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### NOTE:

In the beginning of 2011 *Belarusian Review* has changed its website. From now on all archives and selected articles of *Belarusian Review* may be found at [www.thepointjournal.com](http://www.thepointjournal.com)

English version of the website may also be accessed through [www.belarusianreview.org](http://www.belarusianreview.org)

*Read more on page 32.*

### Time for Policy Shift

The years of Western attempts to develop meaningful engagement with the dictatorship in Belarus ended with a period of liberalization prior to the presidential election in December 2010. This period was marked by the government's rather tolerant attitude toward the opposing candidates during the registration process; and the campaign itself was relatively unimpeded. The candidates' half-hour live appearances broadcast on state TV and radio evoked disbelief in the Belarusian audiences unaccustomed to such open criticism of the government and the ruling president. The liberalization, however, ended immediately after the closing of the polls and the announcement of results with a brutal dispersion of tens of thousands of peaceful demonstrators protesting yet another stolen election. The night ended with indiscriminate beating of the protesters, with more than 600 arrests, including those of the seven of the opposing presidential candidates.

The West's policy of trying to introduce democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law in Belarus started shortly after Aliaksandr Lukašenka's election to the presidency in 1994. It began with a step-by-step approach, with the West encouraging the Belarus' government to take the first step toward democracy which would then be met with corresponding step from the West. This policy was met by the Belarusian government with steps in the opposite direction, the first being a flawed referendum giving the president substantially greater powers, which he used to disband the Parliament, and in effect, to rule by decree. The European Union responded with 12 requirements that would lead toward democracy, and better trade relations. Reducing the requirements to five did not make a difference, and this policy was also a failure. The repressions continued to grow, and in 2006 in another flawed referendum, which in violation of the Constitution, allowed Lukašenka to run for an unlimited number of terms. He won his third term, claiming more than 80% of the vote. The regime's repression grew as did the number of political prisoners.

This time the European Union and the United States introduced a visa ban on Lukašenka and 40 key officials responsible for the repressions and the electoral fraud. The U.S. added an important economic sanction by stopping American firms from trading with two subsidiaries of Belnaftakhim, a major revenue earner for the state which benefited Lukašenka personally. This step produced the desired results, and eventually most of the political prisoners were released. However, Lukašenka got his revenge at the time of the 'clarification' of these sanctions by demanding the departure of the U.S. Ambassador in March 2008 and a drastic staff reduction. The U.S. government responded in kind, and both Embassies have been operating with skeleton staffs to this day.

Aliaksandr Kazulin who ran against Lukašenka in 2006 was released in August of 2008. This step led to

the West's repeated 6-month periods of suspension of sanctions, and relaxation of the visa bans. Taking advantage of the growing friction between Russia and Belarus over the reduction in subsidies of Russian oil and gas, the West was able to engage Belarus in renewed talks. In order to save the country from economic collapse, the regime also aggressively sought loans and credits all over the world, including Venezuela, Iran and China, as well as from IMF.

The brutal aftermath of the 2010 election led the West to reinstate and expand the sanctions with EU broadening the visa ban to 150. The U.S. joined the visa ban, as well as restoring the previous economic sanctions. Russia, on the other hand, despite earlier calls for electoral fairness, called the election an internal matter and came through with a crucial offer of over \$4 billion in loans and credits. Stalemate followed with the Lukašenka regime tightening repressions. As many as 40 key opposition leaders are subject to conveyor-type trials after months of abuse in KGB prisons, including torture, and facing 15-year prison terms for 'organizing public disturbances'. The West in the meantime is searching for more effective countermeasures.

**The time has come to recognize that a confident dictator will not willingly agree to the country's democratization, knowing instinctively that it will lead to his demise.** Since almost absolute power is now concentrated in his hands, and the security apparatus is overseen by his oldest son Viktor, change in Belarus is likely to come only by destroying or diminishing that power.

In a February 10 article in *The Guardian*, Mitchell Orenstein of Johns Hopkins aptly summarizes the three pillars of Lukašenka's regime:

- ⊙ a social contract that promises national independence and a guaranteed low income for tacit consent (by a substantial part of the population) to dictatorial rule;
- ⊙ a propaganda machine that reinforces the value and necessity of this deal;
- ⊙ and a massive security apparatus to enforce it..

It is these pillars that have to be chipped at in order to bring down the dictator, or at least to so weaken his rule so that he will agree to substantive changes and a safe retirement in exile.

Economic sanctions, especially by the European states that are major trading partners with Belarus can lower the subsistence level of a large part of his electorate, in order to bring his support below the currently estimated 45-55%. The country is already on the verge of another devaluation and threatened by rampant inflation, so it will not take much to create the needed disaffection. Back in the early 90's it was rise in the price of lunch at the mammoth state concerns in Minsk that spontaneously brought out hundreds of thousands of workers to the city center. The government at that time caved in to their limited demands.

The propaganda machine would then lose its effectiveness, especially if it is countered by more effective satellite television and radio broadcasts from abroad. The shifting of some currently available funding can both improve and expand the programs of Belsat TV and

the radios and increase the viewer/ listener base by making receiving equipment more available. Simple printing equipment can help to spread the printed messages.

The best weapon against the security forces may be the greater numbers and better organization of the opposition forces. The identification and support of the most effective parties and organizations can help to channel the available resources to where they can do the most good.

And now comes the most difficult part for the supportive foreign governments and implementing agencies, and that is to recognize that the previous policies have failed and no amount adjustments and tinkering will make them succeed in accomplishing this difficult task. Finally, for those who are still convinced that Russia's participation may be the solution for bringing democracy to Belarus, a history lesson may be in order. First, Russia has never practiced democracy in the past, and its future prospects are somewhat bleak. Second, Russia in all her incarnations throughout the history has always coveted Belarus as entry to Europe, and now as land bridge to the Soviet WWII booty — the Baltic province of Kaliningrad, a part of the former East Prussia. Currently it is keeping alive the idea of the Russia-Belarus Union state for just such an eventual political or economic takeover.

**To bring democracy to Belarus and thus to eliminate the last dictatorship in Europe will take a well planned and adequately supported major shift in assistance policy by the United States and the countries of Europe to whom democratic freedoms everywhere are treasured values.**

Walter Stankievich

## From the Publisher

Our longtime friend in Congress Representative Chris Smith has introduced the latest version of the Belarus Democracy Act. To ensure the bill's quick passage in Congress it needs additional co-sponsors. Please contact your Representative and ask your friends to do the same with a request similar to the one shown below:

**The Belarusian Dictator's Crackdown Continues Unabated**

**Help Bring Democracy to Belarus  
Support Independent Media and Civil Society in Belarus**

Dear Representative .....

**I respectfully urge you to be a cosponsor of the Belarus Democracy Reauthorization Act (H.R. 515), which first became law in 2004 and was reauthorized in 2006. The new reauthorization bill is very similar to its predecessors.**

Like them, it 1) expresses the sense of Congress that the President should deny entry into the U.S. to members of Belarus' senior leadership and their business cronies and law enforcement officials involved in human rights violations, including the ongoing December 19 post-election crackdown.

It also 2) expresses the sense of Congress that the President should not support loans to Belarus except for humanitarian purposes and should block certain Belarusian property transactions.

Finally, it 3) authorizes continued support for democratic opposition and civil society groups, including training programs for democratic activists, as well as broadcasting to Belarus.

## FEATURES

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
Office of the Spokesman

For Immediate Release  
January 31, 2011

STATEMENT BY PHILIP J. CROWLEY,  
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR  
PUBLIC AFFAIRS

### Belarus Sanctions

The United States announces today measures to respond to the brutal crackdown by President Lukashenka and the Government of Belarus in the wake of the presidential election of December 19, 2010. The disproportionate use of force and initial detentions of hundreds of demonstrators; charging of five opposition presidential candidates; ongoing raids against civil society, media and political parties; the closure of the OSCE's office in Minsk; and a flawed vote count all represent major steps backwards for the country. These actions oblige the United States and others in the international community to act. As Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Catherine Ashton said in their joint statement of December 23, "the people of Belarus deserve better."

In response to the continuing crackdown, the United States is undertaking the following steps:

· The United States is revoking the general license that had temporarily authorized U.S. persons to engage in otherwise prohibited transactions with Lakokraska OAO and Polotsk Steklovolokno OAO, two blocked subsidiaries of Belarus' largest state-owned petroleum and chemical conglomerate, Belneftekhim. All transactions with Belneftekhim and its subsidiaries are now blocked pursuant to Executive Order 13405.

· The United States is significantly expanding the list of Belarusian officials subject to travel restrictions. We will enforce those restrictions to prevent the entry into the United States of individuals (and their family members) who are responsible for actions or policies related to the crackdown that began December 19.

· The United States is working to impose financial sanctions against additional Belarusian individuals and/or entities pursuant to Executive Order 13405. The criteria for inclusion on these lists are participation in



actions or policies that undermine democratic processes or institutions, or responsibility for human rights abuses related to political repression.

The United States continues to seek the immediate release of all detainees and the dropping of all charges associated with the crackdown; a halt to the harassment of civil society, independent media and the political opposition; and space for the free expression of political views, the development of a civil society, and freedom of the media. We will review and adjust our policies based on subsequent actions by the Government of Belarus.

These measures are not aimed at the Belarusian people. The United States is planning to expand this year by at least 30 percent its assistance to Belarusian civil society, independent media and democratic political parties, including for activities which increase Belarusians' contact with open societies.

The United States is closely coordinating its response to the crackdown in Belarus with the European Union and other partners. In this regard, we welcome today's decision of the European Union's Foreign Affairs Council to impose travel restrictions and an asset freeze, and strengthen its support to civil society.

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## Europarliament Resolution

By Andrej Jelisiejew

The members of the European Parliament have voted on the agreed draft of resolution on Belarus with minor edits. The draft has been presented on January 19. The European Parliament urges the EU institutions to consider targeted economic sanctions and the freezing of all the macrofinancial aid provided to Belarus, to re-apply the visa ban on the Belarusian leading authorities and to suspend Belarusian participation in the Eastern Partnership activities. It also suggests supporting independent media and expresses its opinion that the World Ice Hockey Championships should not be held in Belarus while there are political prisoners in the country.

In the adopted resolution the European Parliament:

- Calls on the Council, the Commission and the EU High Representative to review EU policy towards Belarus including consideration of targeted economic sanctions and the freezing of all the macrofinancial aid provided via IMF loans as well as lending operations by the EIB and EBRD programmes;

- Calls on the Commission to support, with all financial and political means, the efforts of Belarusian civil society, independent media (including TV Belsat, European Radio for Belarus, Radio Racja and others) and non-governmental organisations in Belarus to promote democracy and oppose the regime; sees the necessity to step up and facilitate the relations of Belarusian NGOs with the international NGO community; at the same time calls on the Commission to halt ongoing cooperation and to withdraw its assistance provided to the state-owned media in Belarus;

- Urges the Commission to continue and increase financial aid to the European Humanities University (EHU) based in Vilnius, Lithuania, to increase the number

of scholarships for Belarusian students, repressed for their civic activities and expelled from universities;

- Calls on the Council, the Commission and the EU High Representative to immediately re-apply the visa ban on the Belarusian leading authorities expanding it to the state officials, members of judiciary and security officers who can be considered responsible for the vote-rigging and post-election brutal repressions and arrests of the members of the opposition and to freeze their assets; points out that sanctions should remain in minimal force until all political prisoners and detainees are released and exempted from charges;

- Calls on the Council to consider the possibility of suspending Belarusian participation in the Eastern Partnership activities at the Eastern Partnership summit in Budapest if there is not an acceptable explanation and considerable improvement of the situation in Belarus; this suspension does not apply to NGOs and civil society.

Apart from the above, the resolution:

- Calls on the Council to conduct new election "free and fair, in accordance with the OSCE standards".

- Condemns the use of brutal force by the police and KGB services against the protesters on the Election Day and in particular expresses its indignation over a brutal attack on Mr Nyaklyaeu, expresses concern by the "attempts of the Belarusian authorities to take Daniil Sannikau, a 3-year-old son of Andrey Sannikau and Iryna Khalip, who are in detention since December 19, to the state's custody".

- Strongly condemns arrests and detentions of peaceful protesters and the majority of presidential candidates, leaders of the democratic opposition, and also a large number of civil activists, journalists, teachers and students, who face up to 15 years of imprisonment;

- Calls on the Belarusian authorities to withdraw all politically motivated charges and conduct an independent objective international investigation under the OSCE auspices.

- Demands immediate and unconditional release of the detainees, including those recognized by Amnesty International as prisoners of conscience; calls on the Belarusian authorities to provide unhindered access of the detainees to their families, legal and medical assistance;

- Condemns repressions and calls on the Belarusian authorities to immediately stop all forms of repression and harassment of the civil society activists, including attacks, searches and confiscation of materials in private apartments, offices of the media outlets and the civil society organizations, expulsions from universities and workplaces.

- Expresses its opinion that sport events, like the World Ice Hockey Championships in 2014, should not be held in Belarus while there are political prisoners in that country.

- Regrets the move on the part of the Russian Federation in recognizing the elections and description of the repression as an 'internal affair';

**Source:** European Radio for Belarus, January 20, 2011

# Activists In Belarus Fear School Expulsions, Firings

By Courtney Rose Brooks

Belarusian lawyer Valyantsina Busko says she and her son were at the December 19 protest in Minsk against the reelection of authoritarian President Aliaksandr Lukashenka out of curiosity. She found herself fighting against a crush of people.

"There was a stampede, it was awful," she says. "I was hit in the face with a police shield, but my winter cap protected me. My son was also beaten, and then all of us were put in police cars and taken to the Akrestsina jail. We were separated and registered."

Busko, who is from the southwestern city of Hrodna, was tried the next day. She says the trial lasted only one minute, there were no witnesses, and no one listened to the detainees. She was sentenced to 10 days in prison for her participation in the protest.

Her troubles, however, didn't end there. She was still in Minsk, waiting for her son to be released, when she got a telephone call from the regional bar association telling her that the next day her behavior would be discussed by the leadership of the association.

She says that the discussion subsequently took place in her absence, and the association revoked her license to practice as a disciplinary measure for participating in the mass protests. "I am now deprived of work," she says.

## Crackdown On Opposition

Busko is just one of many protesters to be targeted in a crackdown following the mass protests against Lukashenka's disputed reelection. Opposition and rights activists are concerned that 2011 will bring a new wave of expulsions and firing from schools and jobs.

The protests saw more than 600 people arrested and most were given sentences of between five and 15 days in jail. Hundreds have since been released but continuing arrests make it unclear how many remain imprisoned.

Over the last three days, the KGB has searched dozens of offices and homes belonging to pro-democracy activists, journalists, and members of opposition parties, with many taken in and interrogated.

The Belarus Helsinki Committee human rights group was reportedly raided, and its director detained, earlier this week.

On January 6 in Homel, Belarus's second-largest city, six police officers, some in plainclothes, broke into the apartment of activist Yauhen Yakavenka. An hour later the home of Kanstantsin Zhukouski, the city coordinator of the opposition Belarusian Christian Democratic Party, was also broken into.

Both had worked on the election team of opposition presidential candidate Uladzimir Neklyayeu, who remains in police custody.

## Targeting Students

Opposition activists fear a repeat of 2006, when more than 300 student dissidents were expelled from their uni-

versities after protests following Lukashenka's landslide election win.

Alena, a volunteer for the opposition Belarusian Popular Front (BNF) who did not want to give her last name, says she has encountered people who face expulsion from schools or firing from their jobs.

"In the office of the BNF where we work, a lot of people come who have been imprisoned for 10-15 days, and we are trying to help them, send them to a human rights organization, where they can obtain legal advice," she says, "as many people face expulsion from schools or firing from jobs."

Students belonging to opposition groups are regularly targeted in Belarus. Some have been expelled from universities on spurious charges; others have been press-ganged into the armed forces. Sometimes students are warned to stay away from demonstrations if they want to continue their studies.

For Alina Litvinchuk, the fear of expulsion is very real. A member of the opposition United Civic Party, she says that in the past she has been summoned to the Brest State University dean's office and threatened with expulsion for her political activities.

Although she was not at the December 19 rally, she says the university has recently prevented her from taking two exams by failing her on preliminary tests.

"During the winter session we have stopped talking about expulsion eye to eye," Litvinchuk says. "But during the session I was not allowed to take the first exam, and then another, and this in fact is expulsion."

## Reaching Out To Those In Jail

Many other protesters still remain in jail. Four of the seven opposition presidential candidates arrested are still detained, while Ryhor Kastusyou, Dzmitry Vus, and Vital Rymasheuski have been released. All seven have been formally charged with organizing mass disturbances and face up to 15 years in prison if convicted.

Volunteers around the country have been raising money and sending packages to the imprisoned dissidents for Christmas, which Orthodox Christians in Belarus celebrate on January 7.

Alena from the BNF says many people have sent Christmas cards to the imprisoned activists. "People continue to come here bringing some holiday gifts to lighten these holidays a little bit for these people who are far from being in a festive mood," she says.

"Also, there were a lot of Christmas and New Year cards, which many ordinary people wrote for prisoners on December 19 and later," she adds. "We give everyone a card, each of which is a small piece of art, because people with all their heart wrote kind words to those who suffered from the authorities on December 19."

Should Belarusian schools start expelling dissidents from the country, universities in Poland, Armenia, and Lithuania have offered to open their doors to Belarusian students. After the protests in 2006, Poland launched a scholarship program for Belarusian students expelled from university for their opposition activities.

**Source:** RFE/RL Belarus Service, January 07, 2011

**Students belonging to opposition groups are regularly targeted**

## Lieberman: The West's Policy Toward Belarus Has 'Failed Miserably'

*U.S. Senator Joseph Lieberman (Independent-Connecticut) is one of the leading voices in Washington's condemnation of Minsk's crackdown on protesters after December's presidential election.*

*The violent reaction by authorities to pro-democracy activists has resulted in U.S. and EU sanctions against President Aliaksandr Lukashenka's regime, and in an exclusive interview, the director of RFE/RL's Belarus Service, Alexander Lukashuk, asked Lieberman about how the West views Lukashenka and how it might deal with him going forward.*

**RFE/RL: You'll soon be traveling to Europe to attend the Munich Security Conference, but your first stop will be in Vilnius, where you'll be meeting with students and activists from neighboring Belarus. What do you want to accomplish in Vilnius?**

**Joseph Lieberman:** For years now, Senator John McCain (Republican-Arizona) and I have been leading a bipartisan delegation from the Congress to the Munich Security Conference, and each year we try to stop somewhere where we hope we'll learn something and perhaps be able to make a constructive difference. And we felt very strongly that we wanted to go to Vilnius this year to discuss the situation in Belarus.

We're going to meet with students at the European Humanities University, also members of the political opposition and civil society, and with Lithuanian leaders, too. We want to hear directly from Belarusians who are there in Vilnius about the crackdowns in their country since December 19 and what we in the West can best do to help them. And frankly, we want to tell them -- the Belarusian opposition — that we're with them. We stand with them in the cause of freedom and [say], "Don't lose hope."

**RFE/RL: In the recent article that you and Senator John Kerry (Democrat -Massachusetts) wrote for "The Washington Post," you say that a new approach is needed for dealing with the Belarusian regime. Can you describe what that new approach might be?**

**Lieberman:** Senator Kerry and I reached a conclusion which is not hard to reach — that the strategy of engagement with Lukashenka that the United States and the EU followed for the last few years has failed. It has failed miserably, as seen by Lukashenka's actions. And what we need now is for the U.S. and the EU to, one, make clear that Lukashenka's autocratic leadership is no longer acceptable, and two, to do whatever we can, beginning with targeted economic sanctions, to put pressure on Lukashenka and the people around him to change their behavior.

Also, [we need] to increase our material and technical support to the Belarusian opposition and to civil society there. In that sense, I'm encouraged that we actually have begun to take this new policy toward Belarus with the announcement on [January 31] by the U.S. and the EU that we would be increasing our sanctions on Lukashenka's regime and also stepping up our democracy assistance to the people of Belarus.

**RFE/RL:** The EU has introduced a visa ban on Belarusian officials in the wake of the crackdown, but it abstained from enacting economic sanctions against Minsk. Many in the opposition feel disappointed and betrayed by that. You and Senator Kerry urged the European Union to join the United States in blocking any business with Belarusian oil and petrochemical companies. When you meet with European leaders in Munich, is this an issue you'll be raising with them? What do you plan to tell them?

**Lieberman:** Yes, this is absolutely an issue that I, and I believe my colleagues from the U.S. Congress, will be raising with our colleagues from the European Union. I was pleased that the EU has introduced a visa ban on the officials of Belarus. I can't say I was surprised, but I was disappointed that there were no economic sanctions applied.

Obviously, we're going to be arguing that the European Union change that point of view because the fact is that Lukashenka and the people around him make an enormous amount of money from the oil and petrochemical companies that we hoped would be part of the sanctions. And that money keeps this dictatorial regime afloat, so we think it's important to go after the money and make it harder for the Lukashenka regime to enrich itself at the expense of the people of Belarus.

**Source:** Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, February 4, 2011.

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## EU Slaps New Sanctions On Belarus Leader, Allies

(BRUSSELS) - The European Union slapped a new raft of sanctions on Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko and his inner circle on Monday as punishment for a post-election crackdown on the opposition.

The announcement triggered a swift vow of retaliation from the regime in Minsk, which promised to respond with "proportionate" but unspecified measures.

Although Belarus freed at the weekend a second opposition candidate who was among hundreds of protesters jailed for crying foul after a presidential election, the move was not enough to earn it a reprieve from the West.

At a meeting in Brussels, EU foreign ministers decided to reinstate a travel ban against Lukashenko that had been suspended two years ago in a bid to encourage democratic reform in the former Soviet state.

The sanctions were imposed for the "fraudulent presidential elections" of December 19 and the "subsequent violent crackdown on democratic opposition," the ministers said in conclusions calling for the release of jailed protesters.

By slapping sanctions on 158 people, the ministers expanded on measures taken in 2006 against the regime for a previous crackdown. At the time, the list included Lukashenko and 40 associates.

The new list also included two of Lukashenko's sons, Viktor and Dmitry, Defence Minister Yuri Zhadobin and the head of the country's secret police, Vadim Zaitsev.



The EU stopped short of imposing wider economic sanctions against the Belarus state, as called for by Sweden and Poland, because others did not want to make the people of Belarus pay.

But Brussels will not cut all contact with Minsk: Foreign Minister Sergei Martinov and Deputy Prime Minister Viktor Semashko are not on the sanctions list, a European diplomat said.

"We want to leave some channels open," the diplomat said. "Among the bad guys in Belarus, the foreign minister is not the worst one."

The Belarussian government did not say what type of retaliatory action it could take, although some Russian gas supplies to Europe flow through Belarus.

"It is not our choice to have tensions with the European Union," the foreign ministry said in a statement, vowing "adequate and proportional measures" in order to "strengthen Belarus's sovereignty and to preserve stability."

**Source:** [www.eubusiness.com](http://www.eubusiness.com), January 31, 2011

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## United States Mission to the OSCE

*Statement by Ambassador Kelly on Situation in Belarus*

United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on the Situation in Belarus  
As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
March 3, 2011

The United States would like to once again call attention to the unacceptable situation in Belarus. We remain gravely concerned about the government's failure to uphold democratic principles; the continuing crackdown on civil society, independent media, and opposition political parties and movements; the beginning of trials and harsh sentences of those detained; the harassment of lawyers who represent detainees; limited access by families and legal representatives to those incarcerated in KGB facilities; the conditions under which the detainees are being held and their treatment while in detention; and the closure of the OSCE Office in Minsk.

The quick trials, verdicts and sentencing of additional detainees to harsh prison terms demonstrates fresh attempts to imprison individuals for apparently political reasons, and indicates the Lukashenka government intends to continue its suppression of voices that express positions other than those demanded by the government. In other words, the government continues to try to take its people backwards and undermine Belarus's movement toward Europe. We again urge the release of all detained protesters immediately, without charges or sentences.

Additionally, although Foreign Minister Martynov assured the OSCE Chairman-in-Office in his December 31 letter announcing the decision to close the OSCE Office in Minsk that Belarus "will be constructively working with the participating States, [the] Secretariat and the Organization's institutions on the entire spectrum of issues on its agenda," Belarus has not:

. Responded to the Representative on Freedom of the Media's request to visit Belarus; or

. Allowed ODIHR to freely observe the trials of detainees. This is regrettably in direct violation of Belarus' commitment in paragraph 12 of the 1990 Copenhagen Document, in which participating States agreed "to adopt as a confidence-building measure the presence of observers sent by participating States and representatives of non-governmental organizations at proceedings before courts."

Although the Foreign Minister pledged to constructively cooperate with OSCE executive structures, these words must be backed up by deeds. The Representative on Freedom of the Media must receive permission to visit and carry out their work without conditions and without delay.

To meet this end, Belarus is in discussions with ODIHR regarding trial observations. I hope ODIHR observers will be allowed to observe trials as soon as possible.

The public statement issued by former presidential candidate Ales Mikhalevich on February 28 is particularly disturbing. Mr. Mikhalevich declares that he and other detainees were systematically tortured by KGB officials. He states that he was forced to agree to become a KGB informant in order to be released. We strongly urge the Government of Belarus to allow an independent investigation into these very grave allegations.

We listened carefully to Ambassador Sychoy's remarks at the February 10 Permanent Council meeting, and his comment that "there was nothing new" in our statement. This was not the case. We highlighted increased harassment of lawyers, including the disbarment of lawyers involved in the so-called "mass riot" case, and called attention to the specific cases against independent journalists Natalya Radzina and Iryna Khalip. We continue to call for the immediate, unconditional release of all those detained for political motives. We stress the importance of observing due process and the rule of law, and we reaffirm the critical need to uphold OSCE and international commitments.

### Quotes of Quarter

Referring to EU's past statements and actions **ALEXANDER LUKASHENKA** declared at a meeting with journalists on 19 February at the Raubichy sports complex, according to Interfax:

"I'd like to spit on all their comments. They are angry and indecent people. One cannot either talk to them or build any relations."

He noted he knew what they wanted in Belarus.

"They failed here, though they spent hundreds of millions dollars. After the failure they begin to scream, in order to justify themselves, that we have political prisoners here."

"We do not have any prisoners of conscience, they are ordinary bandits, who have several previous convictions,"

**LUKASHENKA** stated.

Speaking about the West, he noted that

"they are swindlers who shared money with ours (people), but this money was wasted."

# Mikhalevich Outlines Torture in KGB Center

By David Marples

At a press conference on February 28, former Belarusian presidential candidate Ales Mikhalevich outlined details of tortures at the KGB Detention Center in Minsk. Mikhalevich had been released a few days earlier on condition that he turned informant for the secret police. Instead he used the opportunity to denounce his captors, declaring his concern for those still in KGB isolation cells and other facilities across Belarus.

On March 2, the Frunze district court of Minsk handed down sentences to three people detained after the mass protest in Independence Square on December 19-20, 2010, following the presidential election. Alyaksandr Atroshchankau, the 29 year old press secretary of presidential candidate Andrei Sannikau (who remains in custody) received a four year prison sentence. Dzmitry Novik, also aged 29, who was detained in Baranavichy on December 23, received a sentence of three years and six months; and Alyaksandr Malchanau, a 22 year old native of Barysau and a former member of the youth group Zubr (now disbanded) received a three year sentence ([www.charter97.org](http://www.charter97.org), March 2). Two weeks earlier Vasil Parfyankou, 27, a member of the Uladzimir Neklyayeu presidential campaign, received a four year sentence (Belapan, February 17).

The recent trial was another signal of how the Belarusian authorities intend to proceed. Numerous activists stand accused of inciting riots. They include four presidential candidates — besides Mikhalevich and Sannikau, future cases have been instigated against Mikalay Statkevich and Nyaklyaeu. The latter is under house arrest, meaning that KGB agents occupy his apartment. Another candidate, Vital Rymasheuski, has been ordered not to leave Minsk.

In addition, a large number of prominent political figures have been in detention for more than two months, often without access to lawyers. They include two well-known leaders of the Young Front who were arrested the day before the elections in a well-planned preemptive strike by the KGB: Zmitser Dashkevich, the 29 year old leader of the association and Eduard Lobau, 22, a former chairman. Both were charged with criminal hooliganism. Anatol Lyabedzka, the leader of the United Civic Party and a seasoned campaigner was arrested on December 20 ([www.spring96.org/be](http://www.spring96.org/be), February 18).

Another leader very familiar with Minsk prisons is Paval Sevyarynets, the 34 year old member of the unregistered Belarusian Christian Democratic Party, who campaigned for fellow member Rymasheuski. Natalya Radzina, aged 31, is one of the founders of Charter-97 website, which backed Sannikau. Two of the detainees are Russian citizens, namely Artyom Breus and Ivan Gaponov. The Russian foreign ministry has expressed concern about the pair who were released and then promptly rearrested about an hour afterward on December 29. Their trial began on February 22, but was suspended. New evidence was then offered that they had wounded more than ten police officers during the melee on Independence Square ([www.naviny.by](http://www.naviny.by), March 2).

Prior to Mikhalevich's statement, there was only speculation as to the conditions in the jails and pre-trial detention centers. After his arrest, Mikhalevich was asked by the KGB to read a statement on television denouncing the other can-

didates, as Ramanchuk had done. He refused, and a week after his arrest, the security agents began to use torture. Evidently his was not an isolated case because the treatment was imposed on several prisoners simultaneously. He was physically abused by having his arms twisted in a high position for long periods and forced to stand naked against a wall in temperatures of 10 C. Other methods included sleep deprivation — prisoners were forced to lie directly under lamps and not allowed to cover their faces. They were also forced to walk outside in freezing temperatures and access to a doctor was limited to Thursdays. Prison cells were so overcrowded that some prisoners fainted (*Nasha Niva*, February 28).



*Former presidential candidate Ales Mikhalevich*

Mikhalevich thus described the prison as “a concentration camp in the center of Minsk.” His very public statement offers a challenge to President Alyaksandr Lukashenka at a time when international attention is focused on mass protests and potential removal of long-term dictators in the Middle East and North Africa.

The motives of the authorities can be determined from the length of the initial sentences. Atroshchankau, Malchanau, and Novik are relatively minor figures. Their sentences, however, are notably severe on the grounds that they had tried to break into the parliament building. Their trials prepare the way for those of more prominent figures, headed by Sannikau and Statkevich. In addition to the now released Nyaklyaeu — who called an ambulance because of concerns about his blood pressure after a further dispute with a KGB official on March 2 — the health of both former candidates is a cause for deep public concern. Sannikau had his legs broken by riot police on December 19. Statkevich, accused as one of the ringleaders of the assault on the parliament, was on hunger strike between December 19 and January 12 (Radio Free Europe, March 2; [www.euroradio.fm/en/node/5820](http://www.euroradio.fm/en/node/5820), January 25).

Lukashenka has little to gain from imposing heavy sentences on opposition leaders other than using them as pawns to gain compromises from the West. However, Europeans have distanced themselves from his regime, and the tortures provide further evidence that these are essentially “show trials” of carefully selected targets, for the most part young activists who openly oppose the regime.

**Source:** Eurasia Daily Monitor Volume: 8 Issue: 45 March 7, 2011

**Editor's Note:** In March 2011 Ales Mikhalevich has managed to leave Belarus in defiance of official orders. On March 18 he applied for political asylum in the Czech Republic. See p. 18 of this issue (*News Briefs*)



# International Women Of Courage

By Heather Maher

*The U.S. State Department has marked International Women's Day by designating 10 women from around the world "International Women of Courage."*

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton hailed them as "remarkable" people whose "quiet moral authority has come from putting the well being of others before their own."

This year's honorees include women who work to combat domestic abuse in Afghanistan and "honor killings" in Jordan, **who defy authoritarianism in Belarus** and promote education for girls in Pakistan, as well as a woman who is leading Kyrgyzstan as it navigates a path as the first parliamentary republic in Central Asia.

## ...Belarusian Courage Under Fire

The youngest recipient of the U.S. award this year is 20-year-old Nasta Palazhanka of Belarus, who was unable to attend the ceremony.

Palazhanka is the deputy chairwoman of Malady Front (Young Front), the largest youth democratic organization in Belarus. She joined the opposition youth movement at the age of 14, and symbolizes what the State Department called "the extraordinary potential of civil activism in Belarus," where authorities continue a sweeping clampdown after public outrage over a flawed presidential election in December.

In remarks to RFE/RL, Palazhanka paid tribute to the election critics, many of whom were beaten when they joined election-night protests and remain in jail on charges of fomenting "mass unrest."

**"A country right in Europe that is still oppressing its people, rigging elections, jailing political opponents in the most brutal and oppressive ways is an intimidating force, but Nasta Palazhanka has stood up and spoken out."**

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton

"For me this award — especially thanks to all those people who came on December 19 to the square [in Minsk], is the pride of my friends from Young Front...[and] for anyone who is still in jail," Palazhanka said. "And certainly, when this prize is awarded to women, I cannot fail to mention the courageous Iryna Khalip and Natalya Radzina, with whom I was together in prison. Therefore this award is ours collectively — I do not think it is personally my prize."

Authorities under third-term Belarusian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka are currently in the process of sentencing demonstrators and administration critics to long prison terms for their roles in the protests, as well as debarring lawyers representing some of the accused.

In naming Palazhanka a Woman of Courage, the State Department noted that she has been "threatened and

subjected to politically motivated pressure and harassment against herself and her family, but continues to advocate for civil society freedoms and promote respect for fundamental human rights."



*Palazhanka after her release from KDB (KGB) detention in February 2010*

"Nasta Palazhanka of Belarus — she has been living through such a difficult time," Clinton said. "A country right in Europe that is still oppressing its people, rigging elections, jailing political opponents in the most brutal and oppressive ways is an intimidating force, but she has stood up and spoken out."

Despite repeated imprisonments, Clinton said Palazhanka remains resolutely committed "to promoting civil society and bravely helping to chart a peaceful path for democratic society."

**Source:** Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, March 09, 2011

## HISTORICAL DATES

### February 1, 1661

Inhabitants of the city of **Mahileŭ** rose against the Muscovite occupying army. Assisted by troops of the Grand Duchy of Litva, they liberated their city for the duration of the 1654 war.

### February 2, 1838

Birthdate of **Kastuś Kalinoŭski**, leader of the anti-Russian national uprising of 1863-1864.

### March 21, 1840

Birthdate of **Francišak Bahuševič**, poet, lawyer and pioneer of the Belarusian national revival.

### March 22, 1864

**Kastuś Kalinoŭski**, the leader of the anti-Russian uprising was executed by Russian czarist authorities, in Vilnia.

### March 25, 1918

**Belarus' Independence Day** (Day of Freedom) — Belarusian Democratic Republic (BNR) was declared an independent state by the Executive Council of the First All-Belarusian Congress, in Miensk.

### April 4, 1557

450th anniversary of birth of **Leŭ Sapieha**, a renowned statesman, chancellor of the Grand Duchy of Litva, and compiler of Litva's collection of laws - the Lithuanian Statute.

## Blood Petroleum

By Siarhiej Karol

*Economic sanctions against the Lukashenka regime can work to rid Europe of its last dictatorship.*

Following the “bloody Sunday” of 19 December, when the regime of Alyaksandr Lukashenka rigged the vote count and used violence against protesters on an unprecedented scale, the West is confronted with the presence of an openly oppressive dictatorial regime on the outskirts of Europe. As four European ministers of foreign affairs pointed out in a *New York Times* opinion piece, the degree of political oppression now unleashed in Belarus has not been seen in Europe since the 1981 martial law in Poland. The possibility of having an unrestrained dictatorship, complete with 23 political prisoners jailed for decades and a strategic alliance with Iran, requires bolder measures than those deployed against Lukashenka to date.

There are plenty of reasons why policymakers dislike and rarely pursue economic sanctions against oppressive regimes. But Belarus is a rare case when sanctions can be both quick and efficient, ushering in long-needed change in that country with minimal side effects.

The economic foundations of the Lukashenka regime are simple and can be easily dismantled. They rest on obtaining Russian oil at about half-price and refining and selling it to buyers within the European Union as diesel and gasoline at the world prices. Over the years, this subsidy amounted to more than \$100 billion of direct fiscal support, giving the regime credibility as a defender of stability in Belarus and the tax revenue to sustain an apparatus of oppression and propaganda.

Russia started to phase out the subsidy in 2007 and almost eliminated it in 2010. For almost all of last year Lukashenka had to live without discounted oil for foreign refining. The consequences were immediate — foreign borrowing skyrocketed, tax revenues dried up, and the miracle of Lukashenka deflated before Belarusians’ eyes. According to exit polls, the pro-Lukashenka vote on 19 December fell below 50 percent, despite the unfair campaign conditions and the propaganda masquerading as television news. In response, the dictator decided to cross the line separating a forceful but popular authoritarianism from an unrestrained police state.

A key lesson here is that economic sanctions against Lukashenka work. By keeping the Belarusian leader on a full-price oil diet for just one year, the Russians extracted from him all the concessions they wanted. In exchange, they effectively restored the subsidy to its peak 2006 level. This gave the regime the breathing space to gain back the lost carrot — which, together with a reinforced stick, it hopes will ensure its survival.

But the subsidy from Russia works only as long as there are buyers for the petroleum made of discounted crude. This creates a unique opportunity for an effective economic strike at the heart of the Lukashenka’s dictatorship.

A simple measure preventing European legal entities from dealing with Belneftekhim, the state-owned petroleum conglomerate, would squeeze the economic air out of the system. When the United States put Belneftekhim on a list of entities that American businesses cannot deal with (the so-called OFAC list maintained by the U.S. Treasury), the pain in Minsk was felt immediately, exceeding all State Department expectations. The measure upended a whole strategy to open the U.S. market to Belarus’ state-owned refineries, which the regime hoped to use to further expand the economy.

Belarus’ exports to the United States were only \$200 million at the time. Stopping the \$3 billion or so of oil exports to the EU — a quantity small enough not to damage the interests of the EU consumers — would take away the breathing space created by the restoration of the Russian subsidy.

Another economic Achilles heel of the regime is its need to finance the current account deficit. In 2008 and 2009, Russia and the IMF together underwrote Lukashenka’s salvation by extending billions of credit. In 2010, Belarus placed its first public bond offering of \$1 billion, and spent it entirely on pre-election salary increases.

The government plans to issue another \$2.5 billion in 2011. Should the regime be unable to finance its capital account deficit, it will be forced to devalue or inflate the currency or stop lavish payouts, any of which will quickly and directly undermine its economic foundations. So a ban on European and U.S. banks making loans to and underwriting Eurobond offerings of the Belarusian government and state-owned enterprises would be another highly effective sanction.

**Ban on European and U.S. banks making loans to and underwriting Eurobond offerings (by the regime) ... would be another highly effective sanction.**

For 16 years Lukashenka has affirmed his rule by playing the West against Russia and extracting incredible rents in the process. This is a simple scheme that can be as simply dismantled if made to work in reverse. Now that Lukashenka has shown his true face — as a dictator who will stop at nothing to preserve power despite the overwhelming evidence of Belarusians’ desire for change — it’s time we turned the tables on him by simply refusing to fund his regime by taking part in its oil speculations.

If we fail to do so, we will validate Lukashenka’s cynicism. The flow of blood petroleum from Belarus to the EU must, and easily can be, stopped.

*Siarhiej Karol, a native Belarusian who is now a financial executive in the United States, writes regularly on economic issues and American politics for independent publications in Belarus.*

**Source:** Transitions-on-Line, 3 January 2011

# Sponsors of the Dictator

Evelyn Kaldoja, *Postimees*

Do not lie to yourself saying a refusal to support the EU economic sanctions can avoid causing harm to ordinary Belarusians.

They already live in poverty, under fear of the KGB and in North Korea-like information space.

Evelyn Kaldoja, a journalist at Estonian *Postimees*, analyzes why the Baltic countries stood against EU economic sanctions against the regime of Lukashenka.

"The next time you will be watching a YouTube video of a policeman beating a pregnant woman, or looking at a photo of an opponent of Alyaksandr Lukashenka lying on bloody snow, or reading how the Belarusian security forces arrest a mute man for shouting anti-governmental slogans, ask yourself if Estonia did it best to prevent this.

The international media have recently learnt that the Baltic countries stand against Poland, Germany, and Sweden, who want to impose economic sanctions against the Belarusian regime.

**If we allow terrorizing Belarusians in the interests of our big businessmen, how can we show our displeasure with Western Europe constructing pipelines with Russians?**

Evelyn Kaldoja, *Postimees* (Estonia)

Do not lie to yourself stating we refuse to support the economic sanctions because we do not want to harm ordinary Belarusians. They already live in poverty in their debtor country, which depends on Moscow. They live in North Korea-like information space under fear of the KGB. Their life becomes even worse, because the Soviet-style economy doesn't work, debts to manipulating Russia do not disappear, and the fear of being deposed makes the leadership to react to any step that could lead to changes in a tougher and more paranoid way.

The Baltic trio, which seems to demand from NATO and the EU to carry out a value-laden policy towards Moscow, conducts a money-value policy. When speaking about our confrontation, the foreign media do not forget to mention numerous investments to Belarus from Lithuania and Latvia. Belarus is in the top 10 of Estonia's trading partners, both in export and import. So, the resistance of the Baltic states to imposing economic sanctions can easily be understood.

If we allow terrorizing Belarusians in the interests of our big businessmen, how can we show our displeasure with Western Europe constructing pipelines with Russians and selling them navy ships?

The EU foreign ministers decided to punish Minsk by imposing visa ban on 158 high-ranking officials. The EU realizes that they need Lukashenka remaining in power. His regime is so authoritarian that a peaceful overthrow is hardly possible. A ban to buy goods in Paris is better than a bullet in the head.

Economic sanctions would pose a greater threat. The complete termination of business contacts with the EU would be uncomfortable for those supporting Lukash-

enka consciously. Some can begin to look for alternatives that would allow them to do business everywhere and in accordance with the market economy rules. This may become a backbone for the opposition.

Fortunately, citizens of a free country are able to initiate their own actions. We can refuse to buy the goods imported from Belarus. We can refuse to buy products of our brewery, which boasts of its supplies to Belarus in the Soviet style. We can name and boycott the sponsors of the dictatorship."

Source: Charter97 Press Center, February 3, 2011

## Belarus' Forum

### Dissent Hits Belarus via Warsaw: BelSat Telecasts a Key Tool

By Gordon Fairclough

WARSAW -- From a cramped TV studio here in the Polish capital, a small team of dissident Belarussian journalists beams newscasts back home, reporting on a severe crackdown against pro-democracy forces being waged by their former Soviet republic's authoritarian leader.

The station, funded by the Polish government, has become an increasingly critical source of independent information for people in Belarus since security forces there beat and arrested hundreds of participants in a massive street protest that followed last month's disputed presidential election.

For Poland, the TV operation, known as Belsat, is a critical part of its efforts to foster democratic change across the border in neighboring Belarus, where President Alyaksandr Lukashenka has held power for 16 years and kept a tight lid on dissent.

On Monday, European Union foreign ministers are expected to impose travel restrictions on senior Belarussian officials and freeze their bank accounts, diplomats say, in an effort to pressure Mr. Lukashenka to release political prisoners. Among those jailed are opposition presidential candidates.

Such sanctions "should be a first step," says Artur Michalski, a senior Polish diplomat who oversees Belarus affairs. "We cannot ignore a situation occurring right on our doorstep. What happened in Minsk was a dramatic step backwards."

Poles say their own transition from dictatorship to democracy has made them determined to help Belarus. When Poland struggled to end communism, support from abroad made a big difference, says Mr. Michalski. "We saw that we were not alone. We know how important that is."

Poland has been among the harshest critics of Mr. Lukashenka's moves to crush his opponents after the Dec. 19 election, in which he was declared the winner with nearly 80% of the vote. The results have been challenged by the U.S. and the EU, citing election monitoring by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which found "bad or very bad" ballot counting in half of the country's precincts.



Warsaw has lobbied other EU states to step up pressure on Mr. Lukashenko and boost support for ordinary Belarusians.

Speaking in parliament in Minsk on Thursday, Mr. Lukashenko said Poland is plotting to overthrow him in an effort to redraw its border with Belarus, which is home to a large number of ethnic Poles.

Poland's Foreign Ministry dismissed his allegations, saying it wouldn't react to "this kind of provocation."

The nearby Czech Republic, as well as Germany, the United Kingdom and the U.S. have also spoken out strongly against Mr. Lukashenko. Czech Foreign Minister Karel Schwarzenberg on Thursday said, "It is not possible to tolerate a pure dictatorship in the 21st century" in Europe.

Belarus' hard line toward opposition politicians has forced EU governments to rethink previous efforts to engage with Mr. Lukashenko's administration. Still, some member states have been wary about imposing severe penalties that they fear could drive Belarus back into the arms of its former political masters in Moscow.

Polish diplomats are urging not just sanctions, but also aid for Belarussian dissidents and support from across the EU for initiatives such as Belsat and other independent media. Poland has organized a conference for potential donors next week in Warsaw to raise funds for "democratization" in Belarus.

For years, Poland has offered scholarships to Belarussian students expelled from university at home because of political activities. The government also funds groups that provide money to families of political prisoners and dissidents in trouble.

In Belsat's studio in a Polish Public Television building, an anchorman kicked off the evening news Wednesday with a story about the role of security forces in dispersing the massive street demonstrations in Minsk the night of the elections. He reported on a petition campaign in Minsk demanding the release of political prisoners and on continuing searches by the KGB, the state security agency that still uses its Soviet-era name.

One man who signed the petition told a Belsat reporter: "They didn't arrest the people who should have been arrested."

Belsat, which started airing in 2007, reaches about one million viewers in Belarus, or roughly 10% of the population, says Alyaksei Dzikavitski, the station's editorial director, who fled Belarus in 2001 and was granted political asylum in Poland.

Warsaw is also home to European Radio Belarus, an independent station that broadcasts in Belarussian and receives funding from the EU, the U.S., the Czech Republic and other countries.

On Thursday morning, in ERB's small studio in a Warsaw townhouse, DJ Daria Romyantsava, 22 years old, lowered the volume on the song playing by American rock band My Chemical Romance. Mara Nalshanskaya, also 22, read a news bulletin: The leader of a Belarus youth group had been pulled from a train and arrested by the KGB.

ERB's mix of rock music, entertainment news and political reports goes out online, by satellite and over some FM stations that reach into Belarus. Its target audience is younger people, and its reports are also distributed via Twitter, Facebook and YouTube.

Ms. Romyantsava and Ms. Nalshanskaya are both Belarusians studying journalism in Warsaw on scholarships provided by the Polish government. "People need to know what's going on," says Ms. Nalshanskaya, who says she has been impressed by young Poles' involvement in their country's politics. "The way things happen in Belarus is not the only way."

*Marynia Kruk and Malgorzata Halaba contributed to this article.*

**Source:** Excerpts from an article in *The Wall Street Journal*, January 29, 2011

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## 'Frightened, Demoralized, And Alone' With Belarus's KGB

By Aliaksandr Lialikaŭ

I don't know how the KGB picked me out of the crowd.

Our first conversation took place after lunch on a Wednesday in late December in my office. That talk was civil enough. I didn't hide the fact that I'd been on Independence Square in Minsk during the postelection protests earlier in the month. Eventually, the agent promised that if I'd admit everything honestly, they'd look on my case favorably. After all, he said, it would be a shame to destroy the career of such a young and promising specialist.

After that came a series of perfectly innocent questions. And I answered them straightforwardly. But gradually the questions became more serious. I slowly began to feel as if I was getting tangled up in my own statements, like finding oneself in a swamp.

My attempts at little jokes were politely, but firmly, brushed aside. I was made to understand that my position was very serious and that this was no time for joking.

So far, there were no direct threats. But through vague innuendo, an atmosphere of oppressive fear emerged. The agent soon lost interest in me and began asking about my friends. Not wanting to betray them, I began to answer more slowly and to resist, which was difficult because it meant altering the initially good-natured tone of the conversation. The agent explained that everyone would confess everything eventually and that the Committee already knew everything anyway. So it would be best for me if I just told everything exactly like it was.

As he was leaving, he told me that I would be summoned for a further conversation at the KGB's offices. He also warned me that any contact with my friends – about which the KGB would know instantly – would be viewed as an aggravating circumstance. I was frightened, demoralized, and alone.

## The End Of The Story?

I was summoned to the KGB building the very next day. The agent that I'd seen the day before had prepared a document with my testimony. All they asked of me was my signature.

Overcoming a petrifying tension, I carefully read the paper through several times and made a few corrections. The agent, who up until that point had been quite polite, wasn't pleased. They began rushing me, saying there wasn't much time. Finally, I signed it.

It later turned out that I had missed one tricky, ambiguous phrase that had been tucked away in the last paragraph.

But the agents quickly escorted me to the exit, gave me back my confiscated mobile phone and my passport, and set me free. However, in addition to relief, I felt an overwhelming depression and anxiety. I did not believe that this would be the end of the story.

And my anxiety was justified. Just one hour later, I was again summoned to the KGB, but this time to a different agent. I was placed in a chair with my back to the door.

Across a desk from me sat another agent working at a computer. He informed me of my rights and, wrinkling his brow and pinning me down with a stern gaze, began the interrogation.

He used a pushy tone. While typing out the protocol, his fingers banged fiercely on the keyboard as if he were disciplining the unfortunate machine. The investigator moved forward and breathed heavily. Every now and again he'd make sharp movements with his hands. Several times he arose and, walking around behind my back, left the room, only to return a couple minutes later. Sometimes other people appeared from behind my back, entered the room, did something silently, and left.

At first, I kept my eyes fixed to the floor. After two hours I asked if I could be allowed to telephone my mother and tell her that I was all right. They granted my request, and an unexpected wave of immense gratitude swept over me. I felt as if the investigator had become my friend.

The interrogation went on. Then, without any prelude, another investigator barged into the room and began to scream at me, inundating me with accusations and threats. Weakly and incomprehensibly, I tried to fend him off.

When he left, the interrogation continued as if nothing had happened. But I began to come unglued. My body somehow began to melt in my chair. My heart was beating out of control – I could see it pounding in my chest under my sweater. My palms were covered in a cold sweat. My mouth went dry, and my breath began to stink. My voice wavered and cracked. After more than three hours, the interrogation came to an end.

Finally, they printed up the protocol. Although I had trouble seeing, I read it through for a long time, and then spent even more time making changes. This took about two hours. As they were showing me out the door, they

handed me a summons for the next day and promised they would give me "a good talking to" if I continued "with this farce."

## Time For A Drink

When I emerged out on the street, I couldn't figure out where I was. I walked along an unfamiliar street and soon realized I was heading in the wrong direction. After I finally was able to orient myself, I quickly headed home.

I don't normally drink, but that night I really laid into the vodka. For a time, that brought me back to my senses. But I passed the entire night lost in endless, tormenting circles of thought. By the time morning arrived -- Friday, December 24, 2010 -- I was completely broken. My will was plastic and pliable. Concepts like pride, honor, and dignity seemed distant and unreal. Every movement demanded unspeakable effort. Waves of nausea alternated with waves of utter despair. I could imagine only torture, prison, an iron curtain. Instead of the dawning of the year 2011, I imagined only George Orwell's 1984.

By the time I showed up to the interrogation, I had no more strength to resist. I said what they wanted to hear, after which they stopped tormenting me. They read me an instructive message

describing how bad human rights are in other countries. They printed out the protocol of my interrogation, and I signed it everywhere the investigator told me to. And then they let me go home.

I'll never forget that Christmas. As soon as I got home, I began getting drunk again. Then, giving in to a surge of panic, I destroyed everything on my computer – books, films, music – anything that had anything to do with Belarus. I threw out badges and other things with symbols of Belarus. Mostly out of the desire to do something, I turned on the television and found a concert of Christmas carols.

I'd never really listened to carols before, but that evening their calm goodness was exactly the salve my tortured soul needed. The doors were all locked up tight. My heart raced in terror whenever the telephone rang. I expected that at any moment I would again find myself in the interrogation room. And that is how, staring glassy-eyed at the television screen, I sat, motionless, until late into the night.

## Despair And Terror

The next month passed in a fog for me. I was afraid to look out the window or leave my apartment. I alternated between despair and terror. My mother developed high blood pressure and would periodically break down in tears.

And that's when our oldest friends came to help me. These were people who cared nothing about politics but who responded to my plight with sincere, human warmth. And that feeling began to take hold; gradually, I pulled myself together. I even worked up the courage to log onto the Internet, where I read that many of my fellow countrymen had also been interrogated.

I looked for and studied all the information I could find about how to behave when being questioned. I hope this knowledge will help me if I ever find myself in that room again. But the more I recovered and the farther those ex-

**I began to come unglued ... after three hours, the interrogation ended**

periences receded, the stronger my feelings of anger and shame for what I "confessed" grew.

It is so hard to be a man in an unfree country. If you do nothing, you are a passive participant. If you try to do something, you are broken and turned into a traitor. It takes incredible courage and spiritual strength to escape this fate. Courage and strength that I lacked.

*Aliaksandr Lialikaŭ is an instructor in mathematics at the Janki Kupaly State University in Hrodna. The views expressed in this commentary are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect those of RFE/RL.*

**Source:** Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, February 11, 2011

## BELARUS ABROAD

### US won't Leave Belarus all By Itself With a Dictator

On January 6 the US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton held a meeting with representatives of Belarus' civil society of Belarus in the US Department of State.

Among the participants of the meeting were the leader of "We Remember" civil initiative **Iryna Krasouskaya**, the Belarus Free Theatre director **Natallya Kalyada** and representatives of the Belarusian expat community in the US: lawyer **Alesya Kipel** and a member of the Council of the Belarusian National Republic **Alesya Syomukha**.

The main topic for discussion was the situation in Belarus after the presidential vote on December 19, and the following crackdown against leaders of the democratic forces of the country, civil society representatives and independent media.

Lots of topics were touched upon: from the personal experience of Natallya Kalyada, who was arrested on the Square on December 19, and technologies of pressure on independent mass media used by the Belarusian authorities, to the strategy of the US pressure on the Belarusian government. In particular, it was concluded that the entry ban to the EU countries for officials is an excessively mild punishment for people who are taking massive repressive actions against their nation. Special attention was paid to analyzing means of economic pressure on Alyaksandr Lukashenka's regime, in particular, on petrochemical industry and financial sphere.

Participants of the meeting expressed the opinion that in the context of escalation of crackdown in Belarus, the topic of political prisoners' unconditional release should be an absolute priority in the talks with Lukashenka's government. No agreements with the Belarusian regime can be in force without unconditional release of political prisoners.

At the end of conversation the sides touched upon the issue of assistance to the civil society in Belarus. Following the conversation, the priorities were set as support to the repressed and their families, independent mass media, effective public associations, students expelled from universities.

**Source:** Charter 97 Press Center, January 7, 2011

## January Events in Prague

Three weeks after the post-election repressions in Belarus, Belarusians residing in the capital of the Czech Republic, have staged a series of events, designed to inform Czech citizens about the repressions — by means of panel discussions, meetings with representatives of the Belarusian opposition and public demonstrations.



*Whoever Wins Elections, does not Beat Up his People*

• On **January 10** the office of the organization Civic Belarus hosted a meeting with politicians Stanislau Šuškievič (head of the Social-Democratic party, who served as independent Belarus' first head-of-state in early 1990s), Siarhiej Kaliakin (head of the opposition party Just World, formerly known as Communists of Belarus), Dzianis Sadoŭski (secretary of the Christian Democratic Party), Viktor Ivaškiievič (deputy chairman of the Belarusian Popular Front party), as well as with Ms. Eva Niakliajeva, the daughter of the presidential candidate Uladzimir Niakliajeŭ.

The meeting was attended by many influential Czech journalists and representatives of Czech political organizations. Mr. Šuškievič told the public about the results of his meeting with the Czech foreign minister Karel Schwarzenberg; Mr. Kaliakin described the Belarusian society's extraordinary solidarity with hundreds of arrested democratic activists; Ms. Niakliajeva called for Europe's help in freeing her father, now facing a trial.

• On **January 13**, Prague's American Information Center hosted a panel discussion entitled "90 minutes with Radio Liberty/Belarus After Elections." Following experts participated:

- **Pavol Demeš** — chairman of the German Marshall Fund office in Slovakia

- **Aliaksandr Martynaŭ** — a Belarusian political science researcher with University of Olomouc.

- **Aliaksandr Lukašuk** — director of the Belarusian Section of Radio Liberty in Prague.

• On the same day another panel discussion was held in Prague's National Technical Library, entitled:

**Elections in Belarus: Lukašenka's present.**

Discussion's participants were: **Elvira Branickaja**, a Belarusian democratic activist and independent election observer, and **Uladyslaŭ Jandziuk**, representing the Belarusian diaspora in the Czech Republic.

The public was also shown the well-known documentary "**The Square**," produced by the director Jury Chaščavacki in 2007.



• On **January 14**, Prague's Belarusians staged on Wenceslas Square in the city's center a demonstration for the **Liberation of Political Prisoners in Belarus**.

About 150 primarily young people took part in the event. They held posters in Czech - with these words:

- **Europe: Do not Forgive the Blood in Minsk**
- **Freedom for Lukašenka's Hostages**
- **Whoever Wins Elections, does not Beat Up his People**

The passers-by on the square were distributed pamphlets in 4 languages: Czech, English, Belarusian and Russian. - entitled:

**BELARUS NEEDS YOUR SOLIDARITY!**

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## The Center for Belarusian Studies

What are its responsibilities / objectives?

*The Center for Belarusian Studies is conceptualized as a focal point for activities and initiatives that focus on the role of higher education as key to the development of a healthy civil society. These initiatives reflect the philosophy that open access and global experience provide an invaluable framework for a holistic understanding of Belarus in a broad cosmopolitan and international context. The following section provides a brief outline of the Center's programming to date.*

### Visiting Scholar Program

The Center for Belarusian Studies supports one or more visiting scholars annually. The purpose of this program is to encourage the professional development of carefully selected Belarusian scholars through a variety of activities at the Center, located in Winfield, Kansas, USA, and elsewhere in the United States. Typically, the visiting scholars are recent graduates of master's or doctoral programs (or their equivalents), are native speakers of Belarusian, and have a demonstrated commitment not only to returning to Belarus following the program but to working actively toward that country's societal renaissance. Visiting scholars lecture at the Center and at other U.S. institutions of higher education on Belarus — history, culture, current events. During the 2009-2010 academic year, this program allowed for the development and teaching of an undergraduate course on Belarus at Southwestern College.

### Masters Program in Leadership with an Emphasis on Belarusian Studies

In 2010 the Center for Belarusian Studies, together with Southwestern College, welcomed the first Belarusian students into the newly designed Masters Degree in Leadership with an emphasis on Belarusian Studies. The rationale behind this initiative was to provide continuing education for students who had graduated with undergraduate degrees in Belarusian Studies and did not have access to Belarusian-language Masters programs in their field in European universities.

### Summer Language Institute

The Center held its first annual Belarusian studies summer school in July-August, 2009, in collaboration with faculty from Harvard University. Co-sponsored by the Poland-based Belarusian Historical Society, the

summer school took place at the Belarusian Lyceum in Hajnówka, Poland. The several students attending from North America were given coursework in the Belarusian language (all levels) as well as lectures on Belarusian history, literature, contemporary politics, and society. Classes were given by scholars from the U.S. Canada, Lithuania, Poland and Belarus. The program is co-sponsored by the Poland-based Belarusian Historical Society

## Symposiums: "Higher Education And Civil Society"

Participants' papers and the lively exchanges they evoked revealed highly relevant yet often significantly divergent views on the prospects for the role of higher education in advancing democratic civil society in Belarus. The participants did reach consensus on a strategic action plan that would provide the basis for further action. Two of these efforts are described below.

### Policy Advising to U.S. and E.U. State Agencies

The Executive of the Center presented the results of the symposium to representatives of the EU, to the US State Department, and to the Helsinki Commission in November of 2009. The Center has subsequently been asked to provide additional counsel on Belarus. We are recognized as a key resource for information about Belarus, as well as mediators in formative dialogues amongst those interested in playing a role in the future of higher education in Belarus.

### Textbook Project

One of the challenges stressed by symposium participants was the lack of current, discipline-specific texts written in the Belarusian language by specialists in the larger global academic community. The Center is currently engaged in collecting data from several institutions in order to further investigate costs of translation, production, and copyright for the preparation of such texts

### Center for Belarusian Studies Monograph Series

The Series has the two-fold goal of providing accurate and hitherto unavailable information for Belarusian readers in Belarus as well as scholarly works on Belarus intended for non-Belarusian readership and/or for Belarusians abroad. Books will be published in either Belarusian or English or both. Occasionally works may be published on Belarus in third languages. The Center has brought together an Editorial Board that includes publishing professional and Belarusian scholars to oversee the submission of manuscripts as well as the quality of the series.

### Archiving and Research

The CBS is recognized as the key repository for the archiving of books and archives from Belarusians in North America. To date, we have received four substantial archives (from émigré authors and poets), as well as many significant book collections with more on the way. These are being catalogued and will be available through inter library loan and to resident scholars and researchers who wish to pursue such work. The collection also includes a substantial number of recordings, photographs, and other material culture. The success of our growing collection

implies the need for more funding to house, scan, and organize the archive so that the collection is managed and easily accessible to students and international researchers.

### Mission Statement

*The Center for Belarusian Studies at Southwestern College was established in 2006 for the purpose of facilitating the revival of the Belarus nation through higher education. The Center is intended to function as the focal point for Belarusian studies in the United States, bringing together appropriate scholars from Belarus; the Belarusian Diaspora, primarily but not exclusively in North America; and other individuals, organizations, universities, libraries, and governments committed to promoting the development of a democratic Belarus.*

You may find more information on the website [www.belarusiancenter.org](http://www.belarusiancenter.org).

## NEWS BRIEFS

**January 2, 2011**

### Minsk OSCE office closed

The government of Belarus says it has decided to order the closure of operations by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's (OSCE) office in Minsk.

The announcement was made by Foreign Ministry spokesman Andrei Savinykh, who explained that the OSCE mission's mandate "had been fulfilled."

The announcement comes after monitors of Europe's top rights watchdog said Belarus' December 19 presidential election showed that the country is still "a considerable way" from holding democratic vote.

**Source:** REF/RL, compiled from agency reports

**January 6, 2011**

### OSCE calls for end to media crackdown

The OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Dunja Mijatović, called today for an end to the attacks on independent media in Belarus and urged authorities to immediately release imprisoned journalists.

"I am deeply concerned by the unprecedented wave of violence, intimidation, arrests and prosecution of journalists that started in the wake of the 19 December 2010 presidential election," said Mijatović in a letter to Belarusian Foreign Minister Syarhei Martynau.

Iryna Khalip, a correspondent for Russia's *Novaya Gazeta* newspaper, and Natallya Radzina, the editor of the Charter97.org website, were arrested and charged with taking part in and organizing "mass disorder". They both face prison terms of up to 15 years.

In addition, security forces raided the offices of the *Nasha Niva* newspaper, the European Radio for Belarus, and the Belsat television station. Several journalists working for these independent media outlets had their homes searched and equipment confiscated.

**Source:** Charter 97 Press Center

**January 10, 2011**

### Czech Republic ready to accept Belarusian political refugees

It also promises not to extradite them to Belarus despite the Interpol's demands. Moreover, opposition activists may receive visas upon the simplified procedure.

The Czech Minister of Internal Affairs Radek John has informed about this.

*"The Czech Republic knows that the KGB has great opportunities for monitoring of the situation, and as soon as political asylum procedures start, there appears a letter from the Interpol demanding to hand this person in.. The Czech Republic will not conduct extradition of the Belarusian political refugees. Moreover, the Czech Republic is ready to accept and give refuge to all the Belarusian political refugees who suffered from repressions connected with the presidential election on December 19, 2010"* – the representative of the Ministry of Internal Affairs has said.

Sjarhei Kalyakin, Stanislau Shushkevich, Alyaksandr Kazulin, Dzianis Sadouski and Viktor Ivashkevich participated in the meeting with the Czech Minister and the head of the migration department Tomáš Haišman.

**Source:** European Radio for Belarus

**January 11, 2011**

### Nyaklyaeu's Daughter Seeks European Support

The daughter of jailed Belarusian presidential candidate Uladzimir Nyaklyaeu, who was severely beaten by police on his way to an election-day protest last month, has embarked on a tour of European capitals to seek support for the country's opposition and an international response to the government's crackdown.

Eva Nyaklyaeva told RFE/RL that she has met with government officials in Lithuania and Poland, Belarus's two western neighbors, as well as ministers in the Czech Republic..

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

**January 13, 2011**

### Russia Agrees with Europe's Resolution

The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe has urged the Belarusian authorities to release the arrested presidential candidates of the election-2010, journalists and human rights defenders as soon as possible and to observe and guarantee human rights.

The Council of Europe's resolution on Belarus "reflects Russia's point of view". The Foreign Minister of Russia Sergei Lavrov claimed it at press conference in Moscow today, informs IA REGNUM.

According to the Minister, Russia has managed to help release the majority of its citizens after December 19, but "two citizens have been arrested again". "They are accused of organizing mass disorders. Our diplomats are keeping in touch with them", - he claimed.

**Source:** European Radio for Belarus

**January 20, 2011**

### Lukashenka: Plots Were Drawn up Outside

The plans to overthrow the constitutional order in Belarus were drawn up in Germany and Poland, Alyaksandr Lukashenka in a meeting on some political issues on 20 January.

"It has been sponsored by foreign special services and carried out by local political outcasts," the head of state said.

"Many today are trying to blame the KGB, the Interior Ministry, security and enforcement agencies of the country that they supposedly misinformed and deceived the President. In this regard I will ask to calm everybody down and to understand one thing: the first one who defends the sovereignty and independence, and the system that is in place now is the President. Law enforcement took no action or will ever undertake any regarding the order in the country without the sanction of the President," the Belarusian leader said.

"The Belarusian people are the master on this land, and no one is entitled to decide for us how we should live."

**Source:** Office for Democratic Belarus

**January 20, 2011**

#### **Russia to Build Nuclear Power Plant**

MOSCOW -- Russia said today it will provide a loan to Belarus to help the country build its first nuclear power plant.

Prime Minister Vladimir Putin said following talks with his Belarusian counterpart, Mikhail Myasnikovich, the plant would help Belarus to establish energy independence.

It was not immediately clear how much money Russia was lending for the project.

Putin also said Belarus would continue to receive subsidized oil supplies that should help to keep its economy on track.

**Source:** RFE/RL, compiled from agency reports

**January 22, 2011**

#### **Putin: Belarus to get Russian Subsidies**

Belarus will get \$4.124 billion in subsidies as Russia supplies Minsk with duty-free oil, Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin said on Thursday following talks with his Belarusian counterpart Mikhail Myasnikovich.

"We will try to provide the Belarus oil sector with subsidies not less than those it received 2007-2009 before the introduction of oil export duties," Putin said.

"This sum amounts to \$4.124 million. There are some questions concerning calculations, but we have confirmed our position."

**Source:** Office for Democratic Belarus

**January 24, 2011**

#### **Latvia Abolishes National Visa Fee for Belarusians**

Latvia has exempted Belarusian citizens from paying a fee for its national non-Schengen visas issued for stays of more than 90 days within six months, the Delfi news agency reported on January 22 with reference to Latvia's foreign ministry's press office.

The decision was made with consideration for the European Union's recommendations for the purpose of "contributing to people-to-people contacts and strengthening public and democratic institutions," the press office said.

Latvia followed the lead of Poland, which exempted Belarusian citizens from paying a fee for the same type of visas on January 1.

**Source:** Office for Democratic Belarus

**January 30, 2011**

#### **Historian Paul Urban Passed Away**

Paul Urban, a significant public figure of the Belarusian diaspora, and a well-known historian, died in Munich at the age of 86. He was born in the Lepel region of northern Belarus.

After World War II he lived in Germany. In 1972 he published the book "In the light of historical facts," that became

the Belarusian reply to the official Soviet historiography of Belarus.



*Paul Urban, 1956*

Paul Urban's work "Ancient Liévin: their language, origin, ethnicity" was published in Minsk in 2001, and reprinted in 2003. The book is now considered a classic piece of research, dealing with ancestors of today's Belarusians, as well as with the origin of the historical term *Litva*.

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

**February 10, 2011**

#### **Estonia to Abolish National Visa Fee for Belarusians on March 1**

The fee for Estonia's long-term national visas for the citizens of Belarus will be abolished on March 1, the Estonian embassy in Minsk told BelaPAN.

Described by Estonian Foreign Minister Urmas Paet as a gesture of support for Belarus' civil society, the decision to waive the fee was made at a February 3 meeting of the Estonian Government.

Estonia's national visa is available to, among others, musicians, university professors, students, athletes and coaches who enter Estonia for short-term work, the embassy said. Individuals may also obtain such a visa to do babysitting jobs and care for their sick relatives

**Source:** Office for Democratic Belarus

**February 10, 2011**

#### **Lukashenka Honors Police Chiefs For 'Preserving Order'**

Minsk's top five police officials have received presidential awards for maintaining order in the Belarusian capital during mass protests in December.

Alyaksandr Radzkoŭ, first deputy chief of Lukashenka's administration, personally presented the letters to the officials at a ceremony in Minsk.

Two of the awarded officials -- the deputy head of Minsk's Interior Ministry department, Colonel Ihar Yauseyeu, and the commander of that department's special police unit, Colonel Alyaksandr Lukomski — are on the list of Belarusians banned from entering the European Union and the United States.

Minsk-based human rights activist Valiantsin Stefanovich told RFE/RL that Lukashenka was trying to legitimize the beating and arrest of the demonstrators by awarding police leaders the presidential letters of praise. "He just wants to send a message to the police that 'although you are on a bad list abroad, you are on a good list here at home,'" Stefanovich said.

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



**February 17, 2011**

### **First Anti-Lukashenka Protester Jailed**

Following a trial that lasted just a few hours, a Minsk court has sentenced opposition activist Vasil Parfyankou to four years in prison for participating in a mass demonstration in December.

The 27-year-old Parfyankou has been an activist for about a decade and is known for his role in protecting a Soviet-era mass grave at Kurapaty in 2001-02, when activists maintained a round-the-clock vigil to prevent the site from being bulldozed for a new highway.

The small courtroom was full to overflowing and many opposition supporters and activists were unable to enter the nominally open trial. Prosecutors presented grainy video that purported to show Parfyankou jabbing a wooden plank into an already broken window.

The defendant admitted that he had gotten caught up in the moment, but denied accusations that he struck the government building more than 60 times or caused significant damage.

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

**March 14, 2011**

### **Mikhalevich apparently left Belarus**

MINSK -- A former Belarusian presidential candidate who claimed he was tortured in jail and fears for his life has apparently left Belarus in defiance of an order barring him from leaving town, RFE/RL's Belarus Service reports.

Ales Mikhalevich, who opposed the entrenched President Alyaksandr Lukashenka in the December 19 election, wrote on his blog on March 14 that he is "in a zone that is not accessible for the Belarusian KGB." He did not specify his whereabouts.

"I have been summoned to KGB headquarters again. I have every reason to believe that this time I will never leave the KGB building," he wrote. "That is why I am not going there. I will continue working to bring about an end to torture [in Belarusian jails] and the release of all political prisoners [in Belarus]."

Mikhalevich's wife, Milana, confirmed to RFE/RL that her husband had left Belarus.

"I know only that he left the country, I have no idea about his current whereabouts," she said. "I am sure that there must have been serious reasons for him to do so, since he did it. He did not even take his toothbrush with him."

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

**March 18, 2011**

### **Mikhalevich Applied For Asylum In Czech Republic**

A former Belarusian presidential candidate who fled the country this week after claiming he was tortured in jail has applied for asylum in the Czech Republic.

A spokesman for the Czech Foreign Ministry, Vit Kolar, confirmed that Ales Mikhalevich was in the Czech Republic awaiting the result of his asylum request.

"At the moment he is waiting in a center for asylum seekers for the result of his asylum request," Kolar said.

Vladimir Repka, a spokesman for the Czech Interior Ministry, said that process could take three months or longer:

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

## **BELARUSICA**

### **MYSTERY**

### **of Nonaday, Telavel and Divirix**

**By Aliaksiej Dajlidaŭ, Kiryl Kaścian**

Mindoug (ca. 1195 - 1263), the first Grand Duke of Lithuania, is probably one of the most mysterious personalities in the history of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Very little is known of his life and his ascension to power. According to the now dominant version of history promoted by the Republic of Lietuva, Mindoug was the leader of "Lietuviai". However, some Belarusian historians would note that the name of the GDL titular nation in official Lithuanian documents was "Litvins" ("Litviny"), which has a strong connection with Belarusian history, as well as that the greater part of Mindoug's life was spent in the Belarusian city of Navahradak. Still, the historical data sometimes appear to be not as scanty as they seem. Thus, a thorough inspection of what is presented as a sample of Mindoug's speech in the 13th century Galician-Volhynian chronicle turns up some surprises.



Analysis of a message from the year 1253, found in the Hypatian Chronicle, indicates that this text may contain interesting records concerning the first Lithuanian grand duke Mindoug:

1) that he was speaking in the Yatvingian language, and

2) that Mindoug's quoted phraseology was Christian.

Let us note that researchers have already remarked on the probability of the Yatvingian (i.e. West Baltic, not East Baltic) origin

of Mindoug's dynasty - the ruling dynasty of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania; the philologist K. Buga remarked that the names of Lithuanian grand dukes in the 13-14th centuries were of West Baltic origin. Y. Otremski[1] also mentioned that names of Lithuanian grand dukes contain West Baltic (Yatvingian) lexemes, non-existent in East Baltic languages. Let us also note that the Wielkopolska chronicle from the 13th century, contemporary with Mindoug, denoted his West Baltic origin, calling him "the king of Prussians" and his milieu as "Prussians[2]." Thus, there are sufficient reasons to study the possibility of the West Baltic origin of Mindoug's dynasty. However, this issue is beyond the scope of this article, which is limited to the analysis of an excerpt from Mindoug's speech, found in a 1253 message in the Hypatian Chronicle. The

issue of Christian phraseology of this excerpt will be treated in more detail.

Interesting information exists which indicates that the first Lithuanian grand duke Mindoug may have been Christian long before his official Catholic baptism in 1253. The Galician Volynian (Hypatian) Chronicle of the 13th century and the later Bychaviec Chronicle both mention incomprehensible names of "deities," allegedly worshipped by Mindoug, even after his baptism into Catholicism in 1253 – Nonaday, Telavel and Divirix. "His baptism was fraudulent. He worshipped his idols secretly — first Nonaday, then Telavel, and Divirix.[3]"

Scarcity of information about the Prussian-Yatvingian language and an almost total lack of scientific research concerning this language has resulted in a situation in which these words mentioned in the chronicles have become understood as names of some allegedly "pagan idols" worshipped by Mindoug. However, these words are actually clear excerpts from the Prussian speech. The above-mentioned Nonaday is "numons dajs," — give us, Telavel is "tawo walle," — Thy will, and "Deiwe riks" — Lord God. Their sequence constitutes the Prussian phrase "numons dajs tawo walle, Deiwe riks" which translates as "Thy will be done, oh Lord God."

The phrase "numons dajs tawo walle" is an excerpt from the Lord's Prayer in the Prussian language; this may be seen in examples of this prayer's text in various Prussian dialects, collected by K. Hartknoch and K. Bohush[4]. "Numons dajs" means literally "Give us," and "tawo walle" — "Thy will." Most likely, the basis of the chronicle's message about Mindoug's "worshipping his idols," was constituted by the chronicler's recording of the text (or an excerpt of) of the "Lord's Prayer" in the Yatvingian language.

It is probable that the words "Deiwe riks" (Lord God[5]) were used in the beginning or in the end of the prayer. It is also likely that the phrase may have been not just a part of the prayer, but a routine expression, an idiom: "Numons daj tawo walle, Deiwe riks!" ("Thy will be done, oh Lord God!"). Accordingly, it is likely that Mindoug had already learned Christian prayers or general Christian phraseology before 1253 in his native language (Prussian-Yatvingian). Thus, a sample of the Yatvingian text of the Christian prayer, obtained by the Galician chronicler, could have been later evaluated as a testimony to Mindoug's "paganism"[6]; it could have been done when the original text was copied by scribes unfamiliar with the Prussian-Yatvingian language.

Therefore, there are reasons to believe that in his youth Mindoug had already been taught Christian prayers in his native Yatvingian language. It is difficult to determine who taught them (Orthodox priests or priests of another Christian denomination?). They were certainly not Catholic priests, since Catholics decisively rejected the use of vernaculars in divine services; the Catholic rite used only Latin for this purpose. Use of the Prussian language was even less likely. Activities of Catholic missionaries to Lithuania and Navahradak in the years 1210-1240 were also improbable. Except for the Polish Dominican Vitus, who visited Lithuania, we have no information of such missionaries. It is impossible for Mindoug to have prayed in the Catholic rite "secretly" (as

the chronicler says), as well as for the chronicler to call such prayers "pagan", while at that time Mindoug was officially a Catholic. On the other hand, it is known that Orthodox missionaries willingly used local vernaculars in converting neophytes.

In our opinion, one should not ignore the possibility of a third option — activity of non-canonical (neither Orthodox nor Catholic) priests at Mindoug's court. Let us note, that V. Panucevič, on the basis of information supplied by T. Narbutt, wrote about the widespread practice of Bogumilism at courts of Lithuanian dukes and at the royal Lithuanian court in the 13-14th centuries. Cardinal Pierre d'Ailly's records from 1418 (on which Narbutt based his information) indicate that Lithuanian magnates and grand dukes had throughout confessed Eastern Christian Bogumilism "since the thirteenth century." [7] Thus, considering the peculiar information about this excerpt from Mindoug's oral speech, one might admit the possibility of Bogumil influence on his phraseology. Since the spread of Bogumilism on Old-Belarusian lands (including Lithuania of annals) has been barely studied, let us not further develop this idea, leaving it as a possibility.

Let us note that, according to information by such thorough researchers of Bogumilism as the Bulgarian academician D. Angelov and other authors, multiple repetition of prayers (especially of the Lord's Prayer) constituted the main practice of Bogumils. The words "Thy will be done" ("numons daj tawo walle") represent precisely a line from the Lord's Prayer. At the same time, according to information about peculiarities of the Bogumil practice, precisely the repetition of the line "Thy will be done" from the Lord's Prayer — represented the most important of the Bogumil practice — when its practitioners submitted to God's will, depriving themselves of their own. In general, repeating the Lord's Prayer was a frequent occupation of the Bogumils — as indicated by the Occitanian (in Southern France) Lyon ritual from the 13th century, besides the multiple repetition of the Lord's Prayer several times during the day and night, it was required to say a *dobla* (a double uttering of the prayer) before mounting a horse, before embarking on a ship, before entering a city, before eating and drinking, and before sleep. Therefore, one might say that Mindoug's practice, noticed by the Galician agent — the multiple repetition of the Lord's Prayer, and especially of the line "Thy will be done," — exactly corresponds to Bogumils' general practice.

Thus, one might say with a high degree of probability, that the mentioned Christian phraseology was taught to Mindoug by priests of a non-canonical, most likely Bogumil, denomination, who were present at Mindoug's court. Their influence must have been exerted since very early times, since Mindoug remained faithful to former prayers, even while formally being a Catholic. One might say that this type of prayer was Mindoug's family feature, a tradition.

It is unlikely that they were priests of the Russian canonical Orthodox rite, since the compiler of the Galician Volynian Chronicle intentionally referred to Mindoug's prayers as "pagan." Therefore, we are dealing with activities of non-canonical, independent from Kiev, Christian priests, who taught Mindoug prayers in his own na-



tive Yatvingian language. Characterizing these prayers as “paganism” by the chronicler supports the idea about activities of non-canonical, probably Bogumil, groups.

The same may be deduced from the analysis of documents from the papal curia pertaining to Mindoug. Even a simple scrutiny of papal bulls concerning Mindoug (from 1251) indicates that before his temporary conversion to the Latin rite, the Lithuanian grand duke did not confess “paganism,” but a type of Christianity, which was considered heretical by the curia. Thus, in a number of bulls from 1251 addressed to the Lithuanian ruler, to Livonian and Prussian bishops and to Teutonic Order authorities, pope Innocent IV expresses his enthusiasm about Mindoug having declared his readiness to accept the Latin rite, while abandoning his former “errors.” The bulls never name the Lithuanian ruler’s former faith directly; in referring to it the pope is using various vague notions as “errors (erroris),” and “darkness (tenebris),” professed by the “infidels.” Only the bull from July 26, 1251, addressed to the bishops of Riga, Dorpat, Ösel and Teutonic Order authorities, finally defines this “darkness” explicitly: it is the darkness of the “deviation from faith,” professed by “a huge number of infidels”, i.e. Mindoug’s subjects (cum grandiosa infidelium multitudo existens in perfidia tenebris). A further bull by pope Alexander IV dated March 7, 1255 also stated that Mindoug accepted Catholicism after leaving the “deviation from faith” (ad fidei catholice pervenisti titulum relicta perfidia).[8] Obviously, the term “deviation from faith” or “apostasy” (perfidia) points directly to Christian heresy. Let’s add here, that, according to records in Lithuanian annals, the Livonian master Andrich Stirland in 1249 sent Mindoug a letter with a demand to accept the “common Christian faith.”[9] This again indicates that Mindoug’s faith before his conversion to Catholicism was a Christian faith – but of a different rite, which the curia considered heretical.

Concerning the linguistic peculiarities of the Lithuanian grand ducal dynasty of that time, one may deduce that a Yatvingian-Slavic bilingualism existed among the Grand Duchy’s nobility of Yatvingian descent; gradually it became linguistically Slavic. There is no doubt that Mindoug, as well as his relatives of Baltic origin, knew and was fluent in the Ruthenian language (besides the fact of installment of these dukes in Slavic towns – Navahradak, Polack, Viciebsk, Druck, Pskov – this is obvious from the preserved letter by Duke Gierdzien from 1264 in the Ruthenian language[10]). The numerous examples of speech by Lithuanian nobles and grand dukes in the 13-14th centuries contained in the Lithuanian annals (all written in Old-Belarusian) are examples of the Old-Belarusian language, which precisely in the 13-14th centuries developed into a separate administrative language, which was official for all institutions of the GDL and was known under the name of “Lithuanian,” at least from the middle of the 14th century, (according to a Hungarian chronicle, in 1351 Duke Kiejstut and his fellow Litvins uttered a Slavic phrase in the “Lithuanian (lithwanice)” language.[11]) By the end of the 14th century the Old-Belarusian vernacular was widely known as “Lithuanian,” beginning with the Grand Duchy’s court to contacts with foreign countries. This is shown by instances referring to Old-Belarusian as the “Lithuanian” language by the

grand duke Jahajla in 1387, the Vilnia bishop Andrej Vasilja in 1398, Aeneas Sylvius in the 1430s and many others.[12] It is possible to deduce that in Mindoug’s period, in the middle of the 13th century, a Yatvingian-Slavic bilingualism was preserved among the Grand Duchy’s nobility of Baltic descent; Yatvingian was also the language of (Christian!) prayers. At least, according to the information found in the Hypatian Chronicle, Mindoug preferred to pray in Yatvingian. Perhaps a sacral meaning was associated with this practice.

Note that our conclusions concerning Mindoug’s Christian phraseology must be generally applied to all Lithuanians (Litvins) of that time, or at least to those who were still using Yatvingian in services, and had not completely changed to Slavic (Old-Belarusian) in their speech. That’s true, since the same mentioned words occur in annals, in the note from 1258, during the arrival of Litvin troops to Zviagel (in Volynia): “they worshipped their gods, Andaj and Dyviriks, and called their other gods, who are demons”.[13] Andaj is, most likely, the same “numons daj”, and Dyviriks is the same “Deiwe riks (Lord God).” Here we are most likely dealing with the same phrase, only less accurately recorded. In either case, due to reasons mentioned above, the Christian phraseology and its sacral usage are difficult to doubt. Since the chroniclers associated this type of phraseology concretely with Lithuanians (“they spoke their own way”), it shows that it was specific to Litvins. The chronicler knew it – still, he did not understand, or pretended not to understand the exact meaning of these words. Consequently, he tried to call it “pagan.”

Thus, our conclusions concerning Mindoug’s Yatvingian language as well as of the traditional usage of Christian phraseology must be generally applied to all Lithuanians (Litvins) of that time, or at least to those who were still using Yatvingian in services, and had not completely changed to Slavic (Old-Belarusian) in their speech. Here we must note, that once we accept the analysis suggested herein, we must acknowledge Mindoug’s and his milieu’s language being Yatvingian (West Baltic) — not East Baltic, which suggests a different wording of the mentioned phrase.

It seems most likely to assume the following course of events:

Before his Catholic baptism and coronation in 1253, Mindoug was already a Christian, albeit confessing Christianity in a non-canonical (most likely Bogumil) rite. One might assume that the text of the main Christian prayer was translated far earlier by local Christian priests into Yatvingian. Mindoug was probably familiar with this prayer in his native language since his youth, if not childhood. He perceived it as a tradition.

After attempts by the papal curia to convert Mindoug to the Latin rite, in 1253 he temporarily adopted Catholicism. However, his baptism, as noted by annals, “was fraudulent”. Mindoug was formally a Catholic, yet actually he continued to sincerely confess his former faith. As revealed by records of the Hypatian Chronicle, it was, most likely, Bogumilism. Mindoug “worshipped secretly,” since he secretly prayed in his native language: “numons dajs tawo walle, Deiwe riks.” The fact that these ex-



cerpts of Mindoug's speech later showed up in the Galician-Volynian Chronicle, shows that the original witness of Mindoug speaking these words was someone from the Cholm court, perhaps even the Cholm bishop Ioann, a contemporary of Mindoug, who compiled this part of the chronicle (Ioann completed this part in 1266 in Cholm), or one of his closest colleagues. This is quite likely, considering the lively contacts between Lithuanian and Galician courts in the years 1230 – 1260 (Galician-Volynian Duke Shvarno in 1267-1270 occupied the Lithuanian grand ducal throne.)

Therefore, the prayer might have been overheard by one of Ioann's co-workers, or even by Ioann himself; in either case, it found its way into the annals. What's remarkable is the careful and painstaking rendition of this excerpt of Mindoug's oral speech, even though with complete lack of understanding of its sense. It seems that the scribe put great emphasis on these fragments of Mindoug's live speech, since he perceived some sacred meaning associated with them. Most likely, this person was a witness to frequent repetition of these words by Mindoug. This is why he remembered (or recorded) these words in order to include them later in the chronicle. It is difficult to speculate whether the scribe knew the Yatvingian language; whether it was he, who misunderstood the sense of the phrase, or whether its sense was lost later, in Cholm. At some point its sense was completely lost; it was recorded simply as a collection of phonemes. The editor of the final version of the chronicle thus perceived it as a foreign-language abracadabra, and without attempting to decipher it, interpreted it as names of some "pagan deities." Such a prejudice persists today.

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

## Thoughts and Observations

### Belarus Elections End in Violence And Repressions

By David Marples

... A peaceful protest planned for 8.00 pm on December 19 in October Square was well publicized in opposition websites and newspapers. By 8.00 pm over 40,000 people had gathered there. However, the authorities had turned the square earlier into an ice skating rink with loud music and it proved impossible for speakers to be heard. A decision was made to move to Independence Square, one mile down the main street of Minsk ([www.charter97.org](http://www.charter97.org), December 19).

... Clearly, the assaults (by security forces - Ed.) were planned well in advance. Once detained, most dem-

onstrators received 15 days for petty hooliganism, but 23 others, including Sannikau, Nyaklyaeu, Statkevich, and Rymasheuski were charged under Article 293, Part 1, of the Criminal Code with inciting mass riots, which carries a prison sentence of five to fifteen years ([www.telegraf.by](http://www.telegraf.by), December 20). Ryhor Kastusyou and Dzmitry Vus have not yet been charged but are barred from leaving the country (*Radio Free Europe*, December 29). Rymasheuski was released on December 31, but banned from leaving Minsk (*Radio Free Europe*, January 3).

... One reason for the assault may have been that **according to exit polls and polls conducted by independent outlets, Lukashenka's popular standing was estimated to be 35 percent to 44 percent at the time of the election.** Results from three districts of Minsk were used to tabulate probable election results as follows: Lukashenka 43.4 percent; Sannikau 23.8 percent; Ramanchuk 8.4 percent; and Nyaklyaeu 8.2 percent. In the capital, Lukashenka's share was estimated at 35.3 percent with Sannikau at 21.8 percent. In short, **based upon this select data it would appear that Lukashenka failed to win outright in the first round** (<http://www.ucpb.org/news/elections-2010/62599-2010-12-28-23-50-52>).

... Officially, Aliaksandr Lukashenka was declared the election's victor with 79.67 percent of the vote.

... A second factor may have been the statements by Sannikau and Nyaklyaeu, among others, that in the event of falsifications, the outcome of the election would be decided "on the square." Before leaving October Square Sannikau, Statkevich, and Rymasheuski announced their intent to form a government of "National Rescue" (<http://www.ntv.ru/novosti/214145/>). Lukashenka evidently was fearful that he might be removed from office in the same fashion as his ally Kurmanbek Bakiyev was in Kyrgyzstan (*Radio Free Europe*, December 30).

The international response to the crackdown was mixed. Russian President, Dmitry Medvedev, commented initially that it was an internal affair of Belarus, but eventually congratulated Lukashenka on his "victory" (*RIA Novosti*, December 25). Carl Bildt, Karel Schwarzenberg, Radek Sikorski and Guido Westerwelle, the foreign ministers of Sweden, Czech Republic, Poland and Germany, published an angry letter in *The New York Times* on December 23 entitled "Lukashenka the Loser," in which they denounced vote rigging and the brutal repression of a peaceful demonstration.

For Westerwelle and Sikorski in particular, the events ended their quest to nudge Lukashenka toward democracy with a prospective \$3.8 billion loan. The US and Canada also condemned the actions of the Lukashenka regime. Lukashenka angrily denounced the OSCE observers and ended the mandate of the OSCE office in Minsk (*RIA Novosti*, January 4). However, his relationship with Russia remains shaky and the bloody scenes on Independence Square, a "war on his own people," reflect his nervousness rather than his strength.

**Source:** Excerpts from an article in *Eurasia Daily Monitor* Volume: 8 Issue: 3, January 5, 2011

# Dashed Dreams on Christmas Eve

By Hanna Vasilevich

*For some in Belarus, the end of 2010 crushed their hopes for change; for others, it proved that nothing can threaten Belarus' forced stability. However, the outcome of presidential elections held on 19th of December, was not surprising for either side. The little spark of hope did not manage to become a fire of changes even on Christmas Eve.*

The year 2010 was quite intense with events in Belarusian political life. After the January quarrel between Belarus and Russia concerning gas supply and tariffs on its delivery to Europe, there was a relative improvement in relations for a short period of time. The second wave of the Belarus-Russia quarrel was longer and more intense. It began in June when Gazprom demanded immediate repayment of Belarusian debt of \$190 million. Though the quarrel was settled a few days later, the uneasy feelings affected the relations between the two countries for much longer.

This open confrontation created the false hope in Belarus that the Russian government's support of the Belarusian president in the upcoming presidential elections might be weakening. During the summer the independent media were full of articles by various analysts stating that Lukašenka has lost support from the Russian side, and the current term may be his last. Such statements were supported by Lukašenka's apparent willingness to cooperate with the European Union as a way to escape Russian influence. The summer was hot with debates and easily accessible videos, "revealing" the nature of the Belarusian leader. Russian state TV channels showed a series of highly unflattering short documentaries called *GodBačka*, as in the American mafia series with the word '*bačka*', meaning father in Belarusian. The documentaries claimed to be based on secret archives, revealing the shadowy side of Lukašenka's power. He reacted sharply during his traditional annual press conference with Russian regional media journalists, openly criticizing the Russian government for allowing the telecasts. Russian President Medvedev responded with an equally sharply worded video on his blog... Everyone believed that such a confrontation on the eve of Belarus' presidential elections had shaken Lukašenka's position and his anti-Russian rhetoric would cause him to lose some support, giving the opposition a chance. The unimpeded registration of nine alternative candidates strengthened that view. At the end of the summer the country was full of hope that Lukašenka will not rule much longer.

The campaign was very different from the previous ones in 2001 and 2006. The large number of alternative candidates was in itself a plus, since it made it more likely that Lukašenka will not get the required 50% to avoid a runoff. For the first time since 1994, when Lukašenka was first elected in a runoff, each opposing candidate had a chance to address the people live on state controlled TV, albeit limited to ½ hour. They mostly focused on criticizing the president and the government, and such incredible criticism was neither censored nor banned. The main internet portal TUT.BY arranged a series of online debates among the opposing candidates, in which they openly criticized the president. Such lib-

eralization was attributed to the regime's flirtation with the EU in order to strengthen its position vis-à-vis Russia. Foreign Ministers of Poland and Germany promised credits of \$4 billion on the condition that the elections will be free and fair. However, this carrot was neither big nor tempting enough. Lukašenka was invited to Moscow a week before the election and was offered and accepted a similar sum, without any conditions.

## End of flirtation with European Union

On Election Day, Lukašenka openly stated to the media waiting for him at the polling station that "*we are not going to crawl on all fours for your international recognition*". And he was not. According to officially announced count he received 80% of the vote. The opposition claimed extensive election fraud, referring to the polls conducted by independent outlets, according to which Lukašenka's vote count was estimated to be 35 to 44%. The regime considered the highly negative evaluation by independent and OSCE observers of elections as "not deserving attention." Moreover, the president claimed to be surprised by this evaluation since, according to him, in order "to please the OSCE," Belarus amended its electoral legislation, and the electoral campaign was conducted as openly as possible. "We registered all the candidates, and shut our eyes on their former sins," said Lukašenka. He also underscored that the country hosted more than one thousand electoral observers and many foreign journalists: "We allowed even those who were previously prohibited from entering our country. During this month there were no state borders, anyone who wished, could come." As for the opposition, all those who disagreed with the officially announced elections' outcome and who dared to go to the square to protest, were brutally beaten, massively dispersed, summarily imprisoned, with many still awaiting trials and facing long prison sentences.

In summary, it is now obvious, that it was extremely difficult to exploit the briefly and barely opened "window of opportunity" during the 2010 presidential election in order to introduce democracy to Belarus. Of course, democracy does not seem to have been the goal of Lukašenka's regime. As a result in squelching the protest, it possibly achieved a truly Pyrrhic victory, by stirring growing antagonism toward it within the Belarusian society.

The election has left many open questions concerning the future of the framework of Belarus-West cooperation. A month later the European Parliament discussed the election itself and the situation in Belarus after the election. They proposed sanctions against official Minsk, including the re-introduction of the EU entry ban for Belarusian top-level authorities, the eventual exclusion of Belarus from the Eastern Partnership initiative, and a call for a new election in accordance with OSCE standards. The EU Council managed to reach a somewhat weakened decision on Belarus, though the way was not without thorns. Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi did not support any sanctions at first, though after talking to Angela Merkel he withdrew his objections. The United States joined the entry ban and restored the suspended sanctions against the Belnaftakhim subsidiaries.

Eventually, the dialog apparently ended. Belarus became closed and isolated again, now from both sides.



Limited cooperation continues between western governments and some opposition organizations who managed to escape prison. Though, such cooperation means little to Belarus as a country, nor does it significantly intensify contacts of Belarusian citizens with the west. The Belarusian government as well as the president are not recognized and banned from any possible dialog, and common Belarusian citizens are in the same place and position they were before elections.

However, it is not true that nothing has changed in Belarus. The opposition became even more leaderless. Presidential candidates Saŭnikaŭ and Statkievič are still held in KGB prisons, as are such acknowledged leaders as Liabiedźka and Sieviaryniec. Candidates Niakliajeŭ and Rymašeŭski are under house arrest, and Michalevič, after publicly accusing KGB of torture during his two-month long detention, left the country, 'beyond the reach of KGB'. Ramančuk, by reading a prepared statement criticizing the other candidates for leading the protest demonstration, appears to have lost any stature in the country. Despite the consolidated position in calling for the release of all political prisoners, the Belarusian opposition is split. This trend currently continues, and lack of coordination in preparation of March 25 celebrations marks it. Thus the opposition in its current state can neither effectively represent the Belarusian civic society, nor act as a consolidated political power within the country itself.

It seems that the present task for the Belarusian civic society is to find ways of creating new "windows of opportunity", this time wider and more accessible. The task for the opposition is complicated unless it can overcome the continuing internal splits and form a truly united front more in tune with a greater segment of the population.

The West has two options, both equally difficult. One, to ignore the state and openly and more effectively support the opposition, or the other, to maintain a limited engagement with the regime. Each of these options has its shortcomings. Support for the opposition is complicated since it cannot overcome its internal splits, and thus resembles a cemented vase that might rupture one day. Re-establishing cooperation with the state would mean acknowledging failure of the earlier policies toward Belarus and the legitimization of the Lukašenka regime.

However, since the regime now holds the real power in the country, and once it is sufficiently economically weakened, it could conceivably be interested in limited democratization and liberalization in order to obtain recognition of its de-facto legitimacy and with it — real economic benefits. The latter scenario seems more reliable at least for short or medium-term perspective. And it is this scenario that may eventually provide an open window of opportunity. **If one can enter through the window when the door is closed, one may be able to open the door from inside.**

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## Lukašenka Trapped by His Own Power Structures

By Sviatlana Kalinkina

It is necessary to live in our country a long time to be able to compare certain events. Curiously, no one these days remembers the assault on the Government House that took place seventeen years ago...

Then, the parliament deputy Aliaksandr Lukašenka assaulted the Belarusian White House. Although the police did not allow him to enter the building, he insistently broke through, impudently pushing away men in uniforms and waving his arms. A group of his supporters was also present. Journalists filmed it. At some point during the fight, Lukašenka's jacket was torn. He was appealing to people, showing his torn jacket, cursing the satrap and oppressor of liberties, Viačaslaŭ Kiebič (former prime minister —Ed.), and crying that the police was serving the regime, strangling the fighter for democracy...

What punishment would he get today for such an assault?

Article 292 — "seizure of buildings and objects" — up to five years of imprisonment; Article 339, Part 2 — "hooligan behavior in resisting a person who was stopping disorderly conduct" — up to six years; Article 363 — "violence or threats of violence against police officers" — up to six years. The list of "convenient" articles of the criminal code could be continued.

Yet during "satrap Kiebič's rule, the man who assaulted the Government House was not beaten with rubber truncheons over his head. The journalists who filmed it did not have their equipment broken, they were not dragged to police stations, and their faces were not pressed to the pavement. A ferocious special task force did not rush on the "brave fighter".

He was simply pushed out the door like a harmful puppy, and the guard smilingly observed how the sufferer for democracy was waving his torn jacket, how he was shouting with indignation.

As a matter of fact, the jacket was not his own — it was borrowed from Mr. Sinicyn (his close friend and political ally — Ed.).

I'm interested in learning why Lukašenka considers his own assault of the Government House permissible, but not an assault by anyone else. How could he forget such a heroic part of his biography? Why did he compile odes to himself as a hero and seeker of truth then, while hollering now: "Bandits, terrorists, thugs!"

Lukašenka has admitted monitoring everything that was taking place from an operations center, which means that he was informed about all events as they developed, saw everything, and, being of sound mind, personally issued the order to act in a most cruel fashion. People were beaten over their heads with rubber truncheons and kicked by special task forces who did not differentiate among women, occasional passersby and journalists... After he came to power, he apparently succeeded in implementing democracy as he understands it. His "democracy" consists of two components — lies and power.

It is a lie when he says that the Government House has been assaulted. I personally looked attentively and



several times through the video footage of the Belarusian state without observing any assault. They keep showing the same thing: repeating the same incident several times to make it seem as if the assault was long and insistent. As a matter of fact, we observed several instances of someone breaking glass.

.... In fact his security forces lured him into a trap. No matter what we say, but if there had not been such a brutal crackdown, then this election would have been recognized by Europe and the United States. It means that Lukašenka would have had the legitimacy and space to maneuver. And now – he does not. And he personally gave the order to cancel everything that had been done to avoid depending on Russia.

At the end of the day, which was supposed to be a triumph for him, he held an aggressive press conference in the spirit of – “let us deal with all”, “I’m not afraid of anyone”, but many have noticed a hysterical reddening on “the winner’s” cheeks. His boys waved truncheons on his orders, provided work for the courts, filled the prisons of temporary detention; he observed the beatings and humiliation of his rivals on monitors, – an exciting “movie” that he probably enjoyed. But what is the price of this movie?!

... The doors to the West have closed, and the East has lost the key to open it, but so far there is hope that it is being looked for.

It’s just a classic example of what happens when there is no normal parliament and normal media — the power structures are manipulating the presidents.

Had Lukašenka behaved as Kiebič did during the first assault of the Government House, he might be listening to words of friendliness from the United States and soft, inessential criticism of the OSCE. But the Belarusian president is being guided by information and advice from “experienced analysts.” Here they prompted him on what he should do. They prompted and he made the decision. And now he will dance to the tune of Moscow’s balalaika. He boasts that he restored order in the country in seven and a half minutes, but in fact he lost real power.

... Therefore, the most important documents in the current situation do not appear to be those pertaining to the classified, and soon to be published, information on the financing of the Belarusian opposition by the West, but details of the close and constructive relationships between heads of Belarusian security forces and their Russian counterparts.

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*Translated from Belarusian by Raman Kavalčuk.*

*Edited by Maria Kiehn.*

**Source:** Excerpts from an article in <http://skalinkina.livejournal.com>

## Quotes of Quarter

Polish Member of European Parliament **MAREK MIGALSKI** was quoted by Radio Racja on February 11, regarding the expansion of the EU visa ban list:

“ I think that we need to include into the list the deans and rectors of universities, who expelled students after (the post-election demonstration) December 19 or for other reasons.

## The Opposition Achieved All It Could

By Alexander Čajčyc

By convening tens of thousands in post-election protests, the democratic opposition achieved all it could. The false impression of a democratic election was destroyed. Despite the cold weather, the 2010 protests were much more impressive than the protests in 2006 or 2001.

Some foreign media are complaining about the defeat of the opposition. But all other imaginable outcomes of the street protests in Minsk — the seizure of state power, or even the takeover of the Central Elections Commissions office or state television by demonstrators — were a priori unrealistic. Power between the protesters and the state was distributed highly unequally, given the nature of the current regime and the current situation. Even if we imagine that the opposition could take control of the governmental building — then what? Could the opposition defend it against the state armed forces? How? And why?

Even if the opposition had forced Alyaksandr Lukashenka into a dialogue, it would have launched a process with an uncertain and most likely negative outcome. Any deals made with the current regime would be worth nothing and would be violated by Lukashenka when he deemed convenient. This already happened to the opposition-led parliament in 1996, to Russia’s attempt to build the Union State with Lukashenka, and to the European Union’s attempt to draw Belarus into the Eastern Partnership.

The events of December 19th, including the traditionally flawed vote-counting that brought one more overwhelming and unrealistically large victory for Lukashenka, have shown that the opposition did not need to nominate a single candidate.

In fact, as a result of nominating nine rather than one candidate, the opposition took full advantage of opportunities to promote its views during the campaign. The campaign helped the emergence of a number of new national opposition politicians that gained useful experience and aired their positions.

Lukashenka’s regime cannot be defeated in an election that he himself organizes. Neither can it be defeated in street battles. A realistic goal for the opposition should be not the fall of the regime, but its gradual transformation.

Lukashenka and his loyal think tanks are spreading promises. Belarus, they say, has developed what they call “strong democratic institutions” that allow the country’s economy, as they claim, to benefit the population. Given these “achievements”, the task at hand now is to simply adjust these institutions to Western standards. Having articulated this position, the regime has no place to retreat, and the need for reform has not disappeared. The demonstration of the population’s protest potential, with the opposition taking over Minsk’s central square, may well contribute to reformist sentiments on a purely emotional level.

The democratic opposition has achieved all it could: the false impression of a democratic election has been destroyed, and the population's objection and frustration have been expressed. The West did not recognize the election, and Russia's official reaction has been neutral. Engaging with the EU against the background of beaten journalists and politicians will now be difficult for the president. Moreover, the peace between Lukashenka and Moscow is unstable; in fact, the Kremlin may be waiting for Lukashenka to violate some of his agreements with Russia (as he tends to do) to attack him with more force than before.

This experience shows that an octopus-like opposition – decentralized, pluralistic, but coordinated on a small number of key issues – may be what is needed at the moment. Opposition forces already range from uncompromising to “constructive”, from Belarusian nationalists to pro-Russian parties, from left-wing anarchists to Christian Democrats, from radical Mikola Statkevich to cautious Ales Mikhalevich.

Such opposition could not be split, just like it is impossible to split water. Each opposition structure should focus on a particular topic, be it the economy, the revival of the Belarusian language, or, say, municipal self-government. To go one step further, a member of the opposition in the government, however authoritarian, can do much more than an honorable political prisoner.

**Source:** BelarusDigest, December 22, 2010

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## Lukashenka Backed Himself Into a Corner

By Siarhiej Bohdan

Almost a month after the brutal voting-day crackdown in Minsk, repression against the regime's opponents is not diminishing. Most leaders of the December 19th protests are still in custody without any reasonable interaction with their families or access to lawyers. Police and state security agents are raiding the houses of opposition activists and arresting many of them.

Such a long campaign of repression is unprecedented for Belarus. Of course, Lukashenka needs some time to recover his iron grip over the country that he slightly loosened before the elections. But it is quite clear that such steps accompanied by hostile actions towards the West – such as the closure of the OSCE office in Minsk or accusations against Germany and Poland – will unavoidably mean a tilt toward Moscow. Why did the regime leader change his mind? Just before the elections, he gave the impression of a man interested in reducing Russian influence over his nation and befriending the West.

The situation may have a simple explanation. In a system without public critics and without parliamentary and other public control over state and security services, it was easy for security services to convince Lukashenka that it was absolutely necessary to launch a campaign of repression.

After many years of wiping out anything alive on the Belarusian political stage, now there is effectively a political ground zero in Belarus. There is only the president in public politics. What happens behind the closed doors of Belarusian state institutions and organizations is a mystery. The soil for any visible civil society has been burned and is no longer fertile. That applies to the media, the opposition and civil society in general. There are no voices or serious analysis and research done within the regime that goes beyond their need to preserve the political status quo.

As a result, no one knows what is happening to Belarus. Its leader is not an exception. Everyone has become much more vulnerable to foreign pressure and influence. Both the opposition and Lukashenka, consciously and unconsciously, suffer from this vulnerability in their relations with the West and the East, but, most importantly, in their internal policies. Lukashenka, of course, is suffering more. After December 19th, he actually should be afraid of the system he built himself. For good reason.

**The bulk of his (Myasnikovich) cabinet members are ethnic Russians and persons born outside Belarus.**

Active persecution of civil society by the security services prevented a meaningful rapprochement with the West and pushed the country toward Russia, undermining its independence in a dangerous way. Given the innumerable personal links between many members of Belarusian and Russian security agencies, one cannot exclude the probability of Russian involvement in the crackdown. Perhaps not really direct involvement, yet extremely efficient involvement.

Subsequent developments only support this hypothesis. There is also other proof, such as the new cabinet under Prime Minister Mikhail Myasnikovich — a person who personifies the docile nomenclature of late Soviet Belarus, undoubtedly willing to carry out any orders and having no proven commitment to independence. The bulk of his cabinet members are ethnic Russians and persons born outside Belarus.

Other evidence includes recent articles in the main propaganda outlet of the regime, *Belarus Segodnya*. They accused Poland and Germany of planning and supporting opposition protests. And they did not mention the more-than-well-known support given to some opposition groups from Russia altogether. The first such accusation against Germany (Poland has frequently been accused of such things in the past) means that Moscow or its friends in Minsk are striking back in retaliation for Europe's pre-election attempts to get Lukashenka closer to Europe.

A number of recent actions of the Belarusian regime seem to have had no other goal except to further irritate European governments – like the attempted intimidation of some detainees' relatives and the prevention of their attending a Warsaw conference. These actions did not help Lukashenka in any possible way, yet they guaranteed the anger of Europeans and the closure of their doors to the Belarusian president.

Of course, the speculations above are more assumptions than knowledge. Current developments are difficult to interpret, because they seem to be so illogical and irrational. Yet the result is absolutely clear. The only stakeholder that has already benefited from December 19th is Russia. And it is going to benefit even more as Belarusian relations with the West become more strained. The game, however, may be more complicated.

This week, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov stated that his country supports the recent resolution of the Council of Europe criticizing human rights in Belarus. That means that Russia can aim at weakening Lukašenka's legitimacy and standing both internally and internationally. Belarusian analyst Jury Chavusau discussed such a scenario of Russia's weakening Lukashenka almost a year ago.

But in any event, it would be a mistake to consider the Belarusian president a victim of Russian intrigue. It would be also naive to try to save him from the Russian trap through overtures from the West, which Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė tried to do.

First, the current situation in Belarus has been created by Lukashenka himself. It was he who has been benefiting from Russian subsidies and political help for many years. It was also Lukashenka who set up security services so vulnerable to Kremlin influence.

Second, there are situations when it is perfectly clear what is evil and what is good. No matter what brought the people to the streets on the evening of the election, no matter whose money helped Nyaklyaeu and Sannikau — any disagreements are to be solved without resort to violence and torture.

The recent developments in Belarus have demonstrated that there is no such thing as rule of law in the country. At any time, any citizen can be attacked, detained, isolated and stripped of his rights, including his rights to medical or legal aid. This is the situation in which Belarus finds itself after December 19th. Therefore, there is no need to seek justification for the regime's behavior and speak about 'shades of gray'. Today it is perfectly clear what is white and what is black in Belarus.

Between 2007 and the end of 2010, Belarusian politics was transformed — from dealing with purely moral choices. to the world of real politics Unlike with purely moral issues, in politics it is necessary to negotiate and compromise. For a couple of years, Lukashenka managed to communicate with the international community and created ambivalence, even among many Belarusians critical of his regime, concerning the opposition and possible Russian danger.

Today, everything is outside the political sphere. Even more so than prior to 2007. now the existence and change of his regime are moral issues, linked to basic human dignity and basic human rights. The question as to whom and what to support in Belarus today is no longer a political but a moral choice.

**Source:** BelarusDigest, January 17, 2011

## Does Poland Really Know Belarus?

By Kiryl Kaścian

*Jarosław Kaczyński's critique of current Polish policy toward Belarus reveals how outmoded thinking is damaging Belarusian civil society.*

The title of a recent article by Jarosław Kaczyński, "Sikorski Lost Belarus," unambiguously signals the former Polish prime minister's intent to lambaste the Polish diplomatic chief, Radosław Sikorski, and his boss, Prime Minister Donald Tusk, for the failure of Poland's Belarus policy.

Yet although the article, published on 2 February in the prominent daily *Rzeczpospolita*, could be little more than a show of rivalry between different wings of the Polish political elite, it offers clues as to why Polish policy toward Belarus failed under both Tusk and Kaczyński before him.



Jarosław Kaczyński

Poland, which borders Belarus and has strong historical and cultural ties with this EU neighbor country, has become one of the most active proponents of the Belarusian question in the EU. Kaczyński's article supposes that Polish policy toward Belarus during both his and Donald Tusk's governments should be seen in this broader context, and it seems reasonable to follow him in this.

Kaczynski states that Polish diplomacy's engagement during the recent presidential elections in Belarus ended catastrophically because it was based not on the real situation but rather on an unprofessional and wishful approach. In the former prime minister's view Polish diplomacy opted to ally with the Germans in supporting the pro-Russian candidate Uladzimir Niakliaeu, although he had neither any hope of becoming president nor wide support among the Belarusian opposition. He explains this choice as a favor to Moscow, which did not wish to see a too pro-European candidate competing against Alyaksandr Lukashenka. According to Kaczyński, this explains why the most popular figure in the Belarusian opposition, Alyaksandr Milinkevich, failed to win EU support and withdrew from the presidential campaign. Kaczyński raises questions about the quality of the analyses applied by the Poles and whether there might have been any Russian support for this strand of Warsaw's diplomacy.

Kaczyński argues that Russia won against Sikorski and the entire EU and thus achieved all its goals: to eliminate the pro-Western candidate Milinkevich, reach consensus with Lukashenka, increase his dependence on Moscow, and push Belarus away from Europe. Moreover, he believes, the Polish Foreign Ministry learned nothing from its own mistakes and still treats the Belarusian opposition and



Polish minority groups in Belarus not as equal partners but as petitioners. This not only deprives Polish diplomats of contacts and knowledge, it can be taken as an admission that all the endeavors of Polish diplomacy (abolition of visa fees for Belarusians, banning certain officials from entering Poland, etc.) are more public relations than real actions.

Kaczyński believes that the sanctions the EU had previously imposed on the Belarusian regime (entry bans and removal of trade preferences) had no real effect. In order to make the regime feel the sanctions, a trade embargo could be an option, he says, noting that Russia applies mainly energy sanctions and thus strengthens its presence in Belarus.

Tusk's predecessor also questions the EU's Eastern Partnership, partly conceived by the Tusk government as a way to reach out to Eastern European and Caucasus states. In the case of Belarus, the program was just a misfire, since it did not offer financial benefits to solve Belarus' economic problems and lessen the country's dependence on Russia. Moreover, he argues, the Eastern Partnership was overhyped and the added value of its declared "civilizational benefit" in the eyes of Lukashenka's regime approached zero. Hence the policy of carrot and stick offered to Belarus by the "virtual-bureaucratic" program failed because the stick was too soft while the carrot was rotten.

The level of trust of Belarusian civil society toward Poland built up during his government has dropped drastically under the current government, which along with the EU has stepped up contacts with Belarusian officials and made it harder for ordinary Belarusians to cross into Poland, Kaczyński says.

The article devotes particular attention to the situation of the Polish minority in Belarus, a community that he says faces repression by the Belarusian authorities. He depicts the attempts by the Polish Foreign Ministry under Sikorski to end the division within the Belarusian Union of Poles — by merging two organizations or by registering the wing of it that official Minsk does not recognize as a separate organization — as a retreat that threatens the unity of Poles in Belarus. Similarly, he describes the complications with the issuance of the "Pole's card" (a document affirming an individual's Polish nationality that can be issued to citizens of former Soviet republics who do not have Polish citizenship) as a "paralysis of Polish diplomacy."

Hence, Polish policies toward Belarus under the Tusk government, according to Kaczyński, may be viewed as a series of defeats. He argues that a main task for Polish foreign policy must be to help guide Eastern Europe's future, and policy on Belarus plays a key role in this. In Kaczyński's view, Polish diplomacy should as soon as possible re-evaluate its aims, eliminate its bureaucratic approach, and take into account the needs of Belarusian civil society as it seeks to recoup its political losses.

Each of Kaczyński's main points requires a closer look.

Indeed, Kaczyński is right that Niakliaeu was a weak candidate. Even though Niakliaeu is a relatively well-known poet, his name recognition prior to the electoral campaign had hardly gone beyond his image as a writer. It seems that the strategy of Niakliaeu's proponents was to create a Belarusian variant of Václav Havel, a democratically oriented humanist intellectual who consolidated a nation. This approach was vain from the beginning. First, Havel's example as a post-communist

national leader remains unique in Central and Eastern Europe. Second, even at the Belarusian level Niakliaeu cannot be regarded as a top-level figure or icon either among the humanist intellectuals or nationwide. Third, there is a certain distance between Belarusian society itself and the Belarusian humanist intellectuals; and Niakliaeu was not a personality to eliminate or close this gap. As a potential candidate, Milinkevich enjoyed considerably higher public recognition and his run for president in 2006 could have been a considerable advantage in the 2010 campaign.

The strict division into pro-European or pro-Russian orientation that some political analysts apply may be seen as an amplified echo of the Cold War approach. Such an approach leaves Belarusian opposition politicians almost no room for domestic or external maneuver and evidently allows Lukashenka to represent himself to Belarusian society as the sole guarantor of the country's independence, stability, and prosperity. We can see this kind of thinking displayed by Kaczyński and his political opponents in the current Polish Foreign Ministry alike: both see Belarus as sitting within a certain sphere of interest — Russian, Polish, or EU. Yet, during its 16 years, the Lukashenka regime has become self-sufficient and relatively flexible to foreign challenges. While trembling before Russia over the Belarusian question, Poland and the EU are indeed simply defeating themselves, as Kaczyński points out. At the same time, it is not Moscow but official Minsk that holds the keys to the country. Poland's and the EU's failure in their policies toward Belarus will continue until they acknowledge that this Eastern European country is a separate unit of their foreign policy.

The second key point in Kaczyński's critique concerns the Eastern Partnership, which in the virtual absence of other options became the driver of the Belarus-EU relationship. The initiative itself was practically the first real attempt by the EU to filter these countries out of the context of the Russian sphere of interests, some 18 years after the six former Soviet republics appeared on the political map. Both the Belarusian government and civil society showed considerable interest in this program. For official Minsk it was seen as a results-oriented cooperation framework, "based on common democratic values, but whose scope goes far beyond these values," as Foreign Minister Syarhei Martynau wrote in an article in April 2010, that serves "the pragmatic interests of all partner states and the Wider Europe in general by fostering sustainable development, economic and social modernization in this part of the continent."

There is serious reason to doubt, however, that EU members not from Central or Eastern Europe or the Baltic Sea region will contribute equally to the development of the partnership. The priorities chosen by the Spanish and Belgian EU presidencies can be seen as significantly rolling back the Eastern Partnership gains made during the Czech and Swedish presidencies. We may well share Kaczyński's denunciation of the initiative as a virtual partnership empty of real content, an instrument that meets neither the needs of the Belarusian regime nor the demands of civil society.

In Belarusian-Polish relations, the minority issue is probably the aspect most often misinterpreted by Polish elites. Where the Polish minority could be brought into service as a bridge in relations, instead politicians and the media typically portray them as harassed and repressed. The potential of the Belarusian minority in Poland is never

considered. In his article Kaczyński charges Lukashenka with disrespecting and violating the rights of the Polish minority. Relations with Minsk have been strained by the regime's attempt to split up the official association representing ethnic Poles. Without going into this complex matter, it seems that Kaczyński defines as Belarusian Poles those who belong to the "illegal" Union of Poles and the pressure of the Belarusian authorities on this group's members is interpreted as repression of the Polish minority as a whole. This argument represents a blatant misconception of the difference between the collective rights of minorities and individual rights of people to freely declare their ethnicity on the one hand and the right for freedom of assembly on the other hand. One of the presidential candidates, economist Yaraslau Ramanchuk, is an ethnic Pole who openly speaks about it and is not associated with the "official" Union of Poles. His electorate, however, went far beyond the support of ethnic Poles.

A more useful approach to this issue was suggested by Waldemar Tomaszewski, an ethnic Polish member of the European Parliament from Lithuania, who argues that the Polish minority question should be seen as part of a much broader human-rights problem with the restriction of the freedom of assembly in Belarus. Instead, Kaczyński portrays the quashing of this right in Belarus as an interethnic conflict and vehemently condemns attempts by Poland and the Belarusian authorities to settle the conflict through the merger of the two ethnic Polish associations.

Here we see the workings of the many stereotypes and misconceptions that blot Polish relations toward Belarus and considerably influence Warsaw's foreign policy and Polish public opinion. On the European stage, Belarus is still seen through the prism of Moscow's influence, while problems with the freedom of assembly there are depicted as an interethnic conflict. The contacts and experiences of Belarusian civil society are barely considered, nor the potential for cooperation with official Minsk. Neither the Polish minority in Belarus nor the Belarusian community in Poland is offered the role of potential negotiator.

The crucial misstep in the Polish attitude toward Belarus is the tendency of the Polish elites to see the eastern neighbor through the prism of Lukashenka-the-dictator while disregarding the people's side. Last year's elections showed that both Poland and the EU will deal with Lukashenka for another five years. The Belarusian president still retains considerable support in the society and no opposition candidates could achieve comparable results at the polls under the current "rules of the game." However, during the last couple of years the Belarusian government has shown its readiness for cooperation with the EU and has allowed a limited relaxation of its grip. In this we can see the possibility, under the current regime, for development and maturation of civil society and the onset of change emerging from within. It is naïve to expect an Egyptian scenario from Belarusians. It is more than reasonable, however, to use the existing opportunities and not to isolate the country (and thus first of all its people) with any restrictions on cooperation and dialogue.

**Source:** Transitions-on-Line, March 4, 2011

## AFTERMATH of December 2010 events

### World Leaders Speak Out For Imprisoned Protesters

MINSK, Belarus.— Former Czech President Vaclav Havel, former U.S. President George W. Bush, U.S. Rep. Howard Berman (D-CA), and dozens of international leaders have taken to RFE's airwaves in Belarus to call attention to the plight of hundreds of Belarusian activists jailed in the wake of the dubious December 19 election.

In broadcasts that aired over the New Year's weekend, prominent global leaders read the names of all detainees on RFE's Belarusian station, Radio Liberty.

By reading each person's name, we are signaling that he or she is not forgotten.

Since the vote, which handed incumbent Aliaksandr Lukashenka a fourth term as president, more than 700 protestors have been beaten, arrested, fined, and imprisoned for disputing the election. The vote was widely criticized by the Belarusian opposition and Western observers as falling short of democratic standards.

Other prominent officials who participated in the Radio Liberty project, known as "Voices of Solidarity," included U.S. Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL), former U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, National Endowment for Democracy (NED) President Carl Gershman, Freedom House Executive Director David Kramer, Johns Hopkins University Professor Francis Fukuyama, Russian human rights activist Elena Bonner, RFE President Jeffrey Gedmin, and Czech Foreign Minister Karel Schwarzenberg. George W. Bush read the names of five presidential candidates being held in a KGB prison in Minsk.

"By reading each person's name, we are signaling that he or she is not forgotten," says RFE Belarusian Service Director Alexander Lukashuk. "We know from former Belarusian dissidents that inmates routinely smuggle shortwave radios into prison in order to listen to Radio Liberty."

The "Voices of Solidarity" project is also drawing a huge online audience. In a single day after the crackdown, Radio Liberty's website recorded more than 900,000 page views - a 20-fold increase in traffic. And more than 30,000 people listened to the station's streaming audio programs - a 50-fold increase.

In Minsk, Belarusian officials are defiant. On December 30, Lukashenka referred to the protestors as a "handful of traitors trying to overthrow the country." He hinted that some detainees would face stiff prison sentences.

**Source:** Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, January 13, 2011

# Civil Society Aid Stepped Up

By Rikard Jozwiak

BRUSSELS -- Belarusian opposition movements have received pledges of 87 million euros (\$120 million) from 36 donor states at a fundraising conference in Warsaw.

Polish Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski made the announcement at the end of the gathering, which followed a crackdown on antigovernment activists protesting President Alyaksandr Lukashenka's reelection in December.

Belarusian opposition figure Alyaksandr Milinkevich told journalists at the conference that outside support was crucial to the success of the democracy movement in Belarus.

Milinkevich added that the conference in Warsaw was "not typical. I have been to many conferences in my lifetime, but the fact that this conference is devoted to Belarus with representatives from a high level, from 40 countries is very important for us."

"This solidarity gives us assurance that Belarus is in the European family and that we have common values, although the main thing is our work," he continued. "We need help, concrete help. We must bring democracy to our country."

## 'Helping Civil Society'

Jerzy Buzek, the speaker of the European Parliament, said the aid was part of a dual-track policy of helping the Belarusian people while sanctioning the country's leaders.

"This conference is crucial because it exemplifies the new stance of the free world towards Belarus: a rigorous approach to the regime and a strong support for civil society and the Belarusian people," Buzek said.

We are living a momentous period for democracy and we should not let it pass -- we need to seize it."

The Warsaw meeting came days after the European Union and United States slapped a new raft of sanctions -- including a travel ban and asset freeze -- on Lukashenka and 157 associates.

"This conference was a success," Swedish Foreign Minister Carl Bildt told RFE/RL. "To help the civil society in Belarus is the second leg of the EU's policy towards the country after the first phase, which included imposing visa sanctions on the authorities."

Sweden is the largest national donor to Belarus and Bildt added that the annual sum of aid, reaching a total of 11 million euros (\$15 million), is likely to be increased for this year.

## Increasing Funding

For its part, the European Commission announced it would quadruple its aid to Belarus in order to support human rights and democracy there, to 15.6 million euros over 2011 to 2013.

Eva Nyaklyaeva, the daughter of former presidential candidate Uladzimir Nyaklyaeu, told journalists that the conference underscored that the country's best hope for the future lies with the Belarusian people, not their leaders.

"A conference like this shows that they finally understood that their partner is not Lukashenka and the government," she said, "but their partner is the people of Belarus, the normal Belarusians, the civic society with whom they should plan the future for the country, not with the government."

The U.S. government pledged earlier this week to boost its annual aid contribution to Belarusian civil society groups, currently 8 million euros (\$11 million), by 30 percent. Poland said it was doubling aid to 10 million euros (\$14 million).

## 'People-To-People Contacts'

Additionally, Estonian Foreign Minister Urmas Paet urged the EU to continue its practice of easing visa requirements for ordinary Belarusian citizens, even as it restricts travel for high officials.

Belarusians are currently paying 65 euros for a visa to the EU's Schengen zone, almost twice the price compared to Russians and Ukrainians.

There was also widespread support for the European Humanities University (EHU) in Vilnius, Lithuania, which hosts several Belarusian students who were arrested during the election.

The Nordic Council of Ministers pledged an immediate 20,000 euros (\$27,500) to the university and announced that they also would allocate a further 631,000 euros (\$870,000) throughout the year.

**Source:** Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, February 2, 2011

# MEDIA WATCH

## Time to Hit Lukashenko

### Where it Hurts

By David Kramer and Joerg Forbrig

Following December's fraudulent election, a brutal crackdown has only added further misery to Belarus's beleaguered democratic opposition, civil society and media. In response, European Union ministers were on Monday expected to back a new travel ban and asset freeze against Alexander Lukashenko, the country's dictator, and more than 150 of his henchmen. The move is welcome, but does not go far enough. The time is now right to hit Mr Lukashenko where it hurts: his economy.

The EU deserves credit for this decisive move, a radical change from its previous two-year campaign to "engage" Mr Lukashenko. This policy failed, and has been replaced with new promises to increase support for the country's democrats. But more can be done to press the case for reform and win the freedom of dozens of political prisoners held by the Belarusian KGB. The release of two prominent prisoners over the weekend should leave us in no doubt that the regime is sensitive to such pressure.

To secure release and push for broader change, the west must now adopt economic measures against Minsk. Fuelled by massive Russian subsidies and growing business links with EU, the Belarusian dictator has been able to buy the political acquiescence of his people. The revenues also enable him to sustain a vast security apparatus.



However, Mr Lukashenko's material situation has become less stable of late, creating the perfect opportunity to apply pressure. Russia has begun to phase out subsidies in the form of cheap oil and gas, while once-advanced Belarusian products have become uncompetitive after years without investment or reform of the economy. To fill the holes in its budget, Minsk has taken out loans on a staggering scale, tripling the country's debt over the past three years alone. The much-touted "Belarusian model" is increasingly broken. These are vulnerabilities the EU and US should exploit.

First, the EU should freeze the assets of state-owned – meaning Lukashenko-owned – Belarusian companies and their subsidiaries. The US proved such moves work three years ago, when the holdings of oil monopoly Belneftekhim were blocked, forcing Mr Lukashenko to release political prisoners.

Second, the EU should review its consumption of Belarusian export commodities. The sale, mostly to Europe, of petrochemical products provides most Belarusian revenues. Diesel processed by Belarusian refineries, however, accounts for only 1 per cent of EU use. Interrupting trade would cause little harm to Europe, but major economic disruption for Mr Lukashenko. Belarus will also soon need debt financing, as its reserves dwindle and loans require servicing. Unless more prisoners are released the EU should sever lines of credit. International financial institutions such as the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank should follow.

Finally, Mr Lukashenko has long depended on murky arms sales to bolster his coffers. Allegations emerged recently that Belarus sold missile systems to Iran, while jets provided and piloted by Belarus bombed a French military base during the Ivorian civil war in 2004. Further such arms deals should be blocked. Aside from the security benefits to such a move, this would also dry up a significant source of revenue for the regime.

Some will worry that in pushing for tougher measures, the EU and US will antagonise Russia (which considers Belarus part of its wider sphere of interest) while others fear punitive measures will drive Mr Lukashenko into the arms of Moscow. But neither argument should deter action. Russia views Mr Lukashenko sceptically, and is unlikely to retaliate. Sanctions in the past were imposed because of how Mr Lukashenko mistreated his own people, not on whether Minsk and Moscow had good or bad relations; that approach should not change.

The punitive measures we propose are strongly supported by Belarusian democrats. They know the time is right to tighten the screws on Europe's last dictator. As a wave of freedom moves from Tunisia to Egypt and beyond, Europe must help those seeking liberty on its own border – and confront the threat Mr Lukashenko poses to freedom and human rights in Belarus and beyond.

**Source:** Excerpts from an article in *The Financial Times*, January 31, 2011

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## Cracks Deepen in Belarus' Repressive Regime

By Mitchell Orenstein

President Lukashenko's brutal crackdown as his power fades is a cue for the west to engage with disaffected Belarusians.

As pro-democracy protests sweep the Arab world, Belarus, Europe's grim, quasi-Soviet redoubt, has taken a turn for the worse since President Alyaksandr Lukashenka violently suppressed post-election demonstrations in December and imprisoned seven of the nine candidates who stood against him. But, as western governments – and the European Union in particular – respond, they should view Lukashenka's brutal crackdown as a major turning point: the moment when the regime could no longer claim popular support and was forced to confront the failure of its antediluvian socioeconomic model.

Lukashenka's regime has rested on three pillars: a social contract that promises national independence and a guaranteed low income in exchange for tacit consent to dictatorial rule; a propaganda machine that reinforces the value and necessity of this deal; and a massive security apparatus to enforce it.

... Wages are much lower than official figures suggest – perhaps as low as \$200 to \$300 a month. The unemployment rate is 0.7%, but largely because those who register at labour offices are put to work in community service jobs paying \$10 to \$15 a month. Prices are high, owing to trade restrictions and government support for inefficient state enterprises. Economic growth, pumped up during the run-up to the presidential election by enormous fiscal spending – two-thirds of the economy is state-owned – was officially 7.6% in 2010, but the rate has plummeted since, though no one is saying by how much.

Whatever its past successes in maintaining basic living standards, today it is evident that Belarus cannot match its neighbours' dynamism. While many pensioners and some workers remain content with life under Lukashenka, young people, and those with the most education and talent, voted against him in December – and much evidence suggests that he won less than 50%.

... And yet Lukashenka is no fool. He might not respect the outcome of elections, but he cannot afford to ignore what the last one revealed about the depths of his regime's unpopularity. His problem is the regime's utter loss of legitimacy, which means that repression will not be enough. He needs to strike a new bargain with Belarusians, and he knows it: economic modernisation with political "stability".

The first steps will be taken this year. The regime currently operates a bloated, inefficient industrial sector to maintain employment, which is possible because the government derives most of its revenue from natural-resources trade (mainly refined Russian oil and domestic potash deposits) and transit fees for deliveries of Russian oil and natural gas to Europe. Yet now, Lukashenka wishes to harness entrepreneurship and foreign direct investment in a bid to modernise the economy.

Belarus already has a budding software industry that reports net annual revenues of \$300m. And, with Austrian money and World Bank support, officials are drawing up a privatisation programme that will cover a significant proportion of the country's mainly state-owned industry. While the specific companies to be sold have not been announced, the government has indicated that it would sell a 25% share of the giant potash producer Belaruskali.

Lukashenka hopes that dramatic economic reforms will win western support, disarm foreign and domestic critics and achieve economic modernisation under authoritarian

rule. But he risks angering laid-off workers and empowering inefficient crony capitalists, while moving too slowly to satisfy the desires of those who voted (and took to the streets to protest) against him. And Belarus is no China: it is not too big to be punished for its government's behaviour.

Yet western policy towards Belarus must be carefully modulated, and it should emphasize Europe's soft power – the attractiveness of its social model to an increasing number of Belarusians. The west needs to cultivate relations with these people and invest in the economy, while rejecting the brutality of the regime, which may become easier if privatisation moves ahead.

... Economic engagement is more controversial. Investment in Belarus arguably strengthens the regime, but it also may be necessary for the eventual emergence of a democratic Belarus. Person-to-person exchanges should also be encouraged, and the support that countries such as Poland give to the Belarusian opposition should be stepped up.

The bottom line is this: Belarus's ordinary people and victims of repression need help today. But so does its decrepit regime. The west should use that fact to its fullest advantage.

**Source:** Excerpts from an article in *The Guardian*, February 10, 2011

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## The Moscow Power Games Behind Belarus Election Crackdown

The people of Belarus had never seen anything like it: On Dec. 4, two weeks before presidential election, nine opposition candidates were allowed to appear live on state TV and attack the country's authoritarian president, Alyaksandr Lukashenka. They called his decrees "nonsense" and his policies "shameful", and urged the people to stand up to his "crumbling" regime. For the millions of viewers who know Lukashenka as *bac'ka* — a folksy term that means something like "big daddy" (**Editor's note:** Actually *bac'ka* is the Belarusian word for Father)— the unprecedented TV *debat* suggested that Lukashenka's 16 years in power might finally be waning. No such luck; the democratic "opening" looks to have been little more than the latest bluff in Lukashenka's baiting game with Moscow.

... As the votes were being counted on Sunday evening, seven of the nine candidates who had appeared on those debates were arrested. One of them, Uladzimir Nyaklyaeu, a 64-year-old poet turned politician, got his face bashed in on Sunday night during a clash with police, and was kidnapped from his hospital bed hours later by plainclothesmen. "He was semi-conscious when they took him, under heavy medication with a skull trauma and bad concussion," his wife Olga told *TIME* by phone from Minsk. "When they realized he couldn't walk, they laid him on a blanket and dragged him down the corridor. I was locked in the room screaming," she says. "I still have no idea where he is."

... Across town on Independence Square, riot police began violently dispersing tens of thousands of voters protesting against what Western observers called a "flawed" ballot. Hundreds were beaten with truncheons and arrested after part of the crowd tried to storm the parliament building. Then came the official count: Lukashenka had won 80% of the vote — his usual share — and state television

went back to its traditional repertoire of images depicting a smiling *bac'ka* accepting his victory, waving alongside his 6-year-old son Nikolai, who some say is more likely to inherit the presidency than any of the opposition candidates.

... So why would Lukashenka allow these trappings of open politics, only to allegedly steal the election and crush all dissent? Like a lot of political puzzles in the former Soviet Union, the answer leads back to Moscow.

For several years, Lukashenka has been at odds with the Kremlin over economic and energy issues. In 2007, he refused to cede his country's energy infrastructure to Russia, including control of the pipelines that carry Russian oil and gas through Belarus to Europe. This set off a series of nasty disputes and public fuming. Worst of all for Lukashenka, Russia tried to make Belarus pay market prices for oil, a move that could have crippled its economy.

... Lukashenka's main defense against these threats has been nuzzling up to the West. In 2008, when Russia canceled part of a loan to Belarus, the International Monetary Fund stepped in to help, and last year, Belarus joined the E.U.'s Eastern Partnership initiative, a group meant to build ties with former Soviet states in Russia's sphere of influence. But like most points of cooperation with Western powers, that initiative made demands on Lukashenka to improve his record on democracy, and allow the opposition a chance in these elections.

"We've been ready to embrace him, but he had to show us that he was serious in these elections; that it wasn't going to be business as usual," says a senior Western diplomat in Minsk, who spoke to *TIME* on condition of anonymity. "Essentially he had a choice. He could risk losing control to the opposition, or risk losing his sovereignty to the Russians." On Dec. 4, when he gave the opposition a chance to attack him on live television, Lukashenka seemed to signal that he was willing to ease his political monopoly. But as was even more important, he signaled to Moscow that he was serious about yielding to the West. That was when the game changed.

... "So it's clear that there was never any real intention of becoming like Europe or introducing democracy," says Alyaksandr Klaskouski, a political analyst in Minsk. "It was all a ploy to make Russia negotiate." Once that was achieved, Lukashenka had no scruples about cracking down on the opposition, which his government has done with exceptional force in the past two days. Some 600 demonstrators remain in jail as of Monday evening, the BelpAN news agency reported, and during a press conference on Monday, Lukashenka promised that all of those arrested, including the opposition candidates, would "sit in prison as the law allows." The former collective farm chief then added that after Sunday's attempt to storm the parliament building, there will be no more "stupid democracy" in Belarus.

So the change that flickered on Belarusian TV screens on Dec. 4 has taken only a couple of weeks — and a brief set of talks in Moscow — to fade away. The round of protests that opposition leaders had planned for Monday evening have faltered. "There is no one to lead them," says Klaskouski by phone from Minsk. "The candidates are in jail, and the people are demoralized and, yes, they are frightened. Maybe it was naive, but a lot of people here thought things would be better this time." But instead all they got was another five years with *bac'ka*.

**Source:** Excerpts from an article in *TIME*, December 20, 2010

### NOTES from the Editor:

1. In the beginning of 2011 *Belarusian Review* has changed its website. From now on all archives and selected articles of *Belarusian Review* may be found at

[www.thepointjournal.com](http://www.thepointjournal.com)

English version of the website may also be directly accessed through [www.belarusianreview.org](http://www.belarusianreview.org)

After many years of close cooperation, the editorial board of the *Belarusian Review* expresses its sincere gratitude to **Andrej Ramašeŭski** for his cooperation and maintenance of the previous website.

The new website, [www.thepointjournal.com](http://www.thepointjournal.com) contains not only archives of the previous issues of *Belarusian Review*, but also publishes the most acute and interesting original articles on Belarusian topics both in Belarusian and English, as well as textbooks and language guides of Belarusian

2. Beginning with the Spring 2011 issue of the *Belarusian Review*, in articles written exclusively for our publication

**Belarusian personal and geographic names** are being transliterated from the Cyrillic into Roman script by means of the Belarusian Latin alphabet LACINKA.

This rule doesn't apply to reprints from other sources. In these texts the original Library of Congress (LOC) transliteration of Belarusian names is preserved. .

### COMPARISON of Transliteration Methods:

#### Library of Congress (LOC)

#### LACINKA

#### Consonants

CH

Č

KH

CH

SH

Š

ZH

Ž

TS

C

W - or U after vowels

Ŭ

Examples: kroŭ, rabiŭ

Y

at beginning of words, after vowels,

after consonants **D, R**, or after Ŭ

J

Examples: jama, toje, nadvorje, zdaroŭje

Y

after other consonants

I

Examples: nie, siabra, piaro

#### Soft (palatalized) consonants - marked by the 'soft sign' Ъ in Cyrillic script:

Roman

Cyrillic

LACINKA

S

СЬ

Ś

Z

ЗЬ

Ž

Dz

ДЗЬ

DŽ

Ts

ЦЬ

Ć

N

НЬ

Ń

L

ЛЬ

Ł

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