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EDITORIAL

The Three Wounds of Belarus

Major international attention was directed toward Belarus after the December 2010 elections, primarily in connection with the imprisonment of ex-candidates for the presidency and participants in the protest rally on December 19, 2011. Throughout the winter Belarus suffered the consequences of the post-election events. Spring, however, did not bring any relief. While commemorating the 25th anniversary of the Čarnobyl disaster and on the eve of the 70th anniversary of the end of the Nazi occupation during the WWII, Belarus faced an unexpected and terrible bomb explosion in the center of usually peaceful and safe Minsk.

If the recent and most aching wound caused by the bomb explosion united Belarusian society, any one of us or any member of our family could have been there at that moment, we have different attitudes toward the two previous events, though both directly affected Belarusian society and are still having an impact.

WWII, or in the Soviet interpretation — the Great Patriotic War (since the major focus is placed on the events of 1941-45), has been glorified for decades, starting with the Soviet tradition of mass parades in Moscow and the remaining hero cities of the Soviet Union. This approach has evolved into a tradition promoted by the Belarusian President Lukašenka and aimed at continuing extensive and expensive commemoration through parades and other celebrations of WWII/GPW. The official position is that Belarusians should remember and appreciate the sacrifices of veterans, since the so-called brown threat of German Nazism was stopped thanks to the heroism of the Belarusian people during WWII. The significance of this event is evident throughout Belarusian public life. The majority of official state holidays are directly or indirectly related to the events of WWII: commemoration of both the beginning and victorious ending of the war, linkage of the nation's Independence Day with the liberation of the capital Minsk from Nazi occupation, reconstruction of the Soviet line of military defense — Stalin's line, etc. However, this commemoration is generally focused on the heroic past, omitting controversial aspects of some Belarusians' collaboration with the Nazis' occupational regime. One should mention that this collaboration was often unavoidable, and helped save lives of many compatriots. Certain newly discovered facts from the history of WWII in Belarus are also being omitted — particularly those that can negatively affect or even ruin the unassailably sacred image of the WWII promoted by the Belarusian officials (for instance, the revision of the view on actual duration of the Brest Fortress defense based on the recent archive discoveries would definitely lead only to fundamental realignment of the fortress' museum exhibition but also initiate considerable revision of the society's view on one of the main pillars of the state interpretation of the WWII).

Such a rather one-sided approach is explained by the interest of the Belarusian government and president

in support of the older population — veterans who remember and support the Soviet-like policies.

At the same time, the wider propagation of those events and the role of Belarusians in them creates a basis for patriotic feelings and thus unifies the nation. Such a focus on this particular event in the Belarusian history is explained by some opposition members as the president's vision of the starting point of the existence of the Belarusian nation, and thus ignorance of the previous achievements and developments of the Belarusian past.

This year, 9 May — Victory Day — was once again pompously celebrated. It was celebrated in the style of the old Soviet celebrations. This wound can be considered as a healing one, a bit exaggerated and needing to be reconsidered from the view of current research but still deserving to be commemorated and celebrated.

The other wound, the running sore of the Čarnobyl disaster, is now slowly healing. On April 26, 2011 Belarus commemorated the 25th anniversary of the catastrophe which affected and is still affecting Belarus and its population. Over 70 per cent of the radioactive fallout fell on the territory of Belarus, leading to the removal of 20 per cent of Belarus' agricultural lands from economic usage and resulting in significantly increased percentages of cancer deaths and mutations among children. This is our Čarnobyl heritage, which we have faced every day for the past 25 years. Full information about this technogenic catastrophe was hidden from Belarusians — the nation that suffered most — by the Soviet government for two years, leaving the nation uninformed and without needed help. The subsequent dissolution of the USSR and the following economic crisis overshadowed Čarnobyl. The benevolent neglect of the issue by the regime on one hand, and its politicization through the annual demonstrations called "The Čarnobyl Way" (*Čarnobylski Šliach*) on the other, have put this issue far from public discussion. The withdrawal of economic support by EU states five years ago left Belarus alone in overcoming the consequences of the biggest technogenic catastrophe in the history of mankind.

Unfortunately, some politicians are trying to avoid moral responsibility for their actions of 25 years ago (elsewhere in this issue you'll find an article related to Gorbachev's lack of transparency and continuing denials of official responsibility. Additionally, after several unsuccessful attempts by the Belarusian government to restore contaminated lands to use, based on the assumption that 20-25 years were enough to "clean" the territory, those talks have re-opened again. However, now those statements are made more carefully.

This spring brought us not only these sad memories but also a **new open wound caused by the bomb explosion** in the center of Minsk, at the connecting station "Kastryčnickaja" during rush hour. The result was: 15 dead, 20 still hospitalized and around 200 injured. Even more — shock and frustration — anyone could have been there. The regime's claim of immediate arrests of those supposedly guilty is now being questioned. Spring 2011 brought us a lot of painful memories as well as new wounds on the body of Belarus. Let them not be forgotten

Hanna Vasilevich

FEATURES

Statement by the President Of the United States

The White House
May 27, 2011

I strongly condemn the conviction and sentencing of opposition presidential candidates Uladzimir Nyaklyaeu, Andrey Sannikau, Vital Rymasheuski, Mikalai Statkevich, and Dzmitry Us in Belarus. The United States considers these candidates and the other courageous activists and candidates arrested and charged in conjunction with the crackdown on December 19 as political prisoners. In a major step backward for democracy in Belarus, their trials were clearly politically motivated and failed to meet even the most minimal standards required of a fair and independent judiciary. We welcome the broad international consensus condemning the actions of President Alyaksandr Lukashenka and the Government of Belarus in this matter.

Consistent with our values and principles, the U.S. Government will pursue new sanctions against select Belarusian state-owned enterprises, in addition to the sanctions, travel restrictions, and asset freezes announced on January 31. These measures are targeted against those responsible for the repression, particularly President Lukashenka, and are not directed against the people of Belarus. We are coordinating with other concerned governments to ensure that through the implementation of a flexible international sanctions regime we hold accountable those Belarusian officials responsible for these repressive actions. We have also increased our assistance in support of democratic reform in Belarus. We join the European Union and our other allies and partners in supporting the aspirations of the people of Belarus for a modern, democratic and prosperous society within Europe.

From the Publisher

The show trials and other methods of repression by the regime in Belarus have been continuing. As you can see in our Media Watch section the press coverage in the West has been extensive and sharply critical. Such coverage needs to continue, so that those who have been unjustly imprisoned will be soon released and be able to join those who are protesting in a variety of imaginative and yet peaceful ways.

It is also the task of our publication, and to that end we wish to thank all our subscribers, and particularly those who send us larger contributions as well as order gift subscriptions. So far this year such a list includes the following donors:

Anatol Lukjanczuk, Alice Kipel, Thomas Bird, Olga Wilson, Alla Orsa Romano, Nicholas Sniezko, Anatol Sankovitch, Ludmila Bakunovich.

On the last page you can read about another way to make contributions large or small using credit cards or the PayPal system

OSCE Permanent Council Hears Report on Situation in Belarus

VIENNA, 16 June 2011 – Emmanuel Decaux, OSCE Moscow Mechanism rapporteur, presented to the OSCE Permanent Council today his 52 page report about the human rights situation and implementation of OSCE commitments in Belarus since the December 2010 presidential election.

“It is urgent for Belarus to respect its international commitments in the framework of the OSCE and the UN, and to accept a full and permanent monitoring of human rights by independent organs and bodies” is one of the recommendations presented in the report to Belarusian authorities on how to improve the situation with respect to human rights and fundamental freedoms in the country.”



Decaux, a professor of international law at Panthéon-Assas Paris II University, was appointed rapporteur by the 14 OSCE participating States that invoked the Organization's so-called Moscow Mechanism in April.

The Mechanism, agreed by consensus by all 56 OSCE States, allows for an investigation to be launched without consensus and independently of the OSCE Chairmanship, institutions and decision-making bodies if one State, supported by at least nine others, “considers that a particularly serious threat to the fulfilment of the provisions of the [OSCE] human dimension has arisen in another participating State”. The Mechanism also stipulates that the rapporteur(s) report to the Permanent Council.

The complete report can be found here: <http://www.osce.org/node/78705>

Belarus Democracy and Human Rights Act Passes Key Committee

In April, the U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee approved yet another piece of legislation on Belarus — “The Belarus Democracy and Human Rights Act of 2011” sponsored by Representative Christopher H. Smith. The bill is now headed to the full House of Representatives for a vote.

This legislation, H.R. 515, supports human rights in Belarus. Importantly, the bill authorized aid for pro-democracy forces and funding for broadcasting to the country. H.R. 515 also calls for blocking assets owned by senior Belarusian officials, and their families, involved in anti-democratic actions. The bill supports targeted sanctions and demands the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners. It also requires the US

administration to report to Congress on Belarusian arms sales abroad, censorship or surveillance of the internet, as well as the personal assets and wealth of governmental figures.



Rep. Christopher H. Smith

The Republican Congressman from New Jersey, currently in his 16th term in the U.S. House of Representatives, Smith chairs the Human Rights Subcommittee and the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). He authored the Belarus Democracy Act of 2004 and the Belarus Democracy Reauthorization Act of 2006—passed the House and Senate with overwhelming bipartisan support. In his Apr. 14 opening statement, Smith was unequivocal in his denunciation of the Belarusian regime. He said, “Lukashenka’s dictatorship has the worst democracy and human rights record of any government in Europe.” He stressed that the sanctions were “aimed at the senior leadership” and that the United States stood “with the Belarusian people against their oppressors.”

The Democracy Acts condemning Belarus human rights violations have a long history. The first Act was introduced to the U.S. Congress in November 2001 after the controversial presidential elections. The bill called for the freeze of Belarusian assets in the United States, prohibited trade with Belarusian government-run businesses, denied Belarusian officials entry in the United States; and proposed a \$30 million appropriation to support democratic institutions and organizations in Belarus.

The March 2003 version of the legislature increased the amount to \$40 million. In contrast, the 2004 Belarus Democracy Act contained no prohibitions of the travel of Belarusian officials or U.S. exports to Belarus. It also omitted reference to Russia’s role in promoting democracy in Belarus. The 2004 act was reauthorized in 2006, 2007 and 2008.

The primary value of the previous Belarus Democracy Acts is in increasing U.S. aid for democratic institutions and civil society initiatives in Belarus. To date, the aid that the US provided through other channels has been modest (\$11.5 million in FY2009, and \$15 million (allocated) in FY2010). Moreover, its efficiency has suffered from the noncooperation of the Belarusian regime (for example, the U.S. diplomatic staff in Belarus has been reduced to five people after a diplomatic dispute). The Obama administration has requested \$14 million in aid in FY2011,

but only \$9.6 million of this amount is designated for “political competition and consensus-building” and “civil society.”

What impact will the bill have if it passes Congress and becomes law? Smith hopes it will serve as a “signal to Lukashenka” and “propel[s] this policy forward amidst the administration’s competing priorities.” The most the sanctions can accomplish is to signal the United States’ resolve to exert pressure and its intolerance for human rights violations globally.

However, the sanctions do irk the authoritarian leader. For instance, in 2009, Lukashenka said lifting the U.S. sanctions and repealing the Democracy Act were the preconditions for returning the U.S. ambassador to Minsk. Most importantly, the increased aid aimed for civil society development and the pro-democratic forces in the country will have an immense positive effect in the long run.

Source: Belarus Digest, April 20, 2011

ECONOMY

Minsk Economic Optimism Rings Hollow in Belarusian Ears

By Oksana Kolb

The Lukashenka economic model is teetering as prices rise, the currency continues to weaken, and lenders demand strict conditions for emergency loans.

MINSK | A wave of consumer spending has spread across Belarus since the spring, but it does not augur boom times for the economy. Belarusians are buying precious metals, imported goods, real estate, and above all foreign currency as the ruble continues to lose value and inflation reaches worrying levels.

The fall in the value of the ruble, which began in mid-March, is only one symptom of a chronic illness in the Belarusian economy and perhaps the hardest test yet for the economic model put in place over the past 16 years by the administration of President Alyaksandr Lukashenka.

A former head of the National Bank of Belarus, Stanislau Bahdankevich, said, “The incompetent authoritarian management of the economy led in 2011 to a massive collapse of the currency market. ... The collapse was a result of economic inefficiency and the country living beyond its means for the past several years, off the proceeds from selling state properties and foreign credit.”

The International Monetary Fund recommended late in 2010 that the Belarusian government devalue the ruble by 15 percent. Minsk had required an IMF loan to get it through the 2008-2009 financial crisis. At first the government declined the IMF recommendation, calling it inappropriate, but on 24 May the National Bank of Belarus let the ruble tumble by 56.3 percent. Since the end of 2010 the Belarusian currency has lost 64 percent of its value against the dollar, 74 percent against the euro, and 77 percent against the Russian ruble, according to the central bank’s website.

As of 9 June the official exchange rate was 4,956 rubles to the dollar. But Belarusians are not yet rushing to sell their dollars at that rate. On the contrary, expecting another devaluation, people are trying to exchange their ruble savings into dollars on the black market, where the going rate is at least 6,000 rubles to the dollar.

Belarusian financial analyst Siarhiej Chaly warned that the situation on the currency market is getting out of control. The currency will hit bottom only when its purchasing power falls to the point at which consumers have enough only to purchase basic necessities, he predicted.

LIVING BEYOND THEIR MEANS

In one eloquent example of old-style inefficiency, Vasil Maksimau, chairman of the state audit office in the Vitsebsk region, in May described how a regional paper mill was buying recyclable waste paper from Russia, using scarce currency, just to avoid being idle. The factory switched from using new paper products to recycling in 1991, but now the management cannot find enough local recyclables to keep busy – and so contributed to the balance of payments crisis by buying waste paper abroad.

Belarusian exports are falling every month, while warehouses are filling up with domestic products. A look around Minsk's shops gives the impression that Belarusians are buying locally made products only as a last resort. Western and Asian refrigerators, televisions, and kitchen appliances have long since been snapped up by panicking consumers.

WHAT NEXT?

Could the situation get worse? Leanid Zaika, a leading independent economist and head of the Strategy analytical center, said many people are already reduced to buying little beyond the necessities. "The mechanism of hyperinflation has started, and most importantly, we're looking at a rapid fall in consumer demand because at today's income levels the population already can't afford the basic basket of consumer goods," he said.

Officials have tried to calm such fears, saying that real incomes have fallen only by a quarter this year. In April, Economy Minister Mikalaj Snapkou assured journalists that prices "will be stabilized and reach an equilibrium" by the middle of the year.

More recent announcements seem to contradict one another. At a press conference on 8 June, the chairman of the Minsk city executive committee, Mikalai Ladutska, said that inventories of goods were "sufficient" and that the prices of imported goods were not rising. Retailers were actually reducing their markups, he said. The next day, presidential chief of staff Uladzimir Makei admitted that consumer prices "in the future" would have to rise to the level of neighboring countries, "because the prices of many goods there are much higher than in Belarus."

Viktar Marhelau, co-chairman of the National Association of Entrepreneurs, disagreed with the official line that inflation is not a serious problem. "If we take the official statistics, which take into consideration only a small basket of certain goods, then, yes, inflation will continue at its current pace. But if we include a wider spectrum of goods, including imports, then real price inflation would reach at least 10 percent per month. I don't think this will change soon unless the currency situation changes. Not

only imports, even domestic products are rising in price because of the use of imported components and energy in their production."

Preliminary estimates by the Belarusian central bank show that purchases of foreign currencies from January to April rose by 50 percent over the same period last year, to \$2.6 billion.

For months Minsk has been seeking to stabilize the economy by looking for more credit. But this time, it may have to either commit to reforms or privatize strategic assets.

On 31 May the government requested another IMF loan, and Minsk and the fund are in consultations over what comes next.

In the meantime, weeks of talks with Russia culminated on 4 June, at a meeting of finance ministers of the Commonwealth of Independent States in Kyiv, with the announcement of a \$3 billion loan from the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Community. The loan from the organization's anti-crisis fund will be extended over 10 years. The same day Russian Finance Minister Alexei Kudrin stated that as a condition of the loan, Belarus must privatize \$7.5 billion worth of state-owned assets.

Whether Belarus now returns to the unfinished reforms of the early 1990s, as the IMF recommends – privatization, freeing up prices, less red tape for investors and entrepreneurs – or, perhaps, links its currency to the Russian ruble and sells much of its state-owned energy assets to Russian companies, the next few months are likely to bring more uncertainty and worry, even for those who were lucky enough to sell their rubles before the currency collapse began.

"Good thing I managed to turn all our savings into dollars," said Katsiaryna Siarhiejeuna, a bus conductor in Minsk. "I had more than 20 million rubles in Belarusbank, three years' worth of savings. My daughter, who works at another bank, warned me back in December to take it out and convert. Thank goodness. If not, I would have lost all of my savings."

Oksana Kolb is a staff reporter for Novy Chas, an independent weekly in Belarus.

Source: Transitions-on-Line, June 13, 2011

EXAMPLES of a DIRECTED ECONOMY:

**Lukashenko Wants Price Surge Stopped
Lukashenko Asks Belarusians to Stop
Frenzied Buying**

**Lukashenko Orders Shutdown of Alarm-
ist Mass Media**

Headlines taken from:

<http://news.belta.by> - the regime's official press agency

Belarus Devalues Currency Amid Growing Isolation

By: David Marples

Belarusian President, Alyaksandr Lukashenka, is a man under pressure. Assailed by Western powers for his harsh treatment of former presidential candidates and protestors, he also faces mounting economic problems that have led to the devaluation of the national currency. At the same time, high rates of inflation and what he describes as “panic buying” of consumer goods, salt, sugar, and other products have added to his difficulties. In an address to the Belarusian government, he laid the blame on his Prime Minister and National Bank Chairman, as well as the Russian media and foreign enemies.

On May 26, the Lenin District Court in Minsk announced sentences for two presidential candidates found guilty of organizing a mass riot after the December 19 presidential elections. Mikalai Statkevich, a seasoned leader of the Social Democratic Party, received a six-year sentence in a medium security penal colony. Dzmitry Us, a virtual unknown political entity prior to the elections, received five years and six months. The two announcements follow a five-year verdict for Andrei Sannikau, the leading opponent of Lukashenka according to official results. A host of other activists have received sentences of two to four years (www.charter97.org, May 26).

The harsh sentences have led to a strong critique of the Lukashenka regime from the EU, which has extended travel bans on Belarusian leaders, and especially from US President Barack Obama, enunciated at a news conference in Warsaw, held alongside Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk. President Obama described the internal situation in Belarus as “unacceptable,” and announced his intention to expand sanctions. The Polish Prime Minister commented that his country shared the view that the Lukašenka regime “had no future in Europe” (www.naviny.by, May 29; RIA Novosti, May 29).

President Obama’s outspoken attack comes at a time when the Belarusian leader is facing his most acute problems of his 17 years in office. After much procrastination, the National Bank of Belarus devalued the currency on May 24 from just over BR 3,000 to the dollar to BR 4,930 in an attempt to curtail the high demand for foreign currency and the mass buying of consumer goods, as well as sugar, sunflower, oil, salt, and other products. Inflation rose 15 percent in the first five months of 2011. A decree issued by the Ministry of Economics on May 25 announced the rise in the price of sugar by almost 40 percent and that of vodka by 10 percent from May 28 (*Belorusy i Rynok*, May 29).

Lukashenka has also been concerned by the attitude of Russia, which agreed on June 4 to provide a loan of \$3 billion – to be paid in tranches over the next two years, and two-thirds of which emanates from the Eurasian Economic Union’s Emergency Fund. An initial sum of \$800 million is to be provided within 8-10 days. Russian Finance Minister, Aleksey Kudrin, confirmed that in re-

turn for the loan, Belarus must sell off \$7.5 billion worth of state assets (Belapan, June 5). Hitherto, Lukashenka has rejected suggestions that Belarus would sell profitable state-owned companies. He is also seeking alternative sources of support. On June 1, his Prime Minister Mikhail Myasnikovich confirmed that the Council of Ministers and National Bank have also requested a loan of \$3.5 billion to \$8 billion from the IMF (www.naviny.by, June 5).

In his address to the government on May 27, Lukashenka alternated between disarming frankness and vindictiveness toward those he holds responsible for his current predicament. Citing a recent public survey, he acknowledged that since last March, the populace perceives a worsening of the social and economic situation in the country. The basic cause is the sharp rise in prices, which, he states, concern the people twice as much as acts of terrorism – a reference to the explosion at the central metro station in Minsk on April 11. Twenty percent of citizens are disturbed by the reduction of wages (in real terms) and 20 percent by their inability to purchase hard currency (*SB-Belarus’ Segodnya*, May 28, 29).

Concerning who is responsible for the current problems, Lukashenka noted that according to the opinion poll, 25 percent blamed them on the citizens themselves, 24 percent on the world financial crisis, 20 percent on the government and local organs of authority, and 10 percent on the president. He added his voice to the 25 percent who blamed citizens, but also commented on the flawed actions of the Prime Minister Mikhail Myasnikovich and the Chairman of the National Bank, Pyotr Prakapovich and threatened to fire them if the situation did not improve “within one week.” He also declared his intention to place bans on irresponsible reporters for Russian media who were creating hysteria and panic in Belarus.

The fragility of Lukashenka’s position is evident. On May 27, Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, an-

ounced that Gazprom, which currently owns 50 percent of shares of the company Beltransgaz, is finalizing plans to purchase the remaining 50 percent for \$2.5 billion (ITAR-TASS, May 27). Russia purchased the first 50 percent as part of a deal on gas prices made with Belarus four years ago (Kommersant, May 19, 2007).

Meanwhile, Belarusian Finance Minister Andrei Kharkovets, openly contradicted Lukashenka, saying that the government had no intention of altering its privatization plans and arrangements made previously with Russia (*Belarusian Telegraph Agency*, May 27). However, it is not unusual for the president to make some statements entirely for a national audience while allowing his government to do the opposite.

Lukashenka has been an architect of his own troubles by inexplicably alienating the West through his punishment of former presidential opponents and activists at a time when he needs desperately to reduce his growing dependence on loans from Moscow and economic subjugation to powerful Russian companies.

Source: Eurasia Daily Monitor Volume: 8 Issue: 110, June 8, 2011

Lukashenka has been an architect of his own troubles by inexplicably alienating the West

Nuclear Power

Belarusian Nuclear Power Plant, Russian Interests And Lithuanian Protests

By Hanna Vasilevich

Recent debates concerning the intergovernmental agreement between Belarus and Russia signed on March 15 on cooperation in the construction of a new nuclear power plant, which is supposed to be located near Astraviec close to the Lithuanian border, have warmed up due to the catastrophe at the Japanese nuclear power plant Fukushima.

Construction of a nuclear plant in this region is very controversial, due to both internal and external politics. External circumstances include open confrontation with Lithuania, which has very similar plans and ambitions in building a similar NPP. Lithuanian aspirations in the sphere of nuclear energy will significantly be weakened and the project would be lost if Belarus builds the plant next to its border.

One of the concerns of external observers is also Russian participation in plant construction. This is seen as a spread of Russian influence and an attempt to tie Baltic countries closer to Russia via energy dependency. If Belarus chooses Astraviec as the location of its plant, the Belarusian plant will fill the existing energy niche in the region and Lithuanians will not be able to find any investor interested in building a similar project in such close proximity.

The recent explosion in Fukushima opens the security question for a closer look, especially taking into consideration both the claims of insufficient scientific clearance for such construction and Belarus' tragic experience with the consequences of Chernobyl. Security concerns relate to both the external and internal situation. The year 2011 is the 25th anniversary of Chernobyl, re-opening ill-healed wounds. However, the recent worsening of the economic situation in Belarus highlights the necessity of having its own plant to meet the internal needs of the country's economy. But there are two sides even in the understanding of this need: some believe that the NPP will unleash Belarus from dependence on Russia for energy, while others suggest that having Russia as the sole investor would only bring Belarus closer to its big neighbour and push it into long-term debt.

The pros and cons

As part of the Soviet Union, Belarus suffered the most from the Chernobyl disaster, receiving 75 per cent of all radioactive fallout on its territory and thus having up to 25 per cent of its agricultural lands removed from use for the last 25 years. Belarus still suffers the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster. Twenty-five years of consequences from Chernobyl have cost Belarus an estimated 235 billion dollars. Recent analysis has also shown that it is still too early even to try to return the contaminated land into use since "this land represents the threat for

long years, it should not be worked up, to avoid the hot parts lifting into the air and worsening human health" says PhD Jury Varoniežcaŭ, PhD says.

Even after 25 years, the Chernobyl wound is not healed; it remains open and dirty. Belarusians are threatened by the consequences of the Chernobyl NPP disaster and have an annual rally called "The Chernobyl Way". The idea to build a new nuclear power plant also seems threatening. However, the Belarusian government has different plans in mind. Not only trying to return contaminated lands into use (despite numerous statements of scientists who voiced their opinions against these practices), the government is also planning a new plant with Russian investment. Lacking natural resources, Belarus is significantly dependent on Russia for energy. Now that Belarus has lost the special treatment that it had enjoyed for the last 10 years, the market prices that Russia offers to Belarus are unbearable for the Belarusian economy, hitting Belarusian industries hard. The new power plant would thus bring some measure of energy independence, not only supplying the whole country, but also having a reserve for exports that could be directed to the Baltic States as well as to Poland. The plan is for the first reactor to cover the needs of Belarus, while energy from the second one could be focused on export to neighbouring countries.

The former head of the Belarusian parliament Stanislau Šuškievič supports the idea of building a power plant, understanding the needs and benefits of having it. However, Šuškievič worries about the provider in building and about methods which do not include the positions and consultations with leading Belarusian scientists in the field of nuclear energy and proper research on the location of the future plant. Šuškievič is more suspicious of Russia's motives as the main investor in such a strategic construction than of the recent tragedy in Fukushima. While the tragedy in Fukushima is seen as the result of a natural disaster after performing perfectly for the last 40 years, the Russian role in the Belarusian NPP construction seems for Šuškievič to be tricky by trying to strengthen its position in the region.

Šuškievič expressed his fear that though Belarus desperately needs to become energy independent, this construction would not unleash the country, but on contrary, tie it even closer to Russia. "Though, to my mind, the main bonus in this project is the political one. Russia will control Belarus even stronger than it has been before," says Šuškievič.

Russia in turn tries to calm the situation down by promising that the project will be joined and beneficial for both sides. As the head of Rosatom, Sergey Kirienko assured that "we [Rosatom] build in Belarus like we build in Russia – in this case it is not a commercial trade, but a principle of an open cost account, as we build it in our country."

With a signed intergovernmental agreement, the next steps are planned for May (contract agreement) and June (credit agreement) with construction of the ditch for the foundation of the NPP planned for September 2011.

As the plan slowly turns into reality, on the 25th anniversary of the Chernobyl tragedy, around 500 people

arranged a meeting which adopted three resolutions. One of them calls for prohibition of the NPP building in Belarus. Members of the rally expressed their belief that Belarus should withdraw from building the NPP, taking into consideration its extreme danger for a population that has already suffered from the Chornobyl disaster. Participants expressed strong concern over the security of the plant, equating the potential threat with the recent tragedy in Fukushima and in Chornobyl. However, it is unlikely that this initiative was even noticed by the authorities and that these activities will be seen as something sustainable beyond the one-time endeavour and having an impact on any considerable part of Belarusian society.

The security threat is also a concern of Belarus' neighbour Lithuania. A Belarusian nuclear power plant presents a two-fold threat to Lithuania. On one hand, the security question cannot be denied, but on the other hand, Lithuania would lose a lot if Belarus finishes its NPP construction. Lithuania has similar plans to build its own NPP near the former Ignalina NPP, closed as one of the conditions of Lithuania's entry to the EU in the same region in Visaginas, very close to the Belarusian border. Trying for some time to find an investor and potential partner among its neighbours Latvia, Estonia and Poland, Lithuania has failed so far to bring any company into particular interest in its project of nuclear power plant building.

Recent attempts of the Lithuanian president Dalia Grybauskaitė, who optimistically expects the beginning of Lithuanian NPP construction in 3 years, do not seem very convincing. Even though the competition in finding a potential investor for the NPP construction has been announced and among the potential investors some European energy giants are mentioned, Lithuanian endeavours might be unsuccessful in light of the recent Belarus-Russia agreement.

Lithuanian scientist Jurgis Vilemas supports the fears of Šuškievič, believing that the choice of location of the Belarusian NPP is totally political, as a response to the official Lithuanian statement of its desire to build an NPP next to the Belarusian border, and is lacking scientific research. Vilemas believes that Lithuania's voice on this question is too weak due to a lack of criticism from the Lithuanian side since they themselves tried to avoid confrontation with Belarusians in case Lithuanians were the first to build.

But now, with Belarus having found Russia as an investor, they have outrun Lithuania in closing the energy niche and left little hope for this Baltic state to find anyone to be interested in investing money in a similar project. This leaves Lithuania to be dependent on Russia/Belarus for energy.

Similar concerns were expressed by Lithuania's foreign minister Audronius Ažubalis, who stated that Lithuania was not against Belarus building the NPP per se. However, he expressed his concern about the location and technology (more on the lack of information on the technology to be used) of the potential NPP, stressing that if something were to happen, it would threaten the Lithuanian capital Vilnius, which is only 50 km away. Ažubalis warned that unless the technology becomes public and

can be evaluated and approved by the IAEA, Lithuania will object to the NPP construction using all possible means. He was followed by an address by the Lithuanian Parliament's speaker Irena Degutienė and foreign affairs committee's chairman Emanuelis Zingeris to the Speaker of the US House of Representatives John Boehner. These activities of Lithuanian officials may again be seen in two ways. On the one hand, Lithuania can get information to resolve its concerns; but on the other hand, it could get some time to find a strategic investor for its own NPP project. Moreover, appealing to the location of the NPP to be constructed in the very heart of the historically contested Belarusian-Lithuanian borderland may potentially cause some nationalistic sentiments in the societies on both the sides of the border which will not contribute to the fulfillment of the principle of good neighbourliness.

Despite the tensions and hot discussion within the country as well as outside, Belarusian president Lukašenko officially stated that nothing would stop Belarus from building the NPP. Therefore, if the agreements are signed as planned and the construction is not to be delayed, the first reactor in Belarus could be expected to be launched in 2017, and the second in 2018.

Issue of the Nuclear Power Plant

Interview with Aliaksandr Milinkievič

Belarusian Review: Does Belarus need a nuclear power plant at all? Does its construction involve more plusses or minuses?

Aliaksandr Milinkievič: As a physicist I do not have the so-called nuclear-phobia. However, I am against adopting important decisions affecting people's safety without a wider public discussion and the population's consent in the matter of constructing a nuclear power plant. We are not yet aware of its advisability. According to specialists we are far from exhausting the capacity of existing coal-powered power plants, future new small hydroelectric power plants or the wind-powered energy.

Who said that a nuclear power plant will lead to energy self-sufficiency? Do we have uranium deposits? As a matter of fact, the price of uranium is growing rapidly. And what about getting rid of the nuclear waste? Where would we send it — to Africa? Does anyone in Belarus want to become hostage of a nuclear adventure? Clearly nobody..

I oppose constructing nuclear power plants in countries with totalitarian regimes. Their leaders often succumb to the temptation to transform the "peaceful atom" into a nuclear truncheon.

Building the power plant on the basis of a Russian project will only increase our energy dependence on Russia: one has to consider not only the cost of building the plant itself, but also accommodations for employees, of solving the issue of nuclear waste utilization, of training personnel...

Belarus does not have the money to build the nuclear plant. It will be necessary to increase the country's for-

eign debt to be repaid with interest. In addition, constructing the plant based on Russian technology creates an ecological threat for Belarus. The reactor proposed by Russian specialists has not been so far tested anywhere. Russian technologies are not comparable with those in the West. This applies also to the matter of providing for the safety of the future power station.

Belarusian Review: How do you evaluate the choice of selecting the town of Astraviec for the plant's site? In what way will it affect relations between the republics Belarus and Lithuania, and between the societies of both countries?

Aliaksandr Milinkievič: There are no convincing arguments in favor of selecting precisely Astraviec for the construction site. In my opinion the decision of the Belarusian authorities to locate the nuclear power plant within 50 km. from Vilnia (Ed. – capital of Lithuania) has significantly deteriorated Belarus' relations with Lithuania. It seems that this choice is also an instrument of blackmailing our neighboring country. Societies of both countries are justifiably warning of this decision's consequences.

Belarusian Review: How do you evaluate the Lithuanian government's chances in attracting the international community's (EU and USA) attention to the issue of safety in the Belarusian power plant?

Aliaksandr Milinkievič: The Lithuanian republic is justified in raising the question of guaranteeing the safety of the planned power plant. Unfortunately, in this matter, as in many others, we have very few instruments for influencing the behavior of Belarus' authorities. In my opinion, we should use all available opportunities to attract attention of the most influential countries and international organizations to the issue of building the nuclear power plant.

Chornobyl Legacy

Chornobyl 25 years Later: Transparency Still Lacking

Introduction

The catastrophic accident in 1986 at the Chornobyl nuclear power station in Ukraine was one of the worst man-made disasters of the twentieth century. Mikhail Gorbachev was then the president of the Soviet Union. Now, as the Founding President of Green Cross International, he heads the international Climate Change Task Force and guides Green Cross's practical work in healing Chornobyl's wounds.

In an article in the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists 2011, whose excerpts were published by SAGE <http://www.sagepublications.com>, he writes his detailed recollections about the catastrophe. He concludes by addressing the four key related is-

ssues: prevention, renewable energy, transparency and vulnerability to terrorism and violence. Of the four, he devoted the least attention to transparency which is surprising, considering that his landmark policy was glasnost or transparency

The author of the following article was three years old at the time of the explosion. Living in Belarus which was most affected by the resulting radiation, he was throughout his youth acutely aware of its aftereffects as well as of the continuing hazards to his generation — the Children of Chornobyl.

By Kyril Kaścian

This year Mikhail Gorbachev celebrated his 80th birthday. This anniversary made the world's media recall his role as the Soviet leader with considerable admiration.

In the West he is known as the man who peacefully ended the Cold War. His policies of *perestroika* and *glasnost* aimed at fundamental changes in the Soviet Union are particularly admired. He is also often praised as the leader whose policies resulted in proper independence for the nations of the Soviet Union and Central and Eastern Europe,

He is particularly admired by the Germans for his special contribution to the unification of their country. Indeed, Gorbachev made history of the continent, but this is just one side of the story.

The other side is Chornobyl. Sometimes just one single event may diminish all previous and future positive endeavors of a certain leader. For Gorbachev, Chornobyl is such an event. According to Gorbachev's recollections, it becomes clear that:

1. At least for the first six hours after the explosion, the highest Soviet authorities were unaware of it.

2. The fact that the explosion occurred and radioactive material was released downwind became known to the highest Soviet officials only on April 27, i.e. more than 24 hours after the accident.

3. Gorbachev's statements imply that for the first 48 hours the international media knew more than the highest Soviet officials who apparently received more concrete information only on April 28, i.e. more than 48 hours after the accident.

4. It is only on April 28 when Gorbachev and his cohort started informing the Soviet public of the serious nature of the disaster.

These facts prove either the blatantly unprofessional discharge of their duties by the highest Soviet officials or just Gorbachev's attempt to excuse and justify his role before the international audience by airbrushing the 25-years-old events.

It is highly unlikely that the highest officials of such a superpower as the Soviet Union knew less than the international media as to what really had

happened in Chornobyl. It was evident from the very beginning that the devastating nature of the Chornobyl disaster was widespread.

Moreover, it is obvious that on such occasions every hour could become decisive in the minimization of the negative consequences of the disaster on the population.

If the people had been informed less than 48 hours after the explosion, how many fewer of the Chornobyl-related diseases would they suffer? It is also Gorbachev who had the real power to force the leaders of the Soviet republics to provide the people with the pertinent information at the very beginning.

Gorbachev tries not to touch on the points that still need to be settled by not addressing the question whether radioactive clouds that were headed for Moscow and other densely populated areas of Central Russia were artificially seeded over Belarusian territory right after the explosion. As the then Soviet commander-in-chief, Gorbachev must have been aware of it. Nonetheless, he never denied the rampant accusations regarding the seeding of the radioactive clouds over Belarus, or provide evidence that such seeding did not take place.

After the Chornobyl disaster the number of cancerous diseases increased as high as 25 times in Belarus. How many families in Belarus lost their children because the authorities failed to properly inform them what to do right after the nuclear explosion, or after the radioactive cloud seeding over Belarusian territory?

One cannot bring the victims back, but their families want to know the truth, or is transparency still lacking?

Kiryl Kascian, L.L.M. Eur. is a Belarusian researcher of European Law.

Quotes of Quarter

At a rambling press conference on June 17 in Minsk **ALYAKSANDR LUKASHENKA** stated:

“Many foreign newspapers are writing about us...that the Belarusian economic miracle has collapsed. But it has not collapsed anywhere.”

Speaking about the state of Belarusian economy at the June 17 press conference, the **BELARUSIAN DICTATOR** declared:

“If there is a complete catastrophe, we will close the borders and only import what we need.”

NEWS BRIEFS

March 27, 2011

Mass arrests on Freedom Day

The rally on March 25 has proved that Lukashenka's* regime is relying only on suppression of citizens by force.

Detentions of participants of the rally on Freedom Day in Minsk on March 25 began long before people came near the Yakub Kolas square. They were arrested by riot policemen in mufti. By 6 p.m. a huge number of riot policemen gathered in the center of the city.

One of the organizers of the rally Mikalai Dziemidzenko, deputy chairman of "Young Front," was arrested immediately. Then the coordinator of "European Belarus" civil campaign Viktor Ivashkevich was seized and thrown into a police bus. Soon the arrested were numbered in tens.

Public transport — buses and trams — no longer stopped at Yakub Kolas Square. Riot policemen in mufti urged activists and journalists to leave the Square. Cameramen, including representatives of Russian TV channels, and photoreporters, were pushed aside and driven back.

Finally, people spontaneously began marching towards the Victory Square along two sidewalks. Near the Modern Fine Arts Museum a police cordon in mufti stopped them and began driving them back to Yakub Kolas Square. They were divided and pushed away from the square itself.

Activists of democratic organizations were preventively arrested across Belarus in the morning of March 25. People in Minsk and in regions were detained at their homes.

It was the first time in the contemporary history of Belarus that organizers from the BPF party and Alyaksandr Milinkevich's "For Freedom" movement did not hold a rally on March 25 and suggested instead to lay flowers to monuments to Belarusian poets. "

Source: Charter 97 Press Center

April 1, 2011

Natallya Radzina left the country

Charter97.org editor-in-chief Natallya Radzina is out of reach of the Belarusian KGB.

Natallya has informed charter97.org about it. She has made a safe getaway and at the moment she is abroad in a place of safety.

She was to appear for questioning in Minsk on March 31, after having been summoned by the KGB investigator. There the final indictment connected with the case of "Square-2010" was likely to be brought to her. Natallya decided to leave Belarus before the interrogation.

The journalist had spent more than a month in the KGB remand prison, was released on recognizance and was "in exile" in her hometown of Kobryn. She was charged under two parts of Article 293 of the Criminal Code of Belarus ("Mass riots"). She faces up to 15 years of imprisonment.

In the nearest future Natallya Radzina will herself provide details of her escape.

Source: Charter 97 Press Center



Natallya Radzina

April 7, 2011

Detained Opposition Politician Released In Belarus

Anatol Lyabedzka, leader of the opposition United Civic Party (AHP), was released from a KGB pretrial detention center on April 6.

Lyabedzka, along with some 30 other activists, has been charged with organizing and/or participating in "mass disorders" in Minsk on December 19, during street protests against the official announcement of incumbent President Alyaksandr Lukashenka's reelection.



Anatol Lyabedzka

He was arrested late night of December 19 at his apartment in Minsk. On December 22, he started a hunger strike protesting his arrest, which he stopped several days later at the request of his wife.

Lyabedzka's lawyer was unable to meet his client between December 29 and March 23.

The Belarusian KGB earlier released several opposition politicians and activists, asking them not to leave their home towns while investigations continue.

They include former presidential candidates Vital Rymasheuski and Ales Mikhalevich, Charter97.org on-line news portal chief editor Natallya Radzina, Andrei Dzmitryeu, the campaign manager for opposition presidential candidate Uladzimer Nyaklyaeu, and "Tell the Truth!" campaign activist Siarhiej Vazniak.

Sannikau and another opposition candidate, Mikalai Statkevich, remain in jail.

Source: Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

April 18, 2011

Minsk metro terrorist attack: 13 dead, 149 injured.

According experts' estimations, the explosive device had the explosive yield of 5 kilograms of TNT. The explosive device contained metal waste, 80x8 mm nails and metal balls with a diameter of about 15 mm was placed near a bench situated on the station.



The Prosecutor General's Office has opened a criminal case on charges related to Article 289 Part 3 of the Criminal Code of Belarus (Terrorism).

Source: Charter 97 Press Center

April 21, 2011

Belarusian Opposition Activist Detained Over Minsk Subway Bombing

SMARHON, Belarus -- A member of the opposition Belarusian Popular Front Party has been detained and questioned in western Belarus about the April 11 Minsk subway bombing, RFE/RL's Belarus Service reports.

Uladzimier Shulzhytski told RFE/RL by phone from the town of Smarhon that security officials asked him while questioning him on April 20, what he knew about the bombing and his attitude toward it

He said they also asked him about several pictures on the Internet in which he is shown holding World War II-era weapons and ammunition.

Shulzhytski told them the pictures were taken while he was playing a role in a movie about World War II.

Shulzhytski's mother told RFE/RL on April 21 that police visited her apartment together with her son very late the previous night and searched the premises.

She said police confiscated his computer and other belongings. Shulzhytski remains in custody.

Source: Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

April 30, 2011

True photos of the Square in December

Photos made just after dispersal of a demonstration on Independence Square in Minsk were demonstrated at the trial over Andrei Sannikau.

On April 29, the third day of trial of the presidential candidate Andrei Sannikau, witness for the defence Pyotr Kuchko was questioned. Witness Kuchko said he had gone to a demonstration on December 19 to hear the candidates.

Kuchko said he remained on the square after the demonstration had been dispersed. Riot policemen did not pay attention to him, an old man. He said there were no bottles, ice axes, cans and other things showed in a film "Iron against the Glass" by BT, a Belarusian TV channel. The witness called the film was a fake and said he had made five photos of the Square after the dispersal on his mobile phone. The pictures show columns of police and a car, but no items showed by BT and mentioned in the materials of the case were seen.

Kuchko told Radio Svaboda he was not arrested because policemen perhaps thought he was one of them. He could see the square after the dispersal. It was clean without any items left there.



Photo made by P. Kuchko

Later, a film “Iron against the Glass” showed spades, bottles, iron poles and cans with flame liquid on the square. Kuchko was indignant and decided to refute this in court.

Source: Charter97 Press Center

May 1, 2011

***Nasha Niva* and *Narodnaya Volya* to be shut down for “inappropriate” coverage of terrorist act**

The Information Minister Aleh Pralyaskouski has explained why he advocates shutting down *Nasha Niva* and *Narodnaya Volya*.

According to the minister, when covering the events of April 11 in Minsk metro, Belarusian mass media split into decent and indecent ones, not into state-run and independent ones.

The human rights organization “Reporters without Borders” has condemned the suits of the Information Ministry of Belarus filed at the Supreme Court on stopping *Nasha Niva* and *Narodnaya Volya* newspapers’ publication.

“Reporters without Borders” underline in their statement that shutting down these newspapers “would be an extremely harsh decision”, as a loss of the newspapers which circulation is almost one half of the total circulation of all independent press would be a fatal blow at the limited pluralism of Belarusian mass media.”

The human rights organization reminded that the Belarusian law on mass media, which “is used as a main instrument of pressure on the independent press”, had been condemned many times.

“Reporters without Borders” has called upon the Supreme Economic Court to dismiss the motion.

Earlier the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media Dunja Mijatovic expressed concern over the suits.

Source: Charter 97 Press Center

May 11, 2011

National Bank capitulates. Devaluation announced

The National Bank lifted restrictions for banks regarding foreign exchange transactions with individuals on 11 May, 2011, as part of the plan to make a gradual transition to the single rate of the Belarusian ruble and stabilize the situation on the inner foreign exchange market.

“The use of market approaches to setting the Belarusian ruble rate for transactions with individuals will not only satisfy the demand for foreign currency, but also make pointless the

further panic buying of foreign currency for savings, which has been seen in the recent times in connection with expectations of the foreign currency rate change,” the National Bank said.

Source: Charter 97 Press Center

May 20, 2011

Russia Attaches Strings To \$3 Billion Loan Offer To Belarus

Russia has offered Belarus a desperately needed \$3 billion loan, with significant conditions attached, amid talks between President Alyaksandr Lukashenka and Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin.

Russia's finance minister, Aleksei Kudrin, says a major condition will be attached to a possible three-year, \$3 billion loan for Belarus in the form of Minsk selling off certain national assets.

Belarus is in a deep economic crisis, stemming largely from lavish public spending before controversial presidential election in December that led to a brutal crackdown on the opposition and further soured relations with the West.

Belarus's central bank has responded by lifting exchange-rate controls, which in turn sent the local currency plummeting.

A Russian-backed loan could help stem the ruble's devastating losses, but over the long term, it could also cost Belarus some of its most valuable assets.

Russia is thought to be seeking to capitalize on Belarus's vulnerability by acquiring major stakes in energy assets such as Beltransgaz, the state-owned gas pipeline network that supplies domestic homes and forwards the gas to Europe.

Kudrin said the \$3 billion loan would be issued by the Eurasian Economic Community (Eurasec), a Russia-dominated regional grouping that includes Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan.

He added that the funds would be paid out over a three-year period and not right away, as Lukashenka had hoped.

Source: Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

May 30, 2011

Jailed Belarusian Presidential Candidate Demands New Elections

MINSK -- Jailed Belarusian opposition politician Andrei Sannikau has made public a letter in which he demands a new round of presidential elections.

The open letter was posted on May 30 on the opposition online website Charter-97.

In his statement, Sannikau says he does not recognize the official result of the presidential election held on December 19 that declared incumbent President Alyaksandr Lukashenka the winner. International election monitors said the vote was flawed.

"It was clear that the first round of the election did not produce a winner, and therefore a second round of voting should be held," he said. "Since the [Central Election Commission] rated me second after Lukashenka in terms of the number of votes, I am ready to take part in the second round of the elections that should be held under international control."

Source: Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

June 1, 2011

Belarus Specified the Desirable Amount of IMF Loan

Belarus expects to attract \$3.5-8 billion under the new program with the IMF. This was announced by Prime Minister

of Belarus Mikhail Myasnikovich on June 1, speaking on the work of the IMF mission to Belarus on June 1-14, as well as on the amount of bailout from the fund.

"We have set a task with the National Bank to work with this mission, as well as the next mission, while preparing a draft program for the direct representation to the IMF board of directors, and we estimate the size of bailout at \$3.5-8 billion, BelTA quotes the Premier.

"The price of money (the alleged loan) is 2 times lower than the cost of the EurAsEC Crisis Fund loan," said the Prime Minister.

"We hope for a green light in the work with this and perhaps the next mission, which indicates that one can attract both the IMF resources and those of private capital that one can come here and solve projects with good efficiency," concluded the Prime Minister.

Source: Office for Democratic Belarus,

June 1, 2011

Stanislau Bahdankevich Rejects Authorities' Offer to Cooperate

While talking to reporters in Minsk on Wednesday, Dr. Bahdankevich said he met with Prime Minister Mikhail Myasnikovich on May 30 at the suggestion of the latter.

"That was a private meeting between two former colleagues," said the 74-year-old Bahdankevich, a veteran member of the United Civic Party who was the head of the NBB between 1991 and 1995.

"We worked together in the first years of Belarus' independence," Dr. Bahdankevich said. "We jointly tried to carry out primary economic reforms and worked to secure Belarus' membership in the International Monetary Fund and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development."

"The prime minister offered me informal cooperation whereby I would regularly share my assessment of the economic situation," said Dr. Bahdankevich.

He said that in particular, he was invited to join an economic expert team working under the aegis of the National Academy of Sciences and receive pay for his work.

"I turned down the offer, saying there are younger experts who hold views on the situation similar to mine," Dr. Bahdankevich said. "There are talented people among the personnel of the National Bank whose sole problem is that they are not in decision-making positions."

Dr. Bahdankevich said that he had handed Mr. Myasnikovich a draft anti-crisis program of an expert team headed by him.

He said that he had also put forward proposals for dealing with the crisis, suggesting in particular holding an expanded session at the Belarusian Currency and Stock Exchange. "All applications should be pulled together to determine a well-balanced market rate [of the rubel]," he said. "Next, currency exchange outlets should be supplied with foreign cash."

Unlike a free-floating exchange rate, "a fixed one needs to nourish on international reserves," which are in low supply in the country, said the expert.

Dr. Bahdankevich also emphasized the need to secure a \$8-million loan from the International Monetary Fund to shore up a considerable deficit in the country's foreign trade, which "will not dwindle on its own," as well as to put an end to politically motivated persecutions and pressure on independent media.

Source: Charter 97 Press Center

June 13, 2011

IMF Urges Austerity On Loan-Seeking Belarus

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has urged greater austerity for Belarus, including freezing wages and allowing the national currency to float freely, to justify the emergency financing of billions of dollars.

Belarus wants up to \$8 billion from the Fund to help it cope with a crisis that has forced a 36 percent devaluation of the local currency, the ruble.

Belarusian Prime Minister Mikhail Myasnikovich declared on June 13 that Belarus as a full member of the IMF ought to be able to count on Fund support "in a difficult moment."

But at a subsequent news conference IMF mission chief Chris Jarvis gave only lukewarm support for Minsk's anticrisis policies.

Belarus expects to receive \$1.2 billion in loans from a Russia-led bailout fund this year.

Source: Office for Democratic Belarus

June 14, 2011

China Gives Belarus \$1 Billion In Trade Credits

China has given the cash-strapped Belarusian regime more than \$1 billion in trade credits.

Belarusian Deputy Prime Minister Anatol Tozik said an estimated \$654 million of the total \$1.05 billion credit will go toward building a modern wood pulp processing plant in the city of Svetlahorsk.

Tozik said the Chinese credits will also pay for the overhaul of Belarus's western railroad and road networks.

The state-controlled Belarusian economy is trying to cope with a crisis that has forced a 36 percent devaluation of its currency.

Source: Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

June 15, 2011

Belarus Protesters Answer Internet Call, Defy Lukashenka

According to Reuters, up to 1,000 people turned out in the Belarusian capital, Minsk, on Wednesday in a rare protest at economic hardship, defying a warning by President Alyaksandr Lukashenka that he would "strike hard" against them.

Police sealed off Minsk's Kastychnitskaya Square close to Lukashenka's main administration building, but several hundred people massed in a largely silent protest in nearby streets all the same.

The protesters — replying to a protest call sharply critical of Lukashenka which was carried on social networking sites — carried no slogans, and they were largely silent apart from some rhythmic clapping of hands.

Police made no move to intervene against the protesters.

Motorists last week rallied in the centre of Minsk in protest at a sharp rise in the price of gasoline.

Source: Office for Democratic Belarus

TRIALS & CONVICTIONS in Aftermath of 2010 Elections

Former Presidential Candidates

Andrej **SANNIKAŨ**
Former Presidential candidate



Convicted on May 14, 2011
to 5 years in maximum security prison
Charged with: organizing mass disorders
(art. 293, p.1)

Mikalaj **STATKIEVIČ**
Former Presidential candidate



Convicted on May 26, 2011
to 6 years in prison
Charged with: organizing mass disorders
(art. 293, p.1)

Uladzimir **NIAKLIAJEŨ**
Former Presidential candidate



Convicted on May 20, 2011
to 2 years of suspended sentence
Charged with: violating public order
(art. 342, p.1)

Vital **RYMAŠEŨSKI**
Former Presidential candidate
Chairman of Belarusian Christian
Democracy party



Convicted on May 20, 2011
to 2 years of suspended sentence
Charged with: violating public order
(art. 342, p.1)

Ales **MICHALEVIČ**
Former Presidential candidate



Arrested on December 19, 2010. Released
on Febr. 24, 2011
on condition of turning informant for secret
police. Used the opportunity to accuse his
captors of torture.

In March 2011 left Belarus in defiance of
official orders, was granted political asylum
in the Czech Republic

Dzmitry **VUS**
Former Presidential candidate



Convicted on May 26, 2011
to 5.5 years in prison
Charged with: organizing mass disorders
(art. 293, p.1)

More Tried and Sentenced Democratic Activists

- **Ales Atroščankaŭ** (29), press secretary of Sannikaŭs election staff, sentenced on March 2, 2011 to 4 years of maximum security prison. Charged with: participation in mass riots (art. 293, p.2)
- **Dzmitry Novik** (29), member of Sannikaŭs election staff, sentenced to 3.5 years of imprisonment. Charged with: participation in mass riots (art. 293, p.2)
- **Aliaksandr Malcanaŭ** (22), a former member of youth group Zubr, sentenced on March 2, 2011 to 3 years of imprisonment. Charged with: participation in mass riots (art. 293, p.2)
- **Vasil Parfiankoŭ** (27), a member of Niakliajeŭs election campaign, sentenced on February 17, 2011 to 4 years of imprisonment. Charged with: participation in mass riots (art. 293, p.2)
- **Zmicier Daškievič** (29), chairman of the Young Front, detained on Dec. 18, 2010, sentenced on Febr. 18, 2011 to 2 years of prison. Charged with: criminal hooliganism (art. 339, p. 2)

- **Eduard Lobaŭ** (22), former chairman of the Young Front, detained on Dec. 18, 2010, sentenced on Febr. 18, 2011 to 4 years of maximum security prison. Charged with: criminal hooliganism (art. 339, p. 2)
- **Paval Sieviaryniec**, co-chair of Belarusian Christian Democracy, detained on Dec 19, 2010, handed a 2-year suspended sentence. Charged with: organizing or preparing actions that grossly violate public order (art. 342, p. 1)
- **Nasta Palažanka**, the co-chair of *Malady Front* (Young Front), handed a 2-year suspended sentence. Charged with: organizing or preparing actions that grossly violate public order (art. 342, p. 1)
- **Andrej Dzmitryjeŭ**, manager of Niakliajeŭs election staff, handed a 2-year suspended sentence. Charged with: organizing or preparing actions that grossly violate public order (art. 342, p. 1)

Applicable Provisions of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus

Article 293, 'mass riot': 1. Organization of the mass riot, accompanied with violence against people, demolition, arsons, defilement of property, and armed resistance to representatives of authority — punished by 5-15 years of imprisonment.
2. Participation in mass riot — 3-8 years of imprisonment.

Article 342: 1. Organizing or preparing actions that grossly violate the public order.
2. Training or other form of preparing individuals to take part in such group actions.

Article 339, 'hooliganism'. Deliberate actions that grossly violate the public order and demonstrate evident disrespect to the society — accompanied with the use of violence.

U.S. position on trials

We consider the five presidential candidates — Uladzimir Nyaklyaeu, Andrej Sannikau, Vital Rymasheuski, Mikalai Statkevich, and Dzmitry Us — and other activists, who are being tried after being arrested as part of the crackdown related to the December 19 presidential elections, to be political prisoners; the harsh sentences handed down on May 14 and the ongoing trials are clearly politically motivated.

Belarus should immediately and unconditionally release all political prisoners and cease continuing human rights violations against critics of the government, who remain at risk of harassment and arbitrary arrest.

The results of ongoing trials will be taken into account as the United States continues to review its relations with Belarus and consider further measures.

**Statement by Mark Toner,
Acting Deputy Spokesman
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE**

Belarus' Forum

Imprisoned Freedom

The Freedom Day celebration in Minsk ended with imprisonment of 70 persons. The opposition in Minsk failed to stage the traditional joint rally. The traditional observance of the 25th of March, of the Freedom Day, celebrated by Belarusians on the anniversary of proclamation of the Belarusian People's Republic in 1918, this year failed to materialize due to inability of Belarusian opposition parties to work out a single program of celebration. The opposition traditionally staged a mass rally on the main avenue in Minsk under historical white-red-white flags and with the slogan "Long Live Belarus!"

This year, instead of staging the traditional rally, divided groups of opposition members attempted to convene on the square named after the prominent Belarusian poet Jakub Kolas. However, they were forced to leave this place and then walked to lay flowers on the monument of the other prominent Belarusian poet Janka Kupala. They met a line of militia at this site. Militia prevented anyone to come close to the monument. The official explanation by the deputy head of criminal investigation office of the Minsk central district Aliaksandr Arloŭski referred to received information about a suspicious object found in the park.

Along with the use of preventive methods, one should mention the official statement by the Minister of Internal Affairs Anatol Kuliašoŭ, made on the eve of celebration. He warned that any unsanctioned meeting or demonstration taking place anywhere but in the allowed Bangalore square in Minsk would be suppressed and punished "in the framework of existing legislation." The Freedom Day celebration resulted in imprisonment of about 70 people.

Sources: The BDH (Belarusian Business Newspaper) and Charter'97

Unique Primeval Forest Destroyed To Construct an Arboretum

Violations: Articles 26 and 27 of the Belarusian Law "On specially protected natural territories and objects" and articles 55 and 63 of the Belarusian Forestry Code have been violated. The facts attest to heedless clearing of the ancient forest in protected sections, violation of the environmental balance in the protected area, disruption of the site's biodiversity

Facts, documents and evidences: 2010 was the final year in the 10-year management of Mikalai Bambiza as General Director of the National Park "Bielaviežskaja Pušča." He became world famous because of his scandalous policies and practices of blindfolded and illiterate environmental management. These anti-scientific, nature-destroying and often illegal activities caused immense damage to the unique biodiversity of the wild

primeval forest of Bielavieža and considerably worsened the environmental image of Belarus.

One year prior to his dismissal from the position of the National Park General Director and his re-assignment to a lower-level position in the Belagraprambank, a huge portion of the primeval forest was cut down for the purpose of constructing a new arboretum. We shall note that this happened shortly after the pompous celebration of the 600th anniversary of nature conservation in the Bielavieža Forest (October 3, 2009). This event had been widely advertised as allegedly a 600th anniversary of the nature-protecting regime of the Bielavieža Forest (argumentation of falseness of such statements may be read here) and carried out under the guise of the greatest environmental "achievements" of the National Park administration directed by Mikalai Bambiza and supervised by the Presidential Property Management Directorate.

The idea of maintaining a large specialized arboretum in the Bielavieža Forest for planting stock cultivation and its sale abroad has been discussed for a long time. The first attempt to establish it was made in 2004. Then, a small arboretum of about 2 ha was established. It was located in one of the most splendid parts of the Bielavieža Forest – in the site of the former bison nursery garden, an area covered with gorgeous olden oak-woods and where a significant number of rare herbaceous plants inscribed into the Red Data Book grows. But these endeavors were not sufficient and it was decided to build another, larger arboretum of 7.5 ha. In this site modern technologies will be used to grow wild planting stock mainly for export purposes.

The idea is generally good and does not contain any elements aimed at destruction of nature. However, unfortunately in case of the Bielavieža Forest everything was turned upside down. Maintenance of the new arboretum was accompanied by the conscious and deliberate destruction of the unique old protected forest. Its age was at least 150 years while some trees were 200 years or even older. The National Park administration justifies these clearings by many factors. The most significant is the need to preserve pure forest soil and maintain a microclimate for the forest wall. Additionally, it is emphasized that the implementation of this project was allegedly backed by scientists.

It is necessary to admit that such a claim does not withstand any criticism from the scientific point of view just due to the fact that currently the Bielavieža has hundreds of hectares of the forest areas entirely destroyed by a horrible hurricane in 2002. This area was cleared among others with bulldozers. In 2003 artificial afforestation was conducted in the area. Today, there are 7-9 years old pines growing in a row there, and on this site one can find a location for a future arboretum that complies with all the factors described above.

Instead, however, an old stand of live pine and spruce forest was destroyed. Please note that a young artificially created plantation was preserved, and the unique old primeval forest was destroyed! The reason of such vandalism is obvious – someone needed high-quality timber and an occasion to snip it occurred here! And there were scientists who argued for it, and in common concert put their signatures under this crime against protected na-

ture... It is not a secret that we have currently dozens of so-called "scientists", persons of low morality, weather-cocks and corrupted in many ways. Those persons can easily sign such projects just to obtain additional sops either as money or as personal benefits and privileges. If everything written above is not true, another conclusion becomes obvious — complete incompetence, irresponsibility and neglect of those who developed, affirmed and implemented this project affecting the fate of the Bielavieža Forest!

Conclusion

Thus, despite recent celebrations of the 600th anniversary of the so-called "protected regime" of the Bielavieža Forest and pompous statements about its alleged conservation for the sake of our descendants that are cheerfully heard from the representatives of all levels of the Belarusian state machine (including top-level officials), the real situation is different. In fact, most of the Bielavieža primeval forest is still being mercilessly destroyed by merchants from the NP administration and other come-and-go people. All of them are either low-professionals or have no relations to the nature protection and conservation.

The only measure to date, which can stop this terrible administrative mess and managerial laity as well as provide at least a minimum guarantee of the Bielavieža Forest conservation, is an urgent change-over of the national park's protection regime and granting the core zone status to all historical parts of the Bielavieža Forest.

Source: <http://bp21.org.by/en>, Heorhi Kazulka

Quotes of Quarter

EU High Representative **KATHERINE ASHTON** stated while announcing the appointment of the former Latvian Ambassador to head the EU Mission in Belarus on June 17:

"The European Union remains committed to critical interaction with Belarus.... the depth of which will depend on the freeing of all political prisoners, ...and further progress by the government toward principles of democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights."

"It is about giving something back – in this case providing independent news to Belarus,"

said the founder and director of Poland's BelSat TV **AGNIESZKA ROMASZEWSKA-GUZY** in an interview printed on April 24 in The New York Times.

"After all the underground opposition in Poland during the 1970s and later under the martial law depended so much on news from international broadcasting stations."

BELARUS ABROAD

Freedom Day in Prague

This year all local Belarusians gathered in the St. Cosma and St. Damian church in Prague. After the joint prayer for the Belarusian people, speeches were delivered by Siarhiej Navumčyk, a former Belarusian MP (1990-1994), Jurka (George) Stankievič, editor of *Belarusian Review*, and Aleś Michalevič, candidate for presidency in the 2010 elections in Belarus, who was arrested, tortured and then released in his own recognizance.. He fled Belarus and was granted political asylum in the Czech Republic .



Aleś Michalevič in Prague

The consequences of the Treaty of Riga (1921) – conference in Bielastok

The consequences of the Treaty of Riga (1921) for Central and Eastern Europe's political and military history were the main focus of the international conference that took place in Bielastok (Białystok) on April 28-29, 2011.

Entitled "The 1921 Treaty of Riga within the context of military and political history of Central and Eastern Europe" the conference was organized by the Belarusian Historical Society, the EHU Institute for Historical Studies of Belarus, and Civic Education Centre Poland-Belarus. It gathered about 20 scholars who presented and discussed various political, social, military and memoir aspects related to the Treaty of Riga and its impact both on Belarus and the neighbouring countries.

"The conference raised the painful issue of the Belarus-Poland relations. It is high time to make a sober and cool evaluation of this event from various perspectives", said Dr. Aleś Smalančuk, one of the organizers. A good sign, he admitted, is the active engagement of young specialists in scholarly research.

Summing up the results of the conference, Dr. Aleh Latyšonak concluded that the world history still lacked its vision with Belarusian eyes. Indeed, the historical sci-

ence in Belarus is still largely based on Soviet-like training and research practices which resulted in considerable ideologization of Belarusian historiography. Therefore, the absence of Belarusian voice in the world history is largely a consequence of the inadequate history policies by the state.

In its turn, the conference showed another need. By reapproachment of Belarusian and European visions of certain events, both sides have to reevaluate their attitudes. Belarusians still have to do away with a kind of complex connected both with the lack of state support and non-recognition of the Belarusian vision of events abroad. European scholars in their turn have to eliminate a stereotypical perception of Belarusians' role in certain events of the region's history as something marginal. Such a mutual reapproachment will enable both sides to better understand Belarus' present through its past and to find consolidating points for further fruitful collaboration.

Discussion with Participants Of Political Trials in Belarus

Prague, May 31, 2011.

Four participants of the recent trials took part in a discussion put on by the "Civic Belarus" organization.

- **Nasta Palažanka** — the co-chair of *Malady Front* (Young Front), who received a 2-year suspended sentence.

* See NOTE below

- **Andrej Džmitryjeŭ** — the manager of Niakliajeŭ's election staff, also a 2-year suspended sentence.

- **Alena Tankačova** — the director of the Center for Legal Transformation, who observed the trial proceedings.

- **Daša Korsak** — wife of Aleś Atroščankaŭ, the coordinator of Sannikaŭ's election staff, who was sentenced to 4 years of strict imprisonment

Interesting narratives by all four speakers revealed the extraordinary degree of solidarity that was displayed by the Minsk general public with those on trial. People, many of whom did not participate in the December 19th demonstration, brought food packages, flowers, money for covering the fines...



NOTE: Nasta Palažanka was the recipient of the "International Women of Courage" award, bestowed on her by the U.S. Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton.

One drawback on the part of the organizers was noted. Not being able to secure interpreters from Belarusian to Czech, the speakers were made to deliver their speeches in Russian, in order to accommodate the three Czechs present for whom neither Slavic language was native.

Needless to say, the use of the Russian language in place of Belarusian in staging public events related to Belarus abroad, damages in foreign eyes the image of the Belarusian people and its culture.

Atlantic Council Freedom Awards

WROCLAW, POLAND — The Atlantic Council presented its third annual Freedom Awards on June 10, 2011 to Belarus Free Theater, the Human Rights Center "Viasna" and the Belarus Association of Journalists on behalf of the people of Belarus and their struggle for democracy. Awards were also presented to U.S. Senator John McCain, Polish Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski, Moldovan Prime Minister Vladimir Filat and legendary Polish Solidarity activists Adam Michnik and Helena Łuczywo of *Gazeta Wyborcza*.

Following a video introduction by Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, the awards dinner paid tribute posthumously to former U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Ronald Asmus for his extraordinary contributions to the transatlantic community and Central European Freedom.

The awards ceremony took place during the annual Wrocław Global Forum, held June 9-11 in Wrocław, Poland. Convened in one of Central Europe's cultural and commercial hubs, the Forum brought together over 200 top decision-makers and business leaders to discuss Central Europe's role as a critical partner in strengthening economic, political and security ties across the Atlantic. Speakers included Polish President Bronisław Komorowski, U.S. Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs Alexander Vershbow and former U.S. National Security Advisor General Jim Jones. The Wrocław Global Forum is organized jointly by the Council and the City of Wrocław, and in partnership with the U.S. Embassy in Poland, the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Polish Institute of International Affairs, the Institute of Public Affairs, and the Center for International Relations.

Founded in 1961, the Atlantic Council aims to renew the Atlantic Community for 21st-century global challenges through constructive U.S.-European leadership and engagement in world affairs. The Council embodies a network of policy, academic and business leaders who foster transatlantic ties through non-partisan and cross-national dialogue and research.

Source: Atlantic Council, press@acus.org

Thoughts and Observations

Assessing the Crisis in Belarus

By David Marples

A tense situation prevails in the Belarusian capital of Minsk after a series of political and economic events placed unusual pressure on the Lukashenka regime. These include an unresolved terrorist attack on April 11, a new crackdown on opposition figures, a 20 percent rise in prices and a foreign debt of more than \$28 billion. In his annual address in late April, President Alyaksandr Lukashenka stated that “psychologically sick people” had exploited his “free elections” and that he would take steps to destroy any “fifth column” (*SB-Belarus’ Segodnya*, April 22).

A public spat with Ukraine, hitherto a longtime friendly neighbor, demonstrated the president’s anxiety. It centered on the Kyiv Summit on the Safe and Innovative Use of Nuclear Energy held on the 25th anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster. Evidently under the erroneous impression that the President of the European Commission, Jose Manuel Barroso had refused to attend if an invitation was extended to the Belarusian president, Lukashenka lashed out at the “lousy” leadership of Ukraine. He also referred to Barroso as a “goat” (“kaziol” –a deeply insulting gangster term), and those who had imposed sanctions on Belarus as “scoundrels” (UNIAN, April 27; *SB-Belarus’ Segodnya*, April 27).

The terrorist attack on April 11, which resulted in 14 deaths and over 200 injuries to date, continues to elicit public concern. Charges have been made against two Belarusian men, both born in 1986 and evidently long-term school friends who live in Vitsebsk. Four well-known activists from this city were also arrested, but the charges were subsequently reduced to “hooliganism” (www.ucpb.org, April 20). The two men are charged under Article 289 of the Criminal Code with conspiracy to carry out a terrorist action to “destabilize the country, intimidate the population, and murder people” (www.naviny.by, April 29).

Yet, there is a notable lack of clarity about the charges. One of the “terrorists” is also accused of illegal weapons trading and one—it is unclear if it is the same person—with previous bomb attacks: in Viciebsk in 2005 and in Minsk at the Independence Day commemoration on July 2 – 4, 2008. The KGB has reportedly uncovered a “testing area” for the explosive device in Vitsebsk. The charges carry the death penalty, which in Belarus’ case signifies a pistol shot to the head, and there is every indication that the executions will be carried out promptly, thus avoiding a public inquiry in a courtroom (www.naviny.by, April 29).

Understandably, many are dissatisfied with the investigation, and the Ministry of Information issued a second written warning to the opposition newspaper, *Nasha Niva*, for highlighting suspicions of state involvement in the attack. On May 11, the case against the newspaper will be heard officially and could result in its permanent clo-

sure. A similar admonition to the other major opposition newspaper, *Narodnaya Volya*, resulted in an accusation from the Political Council of the United Civic Party that the government is violating Article 33 of the constitution concerning the freedom of the press (*Narodnaya Volya*, May 1). The conclusion that the authorities have used the terrorist episode as a means to tighten state control is inescapable.

These events, however, distract from the main issue for the Belarusian government, which is the economic situation and recent talks with Russia concerning new loans. Pressure on the Belarusian currency has led to the banks’ agreement to trade the ruble outside its official exchange rate zone of just over BR 3,000 to the dollar, and an official devaluation to around BR 4,000 – 5,000 is anticipated within the coming weeks. Moscow has made clear, however, that Minsk must take more significant measures before the new loans (\$2 billion from the Eurasian Economic Community’s Emergency Fund and \$1 billion from Moscow) will be forthcoming. Aleksandr Surikov, Russian Ambassador to Belarus, stated plainly that one condition would be the sale of state assets (*RIA Novosti*, April 27).

Surikov had specifically in mind four highly profitable enterprises, which all have numerous subsidiaries: Belnefttekhnik, the oil technology company whose foreign assets were frozen by the United States in 2007, and which has been retargeted as part of U.S. sanctions following the crackdown in Minsk after the December 19, 2010 elections (FPS Research Center, January 31); Belaruskali, the potash company that last month sold off a package of 340,000 international shares (Belapan, April 11); Beltekheksport, which sells weapons and defense systems; and not least Traypl (Triple), self-described as “the president’s sports club,” which was founded in 1992 and has expanded into food products, petroleum, soft drinks, and industry. These companies have benefited from state largesse and subsidized energy imports; the president has maintained firm state control over them hitherto.

Lukashenka’s weakening control over the fate of his country undermines his heralded “social contract” with the public. Four years ago, Belarusian analyst Vital Silitski commented that: “The real protest moods, the real protest potential will appear when we see a crisis of the existing social contract and, second, when this dissatisfaction and the protest moods acquire not only a pragmatic dimension but also one linked to values” (*Radio Free Europe*, March 16, 2007).

In 2007, such a situation appeared remote, but today it is increasingly close to reality: a moribund economic policy that is limited to requests for foreign loans to keep the state-run economy afloat; long queues for food products or for foreign currency; fear of homegrown terrorism; sanctions against the regime from the United States and (albeit on a lesser scale) the EU; and a neighbor anxious to link further loans to privatization of valuable assets, i.e., selling them directly to Russian companies

Source: Eurasia Daily Monitor Volume: 8 Issue: 89, May 9, 2011

Day of Victory What Was it for Belarus?

By Andrej Dynko

In the bloodiest war of the 20th century, Belarus lost 1,6 million of its inhabitants; the country lost the Vilnia and Bielastok regions. What is more important, though, is that Belarusians survived as a nation. If the Nazis had won, we would have been physically annihilated. Many Western European nations perceived WWII as a repetition of WWI. In contrast, for Belarusians it represented the end and the beginning of the world.

The country changed its boundaries and ethnic composition. Reminders of the nation's elites, decimated earlier by the Soviets, dispersed throughout the world. The country's material fund was almost destroyed. Front lines rolled over Belarus twice; both adversaries conducted a total war, leaving scorched earth behind.

What's irreparable — out of a population of 9,2 million in 1939, 1,6 million had lost their lives by 1945. Comparable population loss was experienced only by Poland.

Nazis committed brutal atrocities in the parts of Eastern Europe that were to be colonized by Germans in the future — about 600,000 war prisoners of war were starved to death; hundreds of villages — with their inhabitants — were burned to the ground. About 600,000 Jews of all ages were murdered due only to their ethnic origin. Hundreds of thousands Belarusians perished while serving in the Soviet army that was not concerned with human losses.

In the midst of all this bestiality, and despite of it, millions of people have managed to display their best virtues. Thousands of people helped to conceal war prisoners, refugees, communists and Jews hunted by Germans. Thousands of others set up self-government units — in order to survive and keep their national and religious traditions. Many Belarusians, including the future national writer Vasil Bykaŭ, fought in Soviet army units. Tens of thousands of Belarusians, inhabiting German-occupied regions, joined the resistance movement; active partisan (guerilla) units were formed deep in Belarusian forests.

Partisans staged sorties, in order to provoke Germans to acts of retaliation against Belarusian villages; this would further inflame anti-German feelings. On the other hand, Germans, under the pretext of fighting partisans, implemented policies of liquidating at first Jews, then Gypsies, and finally, the Slavic population. They also incited Belarusians against Poles, Lithuanians against Belarusians, etc. — in order to destroy one ethnic group by hands of another.

In 1941, many were greeting Germans — whom they often remembered from WWI — as liberators from the hated Soviet system, which in the 1930s killed over 200,000 of Belarus' population, and sent another 400,000 to concentration camps. Victims of the communist terror and their relatives often collaborated with occupiers. However, the racist nature of the new authorities soon became apparent; leaders of the anti-communist national movement, who at first were willing to collaborate with Germans, soon also became disillusioned.

Unfortunately, by 1941 the strongest Belarusian national leaders had been either murdered by Soviets — like Čarviakoŭ, Taraškevič — or were locked up in Soviet prisons, like Anton Luckievič. Now there remained no popular leaders able to unify the country for the struggle for national independence, aided by western democracies. This is why the Belarusian national liberation movement during WWII and after was weaker than in neighboring Lithuania and Ukraine.

The Soviets have adroitly mythologized WWII in order to gain domination over the enslaved nations of Central Europe. In the case of Belarus, Soviets also manipulated historical narratives, figures and facts. The number of victims, horrible as it really was, was augmented by creating a method of double accounting.

However, these speculations should not overshadow the essence. World War II was a war against absolute evil. Thanks to the victory over Hitler, Belarusians saved themselves as a nation. In the case of a German victory we would have been physically annihilated — because Nazi racists assigned the territories east of Germany for their own "living space." (*Lebensraum*)

For several years after May 1945, an anti-Soviet guerilla movement continued in many regions of Belarus — especially in its western half. While it lasted, it turned into a civil war, with thousands of victims. Nevertheless, the worst was now behind. Belarus was among the victors and became a founder of the United Nations. The horror and the lessons of the war period were described in works of Belarusian writers such as Bykaŭ, Bryl', Adamovič, artist Savicki, film director Klimaŭ.

The principle of refusing to accept war as a means of solving conflicts became a basic part of Belarusians' world outlook.

Source: *Naša Niva*, May 9, 2011

Note on Belarus-Kazakhstan Cooperation

By Aziz Burkhanov (Kazakhstan)

Both Kazakhstan and Belarus recently went through the period of presidential elections. In both countries, the incumbent presidents Lukašenka and Nazarbayev predictably won the elections with high turnovers and voting results according to official statistics; in both countries opposition and international observers expressed concerns about election results and documented numerous violations.

The two countries preserve rather good relations between each other, both on bilateral level and within the international organizations, such as Collective Security Treaty Organization and Customs Union. Last February a new cooperation plan between Kazakhstan and Belarus for 2011-2012 has been signed in Astana and trade partnership between the two countries remains significant. Belarus and Kazakhstan also engage in the military cooperation: for instance, Belarus participates in Kazakhstan's military equipment upgrade programs and several Kazakhstan's Air Force aircrafts have been repaired and upgraded at Belarusian facilities.

From a purely theoretical perspective, this willingness to cooperate can obviously be explained through the nature of governments in both countries. In the political environment of Belarus and Kazakhstan there is a lack of open public debates, representative politics, and independent mass media; therefore, real choices in the foreign policymaking process are made by a few elite members behind closed doors. Similarly, since internal regime type is a particularly important constraint on foreign policies, given that cooperation between Kazakhstan and Belarus is defined by interactions between highly personalistic regimes and individual leaders rather than between states or societies. Therefore, some other IR scholars emphasize further theoretical approach, the systemic theory of neorealism, which suggests that regional groupings form and act in response to the external challenges. Indeed, although foreign policy concepts of Kazakhstan, Belarus as well as of other countries of the Customs Union or Shanghai Cooperation Organization may significantly differ in content, they certainly share a major common aspect: to a large degree they consider Western-backed attention to the democracy and human rights violations as a challenge to their rule. Because of this Western pressure, it can be implied that in the minds of the rulers of the region, especially given their Communist backgrounds and largely anti-Western mentality, human rights and democracy are now considered more like external threats rather than internal ones. Therefore, because of the shared political culture of authoritarian rule and similar approaches to the governance, leadership of Kazakhstan and Belarus opted for a closer cooperation with each other, which in the current conditions will most likely continue in the short and perhaps medium-range perspective.

The newly nascent Customs Union which brings together Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan, remains most recent and according to government officials from all three countries the most promising foreign policy initiative. Many observers and political commentators were a little less enthusiastic when estimating Customs Union perspectives, claiming that all member-states have very different priorities within the organization, which are too incompatible with each other in order to make the organization viable. For instance, Russian leadership still wants to save country's outdated car-making industry and forced Kazakhstan and Belarus to substantially increase customs payments on the imported cars. Similarly, despite the fact that access of Belarusian and Kazakhstani producers to the Russian market is one of the major points of the Customs Union, numerous reports indicate that in reality Russia puts all sorts of additional and hidden barriers to make its market inaccessible.

Another remarkable example was recent conflict between Belarus and Russia over cheap oil and gas supplies and Kazakhstan was quick to offer Belarus an alternative supply source to replace Russia. Some observers stated that the Customs Union could have easily been fulfilled with proper bilateral agreements; since in a wider perspective mutual economic interests in the Belarus-Kazakhstan-Russia triangle are in reality less than substantial. Belarus needs subsidized oil and gas supplies from Russia, while Kazakhstan needs to secure a transporta-

tion corridor to Europe for its own oil and gas. Russia, in contrast, does not need much from Belarus and Kazakhstan in economic terms, besides demonstrating some political loyalty and support of its diplomatic adventures like campaign against Georgia in 2008.

Furthermore, Russian leadership is trying to pull Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan into the Customs Union, which raises questions on whether it is an economically or a politically inspired project. All this demonstrates that perspectives of the Customs Union in its current shape remain questionable and most likely, three countries will continue relying more on the bilateral economic cooperation.

Aziz Burkhanov is a doctoral student at Indiana University-Bloomington. He also holds a Master degree in Political Science from University of Paris-II Pantheon-Assas. Before starting his doctoral studies, Aziz Burkhanov worked in various areas of research and consulting, including multiple-year tenures at the IWEP, a think-tank advising the Government of Kazakhstan on international affairs and IHS Cambridge Energy Research Associates, a world-leading company advising global energy players.

HISTORICAL DATES

July 7, 1882

Janka Kupala (Ivan Lucevič), a great Belarusian poet, was born in Viazynka, near the town of Maladečna.

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

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

He died tragically in Moscow in 1942.

July 7, 1887

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

July 10, 1942

Piotra Klimuk, the first Belarusian-born cosmonaut, was born in the Bieraście (Brest) region. He became the commander of three Soviet orbital flights: in 1973, 1975 and 1978

July 15, 1410

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

Azarenka Defeats Sharapova to Win Miami Title

Victoria Azarenka of Belarus defeated an error-plagued Maria Sharapova 6-1 6-4 today to win the Sony Ericsson Open for the second time in three years.

Azarenka's victory, her sixth career title, will lift her to sixth in the world rankings next week — equalling her career best standing.



Victoria Azaranka

"I played really well in the first set but Maria is a great fighter and I had to really hang in there at the end," said a delighted Azarenka, who defeated Serena Williams here in 2009.

Source: Charter97 Press Center, April 3, 2011

In the 2011 French Open in May Azarenka was seeded fourth. She was defeated in the quarterfinals by the eventual winner — Na Li of China.

Belarusian Runner Won Pittsburgh Marathon in May

Alena Vinickaja, a 36-year-old from Belarus who has two children under 5, captured the women's title, doing so in 2:42:33,



Ms. Vinickaja had no troubles with a perception that she's getting a bit long in years to win a marathon.

"I'm an old woman," she joked. "It felt good to run with the young women and beat them. I just kept running at my pace and after mile 14 I took the lead and ran the rest of the race by myself."

Prior to 2008 Ms. Vinickaja won the San Diego marathon

four times in five years.

Source: Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, Colin Dunlap

Belarusian Handball Player Wins His Fifth Champions' League Title

On May 29 in Cologne FC Barcelona's "Barça Borges" handball team defeated "Ciudad Real" to win the eighth Champions' League title of its history.

The latest Champions' Cup is the eighth of fourteen, won by Spanish clubs in 21 years. The Pyrenean era in Europe's main club tournament began in 1991. And the year before the Cup spent the winter in the Miensk district of Uručča, having been brought there by the Miensk army team from a victory in Barcelona.

Today Belarusian participation in the club's triumph is limited to efforts by Barça's player **Siarhiej Rutenka**. He became a five-times winner of the trophy (once with Slovenian "Celje," and three times with "Ciudad Real.") Rutenka acquired fame in two games of "Final Four," and became "Barça's" most valuable player — scoring eight goals, and twice as many goal assists.

We hope, that with Rutenka's playing for the Belarus' national team, the level of Belarusian handball will return to its previous heights.

Source: fcbarcelona.com, pressball.by

Belarus' Under-21 National Soccer Team Will Play in 2012 Olympics

Belarus won the 3rd place in the European soccer championship of under-21 teams, held in Alborg, Denmark in June 2011. In (for us) deciding match Belarus defeated the Czech Republic in a tenacious struggle — 1:0 by stopper Jahor Filipienka's goal in the 88th minute....

Belarusians' victory in this particular game entitles them to participate in the 2012 London Olympic soccer tournament — an honor none of the post-Soviet national teams (neither Russia nor Ukraine) have reached before.



Filipienka celebrates his goal

Since both the Belarusians and the Czechs were awarded bronze medals in the tournament, their encounter essentially decided who will go to London Olympics.

The championship title was won by Spain, who defeated Belarus 3:1 only in overtime

In the tournament's final Spain defeated Switzerland 2:0.

MEDIA WATCH

Belarus Leader's Grip on Power

By Christian Neef

Belarusian President Aliaksandr Lukashenka claims regime opponents funded by the West were behind the recent subway bombing in Minsk. His behavior is puzzling, observers say. He is cracking down on the opposition even though it is weak and divided and the population seems in no mood for revolution.

But what kind of order does he represent? Late Wednesday, Lukashenka told his people that the calm situation in Belarus "had lulled us to sleep." But this time, he continued, officials from the KGB, the country's security service, had done a "brilliant" job in tracking down the men who perpetrated the metro station attack and getting them to confess. The alleged culprits are a lathe operator and an electrician from the provinces.

That can't be ruled out, although there are indications that the suspected assailants had no political motives. Lukashenka has already announced that he will impose the "strictest order and organization possible" and that the police regiments brought into the city would remain there for the time being. He also said that the all the "gibberish about democracy one wants to impose on us" was absurd and that the people who ordered the bombing -- and who inspired it -- should be sought out in the "fifth column."

Crackdown on Demonstrators

By "fifth column," Lukashenka means the opposition. Indeed, the president has directed all his scorn at the opposition since the presidential elections held on Dec. 19, 2010. After the autocrat supposedly won 79.7 percent of the vote, most of the opposition candidates joined tens of thousands of demonstrators outside the main government building to protest against suspected electoral fraud and to demand that Lukashenka step down. Security forces brutally suppressed the demonstration, injuring at least 100 people and arresting some 700. Once it was over, the president boasted that his forces had "reinstated order in seven and a half minutes." Immediately after the demonstration, Lukashenka locked up seven of the nine presidential candidates who had run against him. Two of them are still being held. Although the seven others have been released, they are either being held under house arrest or have been forced to agree to help the KGB. One former candidate, who has since found refuge in the Czech Republic, reports that KGB officers abused and humiliated him.

Puzzling Behavior

Since Lukashenka has already ruled over Europe's last bastion of socialism for 17 years, the world has obviously grown somewhat accustomed to the eccentric 56-year-old. But, since December, the behavior of this former collective farm manager has become increasingly puzzling — and the West doesn't know how to deal with him anymore.

...Professor Aleh Manaev 59, is one of Belarus's best-known social researchers. He led the Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies (IIEPS) in Minsk for many years before it was shut down by the country's highest court and forced to move to Lithuania.

"The regime remains unacceptable to me," Manaev says, "but I'm disappointed by the opposition. It called on the people to take to the streets on December 19, but it didn't know what to do with them once they were there. And it refuses to believe that most of them care more about having food on the table than freedom."

But that begs the question why Lukashenka has been pursuing his opponents so doggedly since December 19. Manajev answers the question analytically, listing three reasons: First, Lukashenka, who controls everything in the country, has had enough of the opposition's endless accusations, and all of his hatred for them has come bursting out.

Second, he has been forced to take into account the interests of the judiciary, the intelligence service and the police — in other words, the very people who already thought allowing regime opponents to publically voice their opinions in the run-up to the elections was going too far.

And, third, Lukashenka's main problem had already been solved exactly 10 days before the election: As Manajev sees it, Lukashenka's almost conspiratorial trip to Moscow on December 9 to meet with Russian President Dmitry Medvedev pulled Belarus back from the economic brink, at least temporarily.

That would also explain why Lukashenka, in an apparent attempt to justify his change of course, has been accusing the West of backing a coup against him. He claims that the coup was provided with €87 million (\$124 million) "through certain 'fifth column' foundations in Belarus." In the state-run newspaper *Sovietskaya Belorussiya*, he had intelligence agency dossiers and eavesdropping transcripts printed that were meant to prove how the Germans and Poles had built up a network of regime opponents.

He is the most agile of all post-Soviet politicians. And as one biography of him published in Moscow puts it, Lukashenka has succeeded with impunity in "creating a closed society right in the middle of Europe."

But now he has become a hostage of his own system, and one that cannot survive without constantly searching for new enemies.

Translated from the German by Josh Ward

Excerpts from <http://www.spiegel.de/international>

Quotes of Quarter

SENATOR JOHN KERRY on April 6 concluded his statement introducing the re-authorization of the Belarus Democracy Act:

"Belarusians have the same right to self-government as their neighbors. Europe's last dictatorship should not be allowed to stand unchallenged."

A Dictator's Fix

For years, Western governments have chafed at the presence of a repressive dictatorship in the center of Europe—the former Soviet republic of Belarus, ruled with a mixture of brutality and megalomania by Aliaksandr Lukashenka. Now a spectacular series of missteps by the strongman has put him in perhaps the tightest fix of his 17 years in power - and given the United States and its European allies an opportunity they should not fail to exploit.

Mr. Lukashenka's troubles began last December when, after promising to hold a fair presidential election in exchange for a \$3.6 billion Western aid package, he blatantly rigged the vote. When tens of thousands of Belarusians turned up in the center of Minsk to protest the fraud, he sent his police to attack them. Hundreds were arrested, including seven of the nine candidates who ran against him.

...Having promised huge pay increases to state employees before the election, the regime is now watching the economy implode because of Belarus's inability to obtain foreign financing. The value of the currency has plunged by 50 percent in the past week; hundreds of businesses are closing; and shortages are spreading.

...Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, who has long despised Mr. Lukashenka, is trying to force him to sell off large state companies to Russian investors and cede Belarus's political independence to the Kremlin.

Mr. Lukashenka has tried to resist Mr. Putin in the past by playing him off against the West. But Western governments should no longer succumb to that tactic. The United States and the European Union have already imposed sanctions on more than 170 Belarusian officials since the post-election violence, and they should respond to the trial verdicts with still tougher measures. In particular, European foreign ministers should move ...to penalize the big state companies - including the oil, potash and arms export firms — on which the dictatorship rests. They should let Mr. Putin know that swallowing Belarus and its assets will prejudice Russia's own proposals for a strategic partnership with the European Union.

For its part, the Obama administration should make Belarus a test of the "reset" of relations with Russia. Moscow and Washington ought to be able to agree on a common message to Mr. Lukašenka: free the political prisoners and accept genuine political and economic reforms, or face bankruptcy and isolation.

Source: Excerpts from *Washington Post* Editorial, dated 19 May 2011

Lukashenka Digs Belarus' Grave

By Anders Aslund

Once again, Belarus has entered one of its many payments crises. Usually, such a crisis ends with Russia bailing the country out. A bailout attempt has been carried out this time as well, but this Belarusian crisis may be more onerous.

But is there a crisis? Officially, the country's gross domestic product grew 7.6 percent last year and the budget deficit amounted to only 3.5 percent of GDP. Do not believe these numbers. Budget expenditures do not include ample state-subsidized loans, and Belarus' traditionally high inflation conceals some inflation, pumping up the official growth rates in the old

Soviet fashion. The Belarusian economy is basically an over-regulated Soviet economy that is only partially liberalized. The public sector generates 70 percent of GDP.

President Alyaksandr Lukashenka caused the current payments crisis by hiking public salaries by no less than 50 percent in fall 2010 in preparation for the Dec. 19 presidential election. On his promises of an average wage of \$500 a month, nominal wages rose by 41 percent in 2010 and real wages by 25 percent. Even after this populist measure, Lukashenka used unprecedented violence in the election.

Despite the huge, economically unjustified wage hike, Belarus maintained its exchange rate pegged to the U.S. dollar. As a consequence, the country has priced itself out of the market, and its exports cannot keep up with imports. Its current account deficit rose to \$8.5 billion, or 15.6 percent of GDP last year, and foreign direct investment is limited to about \$2 billion a year.

Therefore, Belarus needs some \$6 billion this year in international financing. Traditionally, Russia has contributed such a large amount through implicit energy subsidies, amounting to about 15 percent annually of Belarus' GDP, because Russia has sold oil and gas at much lower prices to Belarus than to other countries. For years, the Kremlin has tried to reduce these subsidies, but Lukashenka has successfully resisted. His last feat was to extract a net gain from the Kremlin of 2 percent of GDP in lower oil prices in December. Even so, total Russian energy subsidies for Belarus will amount to 7 percent of GDP in 2011, which is insufficient. Any new subsidies are unlikely for the time being considering Lukashenka's lukewarm relations with the Kremlin.

During the global financial crisis, Belarus for the first time concluded a \$2.5 billion emergency program with the International Monetary Fund. But the IMF recently ruled that Belarus' economic "policies have been loosened to the extent of becoming unsustainable." Last year, loans increased by an impermissible 38 percent, and these credits are subsidized. Inflation is rising quickly. In April, annualized inflation reached 18 percent, and it could easily surge to 30 percent or more before the end of the year. Hence, the IMF has closed its doors to Belarus, as has the European Union because of gross human rights violations. China chipped in with a large yuan loan during the previous crisis, but that is merely a bilateral clearing facility for imports from China.

In the end, only the Kremlin is interested in helping Lukashenka. After all, Belarus is a member of the customs union together with Russia and Kazakhstan. Russia has also established a special emergency credit facility, the Eurasian Economic Community anti-crisis fund, together with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Armenia and Belarus. Its total volume is supposed to be \$10 billion, of which Russia has contributed \$7.5 billion. After long negotiations, this fund has decided to offer Belarus a loan of \$3 billion to \$3.5 billion to be disbursed over three years, with the first installment amounting to \$1.24 billion this year. The money is supposed to be disbursed on tough IMF-like conditions. But only the IMF has the routines to supervise their fulfillment, and currently IMF engagement with Belarus is likely to be limited.

The Russians are demanding two key things: a devaluation of the Belarusian ruble, probably by 40 percent, and the privatization of many old Soviet enterprises that big Russian corporations want to buy.

...Some observers argue that the devaluation and privatizations will solve the crisis, presuming that the large Belarusian manufacturing industry rapidly expands its exports and the current account balance quickly improves. Despite Lukashenka, Belarus has several decent economic policymakers.

But this time may be different. The amounts needed are larger. All potential creditors but Russia are alienated. And the sharp increases in public wages qualify among the most absurd policies of Lukashenka's erratic presidency.

...Lukashenka's ultimate concern is political stability, but the required devaluation in the highly trade-dependent Belarusian economy is likely to reduce real wages by about one-fifth, taking back most of the benefits given before the election. It is unclear whether Belarus' authoritarian rule could withstand such a shock to the standard of living. But if the government does not devalue, a default would be inevitable. Unenviably, Lukashenka is sailing between a Scylla and Charybdis.

Source: Excerpts from Moscow Times, 26 May 2011

Anders Åslund is a senior fellow of the Peterson Institute for International Economics.

Loans for Belarus

Alyaksandr Lukashenka, the authoritarian president of Belarus since 1994, represents the unacceptable face of post-communist eastern Europe, combining fearsome political repression with fiscal incompetence. His lamentable record bears comparison with that of Robert Mugabe, his ageing counterpart in Zimbabwe. But just as the International Monetary Fund is giving Zimbabwe technical advice to help it overcome its economic troubles, so the IMF should carefully consider the appeal for financial assistance that it received this week from Belarus.

...A loan programme for Belarus would put western governments in the curious position of applying sanctions with one hand while extending financial support, via the IMF, with the other. Nevertheless, if the IMF is confident that it can enforce loan conditions with more success than it did after issuing \$3.5bn to Belarus in 2009-10, then an aid programme is the right course of action.

Without western support, the government in Minsk will have nowhere to turn but to Russia. However, the Kremlin will not give aid unless Belarus sells some of its most valuable state-owned assets, such as its gas pipeline system, two oil refineries, its main mobile phone operator and a potash producer. This would threaten to place Belarus irreversibly in Russia's geo-strategic and economic orbit. It would risk reducing the independence of Belarus, which already has close military ties with Russia, to a cipher. It would set a highly disturbing precedent for other former Soviet republics once in Moscow's grip.

The IMF is not a slush fund, nor is it in the business of exacting a political price, as opposed to economic reforms, in return for its loans. But the Lukashenka regime will not last forever, and western countries have a long-term interest in supporting Belarus's freedom. An IMF programme, properly designed and implemented, would contribute to this goal.

Source: Excerpts from Financial Times Editorial, 2 June 2011

What the West Gets Wrong About Belarus

By Edward Lucas

The Non-Resident Fellow of the Center for European Policy Analysis (CEPA) and the International Editor of the Economist, Edward Lucas evaluated the Western approach toward Belarus over the last two decades. He began this rather lengthy article with the following statement: *"Pigeonholes are handy ways of making sense of the world. But what if the pigeons won't roost in them? For the past 20 years outside opinion, when it has tried to engage with Belarus at all, has tried to cram this country of 10 million into one convenient category after another".*

The article was originally posted on the web site of the Center for European

Policy Analysis (CEPA) www.cepa.org It attracted the attention of the Belarus Broadcast Service of RFE/RL which then asked a number of experts on Belarus to review the article and to provide their comments. Among those who responded were Marguerita Balmaceda, Paul Goble, David Marples and Jan Zaprudnik. These responses as well as the original article created a prolonged lively discussion among the Belarus Service listeners and on-line readers during the month of May on the site www.svaboda.org/Palityka

Editor's Note: We have decided to reprint excerpts from two of these responses — from Dr. Zaprudnik and Dr. Marples; they do contain some interesting ideas and suggestions.

Western Teeth & The Belarusian Nut

Excerpts from a comment on the article "What the West Gets Wrong About Belarus" — by Dr. Jan Zaprudnik (U.S.A)

In his comment (in Belarusian), posted on the Radio Liberty web site, Dr. Zaprudnik first of all notes (and is surprised by) the considerable and stormy response to the article by Belarusian visitors of the site. At the same time he regrets the lack of similar response and interest by Western readers, especially considering the authority of the article's author, the international editor of the influential British weekly *The Economist*.

Yet, in Dr. Zaprudnik's opinion, it is primarily Belarusian readers who should get acquainted with Mr. Lucas' reflections about Belarus, especially since they are coming from such an illustrious source. "For publishing these reflections and popularizing the Belarusian issues abroad, Mr. Lucas deserves our gratitude," concludes Dr. Zaprudnik.

He also appreciates Mr. Lucas' humble admission that past Western approaches to the issue of Belarus are "stained with ignorance, gullibility, wishful thinking, cynicism, and self-interest." However, on the whole, Mr. Lucas' analysis "may be recognized as the work of cold and impersonal intellect, lacking an emotional element and human sympathy toward its subject matter."

... The "What the West Gets Wrong" article by Mr. Lucas completely omits three important factors that should be included in any analyses and pointers to the future. They are as follows: 1. The imperial instinct of the Kremlin, 2. The role of the Russian secret service in Belarusian events, 3. Lukashenka's unquenchable thirst for power which results in the subordination and weakening of all governmental institutions.

Finally, Dr. Zaprudnik notes the cultural contrast of Lucas' self-critical admission of past Western failures with the verbal shooting match initiated by his critics, visiting the Radio Liberty site. Their criticisms supposedly often contained insulting words aimed at the article's author.

Editor's Note: In order to verify these allegations, I undertook the painstaking task of reading more than three pages of readers' comments. Yes, there were some intemperate remarks, provoked mainly by several insensitive statements by the article's author, such as the one about the "divisive and harmful" effect of using the Belarusian language, and especially about comparing our language with the Cajun French dialect of Louisiana.

Yet the vast majority of readers' contributions was conducted in a rational and reasonable tone, even when refuting some of Mr. Lucas' less sensitive statements. For instance, in response to the unfortunate Cajun comparison, one reader pointed out that today's independent Belarusian state owes its existence to the recognition of a separate Belarusian language.

Including Belarus

Excerpts from a comment to the article "What the West Gets Wrong About Belarus" — by Dr. David Marples (Canada)

The article by Edward Lucas on the subject of Belarus is a well-written and entertaining text. However, its assumptions and conclusions tend to be somewhat confusing. First of all, nowhere does the author define what he understands under the terms "West" and "foreign public opinion." There exists no proof that they are identical. Even within the European Union there exist different and opposite views on the question of including Belarus.

One factor, until recently dominating the policies of some western countries, is the lack of interest in Belarus. **The history of such interest has not been of long standing.**

... **How and why has Lukashenka succeeded in staying in power for 17 years?**

Much has been written about the president expressing the desires of a considerable part of the country's population, about Belarus' own specific path of economic development, etc. However, the truth is that the short-term welfare and stability have been achieved by applying already dead policies, based exclusively on taking advantage of cheap Russian energy supplies. Today they are not accessible anymore, and the president lately resembles a beggar, running from one capital to another, asking for credits.

Today Belarus is not that mysterious sphinx anymore; it is facing serious problems.

... It is a mistake to believe that Lukashenka's overthrow will be the end of Belarus' independence, that only he is able to confront cruel Putin and Russian oligarchs. However, even with Lukashenka not in power anymore, his legacy will remain, and not only that of repressions and violations of human rights. It will also be the legacy of policies that have resulted in a near bankruptcy and excessive dependence on Russia. It is too late now to worry about whom Belarus' second president will be.

Is the "West" worried about that? If so, and if the West means primarily the European Union, it would be to its advantage to **open its doors for Belarus** and Ukraine and offer the prospect of increased foreign trade, regardless of their current leadership — instead of imposing ridiculous sanctions.

If the European Union was ready to offer Lukashenka \$3.8 million credits for conducting relatively free elections, then what is the logic of keeping Belarus outside the Union? There is no doubt that Lukashenka would have received this credit, if the aftermath of elections had not been so violent...

Why not offer Belarus full membership in the European Union?

Let's face it, Belarus is now possibly unique in the relative lack of interest in it by the outside world. This may not be necessarily harmful. In any case, today Europe and North America are interested in Belarus more than they were in 1991, or even in 2006.

Saving Belarus from Russia's embrace may be possible, but only by employing very radical measures. Half-way measures have not worked. Then why not offer Belarus full membership in the European Union, realizing that Belarus' very survival is at stake?

... On the other hand — can the Union afford more waiting time, if it really values its neighbors?

Additional Article Headlines

The world's press provided extensive coverage about the events in Belarus during the past quarter. In the following lines some of the articles that appeared in major publications during the months of April through June 2011 are listed by the titles and their authors.

The Washington Post

In Belarus, overspending meets reality

Will Englund, 10 April 2011

The Economist

Terrorism comes to Minsk

E.L., 12 April, 2011

Belarus's Crackdown/ Show Trials Again

12 May 2011

The New York Times

From Belarus, Dynamic Drama with Limited Means

Ben Brantley, 18 April, 2011

From Poland, Satellite TV Tries to Pierce the Belarus Media Muzzle

Judy Dempsey, 24 April 2011

Belarus Economic Crisis Deepens as Currency Plunges

Andrew E. Kramer, 12 May 2011

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

Top Belarus Opposition Leader Goes on Trial

Claire Bigg & Belarus Service, 27 April 2011

The Wall Street Journal

Sentencing of Belarus Candidate Draws Fire

James Marson, 16 May 2011

Belarus Mulls Sale of Potash Producer

Alexander Kolyandr, 7 June 2011

Reuters

Belarus spurns OSCE human rights mission request

7 April 2011

European Union Extends Sanctions on Belarus

23 May 2011

And a continuing series of articles in **The New York Times**

by Michael Schwartz:

Crackdown on Protesters Upsets Lives in Belarus, 3 April 2011

Belarus Official Suggests Opposition Was Behind Blast, 13 April 2011

A Faltering Ruble, Long Lines and a Bomb Attack Rattle Belarus, 18 April 2011

Belarus Opposition Leader Gets a Five-year Sentence, 15 May 2011

Belarus Leaders May Trade Rivals' Freedom for Aid, 26 May 2011

Belarus: Ex-Presidential Candidates Are Sentenced, 27 May 2011

Quotes of Quarter

"They are still screaming 'free the political prisoners,'"

ALIAKSANDR LUKAŠENKA declared at a press conference on May 25 referring to Western officials,

"We'll free them probably. No need to blow government money on prisons, eating up bread."

Culture & History

LIEŨ SAPIEHA

PREFACE TO THE 1588 STATUTE OF THE GRAND DUCHY OF LITHUANIA

Translated by Curt Woolhiser from the Old Belarusian (from the facsimile edition, *Statut Vialikaha Kniastva Litoŭskaha. Teksty. Daviednik. Kamientaryi*. Minsk, 1989)

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE:

Lieŭ Sapieha (1557-1633) was a leading statesman, diplomat, legal scholar and military commander of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Born in the town of Astroŭna (near Viciebsk) into an Orthodox noble family, Sapieha received his education at the Calvinist school at Niašviž and the University of Leipzig. He served as Vice-Chancellor of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania from 1585 to 1589, Chancellor from 1589 to 1621, Voivode of Vilnia (Vilnius) from 1621 and Lithuanian Grand Hetman from 1623 until his death. A tireless defender of the Grand Duchy's autonomy, Sapieha played a central role in the adoption of the 3rd Statute of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (1588), which reasserted Lithuania's rights within the Commonwealth of the Two Nations and reaffirmed the status of Ruthenian (Old Belarusian) as the language of official documentation. Sapieha's Preface to the 1588 Statute, addressed to all citizens of the Grand Duchy, is not only an important example of Belarusian legal thoughts and political discourse of the Renaissance period; his reflections on liberty, the rule of law and the rights and duties of citizens, while rooted in the political philosophy of the 16th century Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth's "democracy of the gentry," still resonate today among Belarusians who value their country's European heritage and the universal ideals of democracy and human rights.

Wise men of all ages have discerned that in every Commonwealth there is nothing dearer to a man of honor than freedom. Slavery should be so odious to him that he is obliged to defend himself against it not only with all his wealth, but with his very life. Thus, honorable men do willingly offer up not only their property, but even their lives against all enemies, that they might not fall under their cruel dominion. And being deprived of their freedom, according to their own will and convictions, they wish not to live in servitude.

But it would be a small comfort indeed if a man were to be freed from slavery under a foreign enemy while having to suffer the rule of a domestic one. Thus was devised a bridle, or harness, for restraining the insolent, that they, fearing the law, would refrain from all violence and tyranny, and that they might not mock and oppress the weak and the poor. For laws are established so that the wealthy and powerful do not have leave to do as they please. As Cicero said, we are slaves of the law so that we may exercise our freedom.

If for an honorable man there is nothing dearer than living in security in his native land, not having to fear that someone might sully his good name, or bring harm to his person or health, or harm his private property,

then he has naught to thank but the law, under which he enjoys peace and is free from all violence, slander and insult to his person. For the aim and result of all laws on earth is and must be that each might keep his dignity, health and property intact, and suffer no injury to them. And this is our liberty, for which we all are among other Christian nations, that we have no lord above us who would rule according to his own will rather than according to our rights, and freely enjoy our good name, life and property. For whosoever would bring injury to us in any of these three things, and according to his own whim rather than according to our rights would subject us to indignities and cruelty, would be no longer our lord, but the violator of our rights and liberties, and we would be his slaves.

And rightly do we hold as truth, for which the Lord God be thanked, that under the rule of Their Graces the Kings and Grand Dukes, our lords, we hold this power and liberty in our hands, creating our own laws that we may preserve our liberty to the fullest. For neither our neighbor and fellow citizen of the fatherland, nor our



Portrait of Leŭ Sapieha (1621)

sovereign lord himself may enjoy any advantage over us but that which is permitted him by the law. Therefore, having in our hands such a treasure that it can be bought by no sum of money, it behooves every honorable man that he know the law, and being well apprised, that he curb both himself and his passions and act according to the written law, injuring no one. And if anyone should cause him injury, he would know where he must seek protection and remedy for such injury. For as one Roman senator fined another for not knowing the laws of his fatherland, thus may we reproach any citizen who boasts of his liberties but does not want to know and understand the laws, the very laws that preserve his liberty. And if it is shameful for a nation not to know its laws, all the more so it is for us, who have our laws written not in some foreign tongue, but in our own, and at all times can learn what is needed to redress any wrong.

Inasmuch as it was formerly a great obstacle that not all could possess the Statute on account of the laborious and protracted process of copying, wishing to satisfy this need of all citizens and to serve the good of the Commonwealth, I took this labor upon myself, sparing

no cost or expense, to have it printed so as to provide a convenient and simple means for all to study the law. Thus, whosoever wishes may now hold it in his hands.

I ask your lordships to receive graciously this labor of mine, and having your freedoms well guarded by the law, to defend them. I ask you to elect to the courts and tribunals not only upright men who know these laws of ours well, but God-fearing and virtuous men who would not pervert the laws for their own advantage and to the detriment of their fellows due to their own avarice and hunger for bribes, but would, walking a straight path, observe holy truth and justice and preserve intact the freedom which we enjoy. With this I command myself to the fraternal love and benevolence of your lordships.

Source: NAVINY, the Newsletter of the North American Association for Belarusian Studies (NAABS), Vol. 7, Issue 1.

| 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' Ь in Cyrillic script: | | |
| Roman | Cyrillic | LACINKA |
| S | СЬ | Ś |
| Z | ЗЬ | Ž |
| Dz | ДЗЬ | DŽ |
| Ts | ЦЬ | Ć |
| N | НЬ | Ń |
| L | ЛЬ | Ł |

Dear Friends!

Belarusian Review is the only journal in English language fully devoted to Belarus: to its current political and economic situation, culture and history, as well as to Belarusian diaspora. In today's world it is very important to have our own voice among English-language mass media. A broad audience is interested in Belarusian matters, but the news need to be delivered to it. What can be better than a printed journal with all necessary information in one issue? Even Internet cannot compete in this area yet. There is no English-language website with full-spectrum news from Belarus and a satisfactory analysis of the situation in the country.

Belarusian Review fully fills this niche, both as a printed journal and an electronic edition made in cooperation with *The Point Journal*. People ranging from American senators to European MPs to students in libraries in the United States and Europe to Belarusians in their home country read the journal. We are interested in increasing our readership in order to broaden the range of people interested in Belarusian matters.

Today *Belarusian Review* needs your help. Its operation depends on money coming from subscribers and donations. Subscription cannot always cover all the costs; therefore your financial assistance is needed. Any donation will be useful and will go to a good cause. Now there is an opportunity to transfer money via Internet using the PayPal system or a credit card. Our donation button is located at www.belarusianreview.org, the official website of *Belarusian Review*. If anyone wishes to mail a check, please use the following address:

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NOTE from the Editor:

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 Latin script by means of the Belarusian Latin alphabet LACINKA.

This does not apply to reprints from other sources. In these texts the original Library of Congress (LOC) transliteration of Belarusian names is retained.

The COMPARISON table on p. 27 of this issue will help you getting acquainted with the LACINKA transliteration method.

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