



Eurozine News Item

More trouble for Belarusian journal

The Belarusian journal *Arche* has received a second "warning" from the Belarusian Ministry of Information, democratic opposition group [Charter '97](#) and [Radio Free Europe](#) have reported. The offence: failing to notify the Ministry for the Press and Mass Media about changes in publication frequency one month in advance.

Arche has only just resumed operations after a three-month suspension at the end of 2006, as Eurozine [reported](#). That time their offence was to deviate from the terms of a licence that limits *Arche* to publishing about history only. [Issue 9/2006](#) contained an account of a 1995 police crackdown on hunger-striking opposition MPs.



Last year's suspension meant that the last three issues of 2006 did not appear (though they were prepared and published online). In January 2007, the back issues were published along with the [first issue](#) of 2007. This was what constituted the deviation from the publishing frequency permitted in the licence. Had *Arche* not published the back issues, the Belarusian post office would have cancelled the delivery contract and *Arche* subscribers would have failed to receive issues paid for in advance.

Arche editor Valer Bulhakau explained in [Belorusskie Novosti](#) that the real reason for the new warning was the publication of articles criticizing high-up government officials. "In the first issue this year, we published several such articles, including 'How to overcome the Belarus deadlock' by [Hans-Georg Wieck](#), in which the retired German diplomat criticized the German government for failing to set up a fund to support civil society in Belarus."

Although the authorities have offered *Arche* a final chance to apply for a change to their publishing licence, Bulhakau says that it is hopeless to expect permission. In the meantime, *Arche* plans to publish a new issue on January's local elections, even though this might result in suspension. "To show our stance and emphasize the barbaric nature of the crackdown on *Arche*, we'll most likely close this publication," says Bulhakau. A lawsuit is out of the question "because they are completely meaningless in contemporary Belarus."

Eurozine appeals to its partners and readers to publicize this latest attempt by the Belarusian government to stifle the independent media in the country.

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