the heritage of Brest and the Brest Fortress, initiates archival research, promotes popularization of history in new modern formats, works with digitalization of knowledge, and also helps consolidate and develop a community of people interested in preserving the heritage.



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Каталог конфиската > Печатная продукция, полиграфия > Печатные книги, газеты, репродукции и другие изделия полиграфической промышленности > рукописи, маш > Книга «Рэвалюцыя». Віктар Марціновіч Мінск. «Кнігазбор». 2020. (б/у, без видимых дефектов)
Количество страниц - 280.

Книга «Рэвалюцыя». Віктар
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«Кнігазбор». 2020. (б/у. без
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Количество страниц - 280.

3. LIFE OF THE IMPRISONED PEOPLE



Natalla Chierše [Natalia Hershe], an artist sentenced to 2 years and 6 months in a general-security penal colony, spent almost two months in a punitive confinement, where she didn't have even bed linen, as a punishment for refusing to sew uniform for law enforcement officers, and other violations. Now she has been transferred to a solitary confinement. Natalla refuses to write a mercy plea addressed to Łukašenka [Lukashenka].

Ihar Bancar [Bantsar], serving a year and a half term in an open penal facility for dancing in his strings in front of a policeman, sent postcards to the arrested management of Viasna; for the first time in almost 40 days he was taken to hospital for medical examination; he is offered to write a mercy plea, but he isn't going to do so.



Anastasija Mironcava writes from the penal colony №4 in Homel, where she has to serve 2 years of imprisonment, "On the 16th we watched the premiere of a theatrical production. There is a club here – a room with a stage, huge curtains and rows of chairs. The director has been working with convicts for many years. What an awesome show he made! And the girls play! .. I even thought they were real actors."

4. DISSENT AND CULTURAL ACTIVISM

Despite the fact that many art workers had to leave Belarus – because of persecution, dismissal, and no opportunities to work – many stayed and continued their daily work of preserving and developing Belarusian culture, although not as noticeable and loud as what we saw it during 2020. However, this situation is not new to us, and we know well the value of this quiet daily work, without which there would have been no celebration of culture that we observed last year.

Mikita Moniĉ [Nikita Monich], an art critic who had to quit the National Art Museum in the summer of 2020 because of the poem he wrote, has launched a YouTube project **Around Culture**, in which he will talk about how to enjoy cultural artifacts and why go to museums and theaters.



Photo: relax.by



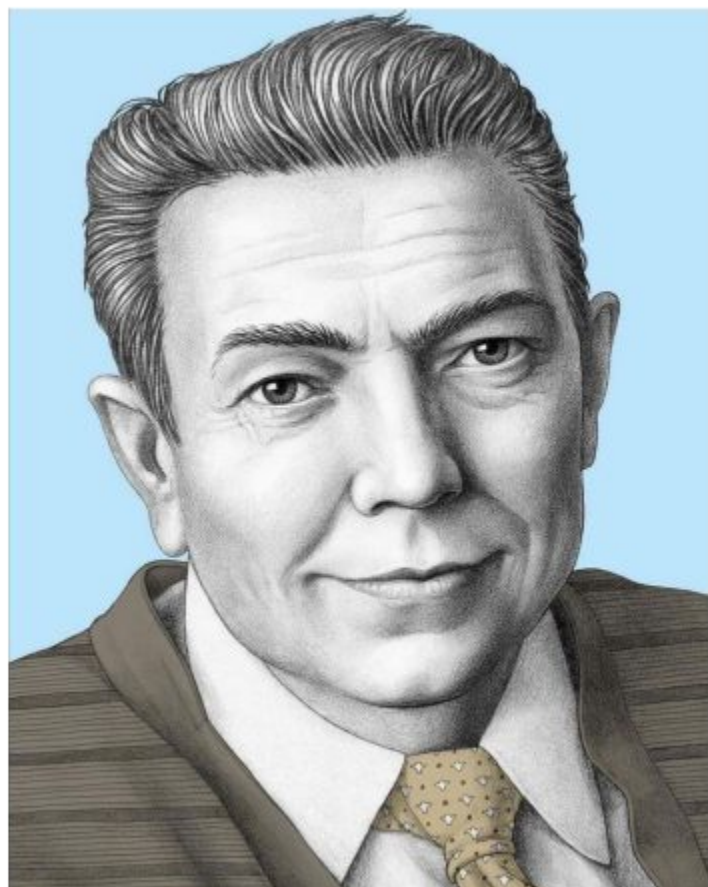
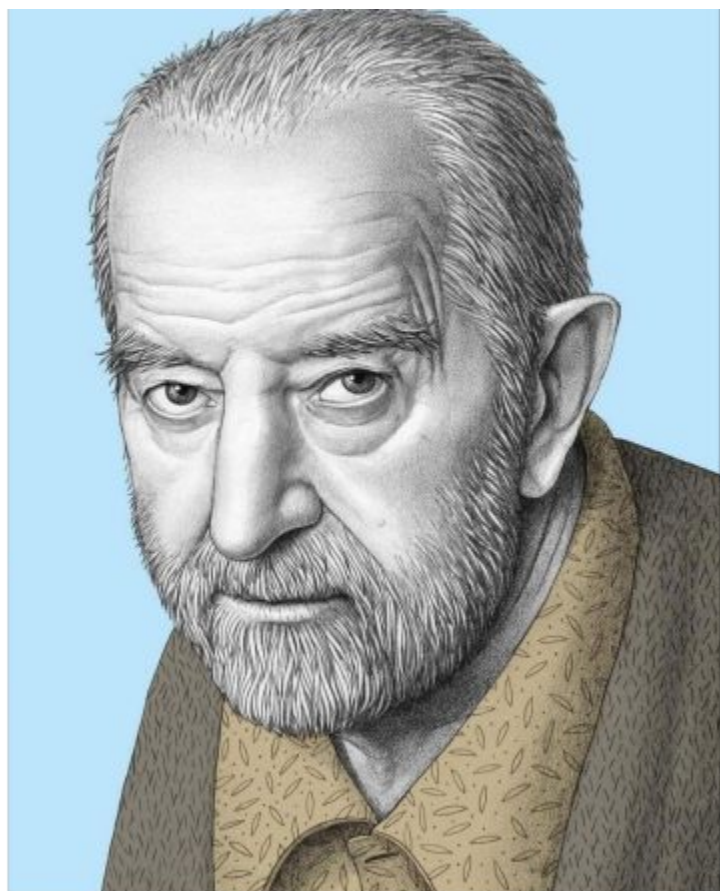
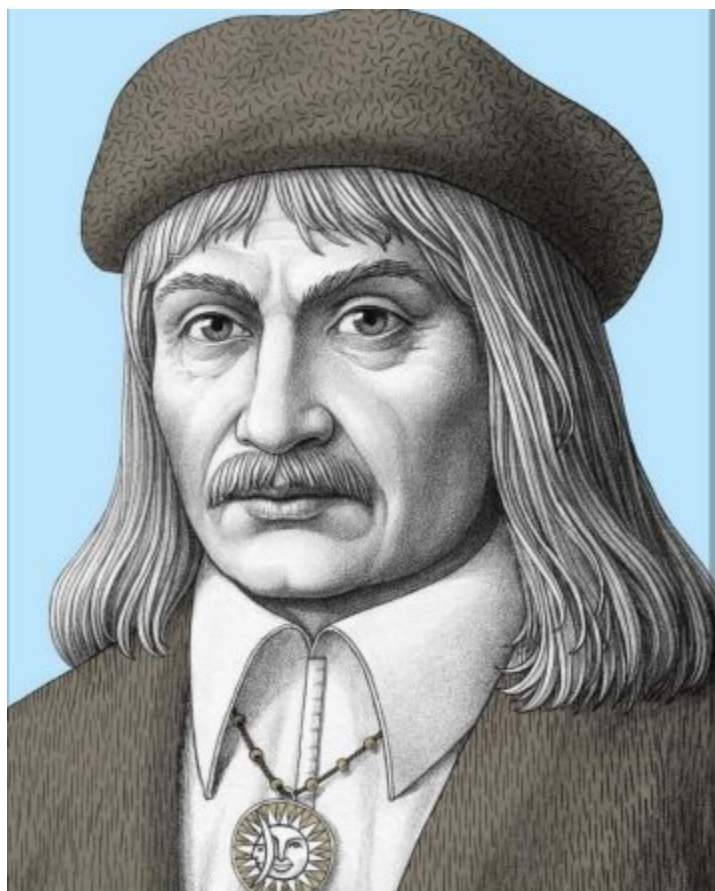
A new song has been released by the band **Laundans**, who played a lot at the neighbours' gatherings in 2020. The video was created by an artist **Liza Lankieviĉ**.

The Choir of Free Baraŭlany (a district in Minsk) congratulated Belarusians on the Independence Day (July 27, the day of the Declaration of Sovereignty of Belarus in breaking away from the Soviet Union).



A book of prose **Black River** by **Pavieł Kaśpiaroviĉ** was published with the support of the Union of Belarusian Writers. Pavieł Kaśpiaroviĉ is a poet, writer, Orthodox priest, clergyman of the Holy Intercession Cathedral in Hrodna.

Uładzimir Skamaroščanka, an artist from Hrodna,
created a series of graphic portraits
of prominent Belarusian cultural figures.



An **exhibition of icons** from Vietka opened on July 24 in the National Arts Museum. Vietka village in Sluck region survived a lot of fires, including several wars and Chernobyl, and the project spanning from 2002 to 2021 has gathered artifacts from several museums and private collections.



A curated art project **Existence. Space** opened in Minsk on July 22. Young Belarusian artists work on the theme of loneliness, existential crisis, and the uniqueness of human existence.



Photo exhibition **Genius loci. Genius lost** closed at the National Centre for Modern Arts in Minsk on August 1. The starting point of the art project was a plein air in the art village of Kaptaruny, an inspiring and mystical place on the border of Belarus and Lithuania. Photographers tried to get lost in an unfamiliar landscape, and rediscover it and themselves.



Exhibition of painted carpets, common in Belarus in the 20-50s of the 20th century, is held in the National Centre for Contemporary Arts in Minsk.



Video version of the concert, which took place within the framework of the **Week of Belarusian Culture** on July 11 with the participation of Belarusian artists who moved to Kyiv as a result of political repressions.



The **Volny Chor** (Free Choir) performed on the Tegelsee in Berlin Strandbad. This choir is a unique musical organism, which since its founding in August 2020 has become one of the symbols of struggle and solidarity through art in Belarus.



The famous opera singer **Ilja Silčukoŭ** released a video for the song "**Wolves**". The plot addresses the topic of violence experienced by Belarusians in 2020.



Belarusian designer **Alena Steinke** has launched the sale of her collection to help Belarusian women political prisoners.



5. VOICES OF BELARUSIAN CULTURE

Alaksiej Strelnikaŭ [Alexey Strelnikov], a theater critic and lecturer at the Academy of Arts, who joined the strike in the fall of 2020 and was fired,

"Censorship wants to turn theater into the art of trustworthy people: censors only need to make sure that this one doesn't work, and this one is banned from performing. Getting around it is possible, and if you aren't on a blacklist and aren't spied on, in fact, you can afford certain freedoms. I think this illusion of freedom, as well as the inner feeling that you are doing something important, keeps many in theater. I say "illusion", but that doesn't mean that I consider such freedom unimportant: the freedom of the human spirit is sometimes more important than the freedom to visit a coffee shop or travel to another country. That's why people are so obsessed with theater and that's why they may not support the current authorities, but stay in a state institution."



Siarhiey Dubaviec, writer, PEN Belarus Board Member,

"The uprising of 2020 fits perfectly into the long series of uprisings that have been taking place in Belarus since the partition of the Rzeczpospolita [Polish Republic]. The trigger of these uprisings has remained unchanged – disrespect for a human."

6. INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

People's Embassies around the world developed a tool for transliteration of Belarusian names into English, Spanish, Italian, German, Portuguese, Polish and French languages.

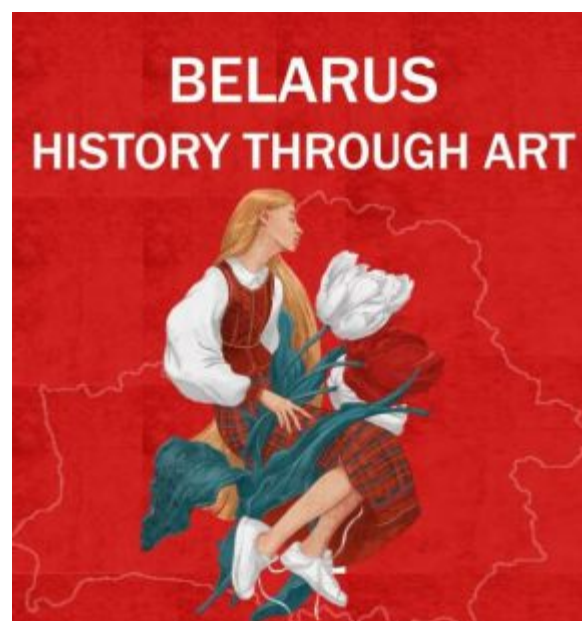


A **Belarusian kimono** with poems by one of the most prominent Belarusian poets and activists of the 20th century, **Larysa Hienijuš**, was created in Japan and presented during the Olympic Games.



The concert of the **Volny Chor** in Warsaw, dedicated to **Maria Kolesnikova**, took place on July 29.

The exhibition **"Belarus: History Through Art"** is held in Monaco from July 30 till August 9.





Kaciaryna Andrejeva (Bachvalava) and **Darja Čulcova** have been awarded the Leipzig Prize for Media Freedom. Kaciaryna Andrejeva is a co-author of the book "Belarusian Donbass".

A wave of international solidarity with the **Belarusian PEN center** and the civil society continues to cover Belarus. Every day we see new articles, statements and words of support addressed to organizations and individual civil and cultural figures, journalists. Each statement is different in its way but the message linking them all is "We stand in solidarity". We are sincerely grateful to our foreign partners for their support.

LITERARY HUB

Національна спілка письменників України

Delo (Slovenian daily newspaper)

Sezione traduttori editoriali Strade in Slc-Cgil

NDR Kultur

L I T
H U B



DELO





7. POLITICAL PRISONERS' BIRTHDAYS



In August, 8 people who have been somehow involved in the process of cultural development of our country, will celebrate their birthdays behind bars. They are **Aleś Puškin**, artist (August 6); **Siarhiej Cichanoŭski**, blogger (August 18), **Anatol Chinievič**, programmer and bard (August 19), **Arciom Takarčuk**, architect (August 20), **Siarhiej Voŭkaŭ**, actor (August 21), **Mikałaj Dziadok**, blogger and writer, public activist (August 23), **Ała Šarko**, cultural manager, program director of Press Club Belarus (August 24) and **Ihnat Sidorčyk**, director, actor and poet (August 25).

See the [link](#) for the addresses for postcards and letters.

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-  info@pen-centre.by
-  [PENBelarus](https://t.me/PENBelarus)
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-  [PEN Belarus](https://youtube.com/PENBelarus)

