

# RFE/RL Review

The Best of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Reporting



**March 1-31, 2007**

## ***BELARUS SERVICE PREEMPTS SCHEDULE FOR EXPANDED MULTI-MEDIA COVERAGE OF RALLY...***

In a demonstration of the type of journalism RFE/RL seeks to practice in the 21st century, the Belarus Service used multiple media and audience interactivity to cover the largest opposition rally to take place in Minsk this year. On March 25, the Service dispatched four stringers to report from the protest and preempted its regular schedule to bring its audience their live accounts. In addition, the Service asked listeners for their help in describing what was happening, and the audience responded by sending in more than 200 photos of the rally. The Service made sure that its website consistently offered the latest news and images by assigning four people in Minsk and two in Prague to the task. Although the Service's website was blocked in Belarus until after the protests had ended, the number of visitors to the site tripled, and its content was widely reproduced by other Belarusian sites (Photos can be seen at <http://www.svaboda.org/articlesfeatures/politics/2007/3/381986BB-CCCA-43C6-BA5A-A49E57D2D007.html>; other related articles at <http://www.svaboda.org/articlesfeatures/politics/2007/3/C0FB43E6-E83E-405B-B3E3-322347F7D4C4.html> and <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2007/3/D50AE221-7D00-4668-97FC-F1011B1719C0.html>).

## ***...FIRST TO REPORT ARREST OF OPPOSITION LEADER VIACHORKA***

The Belarus Service was the first media outlet to report on March 14 that Vintsuk Viachorka, the chairman of Belarus's largest opposition party, the Belarusian Popular Front, had been arrested. Viachaslau Siuchyuk of the Christian Conservative Party was arrested the same evening. The Service broke the news during its *Liberty at Night* program broadcast and updated developments throughout the night on its website. Both leaders had been calling on citizens to attend the protest on March 25, which turned out to be the largest such rally of the year. Both men were released the following day and will appear in court in April to face charges of petty hooliganism (<http://www.svaboda.org/articlesfeatures/politics/2007/03/5d72b608-bc10-47d8-8a80-706214385a2f.html>; <http://www.svaboda.org/xml/articles/2007/03/51C07325-25A4-4C16-8B9C-9740B34B1290.html>).

*\*\* The Director of RFE/RL's Belarus Service, Alexander Lukashuk, may be reached by email at <lukashuka@rferl.org>. The Belarus Service's website is at <http://www.svaboda.org/>; English-language news about events in Belarus can be found at <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarchive/country/belarus.html>*

(more)

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### **RADIO FREE IRAQ ON SCENE OF BLAST DURING UN SECRETARY GENERAL'S VISIT...**

On March 22, Radio Free Iraq correspondent Laith Ahmad reported from the spot in Baghdad where a mortar exploded during a joint press conference by Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki and United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon. The Prime Minister, the Secretary General, and the assembled journalists were unharmed at the press conference, which pertained to UN participation in the reconstruction of Iraq. Ahmad's report led the broadcast of the flagship *Iraqi File* news program (<http://www.iraqhurr.org/realaudio/correspondents/2007/03/20070322164626.ram>; <http://www.iraqhurr.org/iraqfile/iraqfile/2007/03/20070322152720.asp>).

### **...COVERS UN SECURITY CONFERENCE IN BAGHDAD**

In the days leading up to the UN conference, Radio Free Iraq aired a series of features prepared by its own staff combined with stories from RFE/RL Central News, as well as Radio Farda, to present the positions of the different parties, as well as the major issues to be addressed by the conference. On March 10, RFI aired news stories in every live newscast as well as in its flagship news and analysis program, *Iraqi File*. The conference brought together the five permanent UN Security Council members -- Britain, China, France, Russia and United States -- as well as Iran, Syria, and other countries and regional organizations (<http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2007/02/344c2b4b-ab24-4004-b507-2bc8dd323616.html>; <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2007/3/F3AB512E-1C71-4C86-BB08-DFCBB98A8FA5.html>; <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2007/3/36703D6E-969B-4F93-9948-696EC0D79C71.html>; <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2007/3/18E3FC8F-86BA-428E-AF08-1CD6F6A46096.html>; <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2007/3/F3FA749C-9D18-4033-8AF7-A0C27EFC1278.html>).

*\*\* The Director of RFE/RL's Radio Free Iraq, Sergey Danilochkin, may be reached by email at <danilochkins@rferl.org>. Radio Free Iraq's website is at <http://www.iraqhurr.org/>; English-language news about events in Iraq can be found at <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarchive/country/iraq.html>*

### **AZERBAIJANI SERVICE LAUNCHES TWO INTERACTIVE TALK SHOWS**

On March 5, the Azerbaijani Service launched two new live interactive shows. *Dear Baku* is an hour-long program devoted to local issues in the capital that airs each day at noon. *After Work with Doctor Ziya*, which airs weekdays at 5 PM, is a two-hour-long talk show addressing social, political, and cultural issues. Both programs are produced in RFE/RL's Baku Bureau and feature questions from listeners sent in by phone, e-mail, or SMS messages. Anne Derse, the U.S. Ambassador to Azerbaijan, spoke live on the premiere broadcast of *Doctor Ziya*. Ambassador Derse thanked the Azerbaijani Service for its contribution to the development of free media and democracy in Azerbaijan. With these new additions, the Azerbaijani Service now broadcasts 10 hours of original programming a day on its FM affiliate, Baku FM 101.7 (<http://www.rferl.org/releases/2007/03/462-130307.asp>).

*\*\* The Director of RFE/RL's Azerbaijani Service, Abbas Djavadi, may be reached by email at <djavadia@rferl.org>. The Azerbaijani Service's website is at*

*<http://www.azadses.org/>; English-language news about events in Azerbaijan can be found at <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarchive/country/azerbaijan.html>*

### **RFE/RL RUSSIAN, GEORGIAN SERVICES PARTICIPATE IN WORLD-WIDE READING TO COMMEMORATE ANNA POLITKOVSKAYA**

On March 20, RFE/RL's Russian Service and Georgian Service were among dozens of broadcasters around the world to present readings from Politkovskaya's second book on Russia's war in the North Caucasus, "A Small Corner of Hell: Dispatches From Chechnya." Politkovskaya's works were read that day in about 20 countries. As part of its coverage, the Russian Service included a Q&A session with the organizer of the reading, Peter Weiss Foundation President Ulrich Schreiber

(<http://www.svobodanews.ru/Transcript/2007/03/20/20070320205034537.html>;  
<http://www.svobodanews.ru/Transcript/2007/03/20/20070320120019773.html>;  
<http://www.tavisupleba.org/special/humanrights/2007/03/20070320201122.asp>;  
<http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2007/3/55154671-DBB5-435F-93F2-E55A07EC5EB8.html>).

*\*\* The Director of RFE/RL's Russian Service, Maria Klein, may be reached by email at <[kleinm@rferl.org](mailto:kleinm@rferl.org)>; the Russian Service's website is at <http://www.svobodanews.ru>; English-language news about events in Russia can be found at <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarchive/country/russia.html>. The Director of RFE/RL's Georgian Service, David Kakabadze, may be reached by email at <[kakabadzed@rferl.org](mailto:kakabadzed@rferl.org)>; the Georgian Service's website is at <http://www.tavisupleba.org/>; English-language news about events in Georgia can be found at <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarchive/country/georgia.html>*

### **RUSSIAN SERVICE COVERS LOCAL ELECTIONS...**

RFE/RL's Russian Service offered detailed coverage of all 14 regional elections held across Russia in March. Staffers and freelancers reported from all over the country, providing a depth and balance unavailable on other domestic media outlets. The Service devoted substantial coverage to the ruling by the local election commission in St. Petersburg that the opposition Yabloko party could not run in the city's Legislative Assembly elections, including an interview with party leader Grigory Yavlinsky on March 14. The Service broadcast interviews with several other political figures who are not granted access to the mainstream domestic media airwaves. The March regional elections were of special interest this year because many experts believe that they served as a "rehearsal" for the parliamentary and presidential elections to be held in 2008 (<http://www.svobodanews.ru/special/specials/elections.html>;  
<http://www.svobodanews.ru/Article/2007/03/14/20070314093121337.html>;  
<http://www.svobodanews.ru/Transcript/2007/03/16/20070316200001087.html>;  
<http://www.svobodanews.ru/Transcript/2007/03/13/20070313211304903.html>;  
<http://www.svobodanews.ru/Transcript/2007/03/17/20070317172333527.html>).

### **...INVESTIGATES PLIGHT OF IRAQI CHILDREN...**

Also on March 20, the Russian Service aired an interview with Leila Billing, the author of a survey by the International NGO "War Child" of street children and those from poor families living in the south of Iraq. Billing said children are being forced to engage in criminal activities and sex work to provide a living for themselves and their families

(<http://www.svobodanews.ru/Transcript/2007/03/20/20070320181907843.html>;  
<http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2007/3/C7485FCA-6CC3-4611-90AF-3D55686B3540.html>)

### **...CONNECTS RUSSIAN AND CANADIAN CAMPAIGNERS AGAINST SEAL HUNTING**

On the March 23 edition of its "Time and World" program, the Russian Service brought together environmentalists from Arkhangelsk, Russia and London, Canada to discuss harp seal hunting in the world. The Canadian activists said that because of global warming there are no seal pups in the Gulf of St. Lawrence this year. They fear that 75 percent of the harp seals born in the Gulf died due to lack of ice before the hunt even began (<http://www.svobodanews.ru/Transcript/2007/03/23/20070323125417577.html>).

*\*\* The Director of RFE/RL's Russian Service, Maria Klein, may be reached by email at <[kleinm@rferl.org](mailto:kleinm@rferl.org)>. The Russian Service's website is at <http://www.svobodanews.ru>; English-language news about events in Russia can be found at <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarchive/country/russia.html>*

### **RFE/RL BELARUS SERVICE JOURNALIST WINS PEN CENTER AWARD**

The Belarus Pen-Center awarded RFE/RL Belarus Service broadcaster Siarhej Navumchyk its International Prize for outstanding work on contemporary history for 2006 for his book, "Seven Years of Revival." Navumchyk, one of the founders of the Belarus democracy movement in the 1980's, was also a member of the Belarus parliament from 1990-1995. In 1996, he and opposition leader Zianon Pazniak became the first citizens of Belarus to be granted political asylum in the United States. The book is based on Navumchyk's experience in the democratic movement and parliamentary activities, the struggle for Belarus independence, rule of law, and freedom of speech as well as the struggle against Lukashenka's dictatorship. The book was printed in Poland.

*\*\* The Director of RFE/RL's Belarus Service, Alexander Lukashuk, may be reached by email at <[lukashuka@rferl.org](mailto:lukashuka@rferl.org)>. The Belarus Service's website is at <http://www.svaboda.org/>; English-language news about events in Belarus can be found at <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarchive/country/belarus.html>*

### **PROGRAM ON MOLDOVA FAMINE ATTRACTS INTEREST OF ACADEMICS AROUND THE WORLD**

The Romania-Moldova Service devoted the March 17 edition of its *At the End of the Week with RFE* program to an in-depth look at the 1947 famine in Moldova. Correspondent Valentina Ursu spoke with survivors from Moldova's Cahul region about their memories of the famine and how the tragedy has affected their lives. The program sparked great interest in the academic community both in Moldova and abroad. The director of a Chisinau high school asked the Service for permission to use the program in his contemporary history courses at the high school; historian Mihai Gribincea, who also serves as the political advisor to the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities in The Hague, asked for permission to use the program in his new book focused on the crimes of communism in Europe; and Elizabeth L'Orange Furst, a professor at the University of Oslo, requested the program for use in her forthcoming

book ([http://www.europalibera.org/rubrics/ro/2007/03/7981AAEC-CAB8-4713-860A-68A27753BB58\\_3181605.RAM](http://www.europalibera.org/rubrics/ro/2007/03/7981AAEC-CAB8-4713-860A-68A27753BB58_3181605.RAM)).

*\*\* The Director of RFE/RL's Romania-Moldova Service, Oana Serafim, may be reached by email at <serafimo@rferl.org>. The Romania-Moldova Service's website is at <http://www.europalibera.org/>; English-language news about events in Moldova can be found at <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarchive/country/moldova.html> and in Romania at <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarchive/country/romania.html>*

### **KYRGYZ SERVICE FIRST TO REPORT PRIME MINISTER'S RESIGNATION**

On March 29, the Kyrgyz Service scooped all competitors in informing the people of Kyrgyzstan that Prime Minister Azim Isabekov had resigned. Isabekov, who had headed the government since January, stepped down one day after he tried to fire five ministers, only to have his decision overruled by President Kurmanbek Bakiyev. The President has replaced Isabekov with opposition politician Almaz Atambayev (<http://www.azattyk.org/news/domestic/ky/2007/03/20070329.asp#602727>; <http://www.azattyk.org/rubrics/politics/ky/2007/03/8A129322-6829-4136-8F18-329D3A704317.ASP>).

*\*\* The Director of RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service, Tyntchtykbek Tchoroev, may be reached by email at <tchoroevt@rferl.org>. The Kyrgyz Service's website is at <http://www.azattyk.org/>; English-language news about events in Kyrgyzstan can be found at <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarchive/country/kyrgyzstan.html>*

### **TAJIK SERVICE AIRS SPECIAL NOWRUZ HOLIDAY PROGRAM**

On March 21, the Tajik Service produced a special three-hour live program in honor of the Noruz holiday. The broadcast featured messages from opposition leaders, writers, poets, journalists, Tajik artists living abroad, and reports from several Tajik provinces. Broadcasters in Prague and in the Dushanbe Bureau jointly moderated the program. The Service also posted a special photo gallery from Noruz festivities in the capital on its website, and collected donations to a local orphanage as a Noruz gift to the children of Dushanbe (<http://www.ozodi.org/specialsarticle/2007/3/C0811F8D-5066-4949-A839-EC8EA888ECA5.html>).

*\*\* The Director of RFE/RL's Tajik Service, Rod Shahidi, may be reached by email at <shahidig@rferl.org>. The Tajik Service's website is at <http://www.ozodi.org/>; English-language news about events in Tajikistan can be found at <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarchive/country/tajikistan.html>*

### **GEORGIAN SERVICE LAUNCHES SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY PROGRAM...**

On March 19, the Georgian Service launched a new weekly program, *Algorithms*, devoted to science and technology news from Georgia and abroad. *Algorithms* will focus on important discoveries and inventions, the history of science, the role of science in modern society, and challenges facing the scientific community in Georgia. The seven-minute segment airs every Monday as part of the Service's 6:00 p.m. *Evening Show*, which repeats at midnight (<http://www.tavisupleba.org/special/science/2007/03/20070319152610.asp>).

**...INTERVIEWS LEGENDARY GEORGIAN FILMMAKER**

Oscar Ioseliani, who received a prize for his contributions to world cinema at the 14th annual International Febiofest film festival in Prague, Czech Republic, was interviewed by RFE/RL's Georgian Service. The interview with the 73-year old filmmaker was aired on March 30 during the Service's weekly *Studio 10* program. Ioseliani's films were banned in the Soviet Union and he was forced into exile in France in 1982. He is regarded as one of the living legends of European "auteur" cinema (<http://www.tavisupleba.org/programs/studio10/2007/03/20070330225007.asp>).

*\*\* The Director of RFE/RL's Georgian Service, David Kakabadze, may be reached by email at <kakabadzed@rferl.org>. The Georgian Service's website is at <http://www.tavisupleba.org/>; English-language news about events in Georgia can be found at <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarchive/country/georgia.html>*

**AFGHAN MUSEUM DIRECTOR CELEBRATES RETURN OF ANCIENT TREASURES**

On March 20, Central Newsroom correspondent Golnaz Esfandiari landed an exclusive interview with the Director of Afghanistan's National Museum, Omara Khan Massoudi, about the return of nearly 1,500 ancient artifacts to the country. The artifacts had been stored in Switzerland since 1999, and their return marks an important moment in the post-Taliban cultural rebirth of Afghanistan. The interview, which was conducted in Persian and Dari, was broadcast on Radio Free Afghanistan; an English transcript of the interview can be found at <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2007/03/53e94a0e-3fe2-4472-9af7-691a09ffe52e.html>

**RICHARD HOLBROOKE TALKS TO RFE/RL ON GEORGIA, RUSSIA, KOSOVO**

Former U.S. Ambassador to the UN and chief architect of the Dayton peace agreement Richard Holbrooke, during a March 20 interview with RFE/RL New York correspondent Nikola Krastev, discussed Russia's impact on political developments in both Georgia and Kosovo. Holbrooke stressed that Kosovo's independence is inevitable and that the Kremlin's opposition to resolving Kosovo's final status is very unhelpful (<http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2007/3/84F12D92-7F91-4F7D-95AA-0BEA1980E594.html>).

*\*\* The Executive Producer of RFE/RL's Central Newsroom, Deborah Seward, may be reached by email at <sewardd@rferl.org>; RFE/RL English-language news reports can be found at <http://www.rferl.org/features/>*

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