



# BELARUSIAN REVIEW

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☛ *Recommended by the Editor*

## GUEST EDITORIAL

### Democracy Needs to Feel US Support

By Ilya Kunitski

At the end of May, one of the Belarusian opposition leaders – Alyaksandr Milinkevich – visited the United States. The visit was organized with the support of the European Union. Why the EU? European officials seek to consolidate their approach towards Belarus with an American approach and Mr. Milinkevich, in their view, was expected to facilitate the process. He held a number of meetings with US congressmen, officials at the State Department, National Security Council, and others. Mr. Milinkevich, a 2006 presidential contender, had constructive dialogues in high offices and summarized his impressions as follows: “There is a total understanding of our situation and our problems in Washington, DC.” So, there is an understanding, but does the understanding transform to enough US support?

The European Union has recently changed its tactics towards the Belarusian regime, and has opened a window of opportunities. Belarus was included in the European Partnership project, and communications between Brussels and Minsk intensified. Moreover, Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi became the first Western head of government in over a decade to pay an official visit to Minsk. At the same time, the United States has not been participating much in Belarusian matters. While the new administration concentrated its efforts on other international issues, Belarus only sporadically surfaced in US government documents. For instance, the Belarus Democracy Act has been renewed and sanctions against Belarusian petrochemical concern, Belnaftakhim, and its subsidiaries—one of the major money makers for Alyaksandr Lukashenka’s regime — have been introduced and then suspended.

Even the issue of the US Embassy in Belarus virtually stalled. Two years ago, Belarus recalled its ambassador to the United States, and forced the departure of the US ambassador after a row over travel restrictions imposed on Mr. Lukashenka by Washington. Since then both embassies operate with a minimal number of diplomats. This situation primarily hurts ordinary Belarusians who have to travel to Moscow, Kyiv, or Warsaw at their own expense to obtain visas to visit relatives in the US or for other matters. Restoration of a full-fledged US Embassy in Belarus should be one of the US top priorities in Belarus.

Overall, the United States should be more actively engaged in Belarusian issues. As Mr. Milinkevich fairly noted during the meeting with the Belarusian Diaspora in New York, there is still a danger of Belarus losing its independence. It might happen through an increasing economic dependence on Russia. During the recent world financial crisis, Belarus obtained vital loans partly through the channels of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and Russia. It is a good sign that the West started to cooperate with Belarus economically even if it cannot do the same politically. In fact, Belarus-EU trade relations have improved over the past several years.

The US can also facilitate this process. Unlike the EU though, it should use economic leverage to discipline the Belarusian regime. Additional Western financial assistance or suspension of sanctions should be a response to concrete steps of the Belarusian government like releasing political prisoners, or improving elections legislation. Yes, it is very important to coordinate the Belarus policy between the US and the EU. However, the positions should not necessarily coincide as the Europeans are more concerned about economic cooperation with Belarus, while the Americans scrutinize human rights issues and the democratization process. One of the clear achievements of Mr. Milinkevich’s visit was the decision of US Congress to hold hearings on human rights in Belarus.

Meanwhile, the issue of sanctions is a controversial one, since the delicate balance between putting pressure on the government while trying not to hurt the ordinary population should be maintained. Mr. Milinkevich, for instance, is in favor of visa bans for Belarusian officials but against economic sanctions which, in his opinion, affect ordinary Belarusians. Recently, the US prolonged a partial suspension of the sanctions against two of Belnaftakhim’s subsidiaries, AAT LakaFarba, a paint and varnish company, and AAT Shklovalakno, a glass fiber manufacturer. This move understandably prompted a positive reaction from the Belarusian side. On May, 28th, Foreign Ministry spokesman Andrei Savinykh expressed Minsk’s readiness for “constructive and systemic dialogue” with the American partners. In fact, at around the same time the head of the Lukashenka’s Administration, Uladzimir Makei, was supposed to pay a visit to Washington according to some sources. However, for some reason the visit was postponed.

On one hand, direct meetings of US officials and representatives of the Belarusian ruling elite can be beneficial for both sides. Mr. Milinkevich expressed an opinion that American side can use it as an opportunity to convey its message to the Belarusian regime, to inform what is expected from it, and what it can get in return. On the other hand, there is a danger of legitimizing Lukashenka’s regime in the eyes of international and domestic observers. Embracing the current Belarusian government will deliver a fatal blow to the country’s democratization attempts.

It is vital for Belarusian pro-democratic activists to see and feel US support. Belarusian opposition cannot rely on domestic financial assistance as businesses supporting pro-democracy activities are threatened with closure. Therefore, the US should extend its financial and informational support for Belarusian civil society, opposition parties, and independent media. It is even more relevant now in the view of the Belarusian presidential elections, which will most likely occur in the fall of this year. Mr. Milinkevich’s visit highlighted the need for such support. At the same time, the US should also constantly remind the regime that without steps towards improving its human rights record, elections legislation, and independent media access, there will be no overtures from the West towards Belarus.

*Ilya Kunitski is a historian from Belarus. He was recently awarded a Masters degree in Political Science by the New York University with a focus on International Relations.*

**The White House**  
Office of the Press Secretary

On June 16, 2006, by Executive Order 13405, the President declared a national emergency and ordered related measures blocking the property of certain persons undermining democratic processes or institutions in Belarus...

...The actions and policies of certain members of the Government of Belarus and other persons continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. Accordingly, the national emergency declared on June 16, 2006, and the measures adopted on that date to deal with that emergency, must continue in effect beyond June 16, 2010. Therefore, in accordance with[ ... ] the National Emergencies Act [ ... ] I am continuing for 1 year the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13405.

BARACK OBAMA

THE WHITE HOUSE,  
June 8, 2010.

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## **Biennial Convention Of Belarusians of North America**

The 29<sup>th</sup> Convention will take place this Labor Day weekend, September 4-5 at the Belarusian-American Community Center in South River, New Jersey.

### **The Role of the Belarusian Diaspora: past and present**

will be the theme of the Convention's panel discussion. The program will include a concert featuring groups and artists from the U.S. and Canada, an outdoor Kirmash with music and songs, food stand with the prized local Belarusian sala, book and souvenir stands and a volleyball tournament.

The Saturday program will include a historical stand dedicated to 100<sup>th</sup> anniversaries of the birth of poet Larysa Heniush, and of the publication of Lastouski's History of Belarus. A Dinner-dance will conclude the day.

Headlining the planned Sunday program will be a musical performance by guests from Belarus.

A festive banquet will open the program, followed by the panel discussion, a multifaceted concert, sing-alongs, and more.

For the latest information and additional details please write to: BAZA.HQ@hotmail.com, or phone 732 222 1951 or 732 613 8456 in the U.S. and 416 444 0838 in Canada.

## **From the Publisher**

In the course of the last month a number of Belarusian opposition politicians visited North America. They shared their view of the situation in Belarus with the establishment in Washington and Ottawa in advance of the Presidential election scheduled to take place before February 2011. The election will be the fourth in a row for Alyksandr Lukashenka, the longest serving ruler in Europe.

Their task, as is the task of our publication, is to inform Western governments, political leaders and academia about Belarus. You, our readers, can also participate in this task by providing your Senator, Congressman or your alma mater with a *Belarusian Review* subscription. Lately normal attrition has been reducing the number of our most generous contributors, so your expanded support is very much needed.

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YOUR OWN SUBSCRIPTION ?**

## **FEATURES**

### **PACE Suspends its High-Level Contacts with the Belarusian Government and Parliament**

Strasbourg, 29.04.2010 – The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) today decided to suspend its activities involving high-level contact with the Belarusian Parliament and/or the governmental authorities, having noted a "lack of progress" towards Council of Europe standards and a "lack of political will" on the part of the authorities to adhere to the Organisation's values.

During a debate held under urgent procedure, in which Alyksandr Yushkevich, the President of the Standing Committee on Human Rights of the Belarusian Chamber of Representatives, and Anatol Lyabedzka, the President of the Civic Union Party, took part, the parliamentarians regretted recent developments in the country, including the executions of Andrei Zhuk and Vasily Yuzepchuk, the situation of the Polish minority and the absence of international observers during the local elections, as well as the authorities' refusal to permit the establishment of the Council of Europe's East European School of Political Studies.

The Assembly recalled that it was still prepared to engage in a progressive dialogue with the Belarusian authorities "in response to positive developments", while reiterating its conviction that "dialogue can be sustained only through Belarus' continuous progress towards Council of Europe standards".

The adopted text, which is based on a report by Sinikka Hurskainen (Finland, SOC), recalls the proposal set out last year by PACE to lift the suspension of the Belarusian Parliament's special guest status provided that a moratorium is decreed on enforcement of the death penalty.

### Situation in Belarus: recent developments

Resolution 1727 (2010)

1. The Parliamentary Assembly recalls its Resolution 1671 (2009) on the situation in Belarus in which, responding to some improvements in the situation in Belarus and with a view to encouraging further progress, it sets out a new course of engagement and openness in its relations with the Belarusian authorities, while continuing to support the strengthening of Belarusian NGOs and civil society.

2. It also recalls its recommendation to ask the Bureau to lift the suspension of special guest status for the Parliament of Belarus provided that a moratorium on the execution of the death penalty was decreed, and reiterates its conviction that "dialogue can be sustained only through Belarus' continuous progress towards Council of Europe standards".

3. With these considerations in mind, the Assembly regrets that recent developments in Belarus show lack of progress towards Council of Europe standards and lack of political will on the part of the Belarusian authorities to embrace Council of Europe values and to make progress towards Council of Europe standards.

• 4. The Assembly remains ready to engage in a progressive dialogue with the Belarusian authorities in response to positive developments. It underscores, however, that there cannot be progress on dialogue without progress towards Council of Europe standards and a clear political commitment by the Belarusian authorities to embrace Council of Europe values, proved by consistent actions.

• 5. In the light of recent events, the Assembly, therefore, decides to put on hold its activities involving high-level contacts between the Assembly and the Belarusian parliament and/or governmental authorities.

• 6. The Assembly will continue to follow closely developments in Belarus.

**Source:** Office for Democratic Belarus

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## Eastern Partnership 'Absolutely a Success'

By Jan Maksymiuk

There are concerns the European Union's market crisis will dramatically scale back its ambitions for outreach programs with its neighbors -- including its Eastern Partnership.

The initiative was launched with fanfare just over a year ago to help bring six post-Soviet countries -- Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, and Belarus -- closer to the EU fold.

On the partnership's first anniversary on May 7, in fact, the EU kept celebrations muted -- to the point

of silence. But **Stefan Fuele, the EU's Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighborhood policy**, this week said the Eastern Partnership is alive and well. "It has been absolutely a success," Fuele said. "If you take into account that it's been in existence only one year, and if you look at the relationship between the European Union and the six countries, you see that many of them are already using the potential of that Eastern Partnership."

Fuele, speaking on May 13 in Prague, the capital of his native Czech Republic, said the Eastern Partnership offered its six members a "unique structure" of bilateral ties that allows each of the countries to pursue closer EU ties at their own pace. The enlargement commissioner said of the member countries, Ukraine and Moldova have proved the most eager to capitalize on the program, which facilitates trade and visa talks, among other issues. But Fuele said nearly all of the countries had shown progress in their relations with Brussels within the Eastern Partnership mandate.

### Escaping Moscow's Orbit?

The one exception was Belarus, which under President Alyaksandr Lukashenka has continued a pattern of repressive policies. Fuele said the EU had no regrets about allowing Belarus to join the Eastern Partnership, but that ties between Brussels and Minsk would not progress until the Belarusian leadership defines "what kind of engagement they would like to have with the EU."

"On our part, we're ready. We're ready to help financially, we're ready to help also with the visa issues. We are ready to help modernize the economy, improve social development," Fuele said. "But that engagement very much depends on the Belarusian leadership's position on human rights and fundamental freedoms."

If membership in the Eastern Partnership was once seen as a positive "carrot" for wayward states like Belarus, there are creeping doubts as to whether the EU program can induce its members to embrace Western democratic standards

Since joining the Eastern Partnership, Lukashenka's Belarus has thumbed his nose at the EU more than once, holding large-scale military exercises close to its NATO border and agreeing on a joint air-defense system with Moscow.

But Fuele said the partnership was not an "instrument" to tug its members further from Moscow, and that each was free to choose what kind of ties with Moscow best suits its interests.

"The Eastern Partnership is actually a kind of structure where even the Russians can participate, and to the benefit of our Eastern partners," Fuele said. "The level of involvement in the Eastern Partnership is not going to be judged on the basis of the relationship with Moscow. Actually, Brussels is the first to be keen on there being good relationships between these countries and Moscow, a very important neighbor." Between 2011-13, the EU is set to launch a new program specifically designed for the Eastern Partnership countries. The so-called "comprehensive institution-building" program is aimed at improving the administrative capacity of

**Source:** RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty, May 14, 2010

## ECONOMY

### Customs Union instead of WTO?

Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus may be on the brink of creating a supranational body modelled on European integration, but this could be a difficult task given the problems that their customs union has faced so far, writes George Bovt, a journalist and political observer, in a March publication for the EU-Russia Centre.

"Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus could be at the point of creating a supranational body, which would acquire some of the same prerogatives as the three national governments. This body, according to Kazakh Prime Minister Karim Masimov, would be modelled after the European design of integration, developed during the initial steps of the EU's formation. Mr Masimov said that such a move could happen as early as 2012. Would that be really possible, given that the customs union, made up of the three states, is far from being a smooth-working body so far?

According to Mr Masimov, a supranational authority of the customs union would be responsible for regulating natural monopolies, tariffs, unified competitive rules and energy policy. This is quite a challenging goal, assuming that the current conditions of cooperation between the member states continue. As Masimov put it, while it took more than 20 years for the EU member states to cope with the same problems (reaching agreed terms of regulation), the three member states of the customs union have to manage these problems in two years.

**Belarus insisted on its right to discounted prices for Russian oil, with right to resale at market prices.**

The customs union started working on 1 January this year, but it appears that not all of the problems facing it were effectively solved prior to its launch. The unified Code of the Union is still not in effect; it was supposed to start working from 1 July. The beginnings of the Union's operation were spoiled by the quarrel between Moscow and Minsk over Russian oil and gas imports and transit. To put it plainly, Belarus insisted on its right to discounted prices for Russian oil and gas, with a presumed right to subsequent resale to the West at market prices.

Another area of disagreement has been the allocation of import duties between Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan. Initially, Russia insisted on receipt of 93% of all duties gathered by the other three nations. In the end, the three countries reached a compromise, with 87.97% going to Russia, 4.7% to Belarus and 7.3% to Kazakhstan.

Also, Russia has managed to persuade Minsk to agree not to use the Odessa-Brody pipeline for Russian oil resale in exchange for privileged prices (Russia agreed to supply Belarus with 6.3 million litres of duty free oil this year).

Discounted prices for Russian gas for Belarus have been retained and Minsk pays \$168 per 1,000 cubic metres of gas, compared to \$305 paid by the neighbouring Ukraine.

Russia and Belarus have a long history of uneasy relations. The two countries have been in a customs union since 1995 and in a union state for over ten years. During that time, Minsk has imposed 24 trade restrictions on Russian goods and Moscow has imposed 15 on Belarusian goods. These numbers demonstrate that the two governments do not, in reality, have a free trade area.

Last year Belarus-Russia relations were set alight by trade disagreements over dairy products, gas, meat and tractors. As a result, trade between the two countries dropped 40%. The New Year started in similar fashion with a row over oil, in which Moscow demanded that Minsk pay full export duty on the discounted oil that it was buying from Russia and re-exporting to the West at a profit. The issue was only finally (or temporarily) solved after the visit of Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin to Minsk at the end of March.

**Source:** Office for Democratic Belarus,

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### Oil "Export" Duties: Peculiarity of the Russian-Led Customs Union

By Vladimir Socor

The Russian government is apparently moving to operationalize the nominal "union state" with Belarus through a process of economic absorption. Accession to the Russia-Belarus-Kazakhstan Customs Union is not protecting Belarus against this process.

Russia's introduction of export duties on refined oil products and "petrochemical raw material" supplies to Belarus (Belarus Sues Russia in the CIS Economic Court, EDM, April 5) is the latest move toward that end. It follows Moscow's imposition of export duties on crude oil deliveries to Belarus on January 1, 2010. Under threat of an imminent stoppage of Russian oil supplies to Belarus refineries, Moscow compelled Minsk to accept that measure in a January 27, 2010 inter-governmental protocol. Those duties apply to 15 million tons of Russian crude oil delivered annually to Belarus, out of the total annual volume of 21 million tons. Belarus is processing the 15 million tons for export of the refined products, and the remainder of 6 million tons for internal consumption of the products.

Those duties have substantially raised the purchase price of Russian oil in Belarus, correspondingly raising the price of refined products exported by Belarus to European countries. This spiral could quickly render the Belarusian refineries uncompetitive. To offset this price spiral, Minsk has been forced to abolish its own duties on the export of oil products from Belarus to European countries. Minsk's response applies symmetrically to products refined from the 15 million ton portion of Russian crude oil subjected to the Russian export duty (Interfax, March 30).

These measures threaten the viability of Belarusian refineries, the country's most lucrative economic sector. Minsk's renunciation of its own export duty on refined products is an almost desperate move to avoid a sharp increase in the export price of its refineries' production. The response enables those refineries to stay competitive in the short term, but jeopardizes Minsk's capacity to invest in the refineries' technological upkeep and modernization in the medium term.

The Russian government has recently encouraged Russian oil producing companies to acquire ownership stakes in the processing plants in Belarus. Raising the price of crude oil supplies to those plants through the export duty is a hostile-takeover tactic. It threatens to price those refineries' production out of European export markets.

Those duties on crude oil, refined products, and "petrochemical raw materials" directly contravene the free-trade agreements within the Russia-Belarus-Kazakhstan Customs Union. Theoretically at least, the customs union eliminates such duties on all goods within that territory, no longer allowing the exception for crude oil. Belarus has announced its intention to sue Russia in the CIS Economic Court over the crude oil duties, as soon as the Russia-Belarus-Kazakhstan Customs Union takes legal effect on July 1.

Moscow, however, is suddenly claiming that July 1 will not mark a legal watershed after all. According to First Deputy Prime Minister, Igor Shuvalov, the Russia-Belarus-Kazakhstan Customs Union will not become fully operational by that date, but would still require "a whole package of inter-state agreements on the creation of a single economic space...which will take quite a lot of time." Shuvalov optimistically expects that goal to be accomplished by January 2012 (RIA Novosti, April 1). Pending this, he is warning Minsk and other would-be Customs Union entrants that Russia will continue applying export duties, at least on crude oil and oil products. Shuvalov has delivered this message three times in the space of five days: from Moscow, in Kyiv to Prime Minister Nikolai Azarov, and in Minsk to Lukashenka (Interfax, March 28, April 1, 2).

Lukashenka hopes to enlist support from Kazakhstan in eliminating internal "export" duties within the supposed Customs Union's territory. He raised that issue with Kazakhstan's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Kanat Saudabayev, who was visiting Belarus in his concurrent capacity as OSCE chairman-in-office. Lukashenka is warning that internal export duties would invalidate the basic concept of this or any customs union, consigning it to the fate of the CIS or the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEc). Minsk would like to hear Astana's "sincere position" on this issue (Belapan, March 30).

Briefing the media in Minsk, Russian Ambassador Aleksandr Surikov explicitly confirmed Moscow's goal to turn the state-owned oil and gas enterprises of Belarus into joint Russia-Belarus enterprises (Interfax, Belapan, March 31).

On March 30, Russia's Gazprom completed the acquisition of 50 percent of the Belarusian gas pipeline operator, BelTransGas; and installed Gazprom's Vice-Chairman, Valery Golubev, as board chairman of BelTransGas (replacing a deputy prime minister of Belarus). With this move ac-

complished, Moscow now proposes to turn Belarus' Hrodna plant of nitrate-based fertilizer-(an intensive consumer of natural gas) into a joint Russian-Belarusian enterprise (Interfax, March 31; Belapan, April 1).

Chairing a government session on March 30, Belarusian President, Alyaksandr Lukashenka, directly criticized his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin over the crude oil and oil products duties, as well as for last year's restrictions on dairy products and sugar exports from Belarus to the Russian market. Lukashenka has urged his government to respond by promoting "diversification of Belarus' economic, political, and diplomatic partnerships" (Interfax, March 30)

**Source:** Eurasia Daily Monitor Volume: 7 Issue: 65  
April 5, 2010

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## Belarus: Open for Business?

By David Marples

In early April, the reputable Business Week magazine focused on the Belarusian economy with a laudatory article that suggested the country had become a virtual Mecca for foreign investors. Belarus, it noted, has risen dramatically on the World Bank's list based on the "ease of doing business" from its former 129 place to 58, well ahead not only of Russia (120) and Ukraine (142), but even Poland, its EU neighbor (72). Belarus was the recipient in March of visits from representatives of such companies as Microsoft, Cisco Systems, Honeywell, and Navistar, who held meetings with local business leaders as well as with President Alyaksandr Lukashenka. Microsoft intends to open a sales office in Minsk in the near future (Business Week, April 8).

On April 9, giving credence to this optimistic outlook, the House of Representatives discussed draft amendments to its privacy laws, anticipating the sale of government-owned shares in companies transformed into stock corporations, or to employees on favorable terms (ww.naviny.by, April 9). The IMF, like the World Bank, regards Belarus' economic progress favorably. In late March it authorized the release of \$670 million as the fifth and last tranche of an original loan worth about \$3.46 billion. In May, IMF experts are expected in Minsk to discuss the results of the standby loan program, but all the indications are that the organization is well satisfied with progress in Belarus (RIA Novosti, March 31).

The highly publicized disputes between Belarus and Russia have only seemed to encourage other potential economic partners to come forward. The first (albeit symbolic one) was Venezuela, but more recently China has emerged as a potentially serious partner that offers an alternative to reliance on Russia for economic aid. In late March, after meetings with Lukashenka, Chinese Vice-President Xi Jinping signed seven cooperation accords (ww.naviny.by, March 25). One of the areas for prospective cooperation is the controversial construction of the Belarusian nuclear power plant in Hrodna region. From the outset, every aspect of this station has had input from Russia, which was anticipated to provide the technology and start-up loan.

Since then, nothing has happened quite as planned (EDM, March 12).

In May 2009, Belarus asked Russia for a \$9 billion loan. Last February, Aleksandr Surikov, the Russian Ambassador to Belarus, reported that Moscow was willing to provide a loan, but without naming the precise amount. The following month, during his talks with Xi Jinping, Lukashenka suddenly invited the Chinese to participate in the nuclear program, after which the government in Beijing pledged \$10 billion for the Belarusian economy. Surikov declared testily that if the Chinese were involved in the nuclear plant construction, then Russia would likely withdraw from the project altogether, since there were some technological secrets that his country was not ready to share with China (RIA Novosti, March 31). Lukashenka has generally shown readiness to seek new partners, whether they are American, European, Chinese, or African. The inference is that the Belarusian economy has stood the test of time and is once more expanding, as a reported 4.2 percent rise in industrial output in the first two months of 2010 indicated). (<http://eng.24kg/cis/2010/04/05/10835.html>)

Writing in the economic weekly *Belorusy i Rynok*, Irina Krylovykh, recently questioned the rosy perception of the Belarusian economy. She noted that it is necessary to understand the real reason for the appearance of such “beautiful figures.” One is the use of last year’s figures as a basis for comparison. If one goes back two years to 2008, then industrial output has fallen by 4.6 percent. Thus Belarus remains behind its pre-crisis levels of production (*Belorusy i Rynok*, April 5-11).

If pivotal industries are examined, such as machine building and metalworking the picture is even bleaker, with a reduced output of 2.4 percent compared even with last year’s figures. The automobile industry, in Krylovykh’s view, is in a state of “profound crisis” that has witnessed a drop in production of heavy automobiles by 40 percent over the past year. In the first two months of 2009, similarly, the decline compared to 2008 was over 30 percent. Thus, in 2010 Belarus will produce three times less automobiles than in 2008. She also noted the problem of overt “dumping” and raising exports by lowering prices, which not only threatens the future of factories, but also might well solicit anti-dumping measures in the targeted markets (*Belorusy i Rynok*, April 5-11).

**There is a problem of external debt, which this year will reach a record 52 % of GDP, according to IMF.**

In addition, there is the problem of external debt, which this year will reach a record 52 percent of GDP, according to calculations by the IMF. State foreign debt alone was 18 percent of GDP last year and will rise to 24 percent in 2010 (Xinhua, April 6). Symptomatic of the lack of clarity surrounding the economic situation in Belarus is that Lukashenka is the only leader in the Belarusian neighborhood not to disclose his salary on a public site ([www.charter97.org](http://www.charter97.org), April 8): his counterparts in Russia, Ukraine, and the Baltic

States have all announced a drop in their monthly wages during the recession.

In an area like software there is clearly potential for investment in Belarus. Nonetheless, in the more traditional industries that have supported the republic in the late Soviet and early post-Soviet years the situation hardly warrants the sort of optimism that is enunciated not only in Minsk, but also by some Western analysts who tend to accept at face value official Belarusian figures that distort the real situation.

Source: Eurasia Daily Monitor, April 21, 2010

## Belarus' Forum

### Milinkevich: Democracy Ensured on the Streets

Zmitser Lukashuk

In case of victory, Milinkevich promises \$10 billion in investments for the Belarusian economy, reforms for courts, healthcare and utilities, European education for the youth and no nuclear power plant for environmentalists. The launch of his presidential bid in our photo and video report.

On Monday, May 3, Movement for Freedom leader Alyaksandr Milinkevich officially announced his presidential bid during the 2011 elections. “I want to tell you frankly that I feel strong, I know a lot and I have a will. What the most important is that there are many people who support me and on whom I count,” he said in his speech. Before the official launch, Milinkevich and his wife prayed in a church.



Alyaksandr Milinkevich

Nobody could hear what Milinkevich and his wife Ina Kulei were asking God for, but having announced his presidency bid, the politician said he has a plan to make Belarus a truly European nation within five years.

First of all, Milinkevich vows to restore the democratic principle of the power division, enshrined in the 1994 Constitution, to hold general and local elections, to release the government and courts from the political, financial and administrative controls of the executive power, to liquidate the state’s monopoly over the media and to ensure the press freedom.

But his promises on economic reforms were the most impressive. He said: "We will make it this way that investments will flow into the country. We know how to do it, because we are trusted. If the business situation is conducive in this country, we will manage to attract up to \$10 billion annually, raising economy growth up to 7-10 percent."

The politician also supports the private property for land, a transparent national budget. He also vows to abolish the president's fund and to support small and medium-size businesses and to change the taxation policy. He also spoke against the construction of a nuclear power plant (the way it has been proposed now) but did not object the modern nuclear power technologies in principle. He said our thermal power stations should be upgraded to produce more energy.

He admitted he was not a strong proponent of a totally liberal economy and said social benefits should be preserved at the moment.

Milinkevich promised European education to the youth, reforms of the healthcare and reforms in the utilities sector. He also wants to make friends both with the West and the East.

Milinkevich's goal is to bring Belarus to the European Union. To make it possible, he must win elections through a fair vote count.

Alexander Milinkevich: "If they don't count votes (fairly), we call on people to a peaceful protest action that will not lead to chaos or bloody revolutions. But when there is no democracy at polling stations, it means democracy must be ensured on streets."

To be on the safe side, he promised the police to raise their pay to the European level and to rid them of political search duties.

Talking about the allies, Milinkevich counts on support from the Belarusian Pro-Independence Bloc. He also confirmed he would pull out for the sake of the 'single' candidate whose strategy is better for the country than his.

**Source:** European Radio for Belarus, May 3, 2010

## Quotes of Quarter

"Russia and the West create a terrible precedent when they support an illegal government that came to power through bloodshed,"

stated **ALEXANDER LUKASHENKA** on May 4, 2010, in vowing not to hand over Kyrgyzstan's ousted President Bakiyev, apparently concerned about his own eventual fate.

As reported by the European Radio for Belarus, **ALEXANDER MILINKEVICH** in announcing his presidential candidacy on May 3, 2010, stated:

"When there is no democracy at the polling stations, it means democracy must be ensured on the streets."

## 600th Anniversary of the Grunwald Battle

A joint march to the Grunwald (Dubrouna) battleground is being planned to commemorate the 600th anniversary of the 1410 victory over the Teutonic Order. The victory by the combined forces of the Grand Duchy of Litva and Poland stopped the eastward push of the then mighty Teutonic Order.

Deputies of Lithuania's parliament invited members of the Belarus' civic society to stage this historic event together on July 18, 2010. The invitation was readily accepted and an organizational committee was formed in Minsk under the leadership of Prof. Anatol Hrytskevich, a historian, with artist Mikola Kupava, known for his historical depictions as his deputy. The march will start in the Belarusian city of Horadnia (Hrodna), the very place from which Litva's forces began their march to Grunwald six centuries ago. The site of the battle was then in Prussia, and is now near the Polish town of Olsztynek.

The joint march will include representatives of ancient Belarusian towns and cities that in 1410 sent over forty units of their knights under their distinctive banners to fight in the Grunwald battle: The following cities, each under its historical banner, expect to be represented: Vorsha, Byerastsye (now called Brest), Vaukavysk, Vilnya, Vitsyebk, Horadnya, Lida, Myedniki, Myensk (now called Minsk), Mstsislau, Navahradak, Pinsk, Polatsak, Smalyensk, Staradub.



About 200 members of Belarusian Knights' clubs will take part in the reconstruction of the battle itself, due to take place on July 17, 2010. Musical accompaniment will be provided by Belarusian medieval music bands.

The observance of the 600th anniversary will include a round-table conference with the participation of well-known historians, as well as a commemorative meeting in the Minsk cafe "Grunwald," and an exhibition of thematic works by Belarusian artists on July 15, 2010.

**Source:** dubrouna@gmail.com.



## National Park "Bielaviežskaja Pušča" And the Council Of Europe Diploma

The Council of Europe (CoE) diploma is a prestigious award, used to distinguish successful management of national parks and reserves in the realm of environmental protection. It is issued for 5-year terms, after expiration of which the awardees must confirm their validity. The National Park "Bielaviežskaja Pušča" was awarded the Diploma in 1997; however, ten years later the Diploma has been temporarily suspended for the Belarusian as well as for the Polish parts of the national park.

Heorhi Kazulka, the former deputy director of the park's scientific research and coordinator of the project "Bielavieža Forest — the 21st Century," said: "In 1997 this diploma was conferred upon the Bielavieža Forest somewhat prematurely: there were a number of issues violating the rules of the Council of Europe. Thus the diploma has been granted with a provision concerning the correction of inadequacies. Five years later the inadequacies have remained: on the contrary, their number doubled! Therefore the Council of Europe has decided to demand that the park's administration creates a single management plan for the biosphere reserve that would combine all existing problems and, consequently, suggest ways of solving them — so that the park would satisfy European standards."

The next checkup, in 2007, disclosed that no such plan existed, and resulted in a subsequent suspension of the diploma. The condition for its extension was the submission by the park's administration of a management plan that would consider all CoE recommendations. However, the administration failed to do so.

An examination of the issue of extending the diploma's validity was to take place in November of 2007. Then it was postponed several times: to spring of 2008, then to March 2009, and eventually — to March of 2010. At that time, 17 distinguished Belarusian environmentalists requested that the CoE delays its decision on extending the Diploma for the national park "Bielaviežskaja Pušča" for one year.

According to their request "the analysis performed by the environmentalists testifies to a huge number of environmental problems in the Bielaviežskaja Pušča NP, which may lead with increasing speed to the destruction of this unique corner of pristine nature."

At the end of March, the CoE's decision on this matter was again postponed due to the intention of CoE experts to personally visit the Bielavieža Forest in order to learn about the actual functioning of the park management plan. In addition, the park administration was supposed to supply the experts with an English translation of the plan. Until then only the directive provisions of the plan existed in an English version; it comprised about a third of the document and contained nature-protection measures. However, at this time, a complete English text of the plan has not been presented to the CoE.

The official position of the national park's administration, as expressed by the current deputy director on research, Vasil Arnolbik, is based on the disagreement of the

Belarusian side with CoE experts' latest decision to postpone the extension of the diploma.

According to Kazulka "the reasons for delaying the presentation of a management plan to CoE experts, as expressed by the park administration, are simply absurd ... Moreover, they represent only the formal side of the administration's plan. Also, there occurred many malicious violations of the rules: illegal game-drive hunting in the core zone reserved for foreigners, creation of hunting open-air cages replacing the 3,000 hectares of primeval forest, ecologically and simply barbaric felling of trees, creation of a tourist zone within the park's limits (allowed only on its periphery), and many others..."

The main cause of all that is taking place is the non-professionalism of the park administration. It basically consists of people with a low level of ecological education and lack of proper knowledge in the field of managing protected areas."

Kazulka emphasizes that today the Bielavieža Forest, although legally a national park, actually has been transformed into a sort of an "agro-industrial-forest business and tourist" complex, with the additional burden of nature protection, bio-diversity preservation, conducting research and ecological education.

The specialist suggests that the park's administration is now considering the possibility of a voluntary non-acceptance of the CoE diploma. In his opinion, the administration is well aware, that, under the current management style, it won't be able to fulfill the CoE recommendations. This is why it keeps asserting that the CoE requirements are unfounded; it is also casting doubts on the necessity of possessing the CoE Diploma.

"A visit to the Bielavieža Forest and another checkup by CoE and UNESCO experts is planned for the year 2011. Most likely they will be joined by independent Belarusian experts. This terrifies the park's administration most."

Kazulka notes that the international image of Belarus has already substantially suffered due to the scandalous situation in the Bielavieža Forest. The country has for many years advertized its unique park without being able to sustain correct and effective management of it.

**Source:** Bielaviežskaja Pušča — XXI st./naviny.by

### Quotes of Quarter

The Head of the Public Council on Morality **MIKALAI CHARHINETS** asked the organizers of Elton John's concert in Minsk to provide it with records of the singer's previous performances. As reported by Interfax on June 9, 2010, he stated:

"We demand that obscenity, which both children and adults shouldn't see, not be shown. We'll handle the matter."

## NEWS BRIEFS

March 30, 2010

### Opposition Calls Minsk Envoy's Letter 'Hysteria'

MINSK -- Anatol Lyabedzka, the head of Belarus's opposition United Civic Party, says a recent letter to the European Union's leadership from the Belarusian ambassador is an example of "political blackmail" and "hysteria," RFE/RL's Belarus Service reports.

Lyabedzka and Ales Lahvinets from the opposition "For Freedom" movement were commenting on Uladzimir Syanko's letter, published on EuropeanVoice.com in which Minsk's envoy accused the EU of "political extremism" with regard to Belarus.

In particular, Syanko condemned the European Parliament for inviting to the Euronest -- the parliamentary assembly for the countries of the EU's Eastern Partnership program -- representatives of Belarus's opposition and civil society instead of lawmakers from Belarus's Chamber of Representatives.

Source: RFE/RL Belarus Service

March 30, 2010

### Youth Group Denied Registration

MINSK -- The Belarus Supreme Court has upheld a Justice Ministry decision not to register a youth opposition movement, RFE/RL's Belarus Service reports.

Young Belarus movement leader Zmitser Kaspyarovich said the organization is officially registered in neighboring Lithuania. But according to Belarusian law, any movement operating in the country should be registered by the Justice Ministry.

If a movement isn't registered in Belarus its activities are deemed illegal and its members can be charged with "participation in the activities of a nonregistered organization."

The Justice Ministry has repeatedly refused to register the Young Belarus movement. The organization had appealed to the Supreme Court in an attempt to overrule the decision.

Source: RFE/RL Belarus Service

April 6, 2010

### Rocket Scientist Turns 100

Barys Kit was born on 6 April 1910 in St Petersburg (then Petrograd). As a young kid he witnessed the Russian revolution. In 1933, he got his Master's degree from Vilnia (then Wilno) University and began to teach mathematics at the Belarusian Gymnasium. In 1939 he became its principal. After Stalin incorporated Vilnia into Lithuania, Kit moved to Western Belarus where he worked on establishing Belarusian schools.

He was briefly imprisoned by the Nazis and then had to flee Belarus at the end of the World War II. Barys Kit has made a distinguished career as a rocket scientist and a professor at the University of Maryland in the United States. Michael Scanlan, Charge d'Affaires recently named Barys Kit and Tadeusz Kosciuszko as two Belarusians who have made profound contributions to America.

In his interview with Radio Liberty Barys Kit explained that remaining intellectually active and helping people helped him live so long.

Source: RFE/RL Belarus Service



Barys Kit

April 14, 2010

### Moscow-based Journalist Loses Belarusian Citizenship

Independent Belarusian journalist Paval Sharamet says he has been stripped of his Belarusian citizenship, RFE/RL's Belarus Service reports.

Sharamet, who is permanently living in Moscow, told RFE/RL that he has received official notification from the Belarusian Embassy in Moscow that his citizenship has been annulled.

Sharamet said that, according to the letter, he is losing his Belarusian citizenship because he also has a Russian passport.

"They knew very well 10 years ago that I have dual citizenship; I do not understand why they are doing this now," Sharamet said.

According to Belarusian law, a Belarusian national can be deprived of his/her citizenship in the event that he/she serves in the armed forces, police, security agencies, justice system, or any other state bodies of another country.

But Sharamet told RFE/RL that during his long-term residence in Russia he has never served in any Russian government agency.

Source: RFE/RL Belarus Service

April 16, 2010

### Shushkevich: A Demonstration of Gross Ignorance"

The first head of independent Belarus comments on Lukashenka's statement on possession of "virtually weapons-grade uranium".

Stanislau Shushkevich is the former chairman of the Supreme Council of Belarus, a nuclear physicist, a corresponding member of National Academy of Science. Under his rule, Soviet nuclear weapons were removed from Belarus in the early 1990s.

"Lukashenka's words about uranium are a demonstration of his gross ignorance in these issues. He confuses the definitions -- radioactive, highly enriched, weapons-grade uranium. These are different notions. I can certainly say -- we do not have and will not have significant amounts of weapons-grade uranium. We have the so called dirty uranium, it is heavy radioactive. We have a closed active zone of the research reactor in Sosny near Minsk. As the reactor is closed down, radioactive materials are kept under special conditions in order not to allow a nuclear reaction. This uranium can't be used for making a nuclear bomb. A special industry branch is needed to enrich this uranium. We do not have these expensive technologies," the former chairman of the Supreme Council of Belarus told in an interview to charter97.org.

According to Shushkevich, a reason for Lukashenka's statement was the fact he took offence at not having been invited to the Washington nuclear security summit.

**Source:** Charter97 Press Center

**April 20, 2010**

### **Bakiyev and Family are in Minsk**

The former president of Kyrgyzstan Kurmanbek Bakiyev is in Minsk, said Alyaksandr Lukashenka, answering questions of deputies on April 20.

"At present I have ordered to create a medical commission and make a medical check-up of him and his family," the Belarusian leader said.



*Kurmanbek Bakiyev*

He has also informed that he ordered to provide humanitarian aid to the Kyrgyz nation: "I have given a task to send food and all necessary items to Kyrgyzstan. Poverty there is awful".

**Source:** Charter97 Press Center

**May 5, 2010**

### **Foreign Affairs Ministry Shocked by PACE Resolution**

The Belarusian Ministry of Foreign Affairs says the resolution of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe creates an impression that the adoption was an impulsive action.

"The first reading of the text makes an impression the adoption of the document was an impulsive action taken under the influence of random factors and political fluctuations. PACE says it is ready for a dialogue with Belarus, but at the same time decides to suspend all contacts with the country," Belarusian MFA spokesman Andrei Savinykh told BelaPAN.

In this situation, Savinykh emphasized, the Belarusian party demonstrates a more coherent position: "we regard a dialogue as a means of solving all current issues, reaching understanding and expect our partners to come to the same conclusion."

**Source:** Charter 97 Press Center

**May 5, 2010**

### **Czechs Seek Participation in Nuclear Plant Project**

The Czech Republic would like to participate in the construction of a nuclear power plant in Belarus, said Jan Gronik, an advisor to the Czech minister of industry and trade. He noted that the major equipment for the Czech reactors was manufactured by the Czech companies, using the Russian technologies.

Gronik reminded that Belarus's major partner in the project is the Russian company Atomstroieksport. He said the Czech Republic could be a sub-contractor for the construction of the Belarusian reactors, reports Belapan.

The Czech Republic believes that it could supply both the equipment and technological experience.

**Source:** European Radio for Belarus

**May 05, 2010**

### **Belarusian Court Acquits Conscientious Objector**

MINSK -- A Minsk court has acquitted a Belarusian man who refused mandatory military service on religious grounds

Yan Mikhailau, 21, said that his membership in the Jewish Messianic movement means he cannot serve in the army, but is ready to serve an alternative civil service if Belarusian authorities offer him one.

In mid-December, Mikhailau was sentenced to three months in jail for avoiding military service. He had almost finished his jail term when a Minsk Oblast court overruled the verdict against him and sent the case for further investigation.

On March 10, Mikhailau was freed from jail and asked not to leave the city until the additional investigation of his case was finished.

Mikhailau told RFE/RL that today's court decision is a good sign for other young men in Belarus who cannot perform military service because of their religious beliefs.

**Source:** Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

**May 7, 2010**

### **Autukhovich Sentenced to 5 Years Imprisonment for 5 Cartridges**

A panel of the Supreme Court of Belarus on May 6 sentenced Mikalay Autukhovich, a 47-year-old businessman resident in Vaukavysk, Hrodna region, to five years and two months in a medium security correctional institution. The panel found him guilty of illegal possession of five hunting rifle cartridges, BelaPAN reports.

His associate, Uladzimir Asipenka, was sentenced to three years in a minimum security correctional institution.

... Opposition activists and human rights defenders believe that the charges against Messrs. Autukhovich and Asipenka were trumped up in revenge for their criticism, corruption accusations and unsubmitive behavior.

... Mr. Autukhovich insisted that he had been sent to prison because he had protested authorities' arbitrary rule. Amnesty International then declared him and Mr. Lyavonau prisoners of conscience.

Mr. Autukhovich a veteran of the USSR's Afghanistan war and a holder of three combat medals, was among civil society activists who petitioned the government in January 2009 to restore state benefits for the veterans of the war. Mr. Autukhovich refused to accept a jubilee medal that the Belarusian government distributed to Afghanistan veterans on the occasion of 20 years since the withdrawal of the Soviet troops from that country.

In 2004, Mr. Autukhovich ran unsuccessfully for Parliament.

**Source:** Office for a Democratic Belarus, May 7, 2010

**May 12, 2010**

### **Vidanava on the List Of World's Top Dissidents**

Founder and editor of CDMAG Belarusian journal, Iryna Vidanava, named among the most prominent dissidents of the world. The list is contained in the article of Foreign Policy magazine, devoted to the activities of dissidents from various countries.



*Iryna Vidanava*

Iryna Vidanava founded and edited a magazine for teenagers, CDMAG, aimed to encourage creative inclinations, dissent, and democratic values. According to NEWSru.com, in 2005, authorities banned the magazine. But in 2007 Vidanava founded youth magazine, 34 Multimedia Magazine, issued on CD.

The article mentions the dissidents from different countries, from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe, from China to Peru. Russia in the list of the most prominent dissidents is presented by the head of the Moscow Helsinki Group, Lyudmila Alekseeva, and leader of the United Civil Front, Garry Kasparov.

"The dissidents have to suffer often - they are watched, abducted, beaten, killed, arrested, tortured. But only a little of them have a luck - they'll be know in the whole world: they are, for example, Aung San Suu Kyi (Myanmar) or the Dalai Lama of Tibet. Meanwhile, countless people are involved in the same battle", reads the article of Foreign Policy.

**Sources:** Office for Democratic Belarus/ Telegraf.by.

**May 13, 2010**

**US on Conviction of Autukhovich**

*As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly to the Permanent Council, Vienna, on May 13, 2010*

The United States is concerned by the May 6 conviction in Minsk of Mr. Mikalay Autukhovich and three others on charges related to illegal weapons possession. We share the concerns of our EU colleagues, as expressed in the May 10 statement by the representative of the EU Presidency in Minsk, regarding procedural flaws and apparent political motivations in the case.

In this and other cases, we have long stressed to the Belarusian authorities the importance of observing due process. We had hoped that the Belarusian authorities would take this opportunity to demonstrate a strengthening of due process and the independence of the judiciary. Unfortunately, there are reasons to question the conduct of this trial with respect to the civil rights of Mr. Autukhovich and the three others. As we have noted before, improvement in the relationship of the United States with Belarus can come only when the Belarusian authorities show a greater respect for the basic civil and human rights of the Belarusian people.

**May 17, 2010**

**Lukashenka Gives Green Light to \$2 bln Belarusian Euro-bond**

Belarusian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka has approved a government plan to issue Eurobonds worth \$2 billion.

"The council of ministers is authorized to implement in 2010-2011 bond issues amounting to \$2 billion with maturity of at least five years," stated the decree posted on the national legal Internet portal on Saturday.

The organizers of the Belarusian Eurobond placements will be Sberbank, Deutsche Bank, RBS and BNP Paribas.

Russia last month issued Eurobonds worth \$5.5 billion as it returned to international capital markets for the first time since the 1998 financial crisis.

Belarus received billions of dollars from the IMF, World Bank and Russia over the past year as it struggled to deal with the effects of the global financial crisis, but Lukashenka said last month that the country was emerging from recession.

"The country has exited the recession - this is the evaluation of the World Bank and the IMF," he said, predicting that the Belarusian economy would grow by 11% this year.

**Source:** RIA Novosti, Office for Democratic Belarus

**May 20, 2010**

**Nationwide Raids Against Belarusian Rights Activists Continue**

Belarusian police and security forces continued raids across the country today against human rights activists and some political analysts, RFE/RL's Belarus Service reports.

Searches at the offices and apartments of "Tell the Truth" campaign activists took place on May 19 for the second consecutive day in the cities of Minsk, Mahiliou, Homel, Hrodna. Police and state security officers are detaining and questioning "Tell the Truth" members and confiscating computers, mobiles phones, and memory sticks.

Police are telling those who are being searched that they are investigating a criminal case involving the "dissemination of false information." Dozens of activists across the country have been targeted in the raids.



*Uladzimir Nyaklyayeu*

Some rights activists told RFE/RL they believe the raids are connected to the presidential election slated to be held either at the end of this year or the beginning of 2011.

The "Tell the Truth" founder, writer Uladzimir Nyaklyayeu, recently announced that he may run in the presidential election against incumbent Alyaksandr Lukashenka. Nyaklyayew, 63, is chairman of the Union of Belarusian Writers.

Nyaklyayeu said the "Tell the Truth" campaign was created to "prompt Belarusian society to realize the real state of affairs in the country where there is little room for the truth but where there are a lot of lies."

He said the "Tell the Truth" campaign will give the public accurate information about the situation in the country. As part of the campaign, volunteers across the country will collect "false" information reported by the authorities. The groups findings are posted on the website zapraudu.info.

Renowned poets Ryhor Baradulin and Henadz Burawkin, artist Zinaida Bandarenka, Chornobyl researcher Henadz Hrushavy,

scientist Radzim Haretski, Belarusian Association of Journalists head Zhanna Litvina, human rights activist Tatsyana Pratsko, and chessmaster Viktor Kupreychyk have given their support to the "Tell the Truth" campaign.

**Source:** Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

**May 24, 2010**

### **New Belarus Internet Regulations Require Compulsory Web Registration**

Based on a decree issued on 1 February 2010 by President Alyaksandr Lukashenka, Belarus Council of Ministers adopted five resolutions introducing new Internet regulations which require a compulsory registration of all web sites and the collection of personal data of Internet cafe users.

According to one of the resolutions, the registration is required for all Internet resources on the territory of the Republic of Belarus, irrespective of their commercial or non-commercial nature.

Attorney Lyudmila Chekina explained that, in terms of the resolutions, all Internet resources that are on the territory of Belarus must be registered as Internet Service Providers. Providers will also need to record additional information, including more than 30 points that cover not only the name, passport details and contact of the owners of the resource, but also a detailed description of the site, network (IP) resource addresses, domain names, registration number of the data centre, the type of hosting used by resource ports transport protocols and others.

Moreover, besides the fact that all websites must register, they must also be hosted in Belarus which implicitly means that all foreign-based sites may be sanctioned, leading to the termination of their service provision.

**Source:** edri.org/Office for Democratic Belarus

**May 28, 2010**

### **Belarus Offers Russia Pipelines for Cheap Gas**

Belarus on Thursday offered Russia total control of its gas pipeline network in exchange for cheap gas.

Russia already owns a 50 percent stake in Beltransgaz, the holding company of the strategic transit network, under an \$5 billion deal struck in 2006. Russia's Gazprom has been paying off its debt incrementally since, and Belarus has garnered significant discounts on Russian natural gas.

Belarusian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka said in televised comments Thursday that the country is ready to cede full control of the pipelines, which also ship Russian gas to Europe, in return for Russian internal market prices on gas. Belarus is currently thought to pay more than \$200 per 1,000 cubic meters.

Of the Russians, Lukashenka said: "If they say that they will sell gas to Belarus according to internal prices, then we are not against that — take the controlling stake" in Beltransgaz. It is not clear what exact stake in Beltransgaz the president was offering, and for what sum.

Russia has recently found resistance in garnering control over the sprawling pipeline network of Ukraine, despite a swing toward Moscow after recent presidential elections. Kiev maintains the transit network is too important to the country's interests to give up.

Lukashenka also raised the prospect of Russia taking control of the Mozyr Oil Refinery, one of the country's top two refineries, in return for discounts on oil imports — an idea first floated five years ago.

"We're not against it, but for decent money," said Lukashenka

**Source:** The Associated Press, Office for Democratic Belarus

**May 31, 2010**

### **United Civic Party Picks Presidential Candidate**

The United Civic Party (UCP) has nominated Deputy Chairman Yaraslau Ramanchuk for registration as candidate in Belarus' forthcoming presidential election.

The opposition party's Political Council took the decision to this effect on May 31.

On April 17, the party announced that it would put forward its candidate in the presidential election.

The party said that it was still ready to discuss the possibility of a single opposition candidate in the ballot.



*Yaraslau Ramanchuk*

Born in the small town of Sapotskin in the Hrodna region on January 10, 1966, Yaraslau Ramanchuk graduated from Minsk State Linguistic University. His doctoral thesis dealing with economic reforms in a transforming society was not accepted.

Mr. Ramanchuk was a member of the Supreme Soviet in the 1990s. Between 1997 and 2002, he worked for the private weekly *Belorusskaya Gazeta*. Since February 2002, Mr. Ramanchuk has been heading the Minsk-based Mises think tank. In April 2000, he was elected deputy chairman of the UCP in charge of international contacts and the development of economic programs and laws.

Mr. Ramanchuk is an author of numerous economic articles, alternative bills and the UCP's anti-crisis platform. He is also the holder of several international awards.

Since January 2009, Mr. Ramanchuk has been a member of the Council of Ministers' working group on the promotion of the country's image in the international arena.

**Source:** Office for Democratic Belarus/naviny.by

**June 16, 2010**

### **Russia Gives Belarus Five Days to Pay for Gas**

Russia's President Dmitry Medvedev warned Belarus on Tuesday that it must pay its debt for Russian natural gas supplies within five days or face cuts.

Medvedev spoke Tuesday (June 15) at a meeting with the head of Russian state-controlled natural gas giant Gazprom, who said a contract allows the company to reduce gas supplies to Belarus for its failure to cover the \$200 million debt.

Medvedev said in televised comments that Belarus should be given five days to settle the debt or face sanctions.

**Source:** The Associated Press/ Office for Democratic Belarus

## BELARUS ABROAD

### Ivonka Survilla Reelected President of BNR Rada

The 27th session of the Rada (Council) of the Belarusian National Republic (BNR) took place in London on April 17, 2010. The session was held in the assembly hall of the Association of Belarusians of the United Kingdom

The participants of the session held a minute's silence in memory of victims of the plane crash near Smalensk, including Lech Kaczynski, his wife Maria, and last president of Poland's government in exile, Ryszard Kaczorowski.

Reports of the Rada and the leadership of Rada's sectors were heard. Special attention was devoted to assistance of educational and cultural activity in Belarus, promoting national consciousness. The session participants considered a plan of actions for the nearest time and prospects for cooperation with politicians of the US, Canada, and European countries, representatives of international organizations, according to Radio Svaboda.



Ms. Ivonka Survilla

A resolution condemning construction of a nuclear power plant in Belarus was also adopted.

The elections were held in accordance with the organization's charter. Ms. Ivonka Survilla was reelected president of the BNR Rada.

The assembly hall of the Association of Belarusians of the United Kingdom was re-opened recently in London after reconstruction.

The hall is located in the legendary Belarusian house on Penn Road (in northern part of London). It was the first house bought by the Belarusian diaspora in 1948. It was the first official property of the Belarusian diaspora in the West, temporary home of many Belarusian emigrants. The editorial office of "*Belarus na Chuzhynе*" (Belarusian Abroad) was located in the house.

The event on April 17 was attended by numerous guests, representatives of Belarusian diasporas from many countries, including BNR Rada President Ivonka Survilla.

Representatives of the Belarusian diaspora in Latvia, the US and members of the Belarusian minority in Poland welcomed the gathered guests. Welcome addresses of Belarusian organizations from various countries of the world were also read. The session was also attended by the former UK ambassador to Belarus **Brian Bennett** and the prominent British Belarusian studies' expert **Jim Dingly**.

A book by **Natallya Hardzienka** entitled *Belarusians in Great Britain* was presented at the session.

The book describes the past and current life of the Belarusian diaspora in the UK, and activities of Belarusian organizations in Great Britain.

**Source:** Charter97 Press Center, April 18, 2010

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### BNR Rada On Nuclear Power in Belarus

The Rada of the Belarusian Democratic Republic (BNR) in exile, convened for its XXVII plenary session in London on the 18th April 2010, has adopted a resolution titled "*Against the Construction of Nuclear Power Station in Belarus.*"

The Rada noted that the Lukashenka government follows in the footsteps of the Soviet government in Moscow, whose plans to construct such a facility in Belarus near Viciebsk in 1988 were blocked only by mass popular protests organized by the Belarusian Popular Front. But while in the West, the feasibility of nuclear power industry development has been a subject of careful discussion for decades, and many issues still remain unresolved, the current government of Belarus made its decision without either wide public consultations or advice from independent experts without IAEA links. As a rule, no opponents were allowed to speak out at the official discussions, while pickets and mass public actions by environmentalists were banned and their participants arrested.

The resolution refers to the latest information that the construction contract is to be granted to Russian organizations. As a result, the Rada asserts, "Belarus may become hostage of Russia's atomic industry experiments" and states that "a free and open discussion of all the nuclear power plant construction aspects can only take place in a free society and under a state authority which would be elected by the people and would depend on the people."

The resolution concludes: "The BNR Rada protests against nuclear power plant construction plans in Belarus and supports the civil society which intends to oppose this project."

### Belarusian LACINKA Its Second Wind

At the present time — in the beginning of the 21st century — practically all Belarusian-language, press and official texts are being printed in the Cyrillic alphabet. Yet Belarusian is one of the few Slavic languages with a tradition of TWO alphabets: Cyrillic and Roman (**LACINKA**). The latter has been used alongside with Cyrillic in Belarusian press in the beginning of the 20th century, until 1939 in Western Belarus. In the BSSR, the Cyrillic alphabet was used exclusively, as in line with the overall Soviet policy.

Our publication switched to transliterating Belarusian Cyrillic texts by means of the American Library of Congress (LOC) method, after initially using the LACINKA alphabet.

The LOC method is now being used to transliterate texts from languages officially using markedly different alphabets: Cyrillic, Oriental, Georgian, Middle-Eastern... It is not being applied at all to established European languages using the Roman alphabet (French, German, Romance languages), or those in Central and Eastern Europe who modified their versions of the Roman alphabet by adding various diacritical signs (Czech, Polish, Hungarian...). Belarusian LACINKA essentially belongs to the latter group. In the former Yugoslavia both the Roman and the Cyrillic alphabets were officially used, and the Latinized version is used for transliteration in the nominaly Cyrillic Serbia.

A significant breakthrough in using Belarusian LACINKA took place in 2007, starting by transliterating Belarusian geographic names into Roman alphabet. We present below excerpts from the official **Instructions for Transliterating Geographic Names into Roman alphabet**, discussing the reasons for this decision.

In order to better acquaint our readers with LACINKA, one article in each of this year's issues of *Belarusian Review* will use this method of transliteration. A table comparing the two methods will be placed alongside.

### National System of Transliterating Geographic Names Into Roman Alphabet

*Excerpts from a document, prepared by the State Committee of the Property of the Republic of Belarus*

*This document was submitted to the Ninth UN Conference on Standardization of Geographical names, held in New York on 21-30 August 2007.*

In the Republic of Belarus the Regulation on the transliteration of geographic names into Roman alphabet has been used since 2001 and is obligatory when producing cartographic and other works designed for international use.

The basis of the present transliteration into Roman letters was the traditional Belarusian LACINKA, which has been historically certified and was used in popular scientific and fiction periodicals of the 19th — beginning of the 20th centuries equally with Cyrillic. For example, the social-political weekly *Nasha Niva (Our Field)* was published in two alphabets (in 1906-1915), and so were the works of such classical Belarusian authors as Yanka Kupala, Yakub Kolas, Frantsishak Bahushevich, Vincent Dunin-Martsinkevich and others. In the course of active use LACINKA became well adapted for transmission of features, specific to the Belarusian language.

In 2007 LACINKA underwent an examination by experts and was recognized to meet all requirements necessary for the National system of transliteration into Roman alphabet.

**Map of Mahilioŭ region, printed in 2007, with geographic names in LACINKA.**



### Transliteration from the Belarusian Cyrillic alphabet to a Roman alphabet:

- Library of Congress method (LOC)
- using the Belarusian Lacinka (LACINKA)

#### 1. Cyrillic letters Я, Е, Ё, Ю

• Я — in LOC = Ya

— in LACINKA = Ja,

at the beginning of words or syllables, or after vowels  
= Ia

after consonants

• Е — in LOC = Ye

— in LACINKA = Je,

at the beginning of words or syllables, or after vowels  
= Ie

after consonants

• Ё — in LOC = Yo

— in LACINKA = Jo,

at the beginning of words or syllables, or after vowels  
= Io

after consonants

• Ю — in LOC = Yu

— in LACINKA = Ju,

at the beginning of words or syllables, or after vowels  
= Iu

after consonants

#### 2. Cyrillic letters Ч, X, Ш, Ж, Ц, Ы

• Ч — in LOC = CH

— in LACINKA = Č

• X — in LOC = KH

— in LACINKA = CH

• Ш — in LOC = SH

— in LACINKA = Š

• Ж — in LOC = ZH

— in LACINKA = Ž

• Ц — in LOC = TS

— in LACINKA = C

• Ы — in LOC = U, W

— in LACINKA = Ů

3. In LACINKA palatalization of consonants marked by the soft sign Ь is marked by a diacritical mark ' added on top of the corresponding character:

• СЬ — Ś

• ЗЬ — Ž

• ДЗЬ — DŽ

• ЛЬ — Ł

• НЬ — Ń

• ЦЬ — Č

NOTE: In the following article Belarusian names (both personal and geographic) are transliterated from Cyrillic using the Roman LACINKA alphabet.

The first occurrence of a given name is presented as follows:

Name in LACINKA (name in LOC transliteration).

Example: *Marcinovič* [Martsinovich]

### HISTORICAL DATES

#### June 14, 1900

Birthdate of *Michaś Zabejda-Sumicki* [Zabeyda-Sumitski], a famous Belarusian opera singer. Lived and performed in Kharbin (China), Milan, Warsaw, Prague.

#### June 19, 1924

Birthdate of *Vasil Bykaŭ*, an outstanding Belarusian writer and public figure. Most of his works covered the topic of World War Two, experienced by him as a soldier.

Towards the end of his life he was forced to seek refuge abroad. He lived in Finland, Germany and the Czech Republic. He was forced out of his homeland due to attacks in the state-run press and censorship of his writings. The regime continues to take revenge against Bykaŭ even after his death. Vasil Bykaŭ's books are not being republished in Belarus and films about his life and creative work are banned.

Bykaŭ was considered for the Nobel prize in literature in late 1990. He died on June 22, 2003.

#### July 7, 1882

*Janka Kupala* [Yanka Kupala], a great Belarusian poet, was born in *Viazynka* [Vyazynka], near the town of *Maladečna* [Maladechna].

Kupala may be considered one of the founders of the modern Belarusian literature, whose patriotic poetry significantly contributed to Belarus' national awakening in the 20th century.

In addition to his literary activities, he was a valuable civic leader, and the editor of the *Naša Niva* [Nasha Niva] newspaper in the 1910s.

He died tragically in Moscow in 1942.

#### July 7, 1887

**Mark Chagall**, one of the most significant painters and graphic artists of the 20th century, was born in Viciebsk. Between 1915 and 1917 he lived in St. Petersburg, Russia; after the Russian Revolution he was the director of the Art Academy in *Viciebsk* [Vitsyebsk] from 1918 to 1919, and the art director of the Moscow Jewish State Theater from 1919 to 1922. In 1923 he moved to France, where he spent the rest of his life.

#### July 15, 1410

Anniversary of the **Battle of Grunwald**, one of the biggest in the Middle Ages. The German Teutonic Knights, with West European mercenaries, were then decisively defeated by an army commanded by the Polish king *Jahajla* [Yahayla, Jagiello] and Litva's Grand Duke *Vitait*, supported by Czech Hussite and vassal Tartar contingents.



# Belarusians in The Battle of Grunwald

By Kirył Kaścian, Alaksiej Dajliđaŭ

## The role of Belarusians in the Battle of Grunwald

The Battle of Grunwald (Tannenberg, or Dubrovna) was one of the largest battles of Medieval Europe. It took place during the war between the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Teutonic Order. The alliance of Kingdom of Poland led by King Jagailo and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL) led by Grand Duke Vitovt decisively defeated the Teutonic Knights, led by Grand Master Ulrich von Jungingen. The military units from the regions of what is now Belarus took an active part in that battle, the fact that foreign historians tend to overlook due to the confusion in varying terminology describing medieval Belarusians.

July 15 is being marked this year in Belarus, Lithuania and Poland as the 600th anniversary of this epochal event. In this conjunction, we will focus here on one question: What was the role of Belarusians' ancestors in this battle? Before answering this question, we will first review the role of the Belarusians in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL).

## The issue of Belarusians' relationship to the titular nation of the GDL

For a long time, Soviet authorities not only concealed the fact that Belarusians' ancestors comprised the majority of the GDL army in the Battle of Grunwald, but would not even mention the presence of Belarusians on the battleground, preferring rather to speak of "Lithuanian" warlords and combat units — in the established sense of "ethnic Baltic Lithuanians." Fortunately, today's Belarusian society is generally aware of the fact that squadrons from 25 Belarusian towns were the striking power of the GDL army in the Battle of Grunwald. However, contemporary western historians in a sense continue the Soviet tradition by regarding Belarusians as some kind of unformed mass in the Ruthenian "bouillon." The essential cause of this problem is due to the fact that during the GDL period there were no people calling themselves "Belarusians," because the term "Belarus" was first imposed on our country by the Russian empire in the 19th century.

World's history often records cases when the name of a territory, such as Macedonia or Prussia, shifts from one ethnic group to another. Similar fate met the term Lithuania (Litva), which in today's academic world is identified exclusively with the present-day ethnically Baltic Lietuva. Yet a simple analysis of the political and cultural legacy of the GDL reveals that the names Lithuania and Lithuanians (*Litva* and *Litviny* in the original) in the historical arena referred precisely to ancestors of Belarusians, and not to some mysterious pagan ethnic Baltic "*kunigaikščiai*" (i.e. dukes) — unknown to any historical sources.

An example of this notion of Lithuania may be found in testimony by Grand Duke Jagailo, who in his official deed of February 20, 1387 stated that "the ancient tradition of chasing the enemy out of our Lithuanian land (terrae nostrae Lithuanicae) in the folk language (vulgo dicitur) is called "pogonia" ("pahonia" means pursuit in Belarusian). "Po-

gonia" was also the name of the ancient coat-of-arms of the GDL, used on a seal by Polock duke Hleb-Narymont in 1388. And Jagailo testified that the general pursuit of the enemy was a military tradition of the Lithuanian nation, while referring to this custom in Belarusian.

Another example is duke Ivan Baba, of Druck dukes (Eastern Belarus), who joined the Muscovite army in 1432. The chronicles stated that Ivan Baba equipped his new pikeman squadron according to the "Lithuanian" style ("po litovski"). This indicates that the Belarusian military tradition of that period bore no other name but "Lithuanian."

As a matter of fact, so far no one in today's academic world has been able to rationally define where in the historical GDL nation, the Litvins, lies the boundary between ethnic Belarusians and the "ethnic Balts-Lietuviai." This is why the typically Soviet trick of dividing the historical Lithuanian parliament (Pany-Rada — its name is also in Belarusian) by ethnicity into "Belarusians" and "Lithuanians" appears simply unreasonable; as does the imaginary division of the GDL army into "Belarusians" and "Lithuanians," which has been a long-time puzzle for Belarusians themselves. While families such as Zaberezinski, Ilinicz and Hrebtovicz were regarded as "Belarusians," Sakovicz, Svirski and Holszanski were considered (according to the Soviet tradition) "Lithuanians" (read: "Lietuviai"). The best example of the unscientific nature of dividing a single Slavic nation *Litvins* may be a statement found in a Soviet encyclopedia by the publisher Vadzim Dzieruzhynski, that the Polock duke Andrey Olgerdovicz was a "Belarusian," while duke Jagailo was a "Lithuanian." Thus, in an attempt to corroborate the ideologically "correct" history of Belarusians, the Soviet ideology combined with Lithuanian mythogenesis made two sons of one father members of different ethnic groups.

One should observe another flaw of the Lithuanian historical school — the ultra-baltism, expressed by seeing all noble clans of Baltic origin — such as Radzivils, Kiezhailos etc. — as a core of the allegedly "ethnic Baltic nation," which should have supposedly born the name of "Lietuviai" in those times. There is no need to say that the mentioned barons were never known as "Lietuviai" in any historical sources, but were a part of the whole nation of Litvins (Litviny), which was Slavic-speaking, as stated by the Lithuanian Statutes of 1529, 1566 and 1588. First of all, one should not ignore the role of Yotvingians and Prussians in the ethnogenesis of the Belarusian nation, nor the fact that not all Balts evolved into today's "Lietuviai." Secondly the mentioned barons of Baltic descent were undoubtedly bearers of Slavic language and culture, and were an integral part of the Litvins' nation. This was clearly shown by the Belarusian historian Paul Urban on the basis of a number of Latin-language deeds written by members of Radzivil, Kiezhailo, Hiedyhold, Monivid and other families, in the 15th century. The translated texts of these documents often contain transliterated Slavic words and even whole phrases from the original speech — not only legal terms but vernacular phrases as well, that are completely comprehensible to today's Belarusians. The presence of these phrases shows that the original oral texts

of the deeds were dictated undoubtedly in the Old Belarusian language. One should add here, that during the existence of the GDL no examples of the present-day Lithuanian language (*Lietuvių kalba*) have been found, neither in government documents nor in the private correspondence of the country's political elite. This is because the only "Lithuanian" language in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was the language of the GDL's historical nation, Litvins, and it was the contemporary Belarusian vernacular, which may be illustrated by a multitude of examples, beginning with the first recording of the "Lithuanian" (*lithuanice*) language in historical sources — from the lips of duke Keystut in 1351.

While summarizing the relationship of Belarusians' ancestors to the titular nation of the GDL, it is necessary to take into account the religious factor, undoubtedly dominant in Middle Ages. Today's historical science fairly frequently refers to "Pagan Lithuanians" (i.e. *Lietuviai* in the context). Some contemporary western researchers, like S.C. Rowell, in their works, published in Cambridge, attempt to describe the early GDL as a kind of "pagan empire in Central and Eastern Europe." However, it is difficult to associate the Lithuanians of that time with "paganism," especially taking into account the fact that a separate Lithuanian metropoly existed in the GDL since 1317 (according to the byzantist H. Geltzer — since 1300) that united the episcopates of Novhorodok, Polock and Turov (exactly the entire territory of today's Belarus). The metropolitan referred to himself as the "Metropolitan of Lithuania" in his correspondence. One should emphasize that establishing a separate metropoly in a given state was possible only on initiative of its ruler, in case of the GDL — of the Grand Duke. Then we shall attribute the establishment of the metropoly to Grand Duke Viten, who, by the way, was referred to as "my son" by Polock bishop Yakov in his deed of 1297. In 1331 Grand Duke Gedymin proposed to the Moscow metropolitan his candidate Arseny for the position of the bishop of Pskov. In 1342 Grand Duke Olgerd, founder of two churches in Vitebsk, assured the inhabitants of Pskov that he was a baptized Christian. Olgerd also extended the jurisdiction of the Lithuanian metropoly to almost half the territory of Kievan Rus'. Due to his efforts the Lithuanian metropolitan became Metropolitan of Lithuania, Kiev and entire Rus' in 1378. Regarding the Battle of Grunwald itself, we shall note, that, according to the annalist, the "whole Lithuanian army" was fighting on the battlefield under a banner with the image of St. George (Yury).

In light of the above facts, one may conclude that it is necessary to:

- Fundamentally reevaluate the religious identity of the GDL's leading elite, and revisit the nature of their "paganism."
- Thoroughly research the history of Christianity on Belarusian territories in the early GDL period.
- Reevaluate the view of the titular nation of the GDL, now existing in today's academic community, as well as to reconsider the contribution of Belarusians' ancestors to this titular nation.

Thus, on basis of the above described facts we shall speak of the overall domination of Belarusians' ancestors in the political and cultural life of GDL; they constituted the GDL's titular nation of *Litvins*, a nation with a Slavic language and Christian traditions. This threshold leads us directly to understanding the GDL's participation in the battle of Grunwald, where its army's striking power consisted of squadrons from 25 Belarusian towns.

#### **Grunwald: national myths in the context of historical facts**

Modern Lithuanian historiography treats the Battle of Grunwald as a victory of the "Lithuanian nation" (i.e. *lietuvių tauta* in the context). When asked, for example, about the command language of GDL's army in the Grunwald battle, the average Lithuanian will immediately reply that it was Lithuanian (*Lietuvių kalba*). Such a reply indicates the extent to which national myths prevail in today's Lithuanian society. However, historical facts will hardly confirm such an opinion.

Let us recall the fact that Grand Duke Jagailo himself named the Lithuanian military tradition of general pursuit in the Slavic language. It is also unlikely that, for example, commanders of the Miensk squadron Yury Michailovicz, of the Mohilev squadron Andrey Volodzimerovicz, or of the Luck squadron Fiodor Ostrozhski, were able to speak the Baltic language now known as Lithuanian. The simple analysis of the composition of the GDL's army shows that its majority was not, and could not have been, in command of this Baltic language. In the reality of the times, the possible use of bi-lingual commands also should be excluded. Considering the lack of time for making important decisions in wartime conditions, one may arrive at a generally logical conclusion that military commands were issued only in one language. From the practical point of view, it could not have been the Baltic language known as Lithuanian today. On the other hand, all historical facts speak in favor of Belarusian. For instance, duke Keystut in 1351 commanded the Lithuanian army in the Belarusian language. In a Latin-language source it was referred to as Litvian (*lithwanice*). Keystut's call in Belarusian "The ox is our discords. God is with us!" was not only correctly transliterated by the witness ("rogachina rozne nachy gospanany" — which is clearly the aforementioned phrase in Belarusian), but also correctly translated into Latin ("*cornutum ...iuramentum per nos ...Deus ad nos*"), thus corroborating the case. The phrase was recorded on pages of annals with remarks that duke's words were expressed in the Lithuanian (*lithwanice*) language and relayed by his Litvin (*Lithwani*) warriors. It is clear that those warriors from Berestie, Dorohichyn, Horodno and Troki, as well as the duke himself, were speaking in a Slavic language. Therefore, having evaluated the above facts one could hardly err by stating that on the Grunwald battlefield commands to the Lithuanian army were issued in the same Lithuanian language of Jagailo, in which he called Pogonia the ouster of the enemy from "our Lithuanian land" — that is, in the Old Belarusian "Lithuanian" language. Another argument in favor of the Old Belarusian language, is that annals do not record

any examples of Baltic phrases by Jagailo or Vitovt, while containing many examples of spoken Old Belarusian. The Grand Duke Jagailo himself called this language the *language of the Lithuanian people*, as did the first Vilnia catholic bishop Andrey Vasila in 1398.

Nevertheless, the current Lithuanian historiography considers the Grunwald victory their achievement. It is very difficult to evaluate the role that today's Lithuanians assign to Belarusians since the Lithuanian and as a result western, historiography regards Belarusians of that time as an undefined mass of Ruthenians. One example of this view may be the classicist of the contemporary Lithuanian historical school — Edvardas Gudavičius, who in his thorough "History of Lithuania" has not even managed to list the GDL squadrons and banners that participated in the Battle of Grunwald. Thus, the Lithuanian reader has not been able to learn which allegedly "Lietuvių" squadrons successfully defended the freedom of the "Lietuviai nation" in 1410. It is difficult to learn the basis for such an approach by the nation that now bears a proud name of Lithuanians. However, the very presence of this approach testifies to at least two existing conditions. First of all, with the Lithuanian historical science retaining its present positions, it isn't appropriate to speak about the perspectives of creating a consolidated Belarusian-Lithuanian version of history, based on historical facts. Secondly, such an attitude on the Lithuanian side does not at all favor an objective study of the political and cultural aspects of the GDL's legacy.

Indeed, at that time the present-day Lithuanians' ethnic territory of Samogitia was occupied by the Teutonic Order, was written off by the Lithuanian Grand Duke, and did not take part in the events. Therefore, today's vision of the Lithuanian science concerning the Battle of Grunwald may not be regarded as being based on historical facts. In words of the cited historian Gudavičius, it represents "the policy of paupers." Thus, a brief analysis of the Grunwald battle, as well as that of politics and culture of the contemporary GDL, points to the need for a thorough reevaluation of the view of the titular nation of the GDL now existing in today's academic community.

It seems that the creation of a consolidated version of history, based on historical facts and not on national myth, would help to establish real cooperation between scholars of Belarus and Lithuania, as well as to contribute to the world's understanding of who Belarusians really are. From the perspective of the future, it may positively influence the effectiveness of western countries' "Belarusian" political vector.

### Conclusion

Six hundred years have passed since the Battle of Grunwald, which for many centuries defined the fate of not only Belarusian lands, but of all Europe. The best lesson for us from that time will be to honor the holy memory of our ancestors, who fought and died for the freedom of their country — the Grand Duchy of Lithuania — in the Battle of Grunwald in the year 1410.

Below is a list of all the banners (squadrons) of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, that took part in the battle.

1. Squadrons from the 25 towns located on the present territory of Belarus :

- Oszmiany
- Bierestie
- Bychov
- Vitebsk
- Vovkovysk
- Orsza
- Horodno (commander — Michail Monivid)
- Dorohiczyn
- Druck
- Kobryn
- Krevo
- Kryczew
- Lida
- Lukoml
- Mohilev (commander — Michail Monivid)
- Mielnik
- Miensk, Zaslavl — one banner  
(commander — Yury Michailovicz)
- Mstislavl
- Novhorodok (commander — Zhyhimont Keystutovicz)
- Niesvizh (commander — Siemion Niesvizhski)
- Pinsk
- Polock (commander — Ivan Niemira)
- Slonim
- Sluck (commander — Alexander Volodzimerovicz)

2. Other squadrons:

- The Horde (commander — prince Dzhelaladin)
- Volodymer - Volynski
- Vilkomir
- Vilnia — two squadrons  
(commanders — Voicech Monivid, Piotr Gasztovt).
- Kiev (commander — Ivan Holszanski)
- Kovna
- Kremieniec
- Luck (commander — Fiodor Ostrozhski)
- Novgorod-the-Great
- Miedniki
- Novgorod-Severski
- Podolia — 3 squadrons
- Ratno
- Smolensk
- Starodub
- Troki — 2 banners (commanders — Yaunis, Hinvil)
- Czartoryisk

**Note:** Personal and geographic names in this article have been transliterated in a way, that would preserve the phonetic rules of the Old Belarusian language.

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**Editor's Note:** Due to space limitation, bibliography associated with this article has been posted on our Website: [www.belarusianreview.org](http://www.belarusianreview.org).

## Fate of Isolated Minorities: Lusatia - Podlachia

*Běchmy, smy... Budžemy! (We Were, Are... Will Be!)*

An essay by Kirył Kaścian

### I. Rjana Łužica (Lusatia, the Beautiful)

Lusatia is located in the north-eastern corner of Germany; it is the place where two great currents of European civilization meet — Germanic and Slavic. Life in the borderland, at the crossroads, had a strong influence on the historical fate of the local native people, of the Lusatian Serbs (also known as Sorbs or Lusatians). Located on the western edge of Slavdom, they have not managed to gain independence or any kind of political autonomy. Today Lusatian Serbs, a people with a 500-year old literary tradition, number only about fifty thousand. And even this small splinter of a once great nation may become completely germanized in the course of few generations. True enough, such dire warnings have been expressed for several centuries, throughout the Lusatians' "German" history until today. Unfortunately, these fears have found no empathy on part of authorities; over time the number of Lusatian Serbs has inevitably decreased, and the territory of their settlement has shrunk to a few relatively small Slavic islands surrounded by a sea of German culture.

Observing this situation, one is struck by the thought that a similar fate may meet the Belarusians as well. At this point, one begins to grasp, that, in order to save a people, preserving their national identity including language may not be sufficient. Just as important is the opportunity for development within the boundaries of a national administrative and territorial unit.

### II. Parallels of Lusatia and Podlachia

Analyzing the fate of Lusatian Serbs since the second half of the 20th century, one finds many parallels with Belarusians of the Podlachia (*Padliašša* in Belarusian) region in Poland. Both groups, due to the will of fate and that of "Great Powers," found themselves isolated and forced to rely only on themselves.

Lusatia remained in the Soviet occupation zone of Germany. Attempts to join culturally and geographically closer Czechoslovakia, or to gain at least political autonomy remained in the realm of dreams.

In the Belarusians' case the transfer of Podlachia to Poland resulted in the breaking of contacts with the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic (BSSR); the Belarusians of the Podlachia region were left alone to deal with the Polish majority of the Polish People's Republic.

According to various estimates each of these ethnic groups (the Belarusians of Podlachia and the Lusatian Serbs) numbered up to half a million people, and were identified primarily according to their religious affiliation. These confessional divisions played a significant role in preserving the national identity of both groups.

Today Serbs of Upper Lusatia are predominantly Roman Catholic, centered in Budyšin (Bautzen). Other Serb territories (Lower Lusatia) are inhabited by Protestants, centered in Chóšebuz (Cottbus). Only 100 years ago, Serbs comprised the majority of the Lusatian population. However, most of them succumbed to a comparatively quick Germanization.

The assimilation of Roman Catholic Lusatians has been slower, and has resulted in the Catholic religion becoming an important mainstay of Lusatian identity.

A similar situation may be observed in the case of Belarusians of the Podlachia region. The predominantly Roman Catholic districts of Sakolka and Auhustoŭ experienced rather rapid Polonization, while the Orthodox population near the towns Hajnaŭka and Bielsk managed to preserve their Belarusian identity. Thus, in the context of the Podlachia region, the terms Belarusian and Orthodox became synonymous.

### III. "From native fields, from native village"

After World War II, under the conditions of establishing socialist systems, the development of both ethnic groups had much in common. In pre-war Poland and in Nazi Germany Belarusians and Lusatians were treated as second-rate citizens.

However, with the arrival of Communism, both Belarusians and Lusatians gained opportunities equal to those of the ethnic majorities of the Polish People's Republic, and the German Democratic Republic, respectively. Here, however, one should note the difference in implementation of nationalities' policy in the Polish and German Democratic Republic.

The Lusatians were able to renew the activities of Domowina, an organizing uniting all Serb organizations, within two days of the end of the war. Thus, admittedly, the Serb movement began from below. This fact forced the East German Communists to accept the actual situation, and to work with what existed.

The situation with the Belarusians of Podlachia was quite different. At first the policy of Polish Communists did not differ much from that of pre-war Poland: they continued the process of forced assimilation (Polonization), and obstructed any attempts by Belarusians to organize their own national life. Certain steps toward liberalization were undertaken only in the 1950s. Then, on the basis of the formula "one minority — one organization," Poland allowed the establishment of national minorities' organizations. One of them was the Belarusian Social and Cultural Society (BKHT) that served as an umbrella for all organizations of Poland's Belarusians. In other words, it was "allowed" from above, and therefore from the very beginning had to follow rules set up by Polish authorities.

However, one feature common to Lusatians and Podlachia's Belarusians was that both Domowina and BKHT were controlled by the Ministries of the Interior of PPR and GDR respectively. Such a degree of institutionalization, combined with the complete financial dependence of minorities' organizations on state authorities not only transformed Domowina and BKHT into enforcers of the "party line" in their respective ethnic societies, but also created additional means of controlling the minorities.

In this situation equal opportunities for cooperation between leading state elites and representatives of minorities were impossible.

However, the political factors described above should be analyzed along with those of an economic nature. Newly installed communist regimes made possible a social emancipation of Lusatian Serbs and Polish Belarusians and opened for them opportunities equal to those of Germany's and Poland's titular nations. However, these opportunities were offered not to respective groups, but to individuals acting as proponents of the current political system, not of an ethnic group. Another essential factor became the post-war destruction of the traditional way of life, of Podlachia's Belarusians and Lusatian Serbs alike, through industrialization, "rationalization" of agriculture, secularization and urbanization. For a Lusatian Serb in the GDR or for a Belarusian in Poland, moving to a German or Polish-speaking city meant accelerated assimilation, often at the cost of denying one's ethnic identity, first through the loss of one's native language, if not on a personal level, then in succeeding generation.

In the case of Lusatians, their situation became worse due to the presence of deposits of brown coal that were, and still are, mined above ground. Mining resulted in a partial destruction of the traditional structure of settlements, especially near Chóśebuz and Wojerecy, which, coupled with the influx of German-speaking immigrants, accelerated the process of assimilation. Thus, both in Lusatia and Podlachia the communist governments caused a degradation of traditional social structures. Instead, the national life of minorities became institutionalized and centralized.

The only difference was that while the initially independent Lusatian Domowina became subordinated to governmental structures, the BKHT in Podlachia was directly created by them. Thus, these organizations, "national in form and socialist in content" were used to coordinate cultural needs of respective minorities, their activities being fully dependent on government. On one hand, the creation of opportunities equal to those of representatives of the titular nations in Germany's and Poland's socialist societies may be considered a positive step. On the other hand, it caused further individualization of representatives of the Lusatian and Belarusian minorities. Under conditions of accelerated industrialization and urbanization and the simultaneous destruction of traditional social structures, this type of individualization actually helped to accelerate the assimilation of Lusatians in the GDR and Belarusians in Poland.

As a result, both the Belarusian and Lusatian cultures have been reduced to a kind of regional color, expressed primarily in the form of village folklore. Therefore, the most suitable description of the result of socialist policies concerning Lusatian Serbs and Podlachia's Belarusians might be Janka Kupala's image of the "Dispersed Nest."

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The article WILL be CONTINUED in the Fall 2010 issue of *Belarusian Review*

## Thoughts and Observations

### Moscow's 'Imperialist' Attitudes Pushing Belarus Away

Paul Goble

Vienna, March 29 – Russia's counterproductive and off-putting approach to Belarus as well as other former Soviet republics reflects "the presumptuous imperial thought which still has not left the heads of certain Russian politicians," according to a senior Minsk official close to President Alyaksandr Lukashenka.

In a 4,000-word article in *Belaruskaya dumka*, Anatoly Rubinov, a former Lukashenka aide and current deputy chairman of the Council of the Republic of the Belarusian National Assembly, says that Belarusians have changed their attitude toward a union state with Russia over the past decade ([beldumka.belta.by/isfiles/000167\\_770398.pdf](http://beldumka.belta.by/isfiles/000167_770398.pdf)).

Ten years ago, Rubinov writes, Belarusians believed that such a union would play a major role in helping both countries overcome the consequences of the collapse of the Soviet Union, but now, he argues, they would welcome it only if other countries were members as well and only if Russia itself changed its approach.

The reasons for that shift, he says, are to be found less in the ongoing development of Belarus as an independent and self-confident country with its own system and with increasingly important ties to Western Europe, the United States and China than in Russia's "short-sighted" and "egotistical" approach to cooperation.

Examples of that abound, Rubinov says. Thus, "instead of building a second branch of the Yamal-Europe gas pipeline, Russia is prepared to expend enormous sums only in order to leave Belarus at the side of gas transit," and immediately after Belarus joined the Tariff Union with Russia and Kazakhstan, Moscow introduced new tariffs on oil.

But these are symptoms of a much larger problem, he continues. On the one hand, Russia's current "excessively pragmatic position does not correspond to its historic traditions but rather reflects the fact that "today, on the expanses of Russia rules [only] one idol — money and super profits."

And on the other, Moscow today insists that it alone has the right to exploit natural resources on its own territory even if a union state with Belarus is finally established, while in Soviet times, the central powers that be said that the resources of the union state belonged to all the peoples of the state.

By making that shift, Russia has demonstrated that it is almost exclusively interested in the pursuit of its own interests and no one else's. But when Belarus tries to do the same and develop relations with the European Union or with Asia, Moscow gets angry and views such steps as anti-Russian.

"At the same time," Rubinov says, "it is impermissible not to note that Belarus pays dearly for its faithfulness to its

ally Russia." That very faithfulness has made it more difficult for Minsk to develop relations with the West, which routinely accuses Belarus of "an absence of democracy, a dictatorial regime, and Soviet methods of administration."

"The development of democracy," he argues, "is not a simple or rapid process. But Belarus is far from the last place in that regard among post-Soviet countries." Nonetheless, it is routinely attacked as if it were, and the reason for that is the consistent interest Minsk has shown in a union state with Russia.

And from that it follows, Rubin says that "all the unpleasantness of Belarus in its relations with Western countries is not because of Belarus itself but because of its allied relations with Russia." Invariably, "Belarus has drawn fire on itself" and done so out of a desire to fulfill its allied "obligations and interests."

But Russia "unfortunately understands these interests in an extremely pragmatic and one-sided way," as a comparison with American policy toward Georgia, Poland, and the Czech Republic show. Washington "finances" them "not in exchange for material goods but entirely for political loyalty," something Russia won't do at present.

**Belarusians have changed their attitude toward a union state with Russia over the past decade.**

Moscow has failed to see that Belarus, which could have allowed NATO forces on its territory, has not done so, a turn of events which Russians see as "completely unbelievable." But Rubinov points out that it should be recalled just how "unbelievable" at one point was the collapse of the Soviet Union. But that happened."

"Therefore," he continues, Moscow "must not build its policy on the basis of petty immediate economic interests. One must directly say that the position of Russia toward Belarus as by the way to other neighboring states is a reflection of the presumptuous imperial though which has still not left the head of certain Russian politicians."

Belarus could under circumstances move in the direction of the Baltic states, Georgia or Moldova, Rubinov says, and asks rhetorically "has no one in Russia up to know understood that possibility?" He goes on to say that the future of the Union state thus depends "not so much on Belarus but on the position of Russia," implicitly suggesting that Moscow must change course.

The future of that formation "also to a large degree depends on Ukraine," Rubinov says, "If Ukraine moves toward a rapprochement with Russia and enters the Tariff Union with Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan, if on this basis appears a common economic space, then of course the formation of a confederative or super-state union structure is completely possible."

In that arrangement, he points, "Belarus would not be left one on one with Russia, and with the establishment of fraternal relations with Ukraine and Kazakhstan, its political possibilities would broaden and strengthen." But

that will require a different Russian policy toward all these states than the one now on offer.

Meanwhile, Rubinov says, Belarus will continue to seek "the maximum rapprochement with the European Union." It is after all "at the center of Europe, not only geographically but by the level of development of science, education, culture, technology and economics — indeed by all parameters it is a typically European country."

And Rubinov concludes in this way: "Both in the West and in the East people must clearly understand that Belarus over the course of recent times has developed into an independent sovereignty state which will not under any circumstances become part of another state or sacrifice even a small part of its sovereignty."

"Belarus is an independent country," he writes. "It does not have any imperial world political ambitions. It is interested only in mutually profitable cooperation and trade with all, including the United States, the European Union countries, Japan, China, South Korea and others."

"We are Belarusians!" he says. "And this is the main unifying idea. Independently from his ethnic membership, the citizen of Belarus must feel himself to be a representative of the Belarusian people. And Belarus must nowhere be confused with a Ukrainian or a Russian. We have our own country, our own self-consciousness, our own culture and our own pride."

Source: Window on Eurasia, March 29, 2010

## Quotes of Quarter

The head of the IMF mission to Belarus **CHRIS JARVIS**, in summing up the results of the mission work on May 25, according to AFN:

"We plan to return in early autumn to continue discussions. We will give a new estimate of the economic situation in Belarus... and draft a program including economic policy instruments

As reported by AP, Russia's President **DMITRY MEDVEDEV** warned Belarus on June 15 that

"it must pay its debt for Russian natural gas supplies within five days or face cuts

In an interview with the newspaper Die Presse, former head of the Austrian Olympic Committee **LEO WALLNER** said that he had acted

"in the interests of the Austrian economy" when he arranged for Austrian businesspeople to pay for Mr. Lukashenka's vacation expenses, totaling 200 thousand euro from a secret bank account at Raiffeisenbank.

# Belarus President Says West Rejected Better Ties

By Steve Gutterman

MINSK, May 4 (Reuters) — Belarus leader Alexander Lukashenko lashed out at the West in an interview with Reuters on Tuesday, saying he has received little in return for his efforts to improve relations with the European Union and United States.

"I cannot even talk about all the steps that I have taken that are very sensitive for us — and the West cast me aside," said Lukashenko, who is under Western pressure for political reform and broader civil rights in Belarus.

"I have come to understand that there is a huge number of irresponsible politicians in the West," he said.

In a wide-ranging interview, Lukashenko accused long-time ally Russia of tightening the screws on Belarus by scrapping preferential oil pricing, but stopped short of threatening to torpedo a nascent customs union over the dispute.

He criticised both Moscow and the West for engaging with the leaders who took power in Kyrgyzstan after a violent upheaval last month, and vowed not to hand over ousted President Kurmanbek Bakiyev, who has taken refuge in Belarus.

"Russia and the West create a terrible precedent when they support an illegal government that came to power through bloodshed," he said. He warned that any appeal for Bakiyev's extradition would be "hopeless."

Moscow's embrace of Kyrgyzstan's interim government has sent a potentially alarming signal to Lukashenko, who has relied on Russian economic and political support during his 16-year rule over his landlocked, energy-poor nation of nearly 10 million.

Long shunned by the EU and the United States, which accuse him of maintaining power through unfair elections and the harsh suppression of dissent, Lukashenko has sought to improve ties with the West as Moscow has decreased its backing.

But he expressed deep dissatisfaction with the West during the interview and made clear Western leaders should not demand more political reforms unless they are prepared to reciprocate by lifting sanctions and showing more respect.

## 'UNREALIZED HOPES'

"There have been some good moves, but this is a process of unrealised hopes, both in the West and on our side. We expected more from the West," he said. "What we will not tolerate is for somebody to order us around — nobody can shove us from behind."

"We will take exactly as many steps as the West is ready to take," Lukashenko said.

After his government released inmates seen in the West as political prisoners and made some concessions on European demands for electoral reforms, the EU suspended travel sanctions it imposed after Lukashenko's re-election in a 2006 vote that was not recognized by the West.

But it has not lifted the sanctions altogether or returned preferential trade conditions also denied as punishment.

Lukashenko said Western governments will not be satisfied until he is no longer president. But he strongly suggested he would seek another term in a presidential vote early next year.

He said he had not decided whether to run, but added the Belarusian people expect him to do so and that "there are no factors now that would force me to refuse to participate."

"The West doesn't like our course and doesn't like the current president — that's all there is to it. Let's be honest," Lukashenko said. "But the president is elected by the people, not by the West. The sooner the West understands that, the faster we will build normal relations."

Amid disputes with the Kremlin over oil supplies and Kyrgyzstan, Lukashenko said that "maybe in Russia somebody would like to see a different president here."

Lukashenko, who pushed through legislation in 2004 that removed presidential term limits, warned both the East and the West not to hope for a repeat of the Kyrgyz scenario in Belarus.

"No matter how the situation develops here, nobody will have the slightest possibility of ousting those in power here."

Lukashenko indicated that Russia's insistence on charging Belarus duties on oil could jeopardize the customs union it is developing with Belarus and Kazakhstan -- the most concrete step by ex-Soviet republics to create a strong economic alliance. But he spoke cautiously and stopped short of a threat to withdraw.

"This union will hardly have prospects if we veer away from our agreements or violate fundamental principles. But I think that everything lies ahead of us. We have just started creating this union," he said.

"To leave it without even entering it would hardly be right. Let's see how the atmosphere develops. I am certain that if everything is fine others will join us, too." (Additional reporting by Andrei Makhovsky; editing by Maria Golovnina)

Source: Reuters, RPT-INTERVIEW, 5 May 2010

## Quotes of Quarter

The **UNITED STATES** has extended the suspension of sanctions against «Polotsk Steklovolokno» and «Lakokras-ka» until November 30, 2010. The other sanctions remain. According to a Press Release by the U.S. Embassy:

"An improvement in U.S.-Belarusian relations can come only when there is real progress on respect for democracy and for basic human rights."

In a May 4, 2010 Reuters interview **ALYAKSANDR LUKASHENKA** declared:

"No matter how the situation develops here, nobody will have the slightest possibility of ousting those in power."

# Belarus Gears Up For Presidential Elections

By David Marples

*Lukashenka looks increasingly vulnerable, yet the opposition's failure to unite behind a single candidate still seems set to hand him another term in office.*

The Belarusian Constitution demands that the country must hold the next presidential election by February 2011. The incumbent president, Alyaksandr Lukashenka, has been in office for 16 years, and most residents, according to a recent opinion poll by Novak, would like to see "a new face." But can the opposition provide that candidate, and what are the main issues that preoccupy the electorate in the summer of 2010?

At the time of the last election in 2006, the "United Democratic Forces" fielded a single opposition candidate to run against Lukashenka, namely Alyaksandr Milinkevich, an academic from the Hrodna region and without party affiliation. He was not, as turned out, the only opposition leader to run: Alyaksandr Kazulin, former rector of the Belarusian State University and leader of the Social Democratic Party, also decided to run, as did the leader of the Liberal Democratic Party, Syarhey Haydukevich. The result of that election was that, officially, Lukashenka won with almost 83 percent of the vote. Most Western countries, however, refused to recognize the election as free and fair. Most memorably, local campaign protesters erected a tent city in Minsk's central Kastrichnitskaya Square, which was forcibly disbanded after several days.

This time, the United Democratic Forces are divided. Milinkevich will run again, this time from a position as leader of the "Movement for Freedom." On 3 May, he formally announced his candidacy on a pro-Europe platform—"Let's Make Belarus the True Europe"—that anticipated a neutral state that would maintain good relations with Russia. Three days later, former Chairman of the Parliament Stanislau Shushkevich denounced Milinkevich in a bitter statement, endorsing the leader of the European Belarus movement, Andrei Sannikau.

The list of potential opposition candidates grows with each day. It includes, in addition to Milinkevich and Sannikau, the following: Yaraslau Ramanchuk, head of the research center Mises; Uladzimir Nyaklayeu, leader of the campaign "Tell the Truth!"; Ales Mikhalevich, former deputy chairman of the Belarusian Popular Front; Mikalay Statkevich, head of the Narodnaya Hramada Social Democratic Party; Syarhey Kalyakin, leader of the Party of Communists of Belarus; Uladzimir Kolas, chairman of the Council of Belarusian Intelligentsia; and Vital Rymasheuski, co-chairman of the unregistered Belarusian Christian Democratic Party.

And this list is not exhaustive. On 29 May, the Belarusian Popular Front held a congress (soym) and nominated party activist Ryhor Kastusyous as a candidate. On 31 May,

Yuri Hlushakou, deputy chairman of the Green Party, announced his candidacy on a platform emphasizing environmental concerns and opposition to the proposed nuclear power station on the border with Lithuania. In late May, the United Civic Party's political council met and declared that its candidate would be economist Yaraslau Ramanchuk, rather than party leader Anatol Lyabedzka, who would serve as his prime minister should he be successful. Another candidate to emerge in late May was General Valery Fralou, formerly a leader of the Respublika faction in parliament. Fralou stated that he was entering the contest as the only pro-Russian candidate, but that his stance did not preclude good relations with the European Union

or indicate a lack of concern for the interests of Belarus. Fralou also ran in the 2006 campaign but failed to collect the obligatory 100,000 signatures and was forced to withdraw.

It is likewise unclear whether Kazulin will throw his support behind Uladzimir Nyaklayeu or run again himself (that is to say, if not barred by the criminal record he acquired as a result of

his detention after the events in 2006). Haydukevich too is likely to run again, though he is not a member of the opposition. His candidacy, however, would help to legitimize the election in the eyes of international observers.

Plainly, by advancing so many candidates, the opposition will ensure another victory for Lukashenka. Many will likely fail at the first post—the gathering of 100,000 signatures—or else have problems raising the sort of finances required to stay in the campaign. The mild-mannered intellectual Milinkevich is easily the most credible of the candidates. Yet his 2006 "unified opposition" campaign was slow to start, disappointed many, and actually caused the Belarusian Popular Front to split.

This situation is unfortunate for a number of reasons. Lukashenka, who has stated that there are no major reasons why he would not run again, is facing some serious problems. A year ago, he was seemingly impregnable. Having outmaneuvered his critics and secured a suspension of the travel ban on most of his cabinet to the European Union, he could be satisfied with the EU's invitation to Belarus to join the Eastern Partnership. He released the "last" political prisoner (Kazulin), permitted two opposition newspapers (*Narodnaya Volya* and *Nasha Niva*) to be sold at official outlets, and instructed Prime Minister Syarhey Sidorski to announce a new privatization program to attract foreign investment. Lukashenka, so it appeared, had created new opportunities both for himself and his country that would permit it to break out of the Russian orbit, both politically and in terms of economic dependence.

However, the irascible leader could not maintain such a course. There have since been further arrests and harassment of opposition figures, especially of youth activists. On 6 April, the pro-presidential youth organization Belarusian Union of Patriotic Youth and war veterans assembled to

**Forthcoming elections have induced Lukashenka's old fears that the West will seek his removal and the victory of a more democratic candidate. And for once, it may have genuine support from Russia.**



picket the offices of *Narodnaya Volya* for “falsifying history” in an article about the Great Patriotic War. The regime has also targeted the Union of Poles and set up an alternative official organization, claiming to represent the country’s 400,000 ethnic Poles. In these crackdowns, the government has deployed the militia and the KGB. The electoral prelude to the presidential elections — the municipal elections held on 2 April — frequently yielded farcical results, with pro-government candidates receiving totals reminiscent of the single-candidate Soviet years, and much of the voting taking place through advance polls.

The relationship with Russia has become pivotal. Lukashenka has used EU compliance to back up a defiant attitude toward Moscow. He has refused to recognize the breakaway republics of Georgia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. He signed the CSTO Treaty last year only after several delays. He has denounced Russian plans to build new pipelines to European consumers that would circumvent Belarus. He complains bitterly about Russia’s introduction of duties on oil and oil products for Belarus (but not for Kazakhstan, the other partner in the customs union that formed earlier this year), and has negotiated an agreement with Venezuela for the import of oil, which will provide up to 5 million tons this year. All these issues suggest a tense relationship with Russia. Yet hitherto he has always had the assurance that in every new election campaign, he would have the backing of Moscow, which could also be relied upon to recognize the results.

In the 2011 presidential election, Russian backing is not a foregone conclusion. On 7 April, an uprising in Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan, brought down the government of Kurmanbek Bakiev, a longtime ally of the United States. During the events, security forces turned machine guns on innocent civilians. Bakiev fled and was eventually offered asylum, together with his family, by Belarus. Lukashenka appeared in public with Bakiev and openly encouraged him to return and take part in the Kyrgyz presidential elections. His intervention was surprising but it was also a grave miscalculation. He appeared to assume initially that the West would support such a step. Yet both the United States and Russia gave their blessing to the revolutionary forces and supported the call of the interim Kyrgyz government for the extradition of Bakiev.

There is a certain irony in the authoritarian leader of Belarus protecting the former victor of the Tulip Revolution. But for Lukashenka the key issue is the deposal of an elected president and its support by major world powers. He has asserted repeatedly that it could not happen in Belarus and that “Russia and the West create a terrible precedent when they support an illegal government that came to power through bloodshed.” More critical, one can surmise, is the fact that Russia and the United States could find common ground.

That same fear is also displayed in Lukashenka’s relations with the EU, particularly with regard to Poland.

The recent rapprochement between Poland and Russia — whether destined to be long-lasting or temporary — undercuts his balancing act of playing off one neighbor and trading partner with another. Moreover, the amity has occurred outside the confines of the EU, which in turn is preoccupied with the financial crisis that has affected much of southern Europe.

In a recent interview with Reuters news agency, Lukashenka also maintained that despite some cordial relations over the past year, “the West” is now waiting for the 2011 presidential elections, having failed to reciprocate Belarus’ “hundreds, maybe thousands [of moves] a year.” “What we will not tolerate,” he said, “is for someone to order us around.” The West, in his view, is asking too much of Belarus, such as privatizing factories at low cost or what he terms “breaking the constitutional system” of his country. In short, forthcoming elections have induced his old fears that Western countries will seek his removal and the victory of a more democratic candidate. And for once, they may have genuine support from Russia, which is overtly irritated with the lack of progress toward the Union State, a common currency, and a united front on military-security issues.

Lukashenka has also, unwisely, denied there being an economic crisis in Belarus. It is clear, however, that the automobile industry in particular is operating at about 70 percent of the output level of 2006. Cash reserves are low, and the national debt is approaching 52 percent of GDP. Last October, Russia refused to advance the final \$500 million tranche of a \$2 billion stabilization loan. In January 2009, Belarus received a \$2.5 billion emergency loan from the IMF, but Lukashenka has asserted that his country will not request further loans. Belarusian residents, long assured of the shock-immunity of Belarus’ unique economic system, took some time to recover from a surprise 20 percent devaluation of the currency in January 2009. The currency continues to depreciate and is approaching 3,000 Belarusian rubles to the dollar.

The key issues for the electorate remain affordable housing and utility bills. Privatization of property has seen a marked increase in Russian real estate investment with a concomitant rise in prices and rents. Similarly many of the country’s most lucrative businesses have fallen under Russian ownership.

Lukashenka still retains several significant advantages as the new election campaign begins. The Central Election Commission remains in the hands of his ally Lidziya Yarmoshyna. He controls the vast majority of the media, especially television. The militia, the KGB, and the armed forces remain fiercely loyal and wield significant power. Parliament has one or two dissenting MPs, but the majority of deputies remain loyal to the regime (they have little power to change things in any case). The Constitutional Court likewise has been a rubber stamp body since late 1996. While the Ministry of Justice has legalized some political parties — the Movement for Freedom led by Milinkevich is

**The longtime president’s key asset, however, is the divided opposition. There is a dire need for unity and agreement on a single candidate.**

the best example — it has failed repeatedly to register others, most notably the Young Front and the Christian Democratic Party. The playing field, as before, is far from even.

The longtime president's key asset, however, is the divided opposition. There is a dire need for unity and agreement on a single candidate, yet less than 10 months before the election — and Yarmoshyna has even hinted that it could be held as early as the fall — about a dozen potential candidates are in the running.

Like its neighbor Ukraine, Belarus during an election campaign will fall under an intense international spotlight, making it difficult for the regime to act in its familiar cavalier fashion toward opponents. It is in a financial dilemma and it is no longer confident of Russian backing for yet another term in office for Belarus' only president to date. No one would expect even a united opposition candidate to win outright, but he/she could feasibly present an alternative program that would address concerns of residents. In other words, the focus would be not merely issues of future integration with Europe — a peripheral concern at best — but about economic stability, wages, and prices, along with relations with the troublesome enemy-cum-friend, the Russian Federation.

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**Source:** This article was published on 31 May, 2010 on openDemocracy.net under a Creative Commons licence.

## Quotes of Quarter

**JUSTAS PALECKIS**, rapporteur on Belarus, vice-chair of the Delegation for Relations with Belarus stated at the conclusion of a seminar by Socialists and Democrats in the Europarlament on May 12, 2010:

"We encourage Belarus to take further and bolder steps towards democracy, respect for human rights and rule of law, with a view of normalization of relations between the EU and this country... Polls show that the majority of Belarusians favor integration into the EU rather than into the East. ...There is no future for Belarus outside Europe."

A Member of the Europarlament, Poland's former Deputy Foreign Minister **PAWEL KOWAL** at a May 27 press conference in Warsaw:

"Europe often indulges in wishful thinking, confuses impressions with facts. There are no real changes in Belarus... A dictator wants to have power and personal security. This is the only thing a dictator cares about."

## MEDIA WATCH

### *The Economist* Features Ivonka Survilla President of the BNR Rada

*It would take a democratic election, a democratically-elected government, and a belief that Belarus is free forever, then I would be the most happy person in the world and I would gladly give my mandate to that government.*

On April 19th, 2010, Ivonka Survilla spoke with *The Economist's* Daniel Franklin as a guest of the program, "A word with" which highlights "regular conversations with the prominent and the interesting." The interview focused on Survilla's role as the President of the Rada of the Belarusian Democratic Republic, BNR, the development and maintenance of this government in exile, and the impact of the BNR's activities on contemporary Belarus.

President Survilla was asked to explain the history of the government and the reasons for retaining their mandate while other post-Soviet nations no longer had governments in exile. Survilla stressed that though the original BNR government was in power for less than a year before being forced into exile, the formal creation of the Belarusian Democratic Republic led to the creation of the BSSR as a separate Soviet Republic, and ultimately allowed for the declaration of independence in 1991. The recognition of the BNR by many European governments and the cooperative stance with members of the Belarusian opposition in Belarus served to stress the significance of this government in contemporary diplomatic and government circles.

Rather than acting as a passive historical artifact, Survilla clearly communicated the relevance of the BNR, the impact of its international parliament, and the importance of the émigré Diaspora in the perceptions and policy-making efforts about and around Belarus. The commentator's last comment stressed the "surprisingly pragmatic" aspect of Survilla's approach and of her aspirations for Belarus.

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## Moscow Does not Recognize Results of Elections in Belarus

By Vladimir Frolov

Belarus is emerging as the next crucial battleground for the Kremlin's new strategy in the former Soviet republics.

As the Kremlin savors its hard-earned political gains in Ukraine and moves to secure a genuine strategic partnership with a friendly, democratic government in Kiev, it is creating a lot of unease for one of Moscow's long-time strategic partners — Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko.

With a presidential election in Belarus scheduled for 2011 and Lukashenko's increasingly hostile stance toward Moscow, Belarus is emerging as the next crucial battleground for the Kremlin's new strategy in the former Soviet republics.

Lukashenko made a big mistake by trying to oppose Russian moves in Kyrgyzstan. Not only did Lukashenko provide political asylum to the deposed Kyrgyz president, Kurmanbek Bakiyev, but he also sought to undermine Moscow's efforts to

secure a transfer of power from Bakiyev to the friendly interim government in Bishkek by pushing Bakiyev to withdraw his resignation. What's more, from Minsk Bakiyev demanded a military intervention by the members of the Collective Security Treaty Organization, or CSTO, to restore him as president.

Lukashenko is now seeking to position his candidacy as a guarantee against a Russian-sponsored revolution in Belarus. His strategy of warning against Russian perfidy may ensure his ultimate undoing.

Russian options in Belarus are limited by Lukashenko's strong-arm tactics against the Belarus opposition, which is fragmented, disorganized and anti-Russian. Moscow has no viable candidate to support in the presidential election, and there is no time to build an electoral challenge to Lukashenko. His re-election is all but guaranteed.

But the Kremlin's patience with Lukashenko is running thin. With his vocal anti-Russian campaign, it is hard to imagine that Moscow will recognize the legitimacy of an election that Lukashenko is likely to rig.

*Vladimir Frolov is president of LEFF Group, a government-relations and PR company.*

**Source:** Excerpts from *The Moscow Times*, May 5, 2010

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## Belarus: Capitalism's Unlikely Frontier

By Carol Matlack

French software startup Abaxia was hunting for an offshore research and development site in 2006 when one of its employees suggested taking a look at his native country, Belarus. "I had to get out an atlas to be sure where it was," recalls Ongan Mordeniz, Abaxia's R&D chief.

... Why Belarus? After all, two decades after the fall of the Berlin Wall the country still seems sealed in a time capsule, with a centrally planned economy run by an authoritarian leader who is routinely denounced by Western governments for what the U.S. State Dept. terms "frequent serious abuses" of human rights. Minsk (pop. 1.8 million), a tranquil city of wide boulevards, hulking Stalinist architecture, and Soviet-era factories, is an unlikely place to find capitalism's new frontier.

Yet the Lukashenko government is opening the door to investment as never before. Since 2007 it has enacted regulatory reforms and tax relief measures that have vaulted Belarus from 129th place to 58th on the World Bank's ranking of the "ease of doing business" in 183 countries. (Poland ranked 72nd, Russia came in 120th, and Ukraine was 142nd.) The Belarus government says foreign direct investment more than doubled last year, to \$4.8 billion, even as investment plummeted in neighboring countries.

American companies may soon join the wave. In late March representatives of Microsoft (MSFT), Cisco Systems (CSCO), Honeywell (HON), and Navistar (NAV) (formerly International Harvester) visited Minsk for meetings with Lukashenko and top business leaders. "We see great opportunities here," says Veronika Prikrylová, Microsoft's business development manager for Central and Eastern Europe. Microsoft is opening a sales office in Minsk this spring and hopes that having a local presence will help it combat piracy. An estimated 80% of

software now used in Belarus is illegally copied, Prikrylová says.

Lukashenko is looking westward as Russia pulls back on aid to its neighbor. Belarus' economy has long been kept afloat by Russia, which has supplied it with below-market-priced energy while soaking up exports from inefficient Belarussian factories. Economic growth over the past decade has averaged 7.1% annually. Russia has subsidized Belarus to keep it as a buffer against EU and NATO expansion.

The nation has been a high-tech magnet since Soviet times. Minsk was one of the Communist bloc's computer-science capitals, and local universities still turn out 4,000 information technology grads every year

Belarus also produces world-class specialists in mathematics and physics. That's an attraction to companies such as Invention Machine, a Boston-based group that in 2004 acquired the assets of a Belarus software company. Invention Machine now runs an 80-person lab in Minsk, including a team of computational linguists who develop "semantic engines" capable of extracting and analyzing key concepts from documents in multiple languages. "They have taken the field of natural language processing to a new level," says James W. Todhunter, the company's chief technology officer.

Invention Machine is one of 78 tenants in a high-tech park the government established in Minsk in 2005. All benefit from generous incentives, including exemption from Belarus' 24% corporate income tax and a provision that lets expatriate managers work without having to obtain work permits. "No other country in the region has done this much" to attract IT investment, says Arkady Dobkin, CEO of EPAM Systems, a Newtown (Pa.) outsourcing company with over 2,000 employees in Minsk and a client list that includes Microsoft, Oracle (ORCL), and SAP (SAP).

... Companies remain cautious. Navistar, for example, has considered supplying engine technology to MAZ, a Soviet-era producer of trucks and buses. "They need some kind of Western partnership," says Steven Hyde, Navistar's vice-president for international business development. But, he predicts, doing business in Belarus will remain an unappealing sell.

**Source:** Excerpts from *businessweek.com*, April 9, 2010

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## Fomenting a Denim Revolution

*The guerilla artists of Belarus Free Theatre perform underground while arguing openly for regime change*

By Randy Gener

*72 percent of Belarusians find it difficult to define the word "democracy." Belarus holds 186th place out of 195 countries in the degree of freedom of the press.*

... Americans and Western Europeans picture Belarus as a black hole, a negative space hermetically sealed from the rest of the continent, ruled by an authoritarian who has clung firmly to power since 1994. The country's economy and information technology, especially its media, is almost entirely under state control. Its state-owned artistic institutions, we are told, remain frozen in the Soviet past. Anecdotal proof: Its security service is still called the KGB. Lenin's monument still stands proudly in central Minsk in front of the House of Government.

... Under the regime of President Alexander Lukashenko, the country also bends to the will of what the international media likes to call "the last dictatorship in Europe."

This epithet (foisted first by the former U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice) is sadly true. On the map of Europe, Lukashenko's Belarus remains of the last few places where free speech and assembly are considered criminal acts.

... The Belarusian opposition dyed its protest blue—a Denim Revolution. The label was coined after a militia officer, in September '05, seized the forbidden national flag (a white-red-white banner) in a public demonstration in the central square of Minsk. As Khalezin memorializes the event in his solo play *Generation Jeans* — the only Belarus Free Theatre production that has so far been presented in the U.S., by the *Under the Radar* festival at the Public Theater in January '08—a member of the youth resistance movement *Zubr* "took his jeans shirt off and fixed it to a stick. As soon as the jeans shirt rose over the crowd, it was already not a shirt but a flag: the flag of the jeans generation, the generation of free people."

... "It is awful," Nikolai Khalezin and his wife Natalia Koliada, co-founders of the renegade ensemble *Belarus Free Theatre*, wrote to Brooklyn-based writer and actor Aaron Landsman in the first of many e-mails seeking international support.

In 2006, at the height of the protest actions of the Belarusian democratic opposition, Landsman became one of the first American artists to extend a helping hand to Free Theatre. (In the same year of *Generation Jeans*'s New York arrival, Free Theatre participated in the *Arts in One World* gathering at California Institute of the Arts, thanks to the *Trust for Mutual Understanding*'s support. The *hotINK* international play reading festival, curated by New York University professor Catherine Coray, also presented Khalezin's earlier effort *Here I Am*.)

... Ironically, Free Theatre's righteous mission to be a potent voice of artistic dissent limits and marginalizes its very real ability to reach out to the Belarusian citizens who are the source of their creativity, even as its producers claim to have several thousands on its audience waiting list for every performance.

Says Koliada: "What Free Theatre does, first of all, is create. This has never been done before: a Belarusian theatre talking about Belarusian issues and written by Belarusian authors and performed by Belarusian artists. We are creating a new way of art in Belarus. We don't want people to think about Belarus only in political terms. We want people to know that there are contemporary artists in Belarus. This is a time of national revival."

In waging a subversive campaign through drama in the shadows of the official culture, Free Theatre suffers from and struggles with the impossibility of separating their artistic choices from their own political troubles. Because everything that is different is criminalized, true Belarusian renewal can take place only if the current regime is removed from power (an unlikely prospect).

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