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✪ *Recommended by the Editor*

## EDITORIAL

### 2010 Election: Dictatorship Strikes Back

By Ilya Kunitski

*The 2010 Belarusian presidential elections presented the world with a showing of the Belarusian regime's true colors. Before the vote, some observers and European politicians had a faint hope that Alexander Lukashenka's dictatorship-style rule might be changed. They thought that he would be more cooperative in the area of human rights and democratization due to a recent economic hardship and lack of Russia's support. Indeed, some positive changes in electoral legislation have been made this year and an unusually high number of alternative presidential candidates (9) were registered for this election. However, all flirtation with liberalization was over on December 19th, 2010 around 10 PM local time in Minsk. At that time, riot police and KGB forces brutally dispersed a crowd of some 20,000 people who gathered in the center of the city to express their discontent with the political situation in Belarus and the official election results.*

It is not new for Belarus to witness a crackdown on oppositional rallies. However, what was particularly striking and disturbing this time was an intensified show of brutality from the authorities. In complete disregard for basic human freedoms and rights, despite generally peaceful intentions of the protestors (to be precise, there were windows broken in Parliament Building, but it is has now been proven that it was done by KGB provocateurs), thousands of people including women and elderly were beaten, with more than 600 detained. Seven presidential candidates were arrested, most of them severely hurt. One of the main candidates, a 64-year old poet, Uladzimer Nyaklyayeu, was knocked unconscious before he even made it to the rally. Later he was kidnapped from the hospital and placed in jail despite his serious medical condition. Such a disproportionate use of force by Belarusian authorities has no excuse.

The brutal aftermath of the voting overshadowed the elections themselves. Meanwhile, international observers deemed the elections flawed. The main European observer, The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), stressed that "while voting on election day was overall assessed positively, the process deteriorated significantly during the vote count, with observers assessing almost half of vote counts monitored as bad or very bad." There are many other problems surrounding the Belarusian electoral process. For instance, voters do not have full information about alternative candidates and their programs since Mr. Lukashenka gets an overwhelming share of the official media coverage. Additionally, during voting, certain groups of Belarusian society, such as soldiers, prisoners, and students, are forced to vote during a so-called "early voting." Early voting results are easy to manipulate due to the lack of oversight. The results hastily presented by the Central Electoral Commission following the December 19th vote clearly indicate mass falsifications. According to official information, voter turnout was 93%(!) and Mr. Lukashenka got 80% of the popular vote,

although independent surveyors stressed that his numbers were definitely less than 50% and that there should be a second round runoff. Instead, mass beatings and arrests occurred.

The actions of Belarusian authorities deserve the strongest condemnation from the international community. The release of all presidential candidates who face long prison terms and other activists held in jails should be a precondition for any diplomatic contacts with official Belarus. In a joint statement U.S. Secretary of State Hilary Clinton and the European Union's High Representative Catherine Ashton called for the immediate release of all those detained at the post election demonstration and questioned the validity of the election itself. In the statement issued by the White House this declaration is even more direct: "**United States cannot accept as legitimate the results of the presidential election announced by the Belarusian Central Election Commission December 20.**" The United States already declared that the economic sanctions against the Belarusian regime will stay in place. On top of that, the US and the European Union should impose travel bans on all the officials (members of the election committee, police officers, judges, etc.) involved in the elections' falsifications followed by Stalin era style intimidations. The United States should press Russia to influence its ally, Lukashenka, like they urge China to influence North Korea. The international community should express its solidarity with ordinary Belarusian people. As Tony Lloyd, head of the OSCE mission stated, "the people of Belarus deserved better..." 20,000 of them gathered in the center of Minsk on December 19th to express their wish for free elections and a brighter future. Instead, they were reminded that they live under the "last dictatorship in Europe." Only by combined actions of the Belarusian people and the international community can the regime be changed.

*Ilya Kunitski is a Belarusian historian with a Masters degree from NYU in Political Science focusing on International Relations.*

### From the Publisher

The December 19 stolen election and its aftermath caught the attention of many of the world's leaders. Many governments and legislators issued statements of condemnation, and in the press the desperate political situation in Belarus has never had this much attention. The LATEST EVENTS section this extraordinary interest is well illustrated.

Indeed, such interest is very much needed in order to support the Belarusian people, particularly those injured, arrested, and facing long prison terms meted out by the regime's judicial machine.

It is to this end that a worldwide appeal was prepared and added as a supplement to this issue. A massive mailing and on-line distribution has already started.

**Take a personal part in this action by widely sending the appeal to your government and to the elected officials, as well as to your local press.**

We are happy to add the names of **George and Lorraine Kipel** and of **Nata Rusak** to the list of larger contributors posted in our Fall issue.

**DID YOU RENEW YOUR SUBSCRIPTION  
FOR 2011 ?**

### **Statement by the Press Secretary on Belarusian Elections and Political Violence**

The United States strongly condemns the actions that the Government of Belarus has taken to undermine the democratic process and use disproportionate force against political activists, civil society representatives and journalists, and we call for the immediate release of all presidential candidates and the hundreds of protestors who were detained on December 19 and 20.

**The United States cannot accept as legitimate the results of the presidential election announced by the Belarusian Central Election Commission December 20.**

We regret, as the OSCE's election observer mission assessment made clear, that limited progress in the political environment prior to yesterday's elections did not lead to a free and fair outcome or a transparent vote count. We are also concerned by indications that independent internet media have been disrupted and call on the Government of Belarus to take measures to protect its citizens' right to free media.

As we reiterated in the U.S.-Belarus Joint Statement of December 1, the further development of relations is contingent upon the Government of Belarus's respect for human rights and the democratic process. The actions taken over the last 24 hours, however, are a clear step backwards on issues central to our relationship with Belarus.

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### **Joint Statement by U.S. Secretary Of State Hillary Clinton and European Union HR Catherine Ashton On Post-Presidential Elections' Situation in Belarus**

*December 23, 2010*

The United States and the European Union reiterate their call for the immediate release of the presidential candidates and the over 600 demonstrators who have been taken into custody in the wake of the presidential elections in Belarus. We strongly condemn all violence, especially the disproportionate use of force against presidential candidates, political activists, representatives of civil society and journalists. Taken together, the elections and their aftermath represent an unfortunate step backwards in the development of democratic governance and respect for human rights in Belarus. The people of Belarus deserve better.

The European Union and the United States recognize the serious problems with the electoral process and the vote count as reported by the OSCE election observation mission and urge the Government of Belarus to meet its commitments to the OSCE to substantially reform the electoral process. The Government of Belarus should take the steps necessary to create political space for polit-

ical activists, civil society representatives, and independent journalists.

Respect for democracy and human rights remain central to improving Belarus's relations with the United States and the European Union. Without substantial progress in these areas, relations will not improve. It is against this background that we will be assessing the Government of Belarus's actions to address the current situation and to take developments into account as we review our relations with Belarus. The European Union and the United States intend to continue their support for and engagement with the people of Belarus and civil society representatives.

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### **Germany Calls Belarus Post-Election Violence A 'Serious Setback'**

Berlin - Germany condemned Belarus on Monday for its wide-ranging crackdown on government opponents, after a presidential election at the weekend returned Alyaksandr Lukashenka to power.

"The German government calls for the immediate release of arrested opposition politicians and media representatives," said Chancellor Angela Merkel's spokesman Steffen Seibert.

He said the way in which authorities had dealt with the election and its results were "a test for further relations between the European Union and Belarus."

"In this context the events of the last hours are a serious setback. They rule out any further convergence at present," Seibert said of EU relations with Belarus.

The spokesman said it was "regrettable" that Belarus was rejecting an EU offer to provide billions of euros in aid, if the elections were conducted in a fair manner.

Uniformed police and plain clothes KGB agents arrested more than 1,000 members of the opposition after the election, authorities and opposition leaders confirmed.

**Source:** earthtimes.org, Dec. 20, 2010

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### **Canada Repeats Call for Release Of Belarusian Opposition Leaders**

*December 24, 2010*

*(The original call deploring the post-election violence was issued on December 19)*

**The Honourable Lawrence Cannon, Minister of Foreign Affairs, today issued the following statement on the post-election situation in Belarus**

"Canada deplores the ongoing arbitrary detention of prominent opposition leaders in Belarus and demands their immediate release, as well as the release of other demonstrators who have been unjustly arrested, detained or convicted.

"I have instructed senior departmental officials to call in Belarus's Chargé d'Affaires in Canada to convey this demand and express Canada's deep disappointment with the conduct of the Government of Belarus.

"Canada has issued a clear and forceful message that we condemn the violence used against the demonstrators, in particular the beating and detention of many of the opposition leaders.

"I am profoundly concerned about the security and well-being of the detained opposition leaders, in particular that of Vladimir Nyaklyayeu, whose condition is unknown.

"We are witnessing a step backwards in Belarus, and I strongly urge the authorities to change direction and to uphold democratic principles, respect for human rights and the rule of law. Canada remains deeply concerned that an oppressive regime continues to hold power in Belarus. The people of Belarus deserve to have their voices heard without fear of violent retribution."

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## Lukashenka the Loser

By Carl Bildt, Karel Schwarzenberg, Radek Sikorski and Guido Westerwelle

There can be no business-as-usual between the European Union and Belarus' president, Alyaksandr Lukashenka, after what has happened since the presidential election in Belarus last Sunday.

In recent months, hope had grown that his words could be taken seriously. He promised to invite international observers to the election, and he delivered on the promise. He talked about giving the opposition some space during the election campaign, and there were some improvements.

The E.U. responded by suspending sanctions and with a generous offer of conditional political dialogue, economic cooperation and the possibility of financial assistance. It would have been in the interests of both Europe and the people of Belarus to continue.

Then everything changed.

While the voting proceeded in an orderly fashion, the counting of the votes turned into a charade. The report of the independent observers assessed the counting as "bad" or "very bad" in nearly half the polling stations they could observe, and it is not unreasonable to assume that it was even worse in the others. It became obvious that there were orders not to count votes, but to deliver a predetermined result.

There is no way to know what the real result of the election is, but what is abundantly clear is that the announced result has no democratic legitimacy whatsoever.

Mr. Lukashenko probably understood that he would not get the required 50 percent of the votes needed to avoid a humiliating second round against a single opposition candidate. All independent exit polls gave him significantly less than this.

But worse was to follow.

Opposition candidates were beaten, dragged away and detained. Hundreds of campaign workers were also rounded up and taken to prison. Summary trials produced sentences without any basis in facts. Political prisoners have become the new reality. Repression is the stated policy.

Europe has not seen anything like this in years. The combination of vote-rigging and outright repression makes what Milosevic tried to do in Serbia in 2000 pale in comparison. What we have seen brings back memories of the introduction of martial law in Poland in 1981.

Where will this end? The forces of repression might carry the day, but the wounds in society will not heal, and a siege regime will clearly not survive forever. Prospects of money from the West to save a deteriorating economic situation have in all probability gone up in smoke. Investors will be wary of a country that has so spectacularly shown its contempt for the law.

The European Union is founded on values of human rights, democracy and the rule of the law. It will not stand indifferent to gross violations of these values in its own part of the world.

Continued positive engagement with Mr. Lukashenka at the moment seems to be a waste of time and money. He has made his choice - and it is a choice against everything the European Union stands for.

But there are many in Belarus who know that his clock is ticking - and are discreetly preparing for a better future.

Our many conversations with representatives of different parts of Belarus society have convinced us that the country wants to be part of a free and prosperous Europe. We must now deepen our engagement with the democrats of Belarus and those inside the government who disapprove of the fateful turn their country has taken. They must not be abandoned or betrayed as their country enters what might be a new dark era.

The best test of our own values is what we do on behalf of the powerless. Europe must not be mute.

*Carl Bildt, Karel Schwarzenberg, Radek Sikorski and Guido Westerwelle are the foreign ministers, respectively, of Sweden, the Czech Republic, Poland and Germany.*

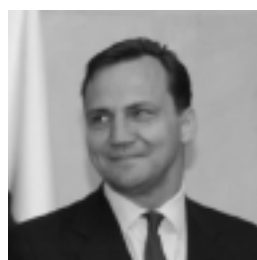
**Source:** *The New York Times*, 2010-12-24



Carl Bildt



Karel Schwarzenberg



Radek Sikorski



Guido Westerwelle

## FEATURES

### Free the Political Prisoners In Belarus Now

By Jörg Forbrig and Pavol Demes

MINSK—Peace and quiet reign on Independence Square — Christmas trees sparkle in the snow, the traffic is flowing, people are heading home to prepare for the holidays. Yet on Sunday, this square in the center of the Belarusian capital witnessed the largest protests against dictatorial rule in a decade, when thousands of President Alexander Lukashenko's riot police and army troops brutally cracked down on tens of thousands of peaceful protesters. All normal? Not quite.

Nearly 400 people were arrested after the protests, including most of the nine candidates that challenged Lukashenko in Sunday's election. Five of the contenders were severely beaten and remain in the custody of the KGB, the country's secret police. 40 journalists, both Belarusian and international, were beaten or arrested. Key NGOs, including human rights groups and independent websites, had their offices searched on Monday. A manhunt continues against any critical mind or civic activist in Belarus. Meanwhile, the "President re-elect" lashes out against the "bandits" and "diversants" who dared to challenge what he had hoped would be another easy win at the ballots. The question many here are asking themselves now is: Why did a promisingly open election campaign end with such ruthless brutality?

Indeed, the democratic opposition in Belarus had been able to act and speak with unusual freedom in recent months. Several representatives of civil society and the democratic opposition decided to run in the elections. In collecting the 100,000 signatures required to submit a candidacy, they encountered few obstacles. Campaign events by opposition candidates took place with no major impediments. Contenders were able to voice their ideas in the media to some degree, and even participated in a live debate on television. These limited openings provided by Lukashenko's regime were duly acknowledged in the official assessment by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which was monitoring the elections.

Of course, these concessions were largely tactical. Their most important purpose was to appease the European Union, which had made it clear—over months of travel diplomacy—that closer ties between the EU and Belarus depended on a more open presidential election. They may also have been a response to growing political and economic pressure from Russia, Lukashenko's most important sponsor for the 16 years of his rule. The surge of candidates was explained by the regime as proof that the democratic opposition in this country is divided, weak, and incapable of handling the challenges facing Belarus.

This plan appeared to work—until Sunday night. It began to fall apart when the Central Election Commis-

sion published its preliminary results, which gave a highly unlikely majority of nearly 80 percent of votes to Alexander Lukashenko, at an equally unlikely turnout of over 90 percent. When Belarusians poured into the streets to protest against what they saw as a blatant manipulation and fraud, they were met by the batons of the police state.

Western institutions responded swiftly and clearly. The OSCE stated that the elections, despite improvements, fell short of democratic standards; it appealed to the government of Belarus to clarify the fate of arrested candidates, journalists, and civic activists. The President of the European Parliament, Jerzy Buzek, condemned the elections and called for an immediate end to the violence against democrats. The EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs, Catherine Ashton, reminded the Belarusian government that any deeper relationship "was conditional on respect for the principles of democracy, the rule of law, and human rights." Individual EU countries have followed with similar appeals, as did the United States, with statements by the State Department, members of Congress, and the White House. This broad transatlantic and European consensus will remain an important lever to push for a political opening in Belarus.

Russia's silence, however, is surprising. After many years of subsidizing the regime in Minsk, Moscow had begun to withdraw its economic subsidies and political support. Over the past months, it even launched an unprecedented media campaign which depicted Lukashenko as psychopathic, corrupt, and responsible for the disappearance of prominent opposition leaders. Yet just before the elections, the Kremlin toned down its criticism and signed a major agreement to establish a common economic space. Belarus will be a test case for Russia's modernization strategy, its relations with the West, and its approach to its immediate neighborhood.

Still, the responsibility for resolving the current situation rests first and foremost with the Belarusian government. Its legitimacy is shakier than ever. The economic situation is deteriorating, and the country's citizens have had enough—amply proved by the tens of thousands who risked their health and freedom on the streets on Sunday to voice their discontent despite the risk of massive police crackdown. The disproportionate use of force on election night, and Lukashenko's shrill public statements afterward, only further illustrates the nervousness of the current regime.

As Independence Square returns to its snowy, peaceful state, the most immediate question is: What now for the West and Russia? The smallest common denominator—and the most immediate concern—must be the immediate release of the hundreds of prisoners taken during the protests. This would lend credence to recent Western and Russian pressure on Belarus to respect the basic standards of a modern society. It would signal an effort to restore the credibility of the modest liberalization that began the presidential campaign. And it would allow the brave democrats who were put behind bars unjustly to spend Christmas at home.

*Jörg Forbrig is a Senior Program Officer in Berlin, and Pavol Demes is a Senior Transatlantic Fellow with the German Marshall Fund in Bratislava.*

# Belarusian Elections And Domestic Politics

By Orest Deychakiwsky

## Overview

Over the course of the last 15 years, the Belarusian people have been subjected to the arbitrary and self-serving whims of a corrupt and anti-democratic regime. Belarus has the poorest domestic human rights record of any country entirely located in Europe today. 14 years ago next week marks Lukashenka's first major power grab, the illegitimate constitutional referendum that led to the liquidation of the democratically elected parliament and centralization of power in the executive branch. And, for the most part, it's been a downward spiral from there, including a string of fundamentally flawed elections, and the manipulation of the country's constitution in another, 2004 referendum abolishing two-term limits, i.e. extending his presidency.

Belarus clamps down on civil liberties, including freedoms of press, speech, assembly, association, and religion regularly. Non-governmental organizations and political parties, as well as independent media outlets, have been subject to harassment, fines, prosecution, and closure. The regime maintains a virtual monopoly over the flow of information. The government has yet to account for the 1999-2000 "disappearances" of four oppositionists. And I could go on. In short, Belarus is an anomaly in today's Europe.

## Past Elections

Past Belarusian presidential and parliamentary elections – in 2000, 2001, 2004, the last presidential ones in 2006, and to a lesser extent, parliamentary elections of 2008, failed to meet or fell significantly short of OSCE standards and were widely criticized by the OSCE and other European organizations. Among the main concerns were the widespread abuse of state power by the authorities to intimidate voters and restrict public meetings/demonstrations, often resulting in arrests and detentions, and lack of transparency in the vote tabulation. In each of these elections, the concept of "level playing field" for all candidates was virtually non-existent, and election commissions at all levels were dominated by representatives of the Lukashenka regime-- in effect, giving the ability of the authorities to easily rig elections.

In the most recent national elections -- the 2008 parliamentary elections -- The OSCE-led Election Observation Mission noted some minor improvements, but said that "further substantial efforts are required if Belarus is to conduct genuinely democratic elections in line with OSCE commitments." The vote count profoundly lacked transparency. This is something my partner, a Swedish parliamentarian and I witnessed first-hand, as we and a domestic observer were hindered from having a full view of the vote count. The precinct electoral commission (PEC) set tables up as barriers about 10 feet from the tables on which the ballots were being counted, and turned their backs towards us blocking our view. We were by no means alone among observers in experiencing non-transparent vote counts. Suffice it to say that no opposition activists from out of 70 that ran were elected to the National Assembly.

Since then, the Lukashenka regime has not let up significantly on repression, but neither has there been a dramatic increase. There was some hopes in 2008, with the release of political prisoners that August and the distribution of two independent newspapers (but not of many others); and there's been a somewhat more tolerant attitude towards demonstrations. But this year has seen raids and equipment seizures of independent press outlets, the suspicious death of Charter '97 journalist Aleh Byabenin, the continued heavy fining of some religious organizations (eg New Life Evangelical Church) and registration difficulties for some NGOs. Legislation adopted earlier this year on the Internet reinforces the tight control and censorship of traditional media – for instance, identification is now required for any use of the Internet at Internet cafes, and independent publications continue to face various forms of administrative harassment. However, there has been a decrease in arrests of opposition/ street protest activists in the last 3-4 months compared to the previous 6 months.

## The Upcoming Presidential Elections:

Now we come to the upcoming December elections. What are we seeing thus far? What might we expect? How different might these elections be in terms of both process and outcome? Belarusian officials have cooperated somewhat with OSCE/ODIHR on implementing ODIHR's recommendations for electoral reform. According to ODIHR and the Venice Commission, these amendments represent a step toward removing some flaws in electoral regulations – for instance, related to early voting or expanding the list of people who can serve as domestic observers. But they do not provide sufficient guarantees of transparency in the election process - in short, it's a mixed picture. And even though the amendments were adopted last January, the local elections held a few months later in April unfortunately followed the past pattern of flawed elections.

However, by virtually all accounts, there were fewer impediments last month from authorities in the candidate signature collection process (100,000 signatures necessary to appear on the ballot) than previously. And, as a matter of fact, the 10 candidates who collected the necessary number of signatures were registered earlier today.

In what is decidedly not an encouraging harbinger, election commissions continue to exclude opposition and independent groups, and access to the media remains skewed in Lukashenka's favor. Opposition and independent NGO representatives will constitute only .25% (1/4 of 1 percent) of membership of Precinct electoral commissions as only 183 out of 1,073 people nominated by the opposition were accepted; in contrast, the vast majority of those nominated by pro-Luka parties and NGOs were accepted. The situation is only a little bit better for TECs – with about 1% opposition representation. Clearly, the authorities still have the means for rigging the elections.

State media election coverage in the past, not surprisingly, has focused on promoting Lukashenka while either ignoring his electoral opponents, or deriding them. However, CEC Chair Yarmoshina (who, parenthetically, was CEC chair throughout all the past flawed elections) just today announced that candidates speeches and de-

bates will be broadcast live. And a few days ago, the CEC apparently decided to guarantee observers “good visibility of vote count procedures.”

So there does – to date – appear to be some improvement as compared to previous elections. Of course, election day is one month away and campaigning begins in earnest in a few days, so this coming month should be pretty instructive.

#### **Belarusian opposition candidates and electorate:**

Alexander Milinkevich, who came in second to Lukashenka in 2006, has declined to run, saying that “I do not want to be an extra in a theater with a single director and a single actor”. Kozulin, who came in 3d, also is not running.

Some of the most active opposition candidates include Andrei Sannikov (European Belarus), Uladzimir Naklyayeu (For Freedom), Yaroslav Romanchuk (UCPB). There are talks over common strategy and possible cooperation. Common threads among the opposition candidates are: democracy and respect for human rights, a market economy, closer links to Europe while not alienating Russia. In holding these positions, the opposition appears to be reflecting the will of a plurality of the Belarusian people. For instance, according to a September poll, 43 percent want cardinal changes to the present path, vs. 38 percent who thought current course should be maintained. 40 % want a president who wants to move closer to Europe, while less than a quarter believe the president should support closer integration with Russia. (It seems that Moscow’s economic pressures are pushing people away.) Almost 60 percent back a market economy; less than 15 percent prefer a backer of a planned economy. Not exactly mandate for Lukashenka.

However, Lukashenka has traditionally been the most popular politician in Belarus, in part because of a certain populist appeal to some segments of the population; in part because the economy has for the most part remained relatively stable and Belarus appears to have more-or-less weathered the economic crisis for the time being (and recently, he has boosted pensions by 10% and public sector wages by 30%);

Lately, according to some polls, Lukashenka’s popularity has hovered in the 40s, but that’s still far higher than anyone else. (Just a few days ago, he predicted that he’ll get 70% and the combined opposition 1.5%). But while a majority of Belarusians think that changes are needed in Belarus, many don’t see any viable alternative to Lukashenka, and don’t believe they’re in a position to influence change or that the elections will bring about change.

#### **Opposition and electorate passivity/chances of change:**

Often one hears comments about the weakness of the opposition and passivity of the population. Maybe so, and when one thinks about Belarus’ almost unimaginable losses during the War, as well as often brutal Soviet rule, this is understandable. But there’s another more immediate reason, and it’s the stifling conditions that strongly discourage political, independent activity – not just because you might get beat up, or be detained (or in worst case imprisoned or “disappeared”), but often more subtle forms of pressure: threat of expulsion from uni-

versity, threat of loss of job (e.g. for last six years, government has been forcing state employees (80% of workers) to sign short-term (usually one-year) work contracts, and those who have not “behaved” have not had their contracts renewed. There’s also, of course, his domination of the media where the opposition has been routinely vilified (eg “leeches who only take grants”) and pressures on independent media.

Moreover, I don’t see any evidence of real opposition right now within the nomenklatura and that’s not surprising given Lukashenka’s tight control, including over the very important “power” ministries. As with the opposition and the general population, Lukashenka is quite adept at keeping the elites off balance, firing or moving ministers, sometimes imprisoning someone for corruption, etc.

**Conclusion:** So, in just about a month from now we’ll know how serious the Lukashenka regime is about free elections and pluralism. I suspect that these elections may be slightly more open/less repressive than previous ones, but Lukashenka’s one-man-rule will continue. One certainly can’t rule out the possibility of street protests, such as those that followed the fraudulent 2006 elections.

Post-election, Lukashenka might take some small steps, mostly in the area of limited economic liberalization (which he already has done to some extent in order to garner \$3.6 billion from the IMF), and he might allow a bit more maneuvering room for civil society. But it’s difficult to see him making any undertaking major political and economic liberalization as that would undermine his own power. So I don’t see the US and even the EU opening their arms too widely to embrace him. Of course, we should welcome improvements, and respond favorably but proportionately.

So, barring any more drastic moves on Russia’s part – which, despite the Godbatka movies, and the roll-back in subsidies, hasn’t happened yet, or some kind of economic calamity, a radical departure from the broad status quo is unlikely in the near term.

Finally – the US and EU and others should not give up on Belarus – should continue to support Belarus’ independence and European direction, raise human rights, promote civil society and independent media, and keep faith with those in that long-suffering country struggling for freedom and democracy.

*Orest Deychakivsky is the Policy Advisor for the U.S. Helsinki Commission*

**Source:** U.S. Helsinki Commission, November 18, 2010

### **Quotes of Quarter**

A quote by **ALEXANDER LUKASHENKA** at his press conference on December 20, the day after the election, regarding the vote count:

“the openness and the transparency was such, that it was hard to determine whether it was an election, or a ‘reality show’.”

“Attempts to bribe the electoral commission chairpersons were recorded. They were offered \$50,000”.

## Kramer: Pressure Should Be Exerted on the Dictator

*"Belarus 2010: Presidential Elections, Political Stability and Foreign Relations" was the title of the discussion presented by the School of Advanced Studies (SAIS) at the Johns Hopkins UNiversity in Washington, D.C. Different aspects of the subject were presented by Orest Deychakivsky (see his preceding article), historian Taras Kuzio and David Kramer, with Mitchell Orenstein of SAIS, as the chair and discussant.*

David Kramer, executive director of Freedom House, formerly Assistant Secretary of State in the Bush administration was a strong proponent of the U.S. and EU imposed sanctions against Lukashenka's regime. The sanctions' objective was to make Minsk adequately investigate murders of oppositional politicians and journalists, and to release political prisoners.



*David Kramer*

Lukashenka and a number of his retinue members were banned from visiting Western Europe and the U.S. Besides, sanctions were imposed on a number of Belarusian enterprises in which "Lukashenka and his retinue had a personal interest", According to Kramer, The sanctions did finally fulfill one goal. After long talks Minsk released the political prisoners.

However, EU chose to temporarily lift the sanctions, expecting to persuade Lukashenka not to recognize the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, the breakaway Georgian provinces

As a result, Lukashenka started to visit the EU countries, and recently a number of European politicians visited Minsk on official visits. That, according to David Kramer "creates an impression that EU stakes its hope on his help in maintaining independence of Belarus from Russia"

He believes that to be a wrong practice:

"Lukashenka uses the West against Russia and vice versa expertly, sometimes he even throws together the EU and the US." Kramer does not expect that the upcoming election would meet international standards and finds it necessary to continue exerting pressure on Alexander Lukashenka's regime.

## Lukashenka Holds Dialogue In Minsk With US Analysts (Part One)

By Vladimir Socor

On December 14 in Minsk, Belarusian President, Alyaksandr Lukashenka, received a small group of US analysts for a discussion on US-Belarus relations. The group, drawn from several Washington think-tanks, visited Belarus at its own initiative, from a variety of policy and professional interests. Lukashenka's unprecedented meeting with such a group, and the free-wheeling discussion lasting almost three hours, partly on the record, highlighted his wish to normalize relations with the United States. Those relations are currently all but frozen, contrasting with the normalization trend in EU-Belarus relations.

Belarus is holding an internationally monitored presidential election on December 19, with Lukashenka likely to be re-elected handily against ten minor candidates in the race. Public opinion surveys, including those commissioned for the government's confidential use (Information-Analytical Center of the Presidential Administration, Weekly Monitoring of Public Opinion, December 10) indicate approval ratings in the range of 70 percent for the incumbent president.

During the preceding months, Moscow had embarked on a policy of regime change in Belarus. The Kremlin regards Lukashenka (and the authorities he personifies) as the main obstacle to a Russian takeover of the Belarus's economy and re-satellization of this Central European country. The implications would be grim for neighboring Poland and the Baltic States, as well as for the EU and NATO, if instead of Lukashenka they would have to deal with Kremlin-controlled authorities in Belarus.

Moscow has sought out local politicians more pliable to Russia, as well as opposition veterans whose relationship with Western sponsors had recently ended in mutual disappointment. Russian state television channels unleashed a barrage of attacks against Lukashenka and the government while encouraging the opposition through manipulative broadcasts. This campaign failed, however, either to split the authorities into pro-Russia and pro-independence factions, or to unite the traditionally fractious opposition. Moscow's regime-change bid had clearly lost steam by the time Lukashenka received the group of US analysts.

The meeting's unusually long duration, and Lukashenka's carefully prepared opening speech to the group, indicated the value of this informal channel of communication in Minsk's eyes, given the freeze on normal diplomatic relations, and indeed the freeze on US policy toward Belarus as such. Beyond bilateral relations, Lukashenka commented extensively and candidly on US policies in Europe's East and Eurasia. Pervading his statements is a concern to avoid the creation of a Russian sphere of influence there, during the current phase of a diminishing US presence and perceived disengagement by Washington.



## Lukashenka Holds Dialogue In Minsk With US Analysts (Part Two)

By Vladimir Socor

Lukashenka continues to regard the US, despite its current predicaments as “the strongest superpower, with global interests and a corresponding influence.” In Minsk’s analysis, the world has not become multi-polar. While opposing a Russian zone of influence, Belarus does not declare any desire to join a Western zone either. Apprehensive that any division into such zones would consign Belarus to the eastern one, Minsk adopts a defensive position of “equal proximity” to either side. First enunciated by Lukashenka in a speech last week (Belapan, December 10), this stance is a local rephrasing of the two-vector model, albeit under current conditions of Russian resurgence and confusion in Western ranks.

The president’s other metaphor is that of “two wings” to sustain Belarus’ independent statehood at this stage in its development. One wing, in Russia and the economic unions it leads, predominated during most of the post-Soviet period. The other, Western “wing” has more recently become equally important, with Belarus shifting its exports of manufactured goods from Russia’s to the EU market and intensifying cross-border exchanges with neighboring EU countries. Increasingly sustained through EU-Belarus engagement, this “western wing” is hobbled, however, by apparent US disinterest and one-sided policy approach toward Belarus. Without naming the democratization agenda of US policy, Lukashenka was alluding to the reduction of US policy toward Belarus to that one dimension.

Belarus is the only post-Soviet country against which the US has imposed economic sanctions on democracy/human rights grounds. While Kazakhstan, with a president-for-life and a single-party parliament, has qualified in US eyes to chair the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) (in which the US particularly emphasizes democracy and human rights commitments), Belarus alone qualifies for US economic sanctions on those same grounds.

In a further irony, those US sanctions (as broadened since 2008) have targeted Belarus’ oil-refining industry, even as the Kremlin attempted to bankrupt those refineries with a view to facilitating a takeover by Russian companies. Some in Minsk may read this as coordination between Washington and Moscow.

Lukashenka calls for “discarding stereotypes and preconceived notions, and by engaging in a mutually respectful dialogue to tackle even the most complicated issues [i.e., reforms in Belarus]. Belarus is not a supplicant for multibillion-dollar aid. We must be regarded as partners, not as a country that one can pressure, coerce, or destabilize.” This clearly implies that Minsk can be more receptive to US democracy concerns if these become the subject of dialogue within normal diplomatic relations. The US is poorly placed advance a democracy agenda with the country’s leadership while ostracizing the same leadership, and allowing the current phase of strategic disinterest to translate into a single-dimensional policy toward Belarus.

**Source:** Eurasia Daily Monitor Volume: 7 Issue: 224, December 15, 2010

Receiving a small group of US analysts in Minsk (EDM, December 15), President, Alyaksandr Lukashenka, appealed to the United States to develop a multi-track policy toward Belarus, instead of a single-dimensional policy [implying democracy-promotion divorced from everything else]. The free-wheeling discussion of almost three hours, partly on the record, with the president, suggested however that Washington is about to develop two additional policy tracks with Belarus. These are, first, the inclusion of Belarus in the Northern Distribution Network (NDN) for delivering supplies to US-led forces in Afghanistan; and, second, bilateral cooperation on nuclear non-proliferation and possible uses of civilian nuclear technology in Belarus.

While specific information on the NDN is not on the public record, Belarus is located directly on the transit route for US supplies that enter Europe via Latvia, for onward shipment to the Afghanistan theater of operations. Belarus is prepared to handle large transit volumes, as well as to deliver locally-made supplies, (foodstuffs and construction materials), for coalition forces and reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan. Like other leaders in countries along that route, Lukashenka regards participation in the NDN as an opportunity for political cooperation with the US and a commercial opportunity for the country.

Responding to another US policy priority, Belarus has agreed to eliminate all its stocks of highly enriched uranium by 2012. Significantly, this commitment is a matter of US-Belarus bilateral relations. US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, and Belarus’s Foreign Minister, Syarhei Martinau, met during the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) summit in Astana and issued a joint statement to that effect. Under the document, the US will provide technical and financial assistance to Belarus for converting its nuclear facilities to operate with low-enriched uranium fuel. The two sides pledge to continue working together on nuclear security, including security upgrades at the Belarus Institute for Nuclear Research. For its part, Belarus announced its intention to diversify its energy supply by building a civilian nuclear power plant, under IAEA safeguards: “The United States supports Belarus’ effort to complete this commercial project as expeditiously as possible” (US State Department press release, December 2)

Lukashenka’s staunch support for Georgia’s territorial integrity, despite Moscow’s strong pressures on Minsk, can also facilitate a turning point in US-Belarus relations. Following Russia’s 2008 invasion of Georgia, the Kremlin singled out Belarus from among all CIS countries, demanding recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia by the Belarus government. Lukashenka recounted some details of his confrontation with Moscow over this issue for the visiting American analysts. Lukashenka felt that yielding on this matter of fundamental principle would have opened Belarus to further Russian demands and pressures at the expense of Belarus’ sovereignty.

Georgian President, Mikheil Saakashvili, and members of his team are known to have met with Lukashenka a number of times since 2008. Although it came to power in Georgia through a “color revolution” type event in 2003, and supported opposition groups in Belarus for several years afterward, the Georgian leadership has shed its earlier illusions about the rapid democratization of Belarus or the political potential of those opposition groups.

More than any former Soviet republic, Belarus was a success story in those terms of reference. Lukashenka regards himself as the trustee of Soviet Belarus’ legacy, i.e., a distinct national-territorial statehood and massive industrial base. His and the government’s current ambition are for Belarus to advance from a post-Soviet to a European state. However, they are weighed down by provincial and cultural isolation from the West (a theme that keeps surfacing directly or indirectly in conversations with government officials in Minsk).

Lukashenka and his team tend to assess Belarus’ performance by comparison with Russia. That assessment encourages them to start looking for the exits from Russia’s orbit. Russia is seen mainly as a supplier of fuels and raw materials for Belarus to process into industrial products for export. Lukashenka takes special pride in the fact that the share of industrial products in Belarus’ exports is higher than the share of industrial products in Russia’s exports (not counting arms exports). From Minsk’s special perspective, Belarus is more of an industrial economy than Russia’s raw material-based economy.

The challenge to Belarus is to reduce its dual dependency on Russian raw materials and the Russian market. This year, Belarus’ exports to the EU look set to surpass its exports to Russia for the first time. Also this year, Belarus has taken unprecedented steps to diversify crude oil supplies for its export-oriented refineries. If these trends continue, Belarus could gradually move from the Russia-led Single Economic Space toward closer ties with the European Union. The EU considers the possibility of equalizing Belarus’ status with that of the other five countries in the EU’s Eastern Partnership Program, depending on the conduct of the December 19 presidential election in Belarus.

For its part, Moscow is interested in destabilizing the post-election situation in Minsk. The Kremlin evidently calculates that post-election turmoil would isolate Belarus politically from the EU, as well as reverse the recent tentative steps toward improvement in US-Belarus relations.

**Source:** Eurasia Daily Monitor Volume: 7 Issue: 226, December 20, 2010

### Quotes of Quarter

A quote by **ALEXANDER LUKASHENKA** at his press conference on December 20, the day after the election regarding the OSCE statement:

“Today’s OSCE conclusion ... did not correspond what took place at the election”.

“What business did OSCE have with what took place at night? The election was over”

“Sometimes these missions forget that they came to observe, not to order us around”.

## The U.S. Congress Resolution

*Resolution Introduced by Rep. Chris Smith in the US House of Representatives*

**H.RES.1716 -- Whereas since his 1994 election as President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenka has established himself as a dictator, abusing executive authority and maintaining himself in office through... (Introduced in House - IH)**

HRES 1716 IH

111th CONGRESS

2d Session

**H. RES. 1716**

Urging the Government of Belarus to conduct a free and fair presidential election on December 19, 2010, and expressing support for the Belarusian people’s desire for democratic government that respects human rights and the rule of law.

**Editor’s note:**

for the complete text, see <http://thomas.loc.org>

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### Congressman Smith Calls on U.S., Other Democracies To Seek Release Of Belarusian Demonstrators

*Smith Authored Belarus Democracy Act, met Lukashenka in 2010*

President Obama and democratic governments should work for the release of beaten and arrested Belarusian demonstrators and presidential candidates, urged U.S. Congressman Chris Smith, a senior member of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs and Ranking Member of the Helsinki Commission, also known as the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE)

This week, Belarusians, whose country has been governed by the dictator Alexander Lukashenka since the mid-1990s, voted in a presidential election. After it was announced that Lukashenka had won with 80 percent of the vote, demonstrators protesting unfair electoral practices converged on Minsk’s Independence Square. While the responsibility for initiating violence is unclear, government forces savagely beat many in the crowd and have arrested over 600 people, including five opposition presidential candidates. The OSCE, which sent election monitors to Belarus, has stated the election was not free and fair, and the U.S. government has stated that it does not accept the result as legitimate.

“Sadly, this week’s election in Belarus was rigged by the Lukashenka dictatorship, which hit a new low in severely beating and arresting opposition candidates and many hundreds of demonstrators,” Smith said. “The democratic governments of the world should do everything they can to ensure peaceful demonstrators are freed as soon as possible and have access to the medical care they need. Once again Europe’s last dictatorship has shown itself to be heartless and lacking in the most basic human decency.

For years Smith has fought for human rights in Belarus. In 2004, he authored Congress's first legislation on Belarus, the Belarus Democracy Act, and in 2006 authored its reauthorization, acts which provided for financial sanctions on the Belarusian government, travel sanctions on President Lukashenka and his senior officials, and authorized support for independent radio broadcasting into Belarus, for Belarusian human rights groups, democratic activists, and independent media and labor unions. In June 2009 Smith and a group of American congressmen met President Lukashenka in the Belarusian capital of Minsk. Smith strongly urged Lukashenka to make major changes to the way he governs Belarus, most importantly by recognizing the human rights of the Belarusian people and permitting free and fair elections. Last month, Smith introduced a congressional resolution urging that Sunday's election be free and fair.

December 22, 2010 Washington, D.C

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## Russian President's Blog On Belarus

By Joe Arciuch

After reading the official English translation (<http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/1052>) of the Russian president's October 3 blog, **this writer has become concerned with the meaning of such phrases as "united by... centuries-old history," "shared culture," "our single nation," "the Union State, CSTO," "our peoples will forever be fraternal," and "our nations are inextricably linked," all implying that Russia still considers Belarus as an inherent part of the Russian Empire.** President Medvedev seems to be ignorant of the fact that Russia, the USA, Great Britain and Belarus signed a memorandum at the December 1994 CSCE Budapest summit in which they guaranteed Belarus' independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Excerpts from the blog follow:(October 3, 2010, 21:45)

### The senseless period of tension in relations with Belarus is certain to come to an end

DMITRY MEDVEDEV:

...Today I want to talk about what is happening in the relationship with our closest ally: Belarus. I want to address both the Russian and Belarusian people. After all, **we are all citizens of the Union State.**

It is my deep conviction that our country has always treated and will continue to treat the Belarusian people as our closest neighbour. **We are united by centuries-old history, shared culture, common joys and common sorrows.** We will always remember that our nations - **and I always want to say "our single nation"**— have suffered huge losses during the Great Patriotic War. Together we survived terrible hardships of the collectivisation, famine and repressions.

Now Russia and Belarus are **partners in the Union State.** Both of our countries are also actively involved in the creation of the Customs Union, in the development of the EurAsEC, CSTO and the Commonwealth of Independent

States. We intend to fully expand our cooperation with Belarus within the framework of these organisations.

... Proceeding from this, **we have always helped the people of Belarus.** In fact, since the collapse of the Soviet Union almost 20 years ago, the volumes of this support, whatever they say, have been huge. Only this year our help to Belarus in the form of favourable oil supply terms amounted to almost two billion dollars. There are comparable subsidies in the supply of Russian gas to Belarus. We do all this because we firmly believe that our nations are inextricably linked.

It is therefore particularly surprising that the Belarusian leadership has recently adopted an anti-Russian rhetoric. The election campaign there is built entirely on anti-Russian slogans, hysterical accusations of Russia's unwillingness to support the Belarusian people and the Belarusian economy, and curses addressed at the Russian leadership. What we can discern behind all this is a clear desire to cause discord between the states and, accordingly, the nations.

...I would just like to say this openly: Russia is ready to develop allied relations with Belarus. Moreover, no matter who leads Russia and Belarus, **our peoples will forever be fraternal.** We want our citizens not to live in fear, but in an atmosphere of freedom, democracy and justice. And we are ready to pursue this together with our Belarusian friends.

### Some Quotes from Wikileaks

At a meeting with Estonia's Foreign Minister in October 2009 **ALEXANDER LUKASHENKA** claimed that

"Minsk can be made to recognize the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia in exchange for cheap gas from Russia".

...as well as "

for claiming that Russia provoked the war in Georgia"

...**LUKASHENKA** was especially distressed that

"EU did not issue a loan for reforms for not having recognized South Ossetia and Abkhazia".

**HILLARY CLINTON** used another argument for changing the orientation of Belarus foreign policy:

"The Belarus dependence on the changeable Russian market means that its opportunities for economic growth lie in the West..."

**CLINTON** noted:

"Both the Head of Presidential Administration Makei and Foreign Minister Martynau said that ... the government was going to reform domestic policy. But everything we heard turned out to be vague rhetoric without any obligations".

## ECONOMY

# Russia Uses Denial-of-Access Tactics Against Belarus Oil Supply Diversification

By Vladimir Socor

Belarus seeks to reduce its near total dependence on Russian oil by diversifying the range of supplier countries and import routes. Belarus' massive oil-processing industry is largely export-oriented and a top currency earner for the national economy. It processes some 22 million tons of crude oil annually, almost all of it imported from Russia via the Druzhba pipeline, for the refineries at Mazyr and Navapolatsk in Belarus. Those imports are subject to the vagaries of Russian taxation and customs regimes, as well as the Russian government's political objectives vis-à-vis Belarus.

The government in Minsk has launched in 2010 for the first time a systematic effort to reduce dependence on Russian oil supplies. Landlocked Belarus seeks to import oil from Venezuela and Azerbaijan, with delivery through Black Sea and Baltic ports by overland routes to Belarus. The Russian government seeks to obstruct Minsk's diversification efforts by using denial-of-access tactics on the relevant pipelines.

Belarus has negotiated in recent months for using oil terminals in the ports of Klaipeda in Lithuania, Ventspils in Latvia, and Muuga in Estonia to import Venezuelan oil. Klaipeda and Ventspils are, each, connected with Belarus's Navapolatsk refinery through a spur of the Druzhba pipeline system. Those spurs used to carry Russian oil to Latvia and Lithuania, respectively. However, the Russian government shut down those pipeline spurs in 2004 and 2006, respectively, so as to strangle Latvia's Ventspils oil export terminal and Lithuania's Mazeikiai refinery. Russian companies had bid unsuccessfully to take over those assets and the Russian government was backing those takeover bids by cutting off the oil supplies. Since that time, the two pipeline spurs connecting Belarus with Latvia and Lithuania have not been used. Belarus now proposes to use that route in reverse, for oil supplies via the Klaipeda or Ventspils port terminal and the pipeline to the Navapolatsk refinery in Belarus.

In late November, however, Russia's state pipeline monopoly Transneft announced that it would remove the "buffer oil" that had been left inside the pipeline spur on Latvian territory (slightly upstream of the spur's bifurcation into Lithuanian territory, thus affecting that connection also). Transneft cited "risks of accident," although such risks had not seemed to preoccupy Moscow ever since the 2004 and 2006 pipeline shutdowns, with 150,000 tons of buffer oil remaining inside. Removal of the "buffer" or "technical" oil would make it impossible to re-start using the pipeline for oil transportation.

The mixed Russian-Latvian company, LatRosTrans, owns and operates this pipeline on Latvian territory. LatRosTrans describes itself as the biggest company with

joint Russian and local capital in the Baltic region. Russian Transneft's fully owned subsidiary, Transnefteprodukt, together with a Cyprus-registered company, hold a majority of shares in LatRosTrans. These two shareholders are apparently prevailing over the Latvian interests in the pipeline and the Ventspils terminal, depriving these of the business of transiting oil to Belarus. In late November, LatRosTrans started pumping the buffer oil out of the pipeline.

Belarus has responded by turning to Latvian courts. Belnaftakhim-Druzhba, operator of the pipeline in Belarus from Navapolatsk to the Latvian border, has obtained a temporary injunction from the relevant territorial Latvian court in Daugavpils to stop the removal of buffer oil, pending a legal decision. Belnaftakhim argues that the Transneft-initiated move contravenes the policies and business interests of Latvia and Belarus regarding oil transit (Belapan, December 1, 7, 13; BNN, December 14).

The holding BelNaftakhim has also been in talks with Lithuania's Klaipedos Nafta for possible transit of Venezuelan oil, also involving reverse-use of the pipeline to Belarus. That route is also potentially affected by the Russian denial-of-access move in neighboring Latvia.

In Estonia meanwhile, the port of Muuga has been taking delivery of tankers with Venezuelan oil for Belarus. Those oil consignments then move by railroad from Estonia via Latvia to Belarus for processing there.

Belarus plans to supply its other major refinery, Mazyr, with Venezuelan and Azerbaijani oil via the Ukrainian port of Odessa and the Odessa-Brody pipeline. That pipeline has been used by Russian companies since 2004 in the reverse mode, carrying Russian oil to Odessa for export, instead of Caspian oil into Central Europe as had been originally intended. That reversal was another example of Russian denial-of-access tactics for the last six years. During 2010, however, Russian companies (mainly TNK-BP) have left the Odessa-Brody pipeline dry; and have also started shifting some oil transit volumes from the Ukrainian Druzhba pipeline to other directions.

The Odessa-Brody pipeline is now available for oil transportation northward into Ukraine and Belarus. The port of Odessa has already taken delivery of Venezuelan oil cargoes in 80,000 ton tankers. Those consignments currently move via Ukraine by railroad (an overly expensive mode of transportation) to Belarus' Mozyr refinery. In late November and early December, the oil transport companies of Ukraine and Belarus have successfully conducted experimental pumping of oil from Odessa to Brody and onward through the Druzhba pipeline from Brody to Mazyr (Interfax-Ukraine, UNIAN, Belapan, December 1-10).

This route involves using the Druzhba pipeline between Brody and Mazyr in reverse, eastward instead of westward. This has become possible as Russia is currently using only one half of that pipeline section's capacity. However, Belarus is facing Russian denial-of-access tactics there also. That section consists of two parallel lines, with an annual capacity of 16 million tons each. For 2011, Transneft has announced booking 17 million tons of capacity in the originally intended direction, westward. This implies full use of one line while using the parallel line at

a fraction of its capacity, for merely 1 million tons, only to block the flow of alternative oil supplies into Belarus. The government in Minsk, however, does not regard this announcement as Moscow's last word on the issue.

**Source:** Eurasia Daily Monitor Volume: 7 Issue: 226  
December 20, 2010

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## Belarus and China Signed \$3.5 Billion Loan Agreement

Belarus and China have signed three loan agreements, eight commercial contracts and two framework agreements on the implementation of bilateral projects in energy, construction, industry, road and transport infrastructure for a total of \$3.5 billion. The signing ceremony was held in Beijing during the visit of the Belarusian president to China on October 11.

Representatives of Belarus and China Exim Bank signed a framework agreement on the financing of priority investment projects and loan agreements for the creation of intellectual transport system of Minsk, the electrification of the railway in the Homel and Mahileu voblast, the supply of freight locomotives, BelTA informs.

In turn, the Belarusian Ministry of Economy and Chinese engineering SAMS Corporation signed an agreement to establish a joint industrial park in Belarus. The parties also agreed to implement a number of projects in industry and energy. Chinese investments provide for construction of sulphate bleached pulp plant based on Svetlogorsk Pulp and Board Plant with the capacity of 400 thousand tons per year, industrial housing and factories of soda ash, Bioroza CCGT plants of 400 MW and Lukoml power plant of 400 MW. Investment agreement with "Beijing Uni - Construction Group" provides construction of the hotel complex "Peking" with service objects in Minsk.

In addition, Chinese companies have to spend about \$600 million for reconstruction of the airport complex Minsk National Airport. The parties plan to create a modern international passenger terminal, equip the airport with the security and alarm systems, build a second artificial runway to receive A-380 aircraft.

First Vice-Premier of Belarus Uladzimir Siamashka noted that these projects are of great importance to the economy of Belarus. "We hope that with their help we can catch up with China, which is developing with 11% GDP growth. Catch up on a different scale, but with a good rate of economic growth," he stressed.

According to the first deputy prime minister, these projects are profitable for both Belarus, and China. Deputy Prime Minister believes that they will allow Belarus to speed up the dynamics of development, China - to develop the European market and to prove its viability in the European continent. According to Syamashka, the foundation for development of 100 other projects with China to \$15 billion is currently laid. The First Vice Prime Minister expressed hope that China Eximbank director would sign a number of important documents during his visit to Belarus in this November.

**Source:** Office for Democratic Belarus, October 10, 2010

## Belarus' Forum

### Action "Alyaksandr, Leave!"

A street action under the slogan "Alyaksandr, Leave!", timed to the anniversary of the 1996 referendum, was held in Minsk on November 24th.

The street action on October Square in Minsk was conducted in protest against **Alyaksandr Lukasehnka's** running in the scheduled presidential election and was dedicated to the constitutional referendum initiated by him in 1996.

Riot police officers arrived at the **meeting** place two hours before the beginning of the action. According to Radio Svaboda, more than two thousand people gathered on October Square. Among those who came were Belarusian presidential candidates **Uladzimir Nyaklyaeu, Mikalai Statkevich, Vital Rymasheuski**, as well as Young Front leader **Zmitser Dashkevich** and BCD head **Paval Sevyarynets**.

People raised hundreds of national white-red-white flags and shouted "Long live Belarus!", "We believe, we can, we win!", and "Lukashenka, go away!"

**Source:** Charter 97 Press Center, November 25, 2010



SASHA (nickname for Alyaksandr), LEAVE!

### Ivonka Survilla to Dalia Grybauskaitė: "Lukashenka Is the Main Threat to Sovereignty"

The head of the Rada of the BNR, Ivonka Survilla, sent an open letter to the president of Lithuania Dalia Grybauskaitė about her statement on the priorities of the European Union **concerning** the elections in Belarus.

As is known, Reuters recently **distributed** information on the meeting between the President of Lithuania and Western diplomats accredited in this country. According to the agency, Dalia Grybauskaitė stated that Alyaksandr Lukashenka was the guarantor of political and economic stability in Belarus, as well as its independence. Therefore, in the opinion of the Lithuanian president, victory of the present head of Belarus **in** the upcoming elections on December 19th, would be the best option for the EU.

On this occasion, the head of the Rada of the BNR, Ivonka Survilla, sent an open letter to Dalia Grybauskaitė.

“Belarusian society anxiously **noted** your unconditional support for Alyaksandr Lukashenka as a presidential candidate who, despite the good will of the EU, does not fulfill the conditions of Europe on the political system and human rights in Belarus, but also stubbornly continues to destroy **the** national values of the Belarusian people.

Madam President, your position is **motivated** by the desire **for** stability. Let me remind you about **recent** episodes, which **have shown** that solidarity with supporters of democracy may have far more positive results than the desire to maintain stability. It was Vilnius where the Belarusian Popular Front held its first congress in 1989, thanks to the invitation of the then government of Lithuania, which put forward the idea of restoring Belarusian independence. In January 1991, when Gorbachev decided to introduce “a state of emergency” in Lithuania to destroy the independence of Lithuania, Moscow’s army attacked the television center in Vilnius, killing innocent civilians. The Kremlin explained these actions by the need to “maintain stability” in the Soviet empire. In those days, a group of deputies of the Belarusian parliament visited Vilnius, and a deputy of the faction of the Popular Front Siarhei Naumchyk made a speech in the Lithuanian parliament with words of solidarity and called on members of foreign parliamentary delegations not to leave the building until there was a threat of assault. In those days, Belarusian national forces supported Lithuania at a critical time, despite the wishes of the Kremlin. Let me also remind you that many in the West tended to justify the actions of Gorbachev, who they thought was a guarantor of stability.

History, however, made other arrangements – it was solidarity **among** national movements that contributed to the collapse of the Soviet empire.

President Lukashenka **has** insulted the national symbols of Belarus, eradicated the national culture, closed Belarusian schools, **instituted** total Russification - this gives grounds to believe that Lukashenka has not changed his attitude towards Belarusian Independence. And Lukashenka was and remains a major threat to Belarusian sovereignty” - Ivonka Survilla said.

**Source:** Charter 97 Press Center, November 19, 2010

## The Center for Belarusian Studies Translation Initiative: Access to Global Discourse, Critical Thinking, and Belarusian Civil Society

In October of 2009, the Center for Belarusian Studies brought together specialists in higher education from Belarus and North America in order to encourage exchange about conditions in higher education in Belarus, including the repercussions of censorship and state control on the building of a healthy civil society. One of the key strategies identified at this event focused on the absence of critical, globally derived/engaged discourse in the Belarusian language for use at the university level. The

absence of such discourse, it was and is argued, severely affects the development of critical thinking and the recognition of personal investment in societal change.

The connections between policy-making, social change, and higher education are at the core of the Center for Belarusian Studies’ current work. Since 2009, the Center for Belarusian Studies has developed a long-term project stressing the development of critical thinking through Belarusian-language translations of discourse in the humanities. In addition to designing and presenting a model for a translation initiative, the Center is overseeing collaborative planning with the European Humanities University, and the Belarusian Collegium through ongoing dialogues initiated in the summer of 2010. It is the curricular needs of these institutions that will provide an initial repertoire of sources for translation and subsequent classroom use. In the last few months, the CBS has presented this initiative to State Department and EU representatives in Washington during a follow-up Symposium held on October 25th, 2011.



The Washington Symposium, Higher Education and Civil Society in Belarus, brought together participants from the Center’s 2009 Symposium, as well as representatives from think tanks, the State Department, and diplomatic circles, among them, his Excellency, Zygimantas Pavilionis (Lithuanian Ambassador to the United States), Matthew Kwasiborski (European Institutes Director, The Fund for American Studies), Alla Orsa Romano (Director of the Belarusian Cultural and Educational Foundation), Anatoly Mikhailov and Aleksandr Kalbaska (European Humanities University), Ales Ancipeinka (Belarusian Collegium), and Lawrence Silverman (Director for Ukraine, Moldova, and Belarus Affairs for the State Department). A key aspect of this participation was to share reports on the activities of these agencies resulting from the initiatives described in the *Strategic Action Plan for Higher Education Reform in Belarus* presented by the Center of Belarusian Studies as a result of the 2009 symposium. Dr. Andrew Sheppard (CBS) reported on the Center’s Masters Program and on the Summer Institute in Belarusian Studies held in the Bielastok region. Ambassador David Swartz moderated the dialogues on behalf of the Center.

We continue to work towards the development and support of these initiatives. To read about our other efforts please visit our web-site [www.belarusiancenter.org](http://www.belarusiancenter.org).

*M. Paula Survilla is Executive Director of the Center of Belarusian Studies, Professor of Music and Slife Distinguished Professor of the Humanities at Wartburg College, Waverly, IA.*

## 30 Minutes after Four Years of Silence

... Anxious to show the EU that there has been some progress toward a better election process, the regime was forced to make some concessions concerning its monopoly over the broadcast media. For the first time since 1994, every candidate was given the opportunity to make two 30-minute, live TV addresses to the nation. For most, it was the first time they had been on television.

A second innovation of the 2010 campaign was a live TV debate on 4 December. Despite a situation in which Lukashenka refused to participate and the program was stacked with hosts who were well-known state apologists, the other candidates agreed to take part. Unexpectedly, the candidates managed to turn the tables by collectively ignoring the hostile and biased hosts, asking one another questions, and becoming the directors of what many called the best TV talk show in the last 16 years. Although Niakliaev walked out after his introductory remarks, it was a rare, if not the only, occasion during which all of the candidates demonstrated some unity.

The television addresses and debates, also broadcast online, generated extensive attention and provoked lively public discussions. As one blogger wrote, the TV presentations sparked a "war" in his grandparents' usually apolitical village household; they fought over whose favorite candidate was better. For the first time, no one picked Lukashenka. Yet, the euphoria over this breath of fresh air has started to fade. After the 4 December debate, the nine challengers disappeared from the air waves. An appeal by several candidates to the Central Electoral Committee for a proper debate including Lukashenka and additional air time for all candidates was denied. **As one activist put it, those precious moments were their "30 minutes after four years of silence."** Since then Lukashenka has had the electronic media all to himself, and the others went back to being virtual candidates, literally.

*Iryna Vidanava is an activist from Belarus who frequently writes on new media.*

**Source:** Excerpt from the TOL Special Report by Iryna Vidanava, 16 December 2010

## BELARUS ABROAD

### BNR Rada Rejects Election Results

The Rada of the Belarusian Democratic Republic in Exile (BNR) condemns the brutal actions of the Lukashenka regime against the peaceful protest demonstration held in Minsk on 19 December. The BNR Rada calls on the West's governments not to accept the results of the presidential election in Belarus, in so far as they were falsified, and the declared "winner" Alexander Lukashenka was constitutionally disqualified from running.

New presidential election should be scheduled without the participation of Alexander Lukashenka. The election should be conducted under international supervision and with the candidates' representatives present in the electoral commissions.

The BNR Rada calls on the West's governments and the international institutions to speak out in defense of the supporters of democracy in Belarus. It calls for the immediate release of Uladzimir Neklayeu who was forcibly removed from hospital, the release of all other candidates, as well as of all detained opposition activists.

*Translation of an RFE/RL broadcast. 20 December 2010*

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### Statement By the Rada of The Belarusian Democratic Republic in Exile 28th December 2010

The Rada of the Belarusian Democratic Republic (the BNR Rada) expresses its concern regarding the brutal repressions against opposition activists, political and human rights organisations, as well as journalists of the independent mass media, which have been unfolding in Belarus in the wake of the so-called presidential "elections" of 19 December, and which are currently gaining in scale. These repressions have involved not only the activists themselves but also their family members.

The BNR Rada calls upon the governments of the European Union member states, the United States of America, Canada, Ukraine, Turkey and Egypt to ban all the KGB and other Belarusian security services personnel, the personnel of the Ministry of Internal Affairs system, the officials of courts and the state prosecution service of the Republic of Belarus, as well as all of the said individuals' close relatives, from entering those countries. The BNR Rada regards the said organisations as constituting the machine of repressions used against the democratic opposition activists

The BNR Rada suggests that this ban should remain in force until such time as the last of the political prisoners in Belarus is released and all the criminal and administrative prosecution cases against the persons persecuted for their political views are cancelled.

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### Declaration by the Coordinating Committee of Belarusians of Canada

The events taking place in Belarus after the so called elections show yet again the terrible truth about the dictatorial regime that for the last 16 years has settled in the center of Europe.

The presidential candidates were brutally attacked as result of provocations, peaceful demonstrators, mainly young people, were beaten and detained. State media presenting a false picture of the event while desecrating national symbols are but one link in chain that throttles all that is bright and pure in the country.

The Coordinating Committee of Belarusians of Canada protests the persecution of people who genuinely love Belarus, who are struggling for her independence, for free democratic elections, and a future, in which there will be no room for lies, violence and abuse.

We are calling on the democratic forces of the world to condemn the bloody Lukashenka regime, and to support those who are striving for freedom and for fair elections in Belarus.

December 20, 2010

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## STATEMENT

*adopted by members of the Belarusian-American Association monitoring the results of the presidential election in Belarus on December 19, 2010.*

We, the members of the Belarusian-American Association, both American citizens as well as new immigrants, express our concern with yet another election in Belarus, that was neither free nor fair.

We condemn the brutal actions of the SpetsNaz forces in forcibly dispersing a peaceful demonstration in Minsk protesting the flawed elections at the conclusion of voting on December 19. We also protest the beatings and the arrest of the following opposition candidates: Nyak-layeu, Statkevich, Sannikau, Rymasheuski, Kostusyeu.

Since free and fair elections are not possible without freedom of expression and without ongoing access to the local media, we are calling on the United States Government to provide sufficient support to such media that are directed to Belarus from the outside.

Since the establishment of democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law can be aided by relevant American institutions, we are therefore calling for the restoration of an effective and unhampered operation of the U.S. Embassy in Minsk, as a first step.

Toward these ends we are calling on the U.S. Government to show greater engagement toward Belarus, balancing economic aid with sanctions against those responsible for the continuance of the dictatorial rule.

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## Demonstration in London

*The following text was composed and distributed in front of the Belarus Embassy 19-21 December, 2010 by Belarusians of London and friends for freedom of Belarus.*

**.We demand the release of all political prisoners and new presidential elections in Belarus — democratic and without Lukashenka:**

- Such elections must be run by an fully independent commission, appropriately accredited and recognised as such;
- Such elections need to be made democratic and transparent by a comprehensive range of democratic legal amendments and practical assurances of a free and fair campaign and vote (including transparent ballotboxes, adequate access by observers at all stages, etc.).
- The country's monopolistic state electronic media must be stripped of its role of the incumbent regime's propaganda loudspeaker, the freedom of speech needs to be restored in Belarus;

- An audit and investigation, by an independent commission inclusive of international commissioners, must be conducted into the vote-rigging in Belarus committed at all levels, holding to account all those engaged in election rigging and in political repression in Belarus, during and after this election campaign.

**Today the only remaining way for a return to a constitutionally legitimate and democratic rule in Belarus by the peaceful means of election is holding new free elections without Lukashenka.**

**The UK and the West ought not to seek rapprochement with the ruling undemocratic regime in Belarus over the heads of the nation's democratic society and at the country's democratic future.**

**Beside London, support protest demonstrations took place in many cities outside of Belarus. Among them were New York, Washington, Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal, Warsaw and Prague.**

## The Center for Belarusian Studies

*Press Release*

The Center for Belarusian Studies notes with profound regret and extreme repugnance the violent, illegal, and wholly unwarranted attacks, arrests, and incarcerations December 19 by the Belarus government against unarmed Belarusians. The inherent right of public demonstrations for redress of wrongs by citizens against their government is one of the most fundamental of democratic institutions. In trampling the elementary human rights of hundreds of its citizens, the Belarusian leadership revealed its true nature and intentions even more dramatically and viciously than in the past. The innocent blood shed December 19 is a stain of shame on those who caused it, a stain that time and diplomatic "business as usual" must not permit to be erased or forgotten.

The Center for Belarusian Studies calls on the Belarus government immediately to release all those imprisoned on that Day of Shame and provide proper medical care for the wounded.

The Center for Belarusian Studies appeals to the Governments of the United States and of the European Union to treat these tragic events as a benchmark for future relations with Belarus. This stain demonstrates vividly that the episodic tactical, wasteful measures by the West in response to supposed signals of liberalization and growing western orientation coming from the Belarus government were neither warranted nor beneficial. We call on the West to develop and implement--finally--a coordinated strategy targeted toward Belarus *per se* and not view Belarus through the prism of some regional geopolitical or economic chess game. December 19 starts a new page in Belarusian history, a beginning that its perpetrators will surely come to regret. So be it.

Winfield, Kansas  
December 22, 2010



**Statement**  
**By the Office for a Democratic Belarus**  
**(Brussels)**  
**And the Belarusian Institute for**  
**Strategic Studies**

*on events of December 19, 2010 in Minsk*

...The violent crackdown on the post-election protests in Minsk on 19 December, 2010 came as a symbolic 'closing' of the brief period of relative liberalization, which Belarus enjoyed since 2008.

Post-election events bring Belarus back to the situation of 2005-2006, perhaps with less hope for dialogue and engagement. One needs to reflect on the long-term consequences of what has happened and put efforts into minimizing Belarus' slide back in its darkest day of repression.

**Therefore, we suggest that the European Union and its Member States, as well as other representatives of the international community immediately**

- Declare all people arrested on December 19 for participating in mass protest political prisoners and call for their immediate release.
- Declare its readiness to resume political dialogue with the government of Belarus only upon release of all political prisoners and abstention from new repressive acts against individuals, parties, NGOs, and press.
- Demand an independent international investigation of the December 19 events.
- Declare solidarity and offer assistance to those who suffered from beating, arrests, and other repressive acts, and to their families.

**We call on the government of Belarus** to immediately release all those arrested in relation with the December 19 events, stop repressions against its own citizens and return to the path of liberal reform in the country.

22 December, 2010

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## **Belarus' Return to Europe**

*- Scholarly Conference in Warsaw-*

**By Hanna Vasilevich**

This conference was held in Warsaw on November 12-14, 2010. Its full title was: "Returning to Europe; Belarus' Past and Future." It was organized by the Institute of Civic Space and Public Policy at the Lazarski University of Warsaw, Poland, and co-financed by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, the Open Society Institute, and the National Endowment for Democracy.

Experts from Belarus as well as from foreign countries (USA, Germany, Canada, Poland) have gathered in order to discuss Belarus' current problems that either directly or indirectly affect the process of its return to Europe.

The organizers have divided the event into the theoretical and practical parts. The first one included four panels, dedicated to the topics of historical perception of the Belarusian nation in eyes of others, to the issue of historical amnesia, various views on Belarus' history, as well as to the problems of education.

The titles and topics of individual panels indicated that the issue of return depends not only on internal factors (national identity built on Soviet legitimacy; the education deficit, due mainly to the historical amnesia, as well as the absence of a single conceptual state-promoted view on history), but also on external factors — perception of Belarusians by others, treatment of the Belarusian historiography by others, and problems due to the domination of positions held by neighbors, especially by Poland and Russia.

Questions have also been raised concerning the changing ways of teaching history during the 20 years of Belarus' independence (Astrouskaya), associated images of people's enemies, which create a passive attitude toward a given situation (Smalyanchuk). Special attention was paid to using the Great Patriotic War (Second World War) in forming ideals and values of today's Belarusian youth (Marples, Shybieka), and the intentional omission of other factors associated with these periods — repression (Kastalyan), or the activists of the Belarusian nationalism (Smalyanchuk).



*Participants of the Warsaw conference*

On the next day all participants were divided into individual groups/sections, designed to work out practical solutions of existing problems. The proposed section on the connection with European history and society has not evoked enough interest, and was cancelled.

I personally participated in the section that analyzed the perspectives of cooperation between Belarusian and European historians. Unfortunately, participants of this sections have not managed to find understanding in the matter of translating the works of our historians into basic foreign languages. Rather, it was being stressed that the Belarusian historiography and historians must prove that they are worthy of being considered by their foreign colleagues, and therefore translation of their works does not seem to be worthwhile... Additionally, the section emphasized the lacking knowledge of foreign languages by Belarusian historians, absence or limited contacts with foreign institutions — primarily with universities and research centers, a narrow specialization of contacts, mostly based on the research of the Second World War.

Despite its fairly skeptical and pessimistic attitude toward the current state of our historiography, in my opinion, the conference was generally successful, since, first of all, it gathered a great number of experts interested in returning Belarus to the European family of nations, and has indicated understanding of the existing problems and willingness to solve them.

*Hanna Vasilevich is a PhD student at Metropolitan University in Prague, Czech Republic.*

## NEWS BRIEFS

**October 17, 2010**

### **Venezuela, Belarus In New Oil Deal**

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez said that thanks to Venezuelan oil supplies, "Belarusian refineries will have no shortages for the next 200 years."

Under the deal Venezuela will supply Belarus with 30 million tons of crude oil over three years, beginning in 2011. The deal was reportedly signed during an October 16 visit to Minsk by the Venezuelan president.

Lukashenka: "Dear Hugo, I would like to thank you once again for the immense help which you [Venezuela] are giving the Belarusian people at this hard time." "

In responding, Chavez expressed his full support for Lukashenka continuing as Belarus president, saying he was confident Lukashenka would win another presidential term in the December election

*compiled from agency reports*

**November 3, 2010**

### **Massive explosion in Pinsk Factory**

The tragic accident which killed 14 people on October 25 in Pinsk was caused by the explosion of two boilers in the workshop of a plywood plant. Many workers are still in hospitals in Minsk, Brest, and Pinsk.

Brest Oblast Governor Kanstantsin Sumar has announced that on November 3 and 4 all national flags in the region will be flown at half-mast. Additionally, all places of entertainment will be closed and entertainment programs shown on local media will be canceled.

President Lukashenka has not yet commented on the accident,

**Source:** RFE/RL Belarus Service

**November 11, 2010**

### **Students forced to withdraw signatures of support**

According to students, a stranger who introduces himself as a member of the election committee keeps threatening them with accommodation and university problems unless they recall their signatures. Mikalai Statkevich's team has lodged a complaint to the CEC.

Baranavichy State University students say that a young man talked to them. He introduced himself as Pavel, a member of Baranavichy election committee, but did not show his ID. He described the possible consequences of giving signatures in support of Lukashenka's opponents.

**Student:** "He asked me: did you give your signatures in support of those candidates? I said: I did. I gave my signatures to four of them. He said: "Do you know that they are opposition members?" I replied that I did and that we seemed to live in a democratic country. And he said: "You live in a hostel and it is cheaper than renting a flat, you are a fifth-year student and you will graduate soon. Aren't you afraid of problems?"

Another Baranavichy State University student says that the same Pavel came to his room late in the evening. He said he was a member of some commission and of the official Youth Union. He had lists of signatures on him: either copies, or the original ones.

**Student:** "He took out a pile of lists and asked: "Did you affix your signature here?" I said: yes, I did. He said: "Do you know that they are opposition members? You see, you live in a hostel..." And I was surprised to find out how much he knew about me and about the problems I had had during the previous finals. He knew what exams I had failed and had resat. He simply told me: "Choose what you like: finals and an opportunity to continue your studies, so maybe you should withdraw your signature..."

The same Pavel visited signature collectors too. "Some 27-year-old man came up to me and asked: 'Are you ... (name here)?' I said it was me. "Do you collect signatures?" I said I did. He started threatening me right away. "Aren't you afraid of consequences?"

There is only one Pavel on the election committee – Pavel Papko representing the work collective of Baranavichy State University. He is the head of the Youth Character Building department of the university. His photo can be found on the university website.

**Source:** European Radio for Belarus, Andrei Yeliseyev

**December 9, 2010**

### **Belarusian Artist Jailed For Hooliganism**

Opposition activist artist Ales Pushkin has been sentenced to 13 days in jail for hooliganism by the district court on December 8. He was arrested on basis of a neighbor's battery complaint.

Pushkin's wife Yanina, said the neighbor came to their house earlier on December 8 and insulted her husband. She said that Pushkin simply asked him to leave, but did not attack him. She said he was arrested to prevent him from campaigning for the opposition. His jail term will end on December 21, two days after the presidential election.

During the presidential election in 2006, Pushkin was also behind bars, serving a 15-day prison term for using vulgar language.

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

**December 25, 2010**

### **Medvedev Belatedly Congratulates Lukashenka**

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev has congratulated his Belarusian counterpart, Alyaksandr Lukashenka, on winning a fourth presidential term, despite Western criticism that the poll was undemocratic and international outrage over a brutal crackdown on opposition supporters.

Russian news agencies quoted Medvedev's spokeswoman, Natalya Timakova, as saying a formal letter of congratulations had been sent to Lukashenka.

Earlier this week, Medvedev described the elections as an "internal affair" for Belarus, in contrast to expressions of outrage by the West over the conduct of elections and the beating and arrest of protesters and opposition candidates by security forces on December 19.

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

## HISTORICAL DATES

### November 2 - Remembrance Day (Dziady)

The day for commemorating ancestors with a special family meal, dating from pre-Christian times and later associated with Christianity's All Souls' Day. .

Since the Belarusian Declaration of Sovereignty in July, 1990, **Dziady** became an occasion for patriotic demonstrations emphasizing the victims and heroes of the historical past. Such observances were led by the Belarusian Popular Front (BPF) and other groups and included marches to **Kurapaty**, a site near Minsk where mass executions took place during the Stalinist era.

### November 1st through December 31, 1920

#### The Anti-Bolshevik Slucak Uprising

Anti-Bolshevik military action in the region of Slucak, organized by representatives of the Belarusian Democratic [National] Republic.

### November 1830 through 1831

The national liberation uprising against the Russian empire and for the renewal of the *Recpaspalitaja* (*Republic*) of Two Nations (Poland and Litva)

### November 3, 1882

The birthdate of **Jakub Kolas** - an outstanding Belarusian poet of the national renaissance era.

### November 26, 1930

The birthdate of **Uladzimir Karatkievic** - a noted Belarusian writer of the Soviet era. Most of his works dealt with Belarus' history. Deceased in 1984

### December 15, 1850

The birthdate of **Mikalaj Sudzilouski-Russell**, known as an activist in 19th century liberation movements, a scientist and doctor of medicine. He helped to organize Bulgarians' 1876 uprising against the Turkish rule. Lived and worked in Western Europe, USA, Hawaii. In 1900 elected a senator, and in 1901 the president of the republic of Hawaii.

### January 28, 1588

Third and final edition of the **Statute** (Collection of Laws) of the Grand Duchy of Litva was published and ratified. The Statute is a unique monument of the medieval Belarusian judicial thinking and literature.

### January 30, 1667

**Truce of Andrusava** concluded between Grand Duchy of Litva and Duchy of Moscow, terminating the bloodiest war in Belarus' history (1654-1667)

## Thoughts and Observations

### Belarus In A Season of Democratic Vagaries

By Jan Maksymiuk

Belarusian state-run television has begun to regularly broadcast messages that the current head of state is a dictator, the national economy is in shambles, the country has had no real elections since time immemorial, and that President Alyaksandr Lukashenka is on the verge of fleeing to his friend Hugo Chavez in Venezuela.

A joke? A showy way to commit mass suicide by the television management?

Neither.

There is a presidential election campaign in full swing in Belarus. Nine opponents of the incumbent president have been given two half-hours of live uncensored air-time on state television and radio respectively to present their programs and speak out against Lukashenka. They may be accused of slandering state institutions or officials and consequently removed from the race but this was a calculated risk that any of them needed to consider for himself in advance.

By virtue of the election law, Lukashenka, who is running for his fourth term, can take advantage of this election privilege as well. But, as in former presidential campaigns, he has chosen to ignore such appearances.

Instead, he appears on state television and radio almost ceaselessly as the president in office and says what he thinks about his adversaries whenever he feels an itch to do so. And he is quite sure that his challengers evidently lack screen appeal, having been allowed just an hour of free television time every five years in the past decade.

"They demanded live television broadcasts. They were given them. But today their campaigners and ideologists openly admit that it would be better for them to avoid being live on television," Lukashenka told his campaigners on November 29 in order to alleviate their fears that the alternative candidates could do any tangible harm to his reelection chances.

"They thought that they would show themselves on the screen as big orators, that they would say a few words and send people running to vote for them. It turns out that this is not so simple."

#### Playing To Brussels

Lukashenka is in his worst row with the Kremlin in his entire presidential career. To outweigh a massive defamation campaign from Moscow, he urgently needs to mend fences with Brussels.

Early this month Brussels sent two messengers to Minsk, Poland's Radek Sikorski and Germany's Guido Westerwelle, who imparted some good news to Lukashenka. If he holds an election that Brussels can accept as democratic, the European Union will disburse 3 billion euros (\$3.9 billion) from its coffers to support his regime.

For the time being, Lukashenka seems to be behaving in line with Brussels' expectations. The Central Election Commission registered nine challengers to Lukashenka without any problems, even though some commentators raised objections as to whether all of them actually collected the 100,000 signatures required for registration.

And now Lukashenka tolerantly suffers what his contenders say about him and his rule on state television and radio. Just a few examples:

**Vital Rymasheuski:** "Our authorities respect only one position -- that of power. We intended to elect a president but we elected a tsar who cares only for his sons and for how to stuff the pockets of his clerks with money."

**Mikalay Statkevich:** "As soon as they start counting votes, they will order the observers to move 10 meters away and stay there, or otherwise the police will take care of them. Pardon my saying, but the observers can watch only their own butts. And afterward, they will announce their results."

**Andrey Sannikau:** "Just imagine: It's December 20, we have won. The dictatorship is a thing of the past. And Lukashenka has fled to Venezuela on his personal plane. Millions of people are on the streets. They shout 'Hooray! Long live Belarus!' And all of this is live on Belarusian television. We have waited for this victory for 16 years. And this day has come at last!"

**Yaraslau Ramanchuk:** "I brought two potatoes with me to the studio. One potato is from Belarus, the other from Morocco in Africa. The most interesting fact is that the foreign potato is half the price of ours. In quality they are similar but their price is different. This shows the efficiency with which we use our land and how our agricultural sector works."

Uladzimer Nyaklyayeu, who is believed to be the strongest challenger of Lukashenka, is a Belarusian poet. Therefore, it is no wonder that he used his campaign appearance on television as an opportunity to quote from his writings. The following unlovely four-liner (rendered lightheartedly into English by your author) clearly alludes to Lukashenka's habit of roller-skiing in summer:

I am on the asphalt  
but I cannot glide.  
Are my skis lazy?  
Or am I out of my mind?

This seasonal outburst of democracy in Belarus has even produced a rehearsal of the popular revolution that his contenders want to launch on October Square in Minsk on December 19, immediately after the closure of polling stations.

Just 1,500 people turned out for the revolution rehearsal on November 24. This does not bode too well for the upcoming premiere. However, the most striking feature of this rehearsal was not its turnout but the transmission of the Belarusian opposition's appeal to Belarusians to take part in the rehearsal on November 24 and the opening night on December 19 by Russian television's First Channel in its prime-time newscast.

Thus, in this election campaign Brussels seems liable to prop up the Lukashenka regime with recognition and money, while Moscow is working to undermine it. And

Hugo Chavez is extending his helping hand to Alyaksandr Lukashenka across the ocean by regularly sending him tankers with Venezuelan oil to make up for reduced Russian supplies. And Viktor Yanukovych, Moscow's best friend in Kyiv, is helping Lukashenka transport Venezuelan oil from tankers mooring at the Odesa oil terminal to Belarus and to lessen Russian economic pressure on someone who once was Moscow's best friend in Minsk.

We are living in postmodernist times when, as the saying goes, the media validate reality. What we see in Belarus now is a reality validated by a B-movie comedy. Once this comedy is over, a grimmer movie is likely to catch our attention.

**Source:** RFE Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova Report, December 01, 2010

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## Internet Regulation Comes at a High Price

Belarus feels the impact of Internet regulation three months after passage of a new law. Users and providers alike have experienced privacy issues and censorship concerns. Belarusian journalist Iryna Vidanova investigates the impact of Decree #60

As fall arrives, it is children who are usually nervous about the first day of school. But on this September 1st, many adult Belarusians worried about the fate of their favourite news and information websites. The official "Day of Knowledge" was also the first day on which the state's Decree #60, in which all online information sources, networks and Internet systems hosted inside the country will be forced to register, would apply to websites. But three months after the controversial law came into force, there are still more rumours and hearsay than facts and figures regarding its real toll on media freedom.

### Muddied beginnings

Why is the accounting still unclear? The decree has been implemented piecemeal. The authorities decided to postpone parts of its enforcement until September 1st because neither the government nor the country's IT infrastructure was ready to review the requests of thousands of websites that applied for registration and to physically host them in Belarus.

According to the BBC Worldwide Monitoring, a total of 31,943 applications were filed by data processing centres, communications channels and websites by June 15th; 22,768 were approved and the rest were returned for revision. Of the more than 25,000 website applications, approximately 8,000 were not approved.

Independent online media have chosen different strategies to deal with the new law. Some hurried to be registered and hosted at home; others have stayed on their foreign servers and in their foreign domains, waiting to see what will happen if they do not comply.

The rules themselves remain vague. Formally, they only apply to those online resources, which are carrying out commercial activities in Belarus, and most independent news websites don't make any profit. As well, online versions of registered print periodicals are exempted

from further registration. Despite the outcry from independent media practitioners and rumours of "black lists" of online resources, no websites, not even those of the hardcore opposition, have been blocked.

### Digital dumping

Nevertheless, some signals are troubling. In mid-August, Internet service providers (ISPs) reported that they had already purchased and installed the equipment and software necessary for Internet filtering, at their own expense. At the moment, the equipment is for manual filtering, but even this type costs at least \$100,000. If the regime mandates that the ISPs install automatic filtering, the costs will be much higher.

Private ISPs, unable to increase prices for their services due to the artificially low prices - digital dumping - dictated the state monopoly "Beltelekom," are likely to reduce the quality and quantity of their services to recoup costs. So at the end of the day, it will be the users who will pay the price, both literally and figuratively, for the regime's Internet regulation.

### State intimidation

Since July 1, 2010, it has been possible to use Internet cafes only after presenting an ID. Clearly concerned about "big brother," the number of users has already decreased by 30 to 50 percent. As a result, many Internet cafes have gone bankrupt and their owners say that Decree #60 has destroyed this business. The impact of this intimidation is clear and the economic toll is limiting Internet access.

What is less obvious and noticeable is the hidden impact the law is having on privacy. While those who do not want to their online activities tracked can simply stop going to Internet cafes, many Internet users do not yet understand that the decree requires ISPs to maintain records of the traffic of all IP addresses, including those at home and at work, for one year. As a result, the state can request information about the Internet use of any user. It can also force ISPs to block access to any website within 24 hours of being requested to do so by a government regulator.

In the past, members of the political and civic opposition understood that the regime was monitoring their online and off-line communications. As a result, trainings on computer safety and secure communications regularly took place. The new decree, however, requires a shift in approach. In addition to improved computer security, activists must now become more familiar with circumvention tools that will allow them to avoid the government's attempts to censor the Internet.

### Getting around the filters

Sadly, it is not only activists who now must be safer online. The decree affects all Internet users, so the general public must also become more safety savvy. The more people who regularly use circumvention tools, the harder it will be for the government to pinpoint media activists who are reporting on politically sensitive issues, especially in the run up to the presidential elections.

As a result of governments' attempts to censor the Internet around the world, there are a growing number of circumvention tools and platforms, which make them available. Many activists and ordinary citizens are, however, intimidated by the seriousness implied by the term

"circumvention" and the technical challenges of using these programs.

To help a broader community learn about, feel comfortable with, and employ circumvention tools, a team of activists has created a "how to" series of comics and posted them online at [www.superpeif.com](http://www.superpeif.com). These easy-to-understand strips offer, "online security for dummies," explaining the basics of how to be safe on the Internet. Available in English, Russian and Belarusian, they employ a fun format that offers simple answers to the security issues that ordinary people face in their everyday, online life.

### Attack on the media

Are such tools necessary? Yes, in fact they are long overdue. In Belarus, the government's first attack against the online opposition took place in 2005. Since then, new media activists have been jailed and forced to leave the country, and websites have been blocked. The new Internet decree is only one part of broader strategy of the ongoing, systematic repression against independent media, both traditional and online.

In 2010, the offices of two leading independent news sources, the newspaper *Narodnaya Volya* and the opposition website Charter 97, were raided and their equipment confiscated. Oleg Bebenin, a founder of Charter 97 and a prominent journalist, may have paid the ultimate price. Frequently persecuted by the regime, his corpse was discovered by family and colleagues on September 3rd. Officially ruled a suicide, independent experts have offered allegations of foul play.

The government's credibility has also taken a hit. Rather than producing a decrease in the popularity of the independent media, those most at risk seem to be enjoying a growth in audience, especially online. This situation is probably due to the public's increasing appetite for objective news about the countries' presidential elections, to be held on December 19th, 2010. For example, according to the editor-in-chief of *Nasha Niva* (Our Field), one of the country's leading independent newspapers, the weekly's print run has increased by 14 percent over the past year and the audience of its online version ([www.nn.by](http://www.nn.by)) has grown by 40 percent.

As the presidential elections get closer, the real costs of Decree #60 and its regulation of the Internet will become clearer. Now, as the authorities apply all the repressive aspects of the new law, media activists will need to employ more tools in order to keep the Belarusian Internet free.

**Source:** Office for Democratic Belarus, October 14, 2020

## Quotes of Quarter

A few selected quotes by **ALEXANDER LUKASHENKA** at his press conference on December 20, the day after the election regarding press freedom and Western contacts:

"We'll publish all materials about the European partners".

"We'll reform the Internet... We especially waited till after the election"

"If your editorial offices are in other countries, we'll hold those countries responsible".

# Lukashenka Compromises To Gain Moscow's Support

By David Marples

On December 19, ten candidates will contest the Belarusian presidency. The election has been notably open, with several opposition candidates reaching out for support from Moscow, and the European Union offering encouragement to the incumbent president conditional on some basic requirements for a democratic process. However, belatedly the president has reached a pre-election agreement with Moscow on oil and gas imports to gain qualified support, at a high price.

Opinion polls suggest that although Alyaksandr Lukashenka leads his rivals, he lacks a clear majority. Lukashenka's electoral rating two weeks before the election was between 31 and 48 percent. Indeed, Lukashenka's closest rivals trailed: Uladzimir Nyaklayeu, leader of the "Speak the Truth" campaign on 15.1 percent to 16.8 percent, Andrei Sannikau, 8.6 percent to 10.6 percent, and Yaraslav Ramanchuk a respectable fourth (6.1 percent to 8.2 percent), with the remainder of the field well behind. According to the poll conducted by the Ukrainian agency SOCIUM, approximately one-third of voters were still undecided (<http://nekliayev.org/en/news/actual/socopros-v-belorussii-lukashenko-vinoven-453-ego-prezidentskiie-reiating-314.html>, [www.belmy.by](http://www.belmy.by), December 8).

The recent rift between Belarus and Russia appeared to make Lukashenka more vulnerable. Moscow made it clear that it would not necessarily guarantee another "elegant" Lukashenka victory and last September on his video-blog, President Dmitry Medvedev commented that the Belarusian leader had broken all the rules of decency ([www.rt.com](http://www.rt.com), October 4). The language was ominously similar to the letter with which he severed relations last fall with former Ukrainian President, Viktor Yushchenko (Interfax, August 11).

The Belarusian authorities had to act promptly to censor several Russian television programs that attacked and ridiculed their president. However, Lukashenka received unexpected backing from the Lithuanian President, Dalia Grybauskaitė ([www.charter97.org](http://www.charter97.org), November 23), and after a November visit to Minsk, Guido Westerwelle and Radoslaw Sikorski, the Foreign Ministers of Germany and Poland respectively, informed Lukashenka that if the election was conducted fairly, they would use their influence to solicit a \$3.8 billion EU loan for Belarus, with the assistance of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) ([www.thenews.pl](http://www.thenews.pl), November 22).

Thus, the election campaign for several weeks turned Belarusian politics on its head. The EU appeared to be behind Lukashenka, while the opposition candidates, particularly Sannikau and Neklyayeu appealed to Russia. However, Moscow declined to endorse any of the nine candidates, despite support for them at lower levels of the Russian hierarchy. It left the door open for negotiations in the knowledge that Lukashenka would be in Moscow in early December for talks on the introduction of a common economic space (along with Kazakhstan), as well as meetings of the Eurasian Economic Commu-

nity, the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the CIS (Belorusskiy Partizan, December 10).

While paying some lip service to a democratic election, the president distanced himself from "the circus." Lukashenka informed a German audience that he expected a "landslide" victory and that the entire opposition between them could only amass about 1.5 percent (RTT News, November 15). The dismissive tone echoed his mid-September comment (a familiar one) that the Belarusian oppositionists were "enemies of the people" (RIA Novosti, September 16). Meanwhile, Lukashenka increased the average wage to \$500 per month and promised it would increase to \$1,000 by 2015 (SB Belarus' Segodnya, December 7).

During the December "debate" on Belarusian Television, Lukashenka declined to appear. The program announced that the nine candidates offered identical programs—a comment repeated by Lukashenka a few days later (SB-Belarus' Segodnya, December 8). Nyaklayeu walked out in disgust (*Nasha Niva*, December 4). Yet, the opposition candidates did not help their own cause. Sannikau and Statkevich appealed to viewers to gather on the "square" (Kastrichnitskaya Square in the center of Minsk) at 8.00 pm on December 19, without giving specific reasons for doing this. Despite some friendly words and cooperation between the Nyaklayeu and Sannikau camps, the opposition failed to unite behind a common candidate: personal ambitions took priority.

Lukashenka's All-Belarusian Popular Assembly was held directly after the TV debate on December 6-7, with 2,500 selected delegates from different sectors of society, who received gifts including a watch and microwave oven, as well as having all their travel and accommodation paid at the state's expense (Nezavisimaya Gazeta, December 6). In return, they had to endure several Lukashenka speeches based on his election platform, published in the newspaper Respublika (November 26), about the success of the economy and his future plans. Lukashenka then flew to Moscow.

Unexpectedly, a private meeting between Medvedev and Lukashenka took place immediately after the Interstate Council of the Eurasian Economic Community, during which both sides made conciliatory moves. Medvedev agreed to remove customs duties from exports of oil provided that the Belarusian side accepted the conditions of the Customs Union with Russia and Kazakhstan by January 1. Lukashenka agreed promptly to this request, which indicated his willingness to introduce the Russian ruble as the common currency once the Union comes into effect formally on January 1, 2012 (RIA Novosti, December 10). Lukashenka commented that the agreement would elevate relations with Russia to a new stage ([www.telegraf.by](http://www.telegraf.by), December 9).

The price for the latest Lukashenka victory could be a high one. Lukashenka will secure Moscow's qualified support in the election (though Russian observers may offer some general objections to the way the campaign has been conducted) but he has effectively conceded economic sovereignty to his neighbor. Gas prices will rise in January 2011 from \$185 to \$225 per thousand cubic meters, and as candidate Viktor Tyarashchanka has noted,

the average debt per Belarusian citizen is now \$2,600 and the currency has depreciated against the US dollar by more than 4,000 times since 1994 ([www.telegraf.by](http://www.telegraf.by), November 25).

Whether Lukashenka needed to pay such a price is a moot point, but ultimately he responded to Moscow's pressure to ensure his own immediate survival.

**Source:** Eurasia Daily Monitor Volume: 7 Issue: 225, December 16, 2010

## MEDIA WATCH

### OSCE Media Freedom Representative: Belarus Needs Media Pluralism

*Press release*

MINSK, 27 October 2010 - Belarusian media and society need media pluralism, the OSCE Representative on Media Freedom, Dunja Mijatovic, said today, adding that her office is ready to offer support and advice as the country liberalizes and modernizes its media policy.

Speaking at the end of a visit to Belarus at the invitation of the government, Mijatovic said she was **"encouraged by the readiness of high-level officials to discuss the problems faced by independent media in Belarus in an open and constructive manner"** but added that there was a "lack of progress in bringing the media situation more in line with the OSCE commitments".

Mijatovic said improvement was sorely needed as pluralism was non-existing in the broadcasting sector, restricted in the print media and vulnerable on the Internet.

"I urged my counterparts to lift all current administrative restrictions applied against independent media. Warnings and closures of newspapers have an enormous chilling effect and should not be used or provided for in the law. The authorities should also take urgent measures to support the much weakened independent media and enable the creation of independent self-regulatory mechanisms that are not part of the government bodies," she said.

**She said she was encouraged by a common understanding about the need for a gradual overhaul of the media legislation.**

"The legislative framework for the media should foster pluralism. I hope that in the future we can work together on amendments of the current media law, on privatization of the state broadcast media, on decriminalisation of defamation and the adoption of an access to information law."

Mijatovic took part in a roundtable discussion on Internet developments, organized jointly by her Office and the Information Ministry, during which participants discussed how Belarus newly adopted Internet legislation compares to international standards.

"I raised my concerns about some provisions of the new legislation, such as the requirement for mandatory identification of all users, and the vaguely defined limitations and bans on illegal information I called upon the

government not to design or apply new legislation that would limit freedom of the media on the Internet," she said, adding that the **Belarusian side agreed to consult her Office and civil society when reviewing current and adopting future Internet legislation.**

She also welcomed the Belarusian authorities' invitation to the OSCE to review the investigation of the death of Belarusian journalist Aleh Byabenin, the founder of Charter97.org. Two experts sent by the OSCE are in Belarus to examine and review evidence related to the death.

Mijatovic met with Foreign Minister Sergei Martynov, Information Minister Oleg Proleskovsky, Presidential Aide Vsevolod Yanchevsky, Central Electoral Commission Head Lidiya Yermoshina and civil society representatives during her three-day visit. She also visited the Belarusian Association of Journalists and the independent newspaper *Narodnaya Volya* and met with journalists

**BR Editor's note:** The OSCE Media Representative's press release shows her good intentions. However, as evidenced by the sentences printed **bold** by BR, Ms. Mijatovich herself is very naive with respect to the attitude and statements offered by the regime's officials, or the press release preparer purposely wishes to present those officials in a positive light.

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### Russia Concedes to Belarus On Oil Exports Duties 1 Week Before Election in Minsk

By Natalya Vasilyeva

MOSCOW (AP) - Russia has agreed to scrap duties on oil it supplies to Belarus starting next year, and Minsk will pass on export duties on products made from the Russian oil to Moscow, the neighbors' presidents said Thursday.

Talks broke down on Wednesday, fueling fears of a dispute that might hit energy supplies to Europe. Europe is thought to get around 20 million tons of crude oil through Belarus annually, and has lost out on energy supplies in the past due to Russia's spats with its neighbors.

Russian officials are playing the deal as a \$4 billion gift to the Belarusian economy, agreed upon a week before presidential elections in Belarus.

Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko called the deal "a major step forward".

Moscow earlier insisted that it would scrap duties only for oil supplied to Minsk for its domestic needs, but has now agreed to broaden that to all oil exports to Belarus.

Russia's Economic Development Minister Elvira Nabiullina told Russian news agencies that Moscow would not immediately benefit financially from the deal.

The authoritarian Lukashenko is a candidate is next week's elections, and is unlikely to allow rivals a serious chance to end his 16-year reign as president.

Thursday's oil deal was inked as Russian, Belarus and Kazakhstan agreed to create a fully fledged common economic space by 2012 after the three nations set up a customs union this year. Lukashenko said the deal creates "economically one country of 170 million people."

Although the agreement will do away with all trade barriers between the countries, there was no mention of a common currency.

Medvedev said after the signing ceremony that the new economic bloc is open to new members. Lukashenko said that "the European Union is already thinking about building relations with us" but insisted that it is the EU, not the three nations, that should adapt to the union's terms if it wants to join. He suggested the bloc adopt the name "Euroasian Union."

**Source:** Associated Press, 9 December 2010

## LATEST EVENTS reports, statements, articles

### Lukashenka Claims Victory Amid Mounting Criticism

By Daisy Sindelar

Belarusian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka has claimed victory for a fourth term in office in an election marred by violence and claims of massive falsification.

The head of the Central Election Commission, Lidiya Yermoshina, announced that Lukashenka won a decisive first-round victory with nearly 80 percent of the vote.

But the sweeping official victory was accompanied by brutal violence, as police and security forces clashed with opposition demonstrators, beating and arresting hundreds of people, including seven of the nine presidential candidates facing off against Lukashenka.

One of the presidential candidates, 64-year-old Uladzimer Nyaklyaeu, was arrested while lying in a hospital bed after being beaten unconscious by security forces during the protests



... The unrest has sparked angry condemnations from foreign officials. In Brussels, a statement by EU foreign-policy chief Catherine Ashton condemned the beatings and arrests, "in particular the beating and detention of several opposition leaders, including a number of presidential candidates, and she calls on the authorities to release those arrested."

Jerzy Buzek, the president of the European Parliament, demanded that Lukashenka punish those responsible, saying it "casts a shadow over the presidential election."



*Opposition candidate Andrey Sannikau lies on a street after being beaten by police.*

... "I had very much hoped that this time we would be able to make a more positive assessment," said Ambassador Geert-Hinrich Ahrens, head of the OSCE/ODIHR long-term election observation mission. "Unfortunately, this is not possible in light of the flawed vote count and the authorities' heavy-handed response to yesterday's demonstrations."

Tony Lloyd, the head of the short-term observer mission, said the brutal crackdown during the protests "swept away" the incremental reforms that had been witnessed before the election.

"The violent attacks and arrests of most of the presidential candidates, as well as hundreds of activists, journalists, and civil society representatives, is the backdrop against which this election will now be judged," he said. "The people of Belarus deserved better."

Moscow saw the vote in a more favorable light. An observer mission from the Russia-led Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) said the conduct of the election was legitimate. And President Dmitry Medvedev, speaking in Latvia, said the vote was an "internal matter" for Belarus and a potential step forward in its development.

... Lukashenka, whose relations with both the West and Russia are chronically fractious, is seen as frequently playing each side against the other. In this instance, a last-minute deal with Moscow overturning a crippling \$4 billion energy export tax may be seen as Lukashenka putting himself in Moscow's corner, possibly relieving him of obligations to provide a free and fair vote to the West.

Independent polls indicate Lukashenka, while still a powerful and charismatic leader, does not enjoy the groundswell of support that his official 80 percent returns suggest.

"A poll conducted by Polish-supported Belsat Television just ahead of the vote suggested that Lukashenka's support was as low as 30 percent, a number that would have fallen far short of the 50 percent needed to clear a first-round win.

The Belsat poll suggests that, if forced into a second round, Lukashenka might have faced possible defeat at the hands of one of the opposition candidates, who would have the collective backing of more than 40 percent of the voters.

**Source:** Special report by Daisy Sindelar, with RFE/RL's Belarus Service and agency reports, Dec. 20, 2010





*Massive post-election protest*

## Seven Belarusian Presidential Candidates Face 15 Years In Prison

Belarusian human rights organization Viasna (Spring96) says seven presidential candidates who ran against the country's authoritarian leader could face up to 15 years in prison in the wake of postelection violence and massive arrests.

It reported that the security service, which is still called KGB, has filed charges against 20 top opposition figures, including the seven presidential candidates, for organizing mass disturbances.

They include 64-year-old Uladzimir Nyaklyaeu, who was beaten unconscious during the protest and subsequently snatched from his hospital bed by men in plainclothes.

A KGB spokesman, Alyksandr Antonovich, declined to comment.

More than 600 people, including the candidates, were arrested during mass protests after the December 19 election that gave Alyksandr Lukashenka a fourth term in office with some 80 percent of the vote. The Interior Ministry said the activists were given sentences from between five to 15 days.

Two of the arrested candidates were later released, but both of them -- Ryhor Kastusyou and Dzmitry Vus -- were summoned to KGB offices afterwards for further questioning.

Earlier, Justice Minister Viktor Golovanov has warned that political parties associated with the protests in Minsk may be "liquidated."

... Meanwhile, international criticism is continuing to pour in against Belarus' crackdown on opposition protesters.

**Source:** Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, December 22, 2010

## HELSINKI COMMISSION CONDEMNS VIOLENCE AMID ELECTIONS IN BELARUS

WASHINGTON--Despite some improvements, the violence against opposition demonstrators and journalists in Belarus during Sunday's election shows the long road ahead for democratic progress there, leaders of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (U.S. Helsinki Commission) said today.

"We resolutely condemn the crackdown by authorities, including misuse of forces against peaceful demonstrators and journalists attempting to exercise their professional duties," said U.S. Senator Benjamin L. Cardin (D-MD), Helsinki Commission Chairman. "The detention of most presidential candidates opposing incumbent Alexander Lukashenka, hundreds of democratic activists and journalists is deplorable as is the authorities' blocking of access to independent websites."

Helsinki Commission staff observed the election as part of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Parliamentary Assembly observation mission. Chairman Cardin and a U.S. Congressional delegation met last year with President Lukashenka and pressed for democratic reforms in the country.

"This election showed some procedural improvements," said Co-Chairman Congressman Alcee L. Hastings (D-FL), "Despite more open political activity, including greater opportunities for candidates to speak on live television, the overall political environment in Belarus remains undemocratic, with the electoral system at every level dominated by the regime, and with the state media disproportionately favoring the incumbent. While ballots appeared to have been cast in an orderly and efficient manner, observers assessed the vote count conduct negatively in nearly half of precincts observed."

The percentage of negative assessments equals that of the flawed 2008 parliamentary elections in Belarus.

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*The Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, also known as the U.S. Helsinki Commission, is an independent agency of the Federal Government charged with monitoring compliance with the Helsinki Accords and advancing comprehensive security through promotion of human rights, democracy, and economic, environmental and military cooperation in 56 countries. The Commission consists of nine members from the U.S. Senate, nine from the House of Representatives, and one member each from the Departments of State, Defense, and Commerce*

### Quotes of Quarter

Film director **Yury Khashchavatski** in an interview with the Czech journalist Petra Procházková:

"Europe is cooperating with a bandit in the person of Lukashenka. By giving him loans you are punishing us, the citizens. It is with your money that he's able to maintain a huge police and army apparatus that is beating us up... and we'll have to keep repaying these loans for years. This is absurd! "

### Belarus Police Arrest Opposition Leaders

By Michael Schwartz

Minsk, Belarus — The government of president Alexander G. Lukashenko on Monday carried out a sweeping crackdown on opposition leaders and their supporters, making arrests that drew scathing condemnations from western governments and seemed to imperil recent efforts to improve relations.

By late in the day, at least six of the nine opposition candidates who ran against Mr. Lukashenko in elections on Sunday were under arrest. The arrests followed an attempt by opposition supporters to storm the main government headquarters here in a futile effort to block the suspiciously lopsided re-election of Mr. Lukashenko, one of the world's most authoritarian presidents.

Mr. Lukashenko said at a news conference that more than 600 others had been detained. With so many arrests, few expected a continuation of the protests on Monday as some had wished. Throughout the day the streets of Minsk were largely quiet, blanketed in a heavy snow.

Western officials expressed particular concern over the treatment of Vladimir Neklyayev, a leading opposition candidate, who was savagely beaten Sunday night, and later taken by unidentified men from the hospital where he was being treated.

... Western monitors offered a harsh assessment of Sunday's elections, which Mr. Lukashenko officially won with just under 80 percent of the vote. The monitors highlighted apparent fraud in the vote tally and strongly condemned police violence on Sunday night.

... Mr. Lukashenko, who has led this former Soviet republic for 16 years and is often referred to as Europe's last dictator, responded with what appeared to a mix of irritation and bewilderment.

"We did just as you demanded. What complaints could you have?" He said, speaking about the Western assessments. "openness and transparency were so high that people mistook these elections for a reality show."

Mr. Lukashenko did make a concerted effort to give these elections at least the appearance of legitimacy. He allowed just about anyone to register as a candidate and permitted campaigning more or less freely around the country, a novelty here. For the first time candidates participated in televised debates in which they criticized the president.

Western observers did note the improvements, though they said these were largely undermined by infractions committed on election day.

The assessment could harm efforts by western governments and Belarus to improve their often-strained relations. The foreign ministers of Germany and Poland had offered Mr. Lukashenko about \$3.5 billion in aid on condition that this election be deemed free and fair.

... A modicum of support came from the Kremlin, which in recent months has publicly clashed with Mr. Lukashenko. Russia's president, Dmitri Medvedev, called

the elections "an internal affair" and pledged Russia's support.

Source: Excerpts from *New York Times*, December 20, 2010

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### Wrong Carrot, Wrong Stick

By Edward Lucas

.... Carrots and sticks are a good way of moving the recalcitrant, in agriculture and geopolitics alike. But what if the donkey is too thick-skinned to mind about the stick and says he prefers thistles to carrots?

That is the upshot of yesterday's dismal news from Belarus. The country's autocratic leader, Aleksandr Lukashenko, has retained power in a presidential election that outside observers reckon was grossly rigged. He has cracked down on the opposition: latest reports say that seven opposition candidates are under arrest. One, Vladimir Neklyayev, was seriously beaten, then hauled from his hospital bed in the early hours of the morning and taken to an unknown destination. Police arrested hundreds of opposition protestors in the center of Minsk and many others in the provinces.

.... Nobody expected Mr. Lukashenko to leave power promptly. But the hope was that he would at least allow some semblance of a fair election and refrain from persecuting its losers. That would have allowed the EU to say that its policy of "engagement" with the regime was working: the idea, long spearheaded by Mr. Sikorski, was to drop sanctions gradually, which supposedly risk driving Belarus further into Russia's arms, and to offer a series of incentives to the nomenklatura—the Belarusian elite. "We have to make them think that their future, and their children's future, is in Brussels not Moscow," a senior official explained.

On a parallel track, America (which also has sanctions on Belarus and withdrew its Ambassador in early 2008) has tried charm too. A meeting between U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and her Belarusian counterpart on December 1st praised Belarus for its decision to dispose of its highly enriched uranium stocks by 2012.

It all made sense on paper. Belarus is a well-educated country on the EU's doorstep. It would integrate far more easily into the EU than other, more talked-about candidates such as Ukraine (seen as too big and too corrupt) or Turkey (too big and too Muslim). Nor is it like Russia, handicapped by dreams of regaining lost superpower status, or by historical hang-ups about neighboring countries. Seen from the diplomatic salon, Belarus looked like a prime target.

... The big weakness in the Western approach was the assumption that Mr. Lukashenko was now scared of Russia and that the Russian authorities were repelled by him. Some evidence supported that: the earthy, ill-educated Mr. Lukashenko (a former collective farm manager) got on badly with Vladimir Putin and even worse with his nominal successor in the Kremlin, Dmitri Medvedev. In a startling public outburst this summer, Mr. Medvedev denounced Mr. Lukashenko as corrupt. Russian television picked up the theme enthusiastically. That eruption followed a simmering row over unpaid gas bills (cheap Russian energy keeps Belarus afloat).

Many thought that the Kremlin would pick and back its own candidate for the presidential election. Faced with a choice of being toppled by the Kremlin or making peace with the West, surely Mr. Lukashenko would choose the latter. Not so. Perhaps to humiliate Mr. Medvedev, perhaps to forestall the West, Russia's government (headed by Mr. Putin) speedily repaired relations with the regime in Minsk. A humiliated Mr. Medvedev said tautly that the election was an "internal matter."

.... And what of the wily, volatile Mr. Lukashenko? No great brain when it comes to economics or history, he understands the geopolitics of his own region. When tempers cool, he will continue playing east and west against each other. He knows how short memories are in Brussels and Moscow. After all, he's been around a long time—and he intends to keep it that way.

*Edward Lucas is Senior Editor at The Economist and Senior Fellow at the Center for European Policy Analysis.*

**Source:** Excerpts from Central Europe Digest, 20 December 2010

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## **Opinion: The EU Has no Choice But to Continue Dialogue With Belarus**

*Europe should condemn Lukashenko's harsh suppression of opposition protests, says Deutsche Welle's Ingo Mannteufel — but there is no way it can avoid engaging in dialogue with his regime.*

**By Ingo Mannteufel**

It was clear from the start that incumbent Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko would have himself declared the resounding winner of the election, just as it was clear that afterwards, he would not be soft on the opposition. The adeptly staged polls were meant to simulate liberalisation without allowing any real democratic change to take place.

This political farce was by no means directed at Belarus's citizens, but at the European public. After all, the European Union has taken a step towards Belarus these past months.

.... One shouldn't be under any illusions about Lukashenko: There will never be any real democratic reforms in Belarus with him in power.

### **Staged for Europe**

Those who now demand an end to Europe's dialogue with Lukashenko may prove their moral superiority, but at the same time they make clear that they know nothing about Belarus. It may be difficult to understand, but the EU is right to continue its dialogue with the Lukashenko regime despite election fraud and the arrest of hundreds of opposition leaders.

.... The EU's high representative for foreign affairs, Catherine Ashton, is right to demand the immediate release of the detained opposition leaders.

### **Split post-Soviet society**

The social situation in Belarus is another reason for maintaining this dialogue. Like in most post-Soviet states, society there is deeply split: The vast majority of the population are apolitical and simply endure authoritarian policies. The total political and economic demise that came as a result of the Soviet Union's collapse 20 years ago has left its traumatic mark on society and robbed many people of the hope that political change is possible at all.

.... Only a relatively small part of society advocates political change: mainly well-educated citizens, intellectuals, small business owners and many students, most of whom live in Minsk and other large cities. Yesterday in Minsk, they took to the streets to support the opposition. These people want a democratic Belarus in Europe. To ensure that their numbers grow in the long term, they should be supported by a relaxing of visa restrictions, granting small consumer loans via the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development as well as civilian projects and cooperation in the educational sector. And that can only be done through dialogue with Lukashenko's regime.

**Source:** Excerpts from *Deutsche Welle*, December 20, 2010

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## **In Belarus, a Slide Toward Eastern Aggression**

**By Anne Applebaum**

On Sunday, the nation of Belarus held presidential elections. On Sunday evening, the police officers of Belarus handed out their verdict. By midnight, tens of thousands of people had been chased out of the main square in central Minsk, hundreds had been arrested and hundreds more severely beaten. Young people limped away from demonstrations with broken arms, bloody heads. Seven out of nine Belarusian presidential candidates were in jail.

...Police arrested journalists, too, breaking into offices and shutting down their operations. Later, they also arrested artists and actors at home. Just for good measure, cyber police also shut down Web sites and social networking sites — Twitter, Facebook and their Belarusian equivalents — and blocked access to foreign sites that carried news of the events in Minsk. Borrowing tactics from their counterparts down the road in Moldova, Belarusian special forces — still known, creepily, as the KGB — apparently sent in thugs to join the Election Day demonstrations, break windows in the parliament and throw stones, the better to justify the crackdown.

All in all, it was a stunning display of the regime's weakness: Indeed, the violence that unfolded in the wake of Alexander Lukashenka's fourth presidential election "victory" can only be explained as a sign of the Belarusian dictator's failure. After the polls closed, Lukashenka claimed to have received nearly 80 percent of the vote. But politicians who are that popular have no need to beat, arrest and harass their opponents, send provocateurs into a crowd or shut down Web sites.

And indeed, Lukashenka's true support is thought to be rather lower than 80 percent. Belsat — a Polish-based television station that broadcasts into Belarus — reckons Lukashenka's actual support is closer to 30 percent, based on polls taken over several months.

...It also explains why truckloads of riot police were sent out to wait for demonstrators in central Minsk before they even arrived.

Under these circumstances, Lukashenka's "victory" also means that — after a long flirtation with the liberal West and the authoritarian East — the Belarusian dictator has made his choice. Last month, the foreign ministers of Germany and Poland (yes, I am married to the latter) went to Minsk with an offer: In exchange for free elections, the European Union offered a major aid package, more open borders, and the potential for a deeper economic and political relationship. Since then, however, Lukashenko has repaired his skittish relationship with the Kremlin and signed a oil deal with Moscow, ensuring that his country's old economic model remains at least partly intact.

... And that, for the moment, is it. Statements will be issued, sanctions might be declared. Lukashenka could have a hard time getting a visa to Berlin or London. But in truth, the West has few carrots to offer unpopular dictators — even unpopular dictators who share borders with Europe — other than free trade and the long-term possibility of integration and economic growth. European foreign ministers cannot guarantee Lukashenka personal wealth. They cannot offer corrupt oil deals.

...This, then, is what the "decline of the West" looks like in the eastern half of Europe: The United States and Europe, out of money and out of ideas, scarcely fund the Belarusian opposition. Russia, flush with oil money once again, has agreed to back Lukashenka and fund his regime. Let's hope it costs them a lot more than they expect.

**Source:** Excerpts from the *Washington Post*, December 21, 2010;

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## A backfire in Belarus

### Editorial-Opinion

*Washington Post*, 21 December 2010

For several years, diplomats in the European Union have nourished the notion that Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, long known as "Europe's last dictator," could be teased away from his alliance with Russia and induced to lead his country toward genuine independence and democracy. On Sunday night, that project blew up in Minsk's Independence Square.

... The opposition protest was the largest ever staged against Mr. Lukashenko - a sign that the country may finally have had enough of his Soviet-style regime. But then his security forces moved in. They attacked the protesters, beating many and arresting several hundred. Opposition activists, journalists and even artists in other parts of the city were rounded up. By Monday, seven of the nine opposition presidential candidates were reported arrested; one, Vladimir Nyaklyayeu, was missing after having been beaten unconscious.

In a single stroke, Mr. Lukashenko thus spelled the end of efforts by the European Union and the United States to cultivate him. A \$3.6 billion package of European aid he was offered in exchange for holding a free and fair election will surely be scrapped. The Obama administration, which recently struck a deal with the regime to remove its stockpile of highly enriched uranium, issued an appropriately harsh statement in which it condemned the repression and said it would not accept the election results as legitimate.

Mr. Lukashenko, who has been trying to play the West and Russia against each other, may now feel he can find succor in Moscow, which declared his crackdown "an internal matter for Belarus." But Western governments should ensure that he pays a price for his behavior. Sanctions against Mr. Lukashenko and key associates should be reinstated and strengthened, with special attention for those involved in Sunday's events.

The episode may also offer President Obama a chance to explore whether the "reset" of U.S.-Russian relations can be extended to Belarus. For its own reasons, the Kremlin despises Mr. Lukashenko, and the Russian media it controls have cynically campaigned for the opposition. This would be a good time to challenge the government of Vladimir Putin to give up its imperialist ambitions in the region and cooperate in isolating a regime that is overdue for change.

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## No Business as Usual

*The following is the conclusion of an Economist blog by Edward Lewis, dated December 23, 2010. In his blog the author questions some of the premises stated in a New York Times article by the four European Foreign Ministers "Lukashenka the Loser" (see p.4 of this issue)*

By Edward Lewis

**The article is a fine start. But without followup, it will be just words. Here are a few possible suggestions, in no particular order.**

1) Strength in numbers. Where are Urmas Paet, Ģirts Kristovskis, Audronius Ažubalis, Mikuláš Dzurinda, János Martonyi, Alexander Stubb and the other European foreign ministers? (they represent Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Hungary and Finland). The danger is that the article looks like a disappointed squawk from the authors of a failed policy, rather than a menacing growl from a united Europe.

2) Offer immediate EU scholarships for those students thrown out of university for their part in the protests

3) Set up a legal defence fund to pay the defence costs of those being prosecuted

4) Institute an immediate visa ban so that those involved in election falsification, illegal detention, beatings and show trials are unable to travel to any EU country.

5) Invite Joanna Survilla, president of the (unrecognised) Belarusian government-in-exile to high level meetings in EU capitals.

6) Issue strong simultaneous protests to Belarusian ambassadors in all EU countries

7) Say that unless protestors are released, all 27 EU ambassadors will be withdrawn

8) Make life difficult for Belarusian state agencies and entities to access the international financial system (banks, bond markets)

9) Apply EU competition law strictly to any exports of Belarusian goods, especially gas or oil,

10) Suspend Belarus's membership of the Council of Europe parliamentary assembly.

**What do readers think? I suspect that a combination of these might have more effect than a finely couched op-ed.**

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## Belarus: That's enough democracy

*There is not much keeping Alexander Lukashenko's unpleasant regime from collapsing*

Alexander Lukashenko had a master plan for his reelection. He would put his country, Belarus, up for auction. Poland's foreign minister Radek Sikorski said Belarus could expect \$3.5bn in EU loans and credit if the election was free and fair. The president played along. Opposition candidates were given airtime on state television. There were emollient statements in Lukashenko's manifesto about the rule of law and private property.

With one week to go, Russia put in its bid. Moscow dropped duties on oil exports and kept gas prices low. As election day approached, Facebook, Twitter, LiveJournal and Gmail were shut down. When 10,000 people took to the streets to protest against vote-rigging, it was back to business as usual for the man dubbed Europe's last dictator.

Out came truncheons and the agents provocateurs. A presidential candidate who had been beaten unconscious by police was dragged from his hospital bed. Six of the nine other candidates were under arrest. At the end of the day more than 600 opposition activists had been rounded up. And in his trademark high-pitched voice, Lukashenko said he had thwarted a revolution. There would be no more "senseless democracy" in Belarus. Monitors for the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe said the poll was flawed and the Russia-led observer mission said there was nothing wrong. Russia's shrinking violet of a president, Dmitry Medvedev, said the Belarus elections were an internal affair.

This is far from being the end of the story. Lukashenko can reappoint himself president, but his populism is imploding. His pre-election borrowing spree has left him with \$11bn in short-term debt and his hard currency reserves are dwindling. Russia, the motherland, is no longer as generous as it was with its prodigal sons.

.... Lukashenko can be bought, but he can't be relied on. Russia is unwilling to fund his country's deficit, which has reached 14% of GDP.

.... The former collective farm manager would love to be hailed as the father of the post-communist nation, but dictatorship is uniting Belarus against him.

**Source:** Excerpts from the Editorial, *The Guardian*, 22 December 2010

## A Nasty Surprise in Belarus

*A rigged vote and an orgy of repressive violence demand a tough response from the West*

FAKED votes, cracked skulls, a jailed opposition, beaten-up protesters and relations with Europe in tatters. This, in short, is the result of December's presidential election in Belarus, in which Alyaksandr Lukashenka, a Soviet thug, declared himself the winner with an improbable 80% of the poll and returned to govern for a fourth time.

European leaders, who had promised Mr Lukashenka cash as a reward for decent elections, seemed caught by surprise. They should not have been. Some have now condemned Mr Lukashenka's actions. For the sake of the region, the Europeans need to go much further.

Opposition leaders in Belarus were under no illusions before the vote. But they saw a chance to appeal directly to the people and to demand real elections. By contrast, Mr Lukashenka saw a chance to cleanse Belarus of any opposition.

.... Mr Lukashenka has been protected by his ability to play Russia off against the West. Although Russia lost patience with him last summer—and even encouraged the Belarus opposition—the risk of another colour revolution ultimately outweighed the inconvenience of dealing with him. He got the Kremlin's support in a deal shortly before the elections—and the violence is only likely to bind him closer. Mr Lukashenka is again a pariah in the West and more dependent on Moscow than ever: both Dmitry Medvedev, Russia's president, and Patriarch Kirill, the head of Russian Orthodox Church, made a show of congratulating Mr Lukashenka on his victory.

So far, the EU and America have refused to recognise the legitimacy of the elections and are demanding the release of prisoners—to little avail. Yet the West erred by allowing itself to be duped by Mr Lukashenka and his anti-Russian rhetoric. In future Mr Lukashenka's quarrels with Russia should not make him any more acceptable to the West.

The West now needs to speak with one voice and reimpose a suspended visa ban on Mr Lukashenka and his officials. It should target the foreign bank accounts and property of Belarusian functionaries. And it should resist the temptation to reward Mr Lukashenka for releasing prisoners. He is a dealer who likes to trade hostages for money. Paying a ransom would only encourage more hostage-taking.

Not only Belarus is at stake. The country is a testing-ground for other former Soviet states. Many of the repressive methods tried out in Belarus are later taken up in Russia by Vladimir Putin's regime. Whereas the colour revolutions represented the spread of Western values eastward, the violence in Belarus represents the advance of Russia's political model westward.

**Source:** Excerpts from *The Economist*, December 28, 2010

# Blood and Special Operations in Belarus Politics

By Yury Drakakhrust

Presidential candidates severely beaten. Almost 700 protesters arrested. Criminal charges filed, and some recantations issued by protest participants that are reminiscent of Stalin's 1930s show trials. Ongoing arrests. House searches. These are the results of this year's presidential election in Belarus.

The official elections results were no less scandalous: 79 percent for incumbent President Alyaksandr Lukashenka. That, however, has been overshadowed by what has become a symbol of this campaign -- snow colored with blood on one of Minsk's main squares.

Why? Who would have thought this was necessary? Days before the election, Lukashenka managed to achieve an understanding with Russia after a long-running political conflict that briefly erupted into a full-fledged "information war."

The campaign, which was more liberal than usual for Belarus, made some headway toward possible recognition of this election by the West. After all, all the would-be candidates were registered. Conditions for their registration were not restrictive and, most importantly, all of them had a chance to address the electorate on state television. The fragmented opposition -- Lukashenka was opposed by nine more-or-less opposition-minded candidates -- posed no serious electoral danger to the incumbent.

Of course, even without the bloody election-night crackdown, this poll, like all Belarusian elections, fell far short of democratic standards. As one local political analyst aptly put it, free elections in an authoritarian country by definition are a defeat for the authoritarian regime. Lukashenka's regime in Belarus is far from collapsing.

Nonetheless, the bloodstains in the Minsk snow offset whatever liberal advances the authorities tolerated during the election campaign.

Even more puzzling are the numerous accounts indicating that it was agents of the authorities -- provocateurs -- who began the assault on the government building that was the official pretext for the bloody crackdown. By all indications, it was the authorities -- or at least some faction within the ruling elite -- that consciously sought a violent outcome.

Some have even charged that the provocation was pushed by outside forces. After the postelection violence, there is no chance the West can recognize the ballot. Lukashenka has been left alone in the company of his Moscow counterparts.

## Behind The Scenes

Since the current cease-fire between Minsk and Moscow is most likely just a breather before the next wave of political and economic confrontations, the last thing Lukashenka needed was to lose any hope of support from the West. That, however, is exactly what happened on December 19.

But such "who benefits?" analysis does not always lead to the correct conclusions. For one thing, it is still unclear

what the final reaction of the West will be or how that will change as time passes. Despite diplomatic talk of a "reset," relations between Russia and the West in the former Soviet space remain very much a zero-sum game.

Simultaneous strategies of promoting democratic development, on the one hand, and defending sovereignty of these authoritarian states from Moscow's influence, on the other, look good on paper. In practice, however, it is often hard for the West to avoid choosing between the two. One way or another, pursuing the latter policy requires some sort of dialogue with these states' leadership, no matter how authoritarian they might be.

Second, even if the crackdown was the result of a foreign provocation, what about the continuing repressions, arrests, and searches? This already looks like a conscious policy by the Belarusian government.

Some experts and politicians think that the reason for the repression is that Lukashenka did not actually win the election. That is, he failed to get the 50 percent of the vote needed for a first-round victory.

However, the only evidence of that takes the form of exit polls conducted by unreliable companies, some of which have dubious reputations. It is likely that those findings are the same sort of statistical propaganda as those presented by pro-government agencies, which were nearly identical to the unrealistic figures endorsed later by the Central Election Commission.

The best opinion polls conducted before the vote indicated a victory for Lukashenka, although not as compelling a win as five years ago when official results gave him more than 84 percent of the vote.

But for an authoritarian leader like Lukashenka, a narrow victory is practically the same as a defeat. Moreover, the comparatively liberal campaign may have raised fears inside the regime that the docile Belarusian nation might be losing its fear. This is something the authorities cannot risk.

Such concerns could easily be exacerbated by authoritarian leaders' inclination toward conspiracy theories. Such people view politics as a series of "special operations." When Lukashenka looked out on Minsk that night, he might have actually been seeing Bishkek in April, when a crowd stormed the presidential palace and ousted authoritarian President Kurmanbek Bakiev.

Back then, it shouldn't be forgotten, Lukashenka provided refuge for Bakiev and publicly approved of his order to security forces to open fire on demonstrators. At that time, he warned that he would show even more determination in defending his own power.

## Disguised Weakness

Although the opposition in Belarus clearly had no comprehensive plan for a "colored revolution," the rhetoric of its leaders was quite radical. Long before election day, they had predicted the results would be falsified and declared that "the square will decide everything." Presidential candidate Mikalay Statkevich said: "Give us the election or we will come and take it."

Two days before the vote, candidate Uladzimir Nyaklyaeu said the goal of the campaign was "to overthrow the dictatorship." All nine opposition candidates said

they would act "decisively" on the square. If such pronouncements were intended to scare Lukashenka, they appear to have worked.

Lukashenka cannot afford to look weak. That was the error of Bakiev and of former Moldovan President Vladimir Voronin, who tolerated a close election and then allowed protesters to ransack the seats of the executive and legislative organs.

Perhaps Lukashenka feared the postelection demonstration could turn into a continuous protest, a campaign of psychological pressure against the government. The reality of that prospect is debatable. Minsk is very cold these days, and people might well have stopped coming to the square at some point. The lack of clear leadership within the opposition also did not help. Lukashenka, however, apparently decided not to take any chances.

What happens next is not easy to predict. The repression has stifled the current wave of protest. It also made Minsk's international stance much more difficult; improved ties with the West, if they ever come, will take quite some time

What's least clear, however, is how these events will play out in Belarusian society. The crackdown of December 19 has already been labeled "Bloody Sunday" -- a reference to an infamous episode in Russian history. In January 1905, Tsarist troops dispersed a peaceful demonstration in St. Petersburg with bullets. In December of the same year, Russia burst into revolution.

*Yury Drakakhrust is a broadcaster with RFE/RL's Belarus Service. The views expressed in this commentary are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect those of RFE/RL*

° Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, December 30, 2010

## SPORTS

### Belarus' Women Basketball Players World's Fourth Best !

The World's Championship in Women's Basketball was held in the Czech Republic in September - October of 2010.

The Belarusian national team was very successful; with a little more luck it may have reached the tournament's finals.

Belarusian girls' victorious march began with a victory over the Russians, until then considered the championship's favorites - and ended with a bitter struggle against the host Czech team, who eventually faced the Americans in the finals.



### Victoria Azaranka wins Kremlin Cup

21-year-old Belarusian tennis player Victoria Azaranka (ranked 10th in the WTA rating) won the Kremlin Cup in Moscow on Sunday. She defeated Russia's 23-year-old Maria Kirilenko (ranked 24th) — 6:3, 6:4.

Let us emphasize that Azaranka was losing the first set 0:4, but managed to overcome the course of the game and seized victory in the end.

Victoria Azaranka's victory in Moscow is her fifth WTA title

Source: European Radio for Belarus, October 24, 2010

## LETTERS

On December 1 and 2, 2010, a group of EHU (European Humanities University) alumni met in Washington D.C. with representatives of American Councils for International Education in order to discuss the future of the alumni association in North America.

In 2004 the European Humanities University was shut down by the Belarusian authorities for being an independent educational establishment that aimed to foster critical thinking among students and to support freedom of expression. Nevertheless, later the same year, EHU was reopened in Vilnius, Lithuania, and, with the help of students, alumni and faculty from Minsk, as well as the international community and Lithuanian authorities, the university renewed its activities with a great success.

The purpose of the D.C. event was to discuss the launch of the North American branch of EHU alumni association. In addition to providing a forum for EHU alumni and students, this organization would also aim at assisting EHU in Vilnius and at reaching out to potential supporters of the University.

On December 1, the Swedish Ambassador to the United States Jonas Hafström held a reception for the Governing Board of EHU, its alumni, its international advocates, and other distinguished guests. The EHU alumni included graduates of EHU in Minsk—Tatsiana Zhuravliova, Volha Dzianisava, Iryna Sulim; a graduate of EHU in Vilnius—Artiom Anisimov. The Ambassador spoke of EHU's foundation and dramatic closure in 2004, as well as about its revival in Vilnius and current successes and challenges. International representatives welcomed an opportunity to learn more about the current political regime in Belarus and the country's future prospects from the Belarusian participants.

The second day was busy for the alumni, as they were invited to attend several meetings on Capitol Hill.

As a result of the event, the alumni launched a networking group EHU Alumni (North American Chapter) (ehualumni@groups.facebook) that aims to connect EHU alumni, who are currently residing in the United States and Canada with each other and the University.

Iryna Sulim, EHU Graduate (2004), Minsk, Belarus  
sulim.iryana27@gmail.com

## Dear Friends:

I have just come back from Minsk where I was for the presidential election on December 19 and for the complete defeat of democracy and the savage attack and arrests of the opposition. I was very proud to be among the fifty thousand people on the Square Sunday night who were not satisfied with the stolen result and who were demanding a new election. I was there together with my friends, Andrey Sannikau who was running for President and his wife journalist Irina Khalip as well as with hundreds of other friends from civil society.

After a staged provocation by the security forces (that has been documented by independent media) uniformed riot police cracked down on the demonstrators. Special secret service arrested and seriously beat not the provocateurs breaking windows in Electoral committee building but targeted journalists, human rights defenders and opposition candidates elsewhere in the crowd of protesters.

Hundreds of my friends were put on prison. More than 600 people were detained that night. All of them got 10-15 days imprisonment. But more serious sentences are facing presidential candidates, their aides and journalists. Today there are 23 persons in the KGB prison who have been declared suspects in a criminal case over "mass riot." They may face up to 15 years in prison. Among them are my close friends Andrey Sannikau, Irina Khalip, Dmitry Bondarenko, Alexander Atroschenkov, Vlad Kobets and Natalia Radina. Over a quarter of the people arrested by KGB worked on Sannikau's presidential campaign and Charter97.

The KGB is living up to its historical reputation. Their interrogators are trying to break the prisoners (and have been successful with some lesser-known candidates), to put the pressure on families, and to create a climate of fear in society. They have threatened to take Sannikau's and Khalip's three-year-old son into state custody for the duration of their imprisonment. The whole week there was no information about candidate Vladimir Nyaeklyaeu who was seriously beaten before the demonstration and taken from the hospital by people in civil uniform. Dozens of private apartments and offices of the former presidential candidate, their staff, human rights defenders, and journalists were searched by the police and the KGB on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Most significantly the Charter97 web site completely destroyed and all computers carried off.

Lukashenka has lost all pretense of moral and political legitimacy and announced a war against the liberal opposition and people of Belarus.

Dear friends, thank to all of you for the great support. We have to be stronger and more united today to force the release of political prisoners. Obviously, serious sanctions against the Lukashenka regime and a complete travel ban on the officials who directed the equivalent of the declaration of martial law must be put in place by the European Union and the United States. But we must recognize that our goal is to get rid of last dictator in Europe; it is only way to save people of Belarus and the possibility of democracy in this sad part of Europe.

Iryna Krasouskaya, President, We Remember Foundation

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