

Chapter 3

THE 2001 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

STRUCTURE OF THE BELARUSIAN ELECTORATE

Andrey LYAKHOVICH

The reasons for the stability of the Belarusian authoritarian regime are to be sought in the peculiarities of the Belarusian political system, the personal qualities of president Lukashenka and in the specificity of Belarusian voters.

Lukashenka's arrival on the political scene and his ability to remain in power despite unfavourable changes in the political situation are explained by his skill to precisely sense the aspirations, feelings and views of Belarusian society, focus on them when communicating to the voters and illustrate them in his policy.

People of pension age (over 55) comprise 23.3% of the Belarusian population*. Lukashenka has the support of 77.9% of pensioners, and the higher the age the greater of percentage of support: among voters above the age of 59 (18.6% of the population) 81.7% support Lukashenka.

The Lukashenka's electoral base is fluctuating between 35% and 50%, people of pension age represent a large part of it.

A large segment of voters comprise those who do not identify with either of the ideologies of the two political poles – the left (pro-Lukashenka) and right (independence-oriented). This middle ground may total 30-45% of the Belarusian electorate.

The political behaviour of this majority is often irrational as they are

* This article uses the 1999 census results, data from the Belarusian Ministry of Statistics and Analysis, and results of sociological research conducted by the Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies (IIEPS) and the independent sociological laboratory "Novak."

at the mercy of Soviet-era stereotypes. Mutually exclusive ideas peacefully coexist in the mass consciousness of these people: they advocate "market economy" under "strict state regulation"; an "independent Belarusian state" within a "union state of Russia and Belarus," and so on.

This majority perceives president Lukashenka not in structural or functional categories, not as a highest government official elected for a defined term and bound by certain limits of competence, but rather on the basis of personal judgement of him as a powerful individual.

In order to sway the "electorally undecided" majority, the Belarusian regime uses the state-owned media to convince the public that everything positive in society is personally due to the efforts of president Lukashenka, while all negative aspects are the fault of bureaucrats, directors of factories, ministers, etc. (i.e., internal and external enemies).

During the presidential election campaign in 2001, the regime extensively employed a strategy of the "conscientious and fair" president Lukashenka and "the corrupt nomenclature." Regular public purges of top officials and directors of major enterprises, among others, are aimed at mobilising Lukashenka's hesitant electorate.

The fact that the regime actually managed to achieve a moderate degree of economic success is used by official propaganda to portray Lukashenka as the guarantor of economic stability and development in Belarus.

Gross domestic product in 1991–1998

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
GDP (previous year = 100%)	99	90	92	87	90	103	111	108
Final consumption index (previous year = 100%)	93	90	98	88	91	103	110	108

Source: Ministry of Statistics and Analysis.

During 1991–95, production dropped dramatically and inflation exploded, peaking at 40% per month. As a result, living standards in

Belarus plummeted. In 1996, the situation began to change for the better and the positive economic trend was sustained in 1999–2001. Belarusian society approached the 2001 presidential election being as well off as during the Soviet era. A poll in May 2001 showed the following picture of consumer feelings among Belarusians:

How would you evaluate the quality of your life?	
Option	Respondents (%)
Verygood	0.7
Rather good	41.5
Rather bad	42.9
Verybad	14.9

Source: Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies (IISEPS).

The majority of Belarusians prefer a guaranteed minimum level of consumption over reform, the positive results of which are not guaranteed. While the political platform of the Lukashenkists and the sovereignty-oriented groups has an ideological determinant (conservative-Soviet and nationalist, respectively), the majority of undecided voters are primarily concerned about socio-economic issues*.

By stabilising the economy, the Belarusian regime was able to offer its own interpretation of democracy. Human rights were replaced by the ideology of "strict order," while the institutional and legislative development of the authoritarian regime was implemented "on behalf of the people." Every major political action was preceded by an appropriate "popular" initiative like the All-Belarusian Popular Assembly** or de jure non-governmental organisations uniting

- * Polls show that 65–70% of Belarusian voters first mention economic problems in replying to the question as to what problems worry them most.
- * Less than 5% of Belarusian voters participate in electing delegates to the All-Belarusian Popular Assembly; nevertheless those delegates, mainly representatives of the presidential vertical, promote initiatives on behalf of the entire nation.

Lukashenka's adherents*.

It is indicative in this context that one of the first steps of Lukashenka as president was to establish a department in his administration for receiving petitions from the population.

In the first half of 2001, the social portrait of Lukashenka's electoral base was as follows:

By age						
18-19	20-24	25-29	30-39	40-49	50-55	Over 55
25.8%	21.3%	16.7%	27.9%	39.2%	43.7%	77.9%

By education				
Primary	Incomplete secondary	Secondary	Professional secondary	Higher (including incomplete)
78.5%	47.0%	31.4%	35.0%	29.2%

By region						
Minsk	Minsk region	Berastse and region	Horadnya and region	Vitebsk and region	Mahilyow and region	Homel and region
28.5%	45.9%	34.6%	34.4%	40.4%	46.4%	47.7%

By place of residence				
Capital	Regional centres	Large towns	Small towns	Villages
28.5%	39.4%	28.8%	39.9%	51.5%

Source: IISEPS.

As a result of the tables above, it can be seen that the typical Lukashenka voter is an elderly villager with a low educational level living in Eastern Belarus. At the time the poll was conducted, Lukashenka

* For example, the question put for the referendum in May 1995 had been lobbied by "non-governmental organisations" like the Slavic Assembly "Belaya Rus" since September 1994.

enjoyed a 32.6% level of support from state sector employers as opposed to 21.6% from private sector employer (the latter usually earning more than the former) .

Approximately 20% of Belarusian voters can be said to comprise the basis of the pro-sovereign, democratic electorate*. Its foundation is educated youth, intelligentsia, qualified professionals and the middle class. Geographically, it is mainly inhabitants of Minsk and North-Western Belarus.

* Approximately 20% of Belarusian voters are against the Russian language having a status equal to the Belarusian language as well as the change in the state symbols made in May 1995. These issues are very indicative of the voters' political preferences.

THE POLITICAL MARKET OF THE MEDIA. THE INFORMATION SPACE OF BELARUS

Andrey YEKADUMAW

The main focus of the 2001 electoral campaign was not the platforms of the candidates, but the disclosure of crimes (actual or alleged) committed by the opponents as well as accusations of deteriorating living standards and destabilising the political situation.

MEDIA SUPPORT FOR LUKASHENKA'S CAMPAIGN

Since 1995, the electronic and print state media have been fully controlled by the presidential executive branch. Therefore, Alyaksandar Lukashenka's electoral campaign was covered by the media in the same fashion as his activity since 1995. Those who watched Belarusian national TV are aware that the state-owned media launched the campaign for Lukashenka five years ago. President Lukashenka has monopolised television broadcasts and has been constantly featured by TV programmes since the campaign for the 1996 referendum.

The excessive presence of the Belarusian president on television is always accompanied by positive comments concerning his job performance and reports of achievements in the area of politics and the economy. The media use all means to support the image that brought Lukashenka to power: a commoner who connects directly with ordinary people. The Belarusian president does not allow television debate with representatives of the opposition.

Throughout his rule, Alyaksandar Lukashenka has continually visited the periphery of the country, holding meetings, opening festivities, delivering lengthy speeches to demonstrate his unity with society that elected him and present himself as actively involved in solving social and economic problems.

Once director of a collective farm, Alyaksandar Lukashenka orchestrates an annual TV show, a telephone conference with managers of collective

farms and state-run agricultural companies, to show the voters his efforts to improve life in the country. The traditional teleconference was held on August 7, 2001, during which the president and high officials discussed the harvest. Officials of the Ministry of Agriculture dutifully reported that the harvest was successfully gathered.

Along with the advertising of Alyksandar Lukashenka, the Belarusian state-owned media were conducting a campaign to discredit any feasible opposition. This negative campaign opened with the broadcast of "Children of Lie," a film by TV journalist Yuri Azaronak in 1995. Activities of the opposition are always highlighted negatively by the official media. Belarusian state television broadcasts a special weekly programme entitled "Resonance," which comprises stories and comments designed to undermine the opposition's credibility.

Long before the electoral campaign began, the national TV channel aired Azaronak's programme entitled "The Secret Springs of Politics." This was essentially blatant propaganda against the opposition and its leaders based on primitive brainwashing, creating the "enemy," montage and biased comments as well as taking images and quotes out of context.

At the end of August, the presidential candidates Syamyon Domash, Uladzimir Hancharyk, and Syarhey Haydukevich appeared on national TV, each with a 30-minute address to the voters. Alyksandar Lukashenka resigned from his pre-electoral appearance, thereby stressing his exclusive status among the candidates.

The "Neman 2001" military exercises began in Belarus on August 30, personally attended by president Lukashenka as Commander-in-Chief. The exercises received widespread coverage through special reports on national TV. The entire nation could see the troops engaged in mock exercises against terrorist groups within Belarus, manoeuvres against foreign troops invading the country from anonymous neighbouring states, and defensive measures against air strikes. Those in front of their TVs were shown a small victorious war, however conditional.

To discredit the opposition, the state-run media carried stories of criminal activity regarding politicians opposed to Lukashenka, and their relatives. A true informational campaign was carried against Mikhail

Chyhir using reports and comments of his son's arrest (Alyaksandar Chyhir was facing charges of allegedly stealing cars and trading in stolen spare parts). Belarusian national TV aired accusations and comments immediately after their detention to convince the audience that the youth and his friends were guilty even before the case was to court. Mikhail Chyhir was earlier the victim of the same tactic.

On September 9, some Internet resources of opposition organisations and media that planned to cover the progress of the election on-line were blocked, including the sites of Charter'97, *Belorusskaya Delovaya Gazeta*, Radio Liberty, Radio Racyya, *Nasha Niva*, Vyasna Human Rights Centre, the Young Front, the Minsk office of IREX, etc. It was not difficult to do, given that most Internet resources in Belarus are controlled by Beltelecom, the national operator.

THE SUCCESS OF PROPAGANDA BY STATE-RUN MEDIA

Generally, the regime avoids open, direct violence against the opposition media, putting up a veneer of lawfulness and opting for economic and legitimised administrative pressure. The state sponsored propaganda campaign was conducted for Lukashenka while the opposition was denied access to state-owned mass media monopolised by the presidential vertical. Nevertheless, Belarus has a degree of freedom of speech, although the political opposition, as well as people in general with differing views, have much more modest information resources for expressing their views.

The state-owned media subordinate to the regime operate in conditions much more favourable than the opposition media. The state provides them with printing facilities, offices and funds. Print runs significantly exceed those of the opposition.

For example, when the election was held the most popular opposition and independent newspapers and their print runs were as follows: *Belorusskiy Rynok* (13,000 copies), *Belorusskaya Gazeta* (15,000), *Belorusskaya Delovaya Gazeta* (18,600-22,000), *Narodnaya Volya* (41,780), *Nasha Niva* (5,600), *Nasha Svaboda* (9,000-10,000),

Tovarishch, founded by the central committee of the Party of Communists of Belarus (8,000) and *Belaruski Chas*, a newspaper of the federation of trade unions (42,000). Meanwhile, the pro-presidential newspaper *Sovetskaya Belorussiya* had a print run of 380,493 copies on weekdays and 438,333 on Saturdays. *Narodnaya Gazeta*, loyal to Lukashenka, was printing 89,189 copies.

Despite the de facto presidential monopoly on the state-owned media, the ratings of Belarusian informational and propaganda programmes are rather low. The professional level of these programs is poor and equivalent in this regard to the Soviet propaganda that aired on the Belarusian TV before the break-up of the USSR. Lengthy stories and endlessly reiterated ideological clichés shrink their audience, driving viewers away to more professional and fascinating programmes on Russian channels which highlight events in Belarus from a different angle. This results in the Belarusian electronic media being extremely inefficient, which is evident by a poll taken in June: despite a barrage of propaganda by the national TV against OSCE activity in Belarus, less than half of the respondents knew who Hans-Georg Wiecek was (see table):

Question: "The Belarusian authorities stated the possibility of deporting OSCE ambassador Hans-Georg Wiecek, head of the OSCE consultative and observation group, on the pretext that he allegedly violated Belarusian laws. What do you think about this?"

Options	%
I support the intent of the Belarusian authorities because ambassador Wiecek's activity violates Belarusian laws	12.8
I do not support the intent of the Belarusian authorities because ambassador Wiecek's activity does not violate Belarusian laws	18.6
I never heard of the activity of ambassador Wiecek	55.0
Difficult to say / no reply	13.5

Source: IISEPS.

Although Belarusians do watch the national TV channel, there is not much sympathy for information programmes. Over a third of those

polled by IISEPS did not watch them at all in June. As for the deteriorating attitude of the public toward the opposition, the targeted television campaign was rather unsuccessful (see table below):

Question "Belarusian television has been broadcasting programmes recently that strongly criticise the opposition. How did those programmes affect your opinion about the opposition?"

Options	%
It worsened	9.6
It improved	4.5
It did not change	36.9
It did not watch those programmes	41.7
Difficult to say / no reply	7.3

Source: IISEPS.

THE RUSSIAN FACTOR IN THE BELARUSIAN INFORMATION SPACE

Russia dominates the electronic media in Belarus. During the run-up to the 2001 election, the three most watched channels in Belarus were BT (the Belarusian national channel) as well as Russia's ORT and RTR. Of the seven non-cable channels received in Minsk free of charge, only BT is Belarusian. Five are Russian: ORT, RTR, Kultura, NTV, TV-6. The station STV+RenTV, which covers the capital, was built on the basis of the former Channel 8 and is, in fact, a branch of the Russian channel RenTV.

The Belarusian population has a much higher regard for the Russian electronic media than for the Belarusian media.

In April 2001, IISEPS polled Belarusian attitudes toward Belarusian and Russian radio stations and the press.

On the radio, the main competitors of the Belarusian state-owned radio are not the Belarusian service of Radio Liberty, but Russian stations and Russian-speaking Belarusian stations (see table):

Question: "What radio stations do you listen to?" (%)

Options	Listen	Do not listen	No reply
Belarusian state-owned radio	52.6	43.0	4.4
FM -stations (BA Roks Alfa Style etc.)	44.1	49.4	6.5
Local radio	45.5	49.1	5.4
Russian stations	40.8	53.3	5.9
Belarusian service of Radio Liberty	14.0	78.7	7.3
Russian service of Radio Liberty	10.4	82.0	7.6
Other Western stations	11.4	80.0	8.6
Radio Baltic Waves	2.4	88.9	8.7
Radio Racya	2.3	88.7	9.0
Other stations	5.5	63.9	30.6

Question: "Which newspapers do you trust?" (%)

Option	Trust	Do not trust	DTS/NR
"Argumenty i Fakty in Belarus"	42.4	10.8	46.8
"Komsomolskaya Pravda in Belarus"	34.1	13.6	52.3
"Sovetskaya Belorussiya"	34.7	20.7	44.6
"Belorusskaya Delovaya Gazeta"	18.7	13.9	67.4
"Trud in Belarus"	20.9	15.3	63.8
Local non-governmental newspapers ("Brestskiy Kur'er", "Vitebskiy Kur'er" etc.)	15.9	15.7	68.4
"Zvestiya in Belarus"	15.5	15.8	68.7
Local governmental newspapers ("Homelskaya Pravda", "Mahilovskaya Pravda" etc.)	17.0	18.7	64.3
"Svobodnye Novosti"	14.7	17.5	67.8
"Narodnaya Volya"	16.1	20.1	63.8
"Belorusskiy Rynok"	10.5	15.7	73.8
"Belorusskaya Gazeta"	9.8	16.7	73.5
"Nasha Svaboda"	8.9	18.3	72.8

Source: IISEPS.

THE 2001 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

The FM stations mentioned in the poll broadcast in Russian and take a conciliatory political stand, limiting themselves to brief news stories about political events in or related to Belarus. Belarusian state-owned radio is under the total control of the presidential vertical. Only three radio stations in Belarus promote democratic values: Radio Liberty, Radio Racyya and Radio Baltic Waves.

Two Russian publications with Belarusian editions, *Arguments and Facts* and *Komsomolskaya Pravda* (popular since perestroika), were among the three highest rated publications according to a poll conducted in April 2001 concerning trust in the press.

A rather large share of readers, approximately a third of the respondents, trusts the pro-presidential newspaper *Sovetskaya Belorussiya*. This figure corresponds to the percentage of Lukashenka supporters. The newspaper has retained its name since the Soviet era.

THE INFORMATIONAL POLICY OF THE BELARUSIAN OPPOSITION

In its tactic during the run-up to the presidential election in 2001, the Belarusian opposition counted on protest voting, as did Alyaksandar Lukashenka's team back in 1994. While the president's main asset was his administrative resources, the opposition tried to use various scandalous disclosures related to violating human rights and laws in Belarus against him.

At the beginning of 2001, the Russian and Belarusian independent media began to publish articles characterising Lukashenka as a psychopath. The diagnosis was made by Dzmitry Shchyhelski, a Belarusian psychiatrist and graduate of the Horadnya Medical Institute, whose "The Epicrisis of Alyaksandar Lukashenka" was published after he left for the United States.

The opposition also actively campaigned by accusing Lukashenka and his entourage of kidnapping opposition figures. At the beginning of the summer, the public found out about the existence of a Belarusian death squad, a special troop under presidential command that dealt with opposition activists.

The public took the news fairly passively, which can be explained (other than by the low degree of political awareness, lack of solidarity and underdeveloped legal awareness) by the overuse of political sensation by the Belarusian media, state-owned and non-governmental alike, in the struggle between the opposition and president. Since his historic anti-corruption report in 1994, Alyaksandar Lukashenka has been constantly resorting to public disclosures in the struggle against his opponents. In denouncing presidential actions, the opposition also provoked political scandals. Regular ostentatious exposés, not always based on indisputable facts and impeccable evidence, have become a habitual practice in the Belarusian informational environment since Lukashenka was elected president.

THE POLITICAL PROCESS IN 2001

Andrey YEKADUMAW

The main characteristic of Belarusian politics in 2001 was the absence of dialogue between the regime and the opposition. Presidential structures and the opposition now exist in parallel, conducting their activities and attempting to influence the electorate. Political events in Belarus in 2001 largely took place beyond political institutions as such, inasmuch as those institutions in Belarus have not become legitimate channels of political change.

LUKASHENKA'S MOSCOW CARD AS A GUARANTOR OF STABILITY OF THE BELARUSIAN REGIME

As a result of his own policy, Alyaksandar Lukashenka placed Belarus in the position of being a Russian satellite. The refusal of the international community to recognise his regime as legitimate has not yet created serious domestic problems for the Belarusian president. However, under the conditions of international isolation and his own diminishing resources of political domination (primarily economic resources), Lukashenka was forced to look to the Russian elites for support. At the beginning of 2001, the Belarusian president visited Moscow to secure the support of Russia's ruling circles. Officially, the visit was part of the Festival of Belarusian Culture in Moscow.

The festival opened with a hockey match between the team of the Belarusian president and a representative team of Russian hockey veterans and members of the Federal Assembly of Russia. On the next day, Lukashenka met with Vladimir Putin, Viktor Gerashchenko, Mikhail Kasyanov, and Pavel Borodin. In the evening he awarded Frantsishak Skaryna orders and medals* to Yuriy Luzhkov, Mayor of Moscow, Gennadiy Seleznyov, actress Tatiana Doronina, Viktor Sadovnichiy, rector of the Moscow State University, Mikhail Shvydkoy, Minister of Culture, and Igor Makarov, Chairman of the gas company Itera.

* The highest order and medal of Belarus.

On April 2, a session of the Highest State Council of the Union State of Belarus and Russia, devoted to the "first five-year jubilee" of the union, was held in Moscow. For Lukashenka, it was not very fruitful. The session approved a union budget for 2001, a working plan for the union government, a message to the Parliamentary Assembly and signed the founding agreement of the international financial and industrial group "Aerospace Equipment," comprising two Belarusian enterprises and eleven Russian companies.

Alyaksandar Lukashenka sought Vladimir Putin's support in opening loans the Russians promised earlier to Belarus. However, Russia's Ministry of Finance did not commit to a specific date for transferring the first instalment (US \$100 million). Simultaneously, Viktor Gerashchenko, Chairman of Russia's central bank, said that the loan would be allocated immediately after Belarus ratified the single currency agreement, under which Moscow would be the only issuing centre and Russia's central bank would mint and print money for Belarus.

On April 5, Tu-22 and Tu-95 Russian strategic bombers landed on the Belarusian military airfields at Machulishchy (near Minsk) and Baranavichy within the framework of training exercises for patrolling forces of the CIS United Anti-Air Defence System. According to the training scenario, they simulated an invasion of a CIS member state's airspace. The simulation turned out to be an expensive outing, each plane requiring 50 to 100 tons of kerosene to refuel. Before landing in Belarus, the same bombers took part in the largest manoeuvres of long-range airforces in Russia in the past seven years. Approximately 15 strategic bombers launched cruise missiles and dropped real bombs.

Belarus has six airfields capable of receiving heavy bombers, hold over facilities from before the break-up of the USSR. The aerodrome in Machulishchy was a long-range airforce base during the Soviet era.

On May 31 and June 1, a summit of CIS countries was held in Minsk. On the eve of the meeting, at 23:37 on May 30, there were two explosions on the grounds of the Russian embassy in Minsk. According to the Department of Information and Public Relations of the Ministry of Interior, flacks and crampons of RGD-5 hand grenades were found on site, indicating that two grenades had been thrown.

The next day, top-ranking Russian officials arrived in Minsk for the summit. They had no public reaction regarding the explosions in the embassy. During the summit, the foreign ministers of Belarus and Russia exchanged instruments of ratification for the agreements "On the Introduction of a Single Monetary Unit and Forming a Common Economic Zone, and on the Regulation of the Issuing Centre of the Union State" and "On the Regulation of Issues connected with the Operational Termination of Organs of the Union of Belarus and Russia." Both agreements had been signed in Moscow six months earlier.

On June 20, Alyaksandar Lukashenka began a two-day visit to Moscow to take part in a discussion between president Vladimir Putin and Mikhail Kasyanov regarding tariff and non-tariff regulations, indirect taxation and increased gas supplies to Belarus.

In exchange for maintaining full-scale political support for the Belarusian regime, Russia wanted to force Lukashenko to accept its own rules concerning economic integration. The Belarusian side was excluded from setting customs rates and taxes within the Union of Belarus and Russia. The Russian State Duma set the tax on profit at 24 % without bothering to inform its Belarusian colleagues.

LUKASHENKA'S DOMESTIC POLICY

The anniversary of the 1994 constitution was officially celebrated for the first time in four years on March 15, 2001. On the anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster, president Lukashenka visited the most contaminated areas of Belarus. His tour was widely covered by the state-owned media.

Simultaneously, leaders of the opposition visited the contaminated areas, but their presence was given much less coverage by the media.

On May 9, Victory Day*, Lukashenka participated in the ceremonial meeting and march. This traditional Soviet holiday is an important element in cultivating nostalgia for the USSR. However, this year the

* The victory over Nazi Germany.

traditional military parade was postponed until July 3 – Independence Day as proclaimed by the president.

The 2nd All-Belarusian Assembly, a congress of approximately 3,000 Lukashenka appointees, met in the Palace of the Republic in Minsk on May 18. The president delivered a speech entitled "For a Strong and Prosperous Belarus" promising to bar the privatisation of "Belaruskaliy" (a potassium works), the Mazyr salt works and the petrochemical industry in Belarus. He also mentioned the increase to \$ 250 of average monthly wage by 2005. The Assembly adopted a resolution approving the country's social and economic development in 1996–2000.

The largest rally for Alyaksandar Lukashenka and his policies was the 10th "Slavic Bazar" Music Festival staged in Vitsebsk at the end of July. This annual event gathers pop singers from former Soviet republics and reproduces the atmosphere of festivals held in the USSR and Warsaw Treaty countries. This year, the presidents of Russia and Ukraine visited the festival.

On September 4, Lukashenka held a meeting with voters in the Palace of the Republic. The 2,500-odd people were specifically selected from various regions of Belarus to meet with the president in the capital.

In Lukashenka's words, after several years in office it became possible to stop the economic slump and maintain socio-economic stability. Lukashenka said that under his management over the past five years gross domestic product grew 36 % and industrial production 65 %. Moreover, the income of the population had also increased, amounting to 106 % compared to 1990. Agriculture was the only area where 1990 levels were not achieved. The president announced his electoral platform priorities: residential housing construction, the development of export production and the agricultural industry as well as government support for science and healthcare.

THE USE OF ADMINISTRATIVE RESOURCES AGAINST THE OPPOSITION

In his electoral race, Alyaksandar Lukashenka used the powerful resources of his administration during his electoral campaign in order

to weaken the opposition. As election day approached, the president issued a series of decrees, some of which were directly targeted at reinforcing his position.

Especially noteworthy in this context are presidential decrees No. 8 of March 12, 2001, No. 11 of May 7, 2001, and No. 20 of June 26, 2001.

Decree No. 8 of March 12, 2001, "On Selected Measures to Improve the Procedure of Receiving and Using Foreign Donations," ruled that any foreign aid was to be registered and special certificates were to be issued by the Presidential Department for Humanitarian Aid. Under the decree, it was not allowed to use foreign aid until such a certificate had been obtained, whereas the procedure of registration was left at the discretion of the Humanitarian Aid Department. The decree, timed before a presidential election, specifies that "foreign donations may not be used for activity aimed at changing the constitutional order of the Republic of Belarus nor the seizing or dismantling of state power. ... Foreign aid in any form may not be used for the preparation and holding of elections, referenda, revoking deputy of the House of Representatives or member of the Council of the Republic, holding meetings, rallies, street marches, demonstrations, picketing, strikes, the production and distribution of propaganda material, as well as holding seminars and other forms of mass agitation of the population*." Apart from the Humanitarian Aid Department, control over the "appropriate" use of foreign donations by their recipients was commissioned to the Committee of State Control, Ministry of Interior, State Taxation Committee, State Customs Committee, State Committee for Financial Investigations, their local branches as well as other state organs. Violation of the decree would subject legal persons to fines up to 100% of the donation involved or confiscation of the donated good or property for the benefit of the state. Under the decree, it was possible to close trade unions, political parties, and other non-governmental organisations, as well as representative offices of foreign organisations as well as deport foreign nationals or persons without citizenship, even for a single breach of its provisions.

* This document is available at <http://www.ncpi.gov.by/>.

Decree No. 11 of May 7, 2001 was aimed at limiting the freedom to hold meetings and other mass rallies before the election. As with earlier decrees related to political activities, it was designed not only to limit forms of expressing the will of the people, but also at complicating the bureaucratic procedure for the opposition to hold its meetings and rallies legally.

Under the decree, political parties, trade unions and other organisations can be closed for a single breach of the regulations. This is possible in cases when "the persons responsible did not properly organise the preparation or holding of an event which resulted in significant losses or important damage of the rights and lawful interests of citizens or organisations, or the interests of the state or public." Important damage, among others, may include interfering with street traffic*.

Decree No. 20 of June 26, 2001 was aimed against Lukashenka's rival candidates. As the president is not answerable to the public or to legislative and judicial institutions, the decree obligated candidates for president to declare their income and property as well as the income and property of close relations, spouses and parents-in-law. Controlling the courts, the president could use his decrees to in effect weed out his rivals. The decree maintains that a candidate using funds or other aid in violation of parts 9 and 10 of Article 48 of the Electoral Code results in the denial or revocation of registration of the candidate**.

In order to win the election, the president of Belarus did not hesitate to acquire financial resources from foreign businesses operating in Belarus. On June 18, 2001 Lukashenka signed decree No. 19 "On Selected Issues regarding the Taxation of Foreign Legal Persons in 2001." The decree provided that 'in the period between July 1 and December 31, 2001 foreign legal persons which conduct business activities on the territory of the Republic of Belarus must pay contributions to the National Fund for the Support of Agricultural Product and Foodstuff Manufacturers and Agrarian Science, to Road Fund and

* This document is available at <http://www.ncpi.gov.by/>.

* Ibid.

to Economic Stabilisation Funds of local budgets, Manufactures of Agricultural Products and Food, Housing Investment Funds as well as Municipal Services and Maintenance Funds. The procedure and conditions of payment were provided in Articles 11 and 23 of the law "On the Budget of the Republic of Belarus for 2001*."

Apart from the presidential decrees, the opposition had another problem: criminal prosecution of their relatives.

Alyaksandar Chyhir, the son of ex-Prime Minister Mikhail Chyhir, was detained on February 10, 2001 together with two friends, Vasil Bykaw and Syarhey Kalyada. According to the investigation, the three were detained after spare parts of stolen cars (allegedly identified by the two victims) were found during a planned raid in their storehouse.

At the end of March, Syarhey Vinnikaw was arrested on charges of dealing drugs. Vinnikaw is the son of Tamara Vinnikava, ex-chairwoman of the National Bank of Belarus who had spent a considerable period of time under house arrest and then mysteriously fled to London. Syarhey Vinnikaw was released after the presidential election.

EFFORTS BY THE BELARUSIAN OPPOSITION

The Belarusian opposition held traditional annual processions and meetings as part of its campaign. The only exception was March 15 when the opposition decided to postpone street rallies until Freedom Day (March 25, the day of the 1918 Declaration of the Belarusian Popular Republic). Some activists were arrested during the rally on March 25; Russian TV channels covered the event, but in general, it had a run-of-the-mill flavour and little, if any, repercussions.

The opposition held events across Belarus timed to coincide with the 15th anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster. The "Path of Chernobyl" march was held in Minsk on April 26. The police, whose presence was limited, did not interfere with the demonstration. The "Path of Chernobyl" has been held annually since 1989, when Belarusian

10 The National Register of Legal Acts of the Republic of Belarus, 2000.

society began to learn the actual extent of the catastrophe. In 1996, when the march turned into an anti-presidential rally, the police and other law enforcement agencies had reacted brutally, and the demonstrators resolutely. According to data in possession of the opposition, approximately 200 participants of the rally were detained, 20 requested emergency medical assistance and 100 sustained various injuries.

In 2001, however, events proceeded without incident and without a massive police presence. Opponents of the regime marched down Skaryna Avenue, the main street of Minsk. The march began with a meeting opened by Vyachaslaw Siwchyk, deputy chairman of the Belarusian Popular Front, and was followed by a prayer for the victims of the Chernobyl tragedy. The column of 5,000 marchers grew to 7-8 thousand by 8 p.m. when the march ended with a second meeting.

The street demonstrations on Freedom Day and on the anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster proved that the potential of the Belarusian opposition to mobilise against the government had not grown during the period of resistance to Lukashenka.

Other than events sponsored by the political opposition, spontaneous strikes broke out across the country. On January 1-5, small entrepreneurs conducted a nation-wide strike. The main reason for the strike was an increase in customs duties on goods imported from Russia and produced in third countries, which made retailers hike prices 40 %. On the morning of April 27, weavers at the Minsk factory of worsted fabrics closed a street demanding their delayed March salaries be paid. To settle the conflict, an official delegation was sent to negotiate with the two hundred women.

On July 5-6, the 3rd Congress of Belarusians of the World was held in Minsk, in the House of Writers.

On July 27, events were organised in Minsk to celebrate former Independence Day (the holiday was moved after the 1996 referendum to July 3, the day Minsk was liberated during the Second World War). Young people took part in most of these events.

The opposition's campaign to mobilise that portion of society

THE 2001 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

unhappy with the situation in the country was not successful. Most of those who participated in the events had previously committed themselves to the opposition.

POLITICAL EVENTS AFTER THE ELECTION

The presidential election was held on September 9. By 2:00 p.m., the official turn out was 57.93%, making the election valid.

Syarhey Haydukevich, leader of the Liberal Democratic Party of Belarus, hurried to congratulate Alyaksandar Lukashenka on his victory.

The same day, approximately 5,000 supporters of the Belarusian opposition gathered in the rain on Kastychnitskaya Square in Minsk, across from the presidential residence, for an unauthorised meeting. It had been planned for 8 p.m. on September 9. The rally proceeded peacefully without provocation or clashes with the police. Uladzimir Hancharyk, the single candidate backed by the opposition, spoke to the gathering, which was also attended by Mikhail Chyhir, Mikhail Marynich and Syarhey Antonchyk. The participants took no radical actions and dispersed in the morning.

The president was inaugurated on September 20, symbolically not in Parliament but in the Palace of the Republic, before an assembly of loyalists, mainly representatives of pro-governmental organisations.

Alyaksandar Lukashenka was sworn in according to the 1996 constitution, and Lidziya Yarmoshyna handed him his office certificate for a five-year term.

ACTORS ON THE BELARUSIAN POLITICAL SCENE IN 2001

Iryna YEKADUMAVA

Before the election in 2001, the only actors left on the Belarusian political scene were the pretenders to the new presidential mandate. It was a struggle between illegitimate leadership of the state, represented by president Lukashenka and his subordinates, and the unpopular opposition – the political parties, non-governmental organisations and civic initiatives. While Lukashenka's camp retained a relative degree of unity, the ranks of the opposition were split over the tactics for changing the regime. Some suggested of the state institutions created by the illegitimate president be radically rejected (opposition to the state), while others called for democratic transformation by using any realistic means available, including compromise with pro-Lukashenka forces (opposition to the regime).

Lukashenka tried to mobilise the administrative resources for his campaign to the greatest degree possible, mainly by swapping personnel. The task of the major opposition forces was to consolidate a broad civil coalition to nominate and support a single candidate to rival Lukashenka. For this purpose, the opposition began to co-operate with members of the nomenclature.

THE POLITICAL PARTIES

By 2001, the political parties had lost the influence they exerted on politics in 1996. Not only the influence and internal unity of political parties was diminishing, but the number of parties was also diminishing. The campaign of reregistering political parties, undertaken by the Ministry of Justice, slashed the number of parties nearly twofold: out of the 35 parties registered in early 1997, only 18 remained on the political landscape in 2001. Without a presence in Parliament and due to unfavourable legal conditions, parties not controlled by the government focused on defending the constitution, human rights and civil freedoms

rather than on programme goals. Over the past four years the viability of Belarusian parties depended not on the popularity of their platforms but on the intensity of their public relations and their leaders' contacts with foreign partners and international structures.

THE RIGHT

Traditionally, the Belarusian Popular Front "Adradzhenne" occupies the right flank of the Belarusian political scene. Its co-operation with other parties in the Co-ordination Council of Democratic Forces (CCDF) indicated that the BPF began to abandon its pretence to the role of an umbrella organisation for all the parties advocating Belarus' independence. Prior to the presidential election, the BPF considered running its own candidate, but these plans were scrapped due to the party's poor organising potential and internal conflicts.

Moreover, at the beginning of the campaign, the BPF was not organisationally united. Its 6th congress, held on October 30, 1999, elected a new leader: Vintsuk Vyachorka succeeded Zyanon Paznyak. Advocates of the latter were unable to accept this change, which resulted in the Front splitting into the Conservative Christian Party "Belarusian Popular Front" (CCP BPF) led by Zyanon Paznyak and the Belarusian Popular Front "Adradzhenne," led by Vintsuk Vyachorka. The Ministry of Justice registered the CCP BPF on September 13, 1999, and the BPF "Adradzhenne" on February 18, 2000. The Conservative Christian Party nominated Zyanon Paznyak as its candidate for president and, having failed to collect the required number of signatures, refused to throw its support to another candidate. BPF "Adradzhenne" opted for joint activity with democratic organisations.

The United Civic Party (UCP) had occupied a centrist position until 1999, mainly focusing on parliamentary work. Even after the 1996 referendum, its main activity involved providing an intellectual resource for "Civic Action," a liberal faction in the Supreme Soviet. In 1999, after the death of deputy chairman Henadz Karpenka and unsuccessful election on May 16 and July 21 rally, the UCP became

more radical and shifted ideologically closer to BPF. For instance, in a manifesto entitled "Belarus' Road to Democracy" adopted in December 1999, it pronounced itself a "popular party," which is not typical for liberals. The UCP became more active in the streets. With its new leadership elected in April 2000, and with Yuriy Marozaw, Uladzimir Navasyad, Leanid Zlotnikaw no longer in the party, the UCP called for a boycott of the elections to the House of Representatives of the National Assembly. Together with the BPF, the United Civic Party played a key role in the Co-ordination Council of Democratic Forces during the initial phase of nominating a single candidate to represent the opposition.

THE CENTRE

The reluctance of the parties on the right to contact illegitimate state institutions weakened the influence of democratic forces on the centrist-minded electorate, represented by the middle class, intelligentsia, a portion of the nomenclature and employees of the state bureaucracy. Having mutated from liberal to liberal conservative, the UCP freed the centrist niche for the pro-Lukashenka Liberal Democratic Party of Belarus headed by Syarhey Haydukevich (founded in 1995, with the assistance of and modelled after its Russian counterpart led by Vladimir Zhirinovskiy). Other claimants for the political centre were the socially liberal non-governmental association "Yabloko" (also with a like-named Russian party as midwife), headed by Volha Abramova, and the Belarusian Social Democratic Hramada of Stanislaw Shushkevich.

THE LEFT

Alyaksandar Lukashenka's populist line made ideological self-identification a problem for the left wing in Belarus. Without a developed private business class in the country, political energy of both social democratic and trade unions focused on the chief employer – the state. Therefore, the left-centrist forces in Belarus attract the least radical

portion of the left and some of the centrist electorate. Meanwhile, employees comprise a strong social group, but their participation in politics is limited. One obstacle here is the large number of social democratic parties and leaders in Belarus. On the other hand, many workers do not trust new parties and prefer more traditional forms of political participation, initiated by the bosses or trade unions.

The Belarusian Social Democratic Party "Popular Hramada" (BSDP PH) was the first democratic party to split from the opposition coalition within the CCDF. Some disagreements between the BSDP PH and the rest of the Council appeared as early as in spring 1999, before elections to local Soviets. The UCP and BPF decided not to put candidates forward for the elections, while the Hramada allowed its members to run, although as individuals and not on behalf of the party. Preparing for the Boycott-2000 campaign, the CCDF adopted a strict and mandatory resolution that bound its members not to run for the House of the Representatives. Contrary to the resolution, the leaders of the BSDP PH refused to boycott the election, and the party central committee twice approved the resolution by Chairman Mikalay Statkevich to run for the House of the Representatives. Mikalay Statkevich was not elected to the lower house, the opposition's unity was not undermined, while the BSDP PH found itself on the verge of a split. The CCDF members expelled the Hramada for participating in the election, allowing only the "For Unity" faction (which supported the boycott) to remain with an advisory vote. On November 20, 2000 the BSDP PH city committee expelled Alyaksey Karol, the faction leader, for infringing the Statutes; however, he was re-admitted to the party two weeks later. Although the party retained formal unity, contradictions between the adherents of Karol and those of Statkevich continued to linger.

Other social democratic parties, excluding the Belarusian Social Democratic Hramada of Stanislaw Shushkevich, are either headed by trade union leaders, or are organisationally connected with trade unions. Among them are the Belarusian Party of Labour (BPL) and the Belarusian Party of Women "Nadzeya." The 5th Congress of the Belarusian Party of

Labour, held on August 8, 2001, condemned president Lukashenka for substituting resolute measures for economic improvement with populist promises. In its statement "On the Socio-Economic Situation in the Republic of Belarus prior to the Presidential Election," the BPL called for the removal of Lukashenka and his team from the political arena.

The communists underwent the most radical evolution. That portion which sided with the regime turned into yet another pro-Lukashenka organisation, not even bothering to take advantage of the possibility to form a parliamentary faction. On the other hand, the Belarusian Party of Communists, headed by Syarhey Kalyakin and opposed to the president, experienced pressure from the authorities, ranging from refusals to grant premises for party events to libel and accusations of espionage through state-owned media. The anti-Lukashenka communists now support the division of powers, a multi-party system, civil rights and freedoms and diversity in regard to forms of ownership. Syarhey Kalyakin, leader of the Belarusian communists, considers himself primarily a professional politician, and only then a communist. He tried to run for president as a democratic candidate on a non-party platform.

In trying to mobilise its supporters, the Belarusian opposition is repeatedly confronted with the need to build a coalition that could unite representatives of the entire political spectrum, from the left (communists) to the right (national conservatives). These efforts have yet to yield the fruit much sought after.

THE TRADE UNIONS

Employees make up the social basis of social democratic parties, trade unions also seek their support. Over the past five years, trade unions have significantly increased their political activity, and their cooperation with the opposition was even asserted on paper* in January 1999.

* The 2nd Congress of Democratic Forces supported trade unions in nation-wide protests.

Today, there are 38 national trade unions and 16 trade unions of institutions or organisations registered in Belarus. The largest trade union remains the Belarusian Federation of Trade Unions (BFTU), which unites a total of 4.5 million people. However, for the majority of these people membership in a union is a tribute to Soviet traditions (during the Soviet era, an employee was automatically enrolled in a trade union when hired by a state-owned company, regardless of whether the employee wanted to be a member or not).

The conflict between the government and trade unions escalated after the BFTU presidium adopted a resolution to campaign for Uladzimir Hancharyk. The government began to exert a harsher form of pressure on the BFTU, including defaming the Federation in the media, conducting financial audits and blackmailing it with the assistance of the Constitutional Court*. On January 12, 2001, the Ministry of Justice issued a statement threatening to cancel the BFTU's registration should Uladzimir Hancharyk become a candidate for president. When the trade union hopeful was nominated, the government immediately reacted, among others by trying to freeze social benefits: one month after the settlement of five disputed issues of the General Agreement for 2001–2003, the Council of Ministers revised its position. A new draft of the agreement offered to the trade unions contained radical cuts in social guarantees and generally unfavourable conditions, as well as limited the authority of trade unions to have a say in the implementation of labour legislation.

Following the election, the BFTU presidium sent Lukashenka a letter reminding him of his pre-electoral promises. The letter did not contain congratulations on being re-elected president. Leaders of trade unions of state institutions and healthcare facilities launched an initiative to call an emergency plenum of the BFTU to dismiss Hancharyk from his position as chairman for his culpability in "drawing trade unions into politics." Finally, Hancharyk had to resign. His deputy Frants Vitko succeeded to him.

* At that moment, the Constitutional Court was hearing a complaint from a BFTU member regarding the way trade union membership fees were paid.

THE CCDF FOLLOWING THE 4TH CONGRESS OF DEMOCRATIC FORCES

The Co-ordination Council of Democratic Forces (CCDF) was founded by six parties and organisations as a permanent coalition platform of the Belarusian opposition. The six founding members included the United Civic Party, the Belarusian Popular Front, the Belarusian Social Democratic Party "Popular Hramada," the Assembly of Non-Governmental Organisations*, the Congress of Democratic Trade Unions and the civil initiative Charter'97. The Congress of Democratic Forces is a forum that adopts vital resolutions of the united Belarusian opposition. The 1st Congress, held on October 18-19, 1996, on the eve of the second referendum, spoke in defence of the 1994 Constitution and against presidential dictatorship. During the last, 5th Congress of August 18, 2001, a broad-based civil coalition finally approved a joint strategy for the presidential election. The 4th Congress held on July 2, 2000 was of decisive importance for consolidating anti-Lukashenka forces. During the 4th Congress, the CCDF was joined by members of the Consultative Council of Opposition Political Parties: the Belarusian Party of Labour, the Belarusian Party of Women "Nadzeya", the Belarusian Social Democratic Hramada headed by Stanislaw Shushkevich, members of the 13th Supreme Soviet, as well as regional and Minsk City Coordination Councils of Democratic Forces. The 4th Congress adopted the resolution "On the Consolidation of Democratic Forces," which called on local branches of CCDF member organisations to found regional councils in regions, towns, and districts, where they had not yet been founded.

To prevent legitimising Lukashenka's regime by participating in unlawfully founded institutions, the Belarusian opposition decided (during the 4th Congress) to boycott the elections to the House of Representatives. The pretext for this decision was said to be the regime's refusal to meet the conditions for lawful, free, and fair elections, that is to give Parliament real authority as the only legislature, to bring electoral

* After registration, the official name of the organisation is the Association of Non-Governmental Associations "Assembly," henceforth referred to as the Assembly.

legislation in-line with European standards, to provide the opposition with access to state-run media as well as to stop political repression and ensure the freedom of assembly and freedom of speech.

Contrary to the aspirations of the CCDF founders, this structure did not become the single co-ordination centre of all anti-Lukashenka forces. The Boycott-2000 campaign also failed to unite all the Belarusian opposition. A new House of Representatives was successfully elected and even included some independent candidates. However, the latter had to pay a price for their election: the movement headed by Volha Abramava was expelled from the united opposition and Uladzimir Navasyad from his party. Divergent views on this issue split the CCDF: it expelled the BSDP PH for the refusal of its leader, Mikalay Statkevich, to sign a statement condemning the election. In solidarity with the BSDP PH, the Belarusian Party of Labour began to ignore meetings of the Council. The operations of the Council also became disorganised when the 4th Congress decided to give voting rights to NGOs, including regional NGOs and those officially not registered. Representatives of the BSDH and "Nadzeya" were repeatedly absent during CCDF meetings due to their displeasure over non-parties and non-registered organisations being given an equal status. On May 29, 2001, the BSDH threatened to leave the CCDF because of a misunderstanding during a debate concerning how to establish the position of the joint candidate in regard to relations with Russia*. BSDH representatives had already been growing discontent with a lack of a quorum, but its resignation would leave the CCDF without a mandate to put forth a joint opposition hopeful. Meanwhile, the Council continued to crumble, "Nadzeya" quit on June 27. According to Chairwoman Valyantsina Palevikova, this was due to violations of earlier agreements concerning the five candidates from which a single candidate was to be nominated. In particular, Mrs. Palevikova objected to the UCP inviting new candidates to join the five, among them Alyaksandar Yarashuk and Natalya Masherava.

* Aleh Bahutski, a BSDH representative, said his party would leave the CCDF because of its unprincipled position with respect to integration with Russia.

THE NGOS

Unlike the presidential election in 1994, NGOs (or people's associations as Belarusian legislation classifies non-governmental organisations as opposed to political parties, trade unions, or religious institutions) actively participated in political campaigning during the 2001 election. According to the Ministry of Justice, 1900 NGOs are registered in Belarus. Formally, these organisations are not engaged in politics, however, as a matter of fact, many NGOs and informal democratic movements have been active in this field for the past several years. This increased activity is due to, first, state policy, which targeted third sector institutions, forcing organisations to draw closer together in terms of co-operation to protect their rights and jointly seek common resources. Second, many NGOs were founded after the constitutional coup in 1996 by opposition activists and actually had political goals. It was a tactical reaction to the government's interference in conducting normal political activity.

The first organisations to operate as non-political *de jure* and political *de facto* organisations were the youth wings of political parties, such as the Young Hramada – the youth branch of BSDP PH, the Young Front of BPF, and the Civic Forum of the United Civic Party. Many pro-democratic NGOs that appeared independently, not spawned by political parties, adhere to a distinct political position. Such associations as Charter' 97, the Assembly of Non-Governmental Associations and Regional Belarus found a place on the right flank of the political spectrum, between BPF "Adradzhenne" and the UCP.

The number and influence of non-governmental organisations has grown. The Assembly had united 430 organisations by December 2, 1999, when its 3rd Congress was held during which a resolution was adopted to register the Assembly and participate in the 2001 presidential election. The newly elected chairman, Ales Belyatski, said that the third sector was to assume a role typical for non-governmental organisations during elections – to observe the election, participate in electoral commissions and encourage young people to vote.

The civil initiative Charter' 97, that still had neither an official status

nor a clear structure, is typical for modern Belarusian politics. This group emerged in November 1997 as an informal initiative to provide the public with legal assistance, hold mass rallies and keep society informed about the unlawful activity of the Belarusian government in order for them to react accordingly. Although not a party, Charter'97 created ideological ground for the co-ordination of the Russian-speaking part of those unhappy with the regime and intended to exert a major influence within the Co-ordination Council of Democratic Forces.

In 2001, Belarusian NGOs participated in the pre-election period in various ways, from mobilising to observing to collecting signatures and campaigning. They also participated in working out a campaign strategy for democratic forces. On August 13, the two democratic nominees and the broad-based civil coalition signed the agreement "On Mutual Obligations of the Single Candidate and the Broad Civil Coalition for the Period before and after the Election of President of the Republic of Belarus." This document did not distinguish between political parties and non-political non-governmental organisations. This symbolised the unity of the Belarusian opposition – its main victory in the presidential election.

THE AUTHORITIES

Bracing himself for the election, president Lukashenka rearranged the staffs of the Ministry of Interior and the Security Council. He also tried to prevent the industrial-economic elite from participating in the campaign. The profound reshuffle in Lukashenka's entourage had begun long before the election with the dismissals of KGB Chairman Uladzimir Matskevich and Prosecutor General Aleh Bazhelka on November 27, 2000. Viktor Sheyman was removed from the Security Council and appointed Prosecutor General. Leanid Maltsaw was re-assigned as Minister of Defence. Uladzimir Navumaw, former head of the presidential security service, once commander of the "Almaz" special squad of the Ministry of Interior, received the post of Interior Minister. The KGB was headed by Leanid Yeryn, another former head of the presidential security service.

The appointment of M. Udovikaw (former first deputy Minister of Interior) as Deputy State Secretary of the Security Council coincided with the replacement of Viktor Sheyman (one of Lukashenka's closest allies) by Ural Latypaw as State Secretary of the Security Council. Yury Sivakow remained unshaken despite scandals connected with the disappearance of well known politicians during his tenure as Minister of Interior. On November 13, 2000, he was appointed deputy head of the presidential administration.

Not every pre-electoral castling of ministerial pieces guaranteed that Lukashenka's position would be strengthened. His former companions, privy to the non-public activity of the president, were distancing themselves from him (e.g., Ivan Tsitsyankow, Aleh Bazhelka and Viktor Lahvinets).

Immediately after the election, Lukashenka launched another series of dismissals and appointments. His decree of September 12 retired Mikhail Myasnikovich, head of the presidential administration. He was replaced with Ural Latypaw, head of the Security Council, recently Foreign Minister, while Myasnikovich was appointed presidential aide for special commissions and later President of the Academy of Sciences. The Security Council was now headed by Henadz Nyavyhlas, head of the presidential security service. Militant Russophile Uladzimir Zamyatalin, first deputy head of the presidential administration, was also retired. Stanislaw Knyazew, a regular officer with the secret services and first Deputy State Secretary of the Security Council, was assigned first deputy head of the presidential administration. He was joined by Leanid Kozik, who was transferred from his post as deputy Prime Minister. A new Prime Minister arrived in the first part of October – Henadz Navitski, once Minister of Architecture and Construction in the Yarmoshyn government. Unlike Uladzimir Yarmoshyn, Mr. Navitski, a native of the same region as Lukashenka, had not previously appeared in the role of a public politician, and was characterised by a lack of personal connections among Russian leaders (since the Soviet era, construction, Navitski's field, was administrated from Minsk, not Moscow).

Alyaksandar Lukashenka told a press conference devoted to his second election that there were no principal changes planned in the country's policy. He promised to liberalise the economy with state support for small and mid-sized businesses and to maintain the same level of social guarantees. As for politics, the president planned to continue fighting corruption, increase the role of government, consolidate the party system and provide state support for the media. Foreign policy was to carry on integrating with Russia.

CONCLUSIONS

Following the regrouping of forces in the camp of the Belarusian opposition, it appears that the balance of forces within it remains largely the same. The regime remains self-sufficient and has no need for a distinct ideology. The opposition is united primarily in its denial of the system of state power as it currently exists.

Unable to gain power separately, national-conservatives, communists and parties with a social democratic orientation were forced to work together. This coalition, diffused with the non-political third sector, is diluting the ideological self-determination of Belarusian parties. By the beginning of the election campaign in 2001, non-governmental organisations and even unregistered civil initiatives had the same status in the CCDF as political parties. The border between political and non-political organisations became even vaguer when the latter began to explore the field of traditional party activity, campaigning under the coordination of opposition candidates' headquarters. Non-political organisations used their networks as organisational infrastructure of the campaign to mobilise (or, at least, supposed to mobilise) certain categories of the population. They also worked within electoral commissions, in essence, doing everything that a party usually does for its candidate. For the first time the nomenclature sided with the opposition, although this alliance proved inefficient and resulted not from a sober political strategy, but from personal visionary propensities on the part of some democratic leaders.

THE SELECTION OF CANDIDATES

Iryna YEKADUMAVA

THE NOMINATION OF OPPOSITION CANDIDATES

Both the regime and the opposition had begun their campaigns long before their candidates were registered.

The issue of putting up a single candidate to represent the united opposition was brought for discussion simultaneously with preparing for the election, that is immediately after the elections to the House of Representatives in autumn 2000. On December 15, the Co-ordination Council of Democratic Forces considered three potential nominees: Mikhail Chyhir, ex-Prime Minister, Syamyon Domash, leader of the non-governmental organisation Regional Belarus, and Uladzimir Hancharyk, leader of the Belarusian Federation of Trade Unions put forth by the Federation and the Republican Party of Labour. The CCDF was to select a single candidate prior to the registration of candidates, while this candidacy was to be approved by the 5th Congress of Democratic Forces. In addition to CCDF nominees, Syarhey Haydukevich and Syarhey Kalyakin announced by December 15 that they would also run for president the following year.

Independent of the CCDF, the parties were also discussing the issue of a single candidate. Stanislaw Bahdankevich, former leader of the United Civic Party, had his own vision in this regard. In December 2001, he suggested that the selection of a single candidate be based on the current rating and electoral prospects of the nominees, stressing that it should have been done before registering them. According to Bahdankevich's scenario, all other opposition politicians were to get on the bandwagon and support the "agreed-upon" candidate. The latter was supposed to be approved by the Congress of Democratic Forces, under the condition that it be convened by a civil coalition broader than the CCDF representing right-centrist forces.

The soym of the BPF "Adradzhenne" held on January 13, 2001,

decided that the single candidate was to be selected by agreement of the broadest possible circle of democratic forces. The key authority in the selection process was to be the Congress of Democratic Forces. The Conservative Christian Party BPF also pledged support for a single opposition candidate, but on February 18 a *soym* conference of the CCP BPF nominated Zyanon Paznyak as its own candidate for president.

April brought rumours that the BPF was allegedly intending to boycott the presidential election. The Front, meanwhile, was pressing to select a joint candidate as soon as possible, considering it inadmissible to collect signatures for several candidates separately. On June 9-10, during a regular *soym* of the non-governmental association BPF "Adradzhenne" and the the Party BPF, the Front called for convening a Congress of Democratic Forces as soon as possible and not after registering candidates with the Central Electoral Commission.

On February 4, 2001, when it became obvious that the process of selecting a single candidate was behind schedule, the United Civic Party adopted a new concept for selecting candidates. It acknowledged the existence of two opposition centres: the Co-ordination Council of Democratic Forces and the Belarusian Federation of Trade Unions, and suggested a co-ordinated plan of action be worked out instead of selecting a single candidate.

The question as to whether to support a single opposition candidate deepened internal conflicts in the Belarusian Social Democratic Party "Popular Hramada." Alyaksey Karol, leader of the faction "For Unity," called on his fellow party members to support Domash, while chairman Mikalay Statkevich suggested that members decide for themselves. Although the central party leadership supported the chairman, the Mahilyow and Horadnya regional branches sided with Alyaksey Karol during the 5th Extraordinary Congress of the party.

The Bureau of the Central Committee of the Belarusian Party of Communists consistently supported Syarhey Kalyakin and, later, Uladzimir Hancharyk. On July 22, the Central Committee officially approved a resolution issued by party leader Syarhey Kalyakin in support of this candidate.

In July, opposition forces reiterated their intent to finalise the selection of a joint candidate. On July 4, the political council of the UCP threatened to remove its members from the teams of the five hopefuls if the procedure of selecting one of them had not been agreed on by July 15. Should the five hopefuls fail to select "the worthiest" among them, the UCP offered to set up a board of voters out of a hundred respected public figures and party members to vote for a single candidate. Should the five democratic candidates have objected to those conditions, the UCP promised to withdraw its support for them and campaign for another candidate.

The organising committee of the Congress of Democratic Forces took a similar stand. On July 10, it ruled that should the five not select a candidate by July 15, the committee would do it for them.

THE PRE-ELECTORAL COALITION OF DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATES

At the end of 2000, Pavel Kazlowski joined the troika of Domash, Chyhir and Hancharyk. The four turned into five on April 25 with the addition of Syarhey Kalyakin and the signing of an agreement to co-ordinate activities with the aim of winning the election. Someone suggested Lyudmila Karpenka, the widow of Henadz Karpenka, former Chairman of the National Executive Committee, to join the agreement. The UCP political council considered putting forth one of its leaders, Alyksandar Dabravolski. Viktor Tsyareschanka and Alyksandar Yarashuk also expressed the desire to join the agreement.

During their first press conference held on May 3, the five candidates stated that they would co-operate during the election campaign.

The final decision as to who would be the candidate to oppose Lukashenka was postponed several times. On June 27, the five agreed during a closed-door meeting that they would select from among themselves a single candidate before July 15. However, this did not occur.

In order to retain unity and come to a decision, the five turned to a confidential memorandum drawn up by the International Republican

Institute on July 8. The document presented the ratings of each candidate among his specific electorate as well as among people disposed to vote for another candidate.

Voters of	Difference between the positive and negative rating of a candidate (%):				
	Kalyakin	Kazbowski	Hancharyk	Chyhîr	Dom ash
Chyhîr	-15	-8	14	-	17
Dom ash	-9	11	22	25	-
Hancharyk	-7	3	-	32	29
Lukashenka	-19	-16	-18	-38	-20
Kalyakin	-	0	8	-38	-32
Kazbowski	-43	-	-21	-6	-22
Others	-15	-14	-6	-12	-3
Uncertain	-5	-4	3	-12	1

Source: International Republican Institute.

The table shows that Belarussian voters were rather consistent in their preferences: those who opted for Lukashenka firmly turned down "the five." Supporters of the right wing (Domash or Chyhîr) did not sympathise with the left (Kazlowski or Kalyakin) and vice versa. Uladzimir Hancharyk had the least negative rating and drew the votes of other candidates' supporters and those uncertain as to whom to vote for. These factors were the basis for the choice of Hancharyk during a meeting held by "the five" on July 21. However, the memorandum did not take into account such factors as the mobilising potential of the various candidates' headquarters and the extent to which their teams were willing to work for other candidates.

On July 25, "the five" confirmed their readiness to work for the victory of Uladzimir Hancharyk. Syarhey Kalyakin and Pavel Kazlowski said they

would not demand their resolution of July 21 be reconsidered. Kazlowski called on Mikhail Marynich and Leanid Sinitsyn to support Hancharyk.

On August 13, Syamyon Domash, Uladzimir Hancharyk and a broad civil coalition signed an agreement on the founding principles of a future democratic Belarusian state. The document was signed by Uladzimir Hancharyk, Syamyon Domash, Pavel Kazlowski, Syarhey Kalyakin, Mikhail Marynich, Mikhail Chyhir, Alyaksandar Yarashuk, Stanislaw Shushkevich (BSDH), Vintsuk Vyachorka (BPF), Alyaksandar Bukhvostaw (BPL), Anatol Lyabedzka (UCP), Vasil Lyavonaw ("For a New Belarus"), Alyaksandar Milinkevich ("Regional Belarus") and others.

Chyhir, Kazlowski, Kalyakin, Marynich, Yarashuk and Hancharyk demanded that Domash not be allowed to sign the agreement and that his candidacy be withdrawn for the benefit of Hancharyk without any conditions. However, following negotiations the politicians agreed to the demands of Domash and the leaders of some opposition parties signed another version of the agreement drawn up on August 11. On August 17, the Ministry of Justice issued a statement saying that the above mentioned agreement had no legal validity, referring to the exclusive competence of the president under the 1996 constitution. The statement also alleged that the agreement implied changing the constitutional system and violated the Constitution of Belarus. The KGB distributed its own statement admitting that formally the agreement did not violate legislation but that it urged the election be denounced should it be won by Lukashenka.

REGISTRATION WITH THE CENTRAL ELECTORAL COMMISSION

The Central Electoral Commission received lists from initiative groups to collect signatures for candidates until June 15; the signatures were to be filled in by July 21 and the candidates were to be registered on August 14.

In order to register, an individual had to collect at least 100,000

signatures and file them with the Central Electoral Commission. Collection efficiency depended on the composition of the initiative groups, as only registered members were entitled to participate in this phase of activity. By the deadline of 6 p.m. on June 15, the Commission had received lists of initiative groups supporting 25 people as candidates for president, namely:

Syarhey Antonchik, leader of the unregistered organisation Workers Self-Assistance;

Syamyon Domash, leader of the unregistered association Regional Belarus;

Yury Dankow, entrepreneur and member of the Minsk City Council;

Syarhey Haydukevich, leader of the Liberal Democratic Party of Belarus and the bloc "New Belarus - Unity";

Uladzimir Hancharyk, leader of the Belarusian Federation of Trade Unions;

Pavel Kazlowski, former Defence Minister, chairman of the non-governmental organisation "International Foundation for Health Rehabilitation of Former Servicemen";

Leanid Kaluhin, then general director of the joint stock company "Atlant";

Syarhey Kalyakin, leader of the Belarusian Party of Communists;

Kanstantsin Kananovich, electronic engineer, lawyer, unemployed;

Yawhen Kryzhanowski, principal director of the "Khrystafor" satire theatre;

Nina Labanava, librarian at Belarusian State Economic University;

Uladzimir Laptsevich, pensioner;

Valery Levanewski, entrepreneur;

Alyaksandar Lukashenka, current president;

Alyaksey Iyashko, director of "Lipen" Ltd.;

Mikhail Marynich, ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary of Belarus to Latvia, Estonia and Finland;

Natalya Masherava, deputy in the House of Representatives;

Mikalay Myakeka, vice president of the international association Human Rights Defence;

Zyanon Paznyak, leader of the Conservative Christian Party Belarusian Popular Front;

Ileanid Sinitsyn, former head of the presidential administration, former deputy Prime Minister, vice president of the NGO Social Technologies (the president of which happened to be Alyaksandar Fyaduta);

Syarhey Skrabets, deputy in the House of Representatives, executive of the joint stock company "Belbabayevskoye Trading House";

Valyantsin Syamak, entrepreneur and a retired KGB officer;

Viktar Tsyareschchanka, member of the 13th Supreme Soviet and general director of the Belarusian-German company International Institute of Management (MIIM-Belarus);

Mikhail Chyhir, former Prime Minister;

Alyaksandar Yarashuk, chairman of the National Committee of the Belarusian Trade Union of Agro-Industrial Workers.

The territorial electoral commissions stopped accepting signatures for candidates on July 21, by which time some of these candidates had already dropped out of the race. For example, on June 19, the Central Electoral Commission denied registration to the initiative groups of Lyashko and Laptsevich. The former was barred due to his non-Belarusian origin (he was born in the Republic of Komi, Russian Federation) and was ineligible according to Article 80 of the Constitution. Strangely, the Commission had no problem with registering Yawhen Kryzhanowski, born in Nikolayev, Ukraine. As for Mr. Laptsevich, the lists of his initiative group proved to be entirely of his own invention. Exactly one month later, Syarhey Antonchyk, who declared to have collected 116,000 signatures, withdrew and joined the campaign headquarters of Mikhail Marynich. He stated that this move was to serve as an example for his rivals of conscientious cooperation for a joint candidate. By July 21, Lidziya Yarmoshyna, head of the Central Electoral Commission, was certain that the only individual to have collected more than 100,000 signatures was Alyaksandar Lukashenka. The Commission registered 22 initiative groups. Out of 17 contestants, 11 claimed to have collected 100,000 signatures, although 16 produced signature lists.

THE 2001 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Candidate	Number of initiative group members	Number of signatures filed according to candidate's headquarters	Official number of signatures*	Number of signatures admitted as valid
Mikhail Chyhir	1,485	160,450	87,308	85,323
Yury Dankow	244	130,000	80,940	62,039
Kanstantsin Kananovich	142		786	741
Leani Kalinin	120		95,699	91,345
Sydney Kalyakin	2,076	100,460 -101,000	96,957	93,562
Pavel Kazbowski	1,609	108,000	80,683	79,351
Mikhail Marynich	806	120,000	96,295	91,021
Zyanon Paznyak	1,429	104,600	75,818	70,915
Leani Sinitsyn	1,973	110,000	86,034	80,540
Sydney Skrabets	170		13,618	12,324
Viktar Tsyreshchanka	6,069	At least 100,000	69,307	68,879
Alyksandar Yashuk	1,209	Less than 100,000	76,312	68,159

Source: *BelaPAN*, Belarusian news agency.

Registered candidates for president

Syamyon Domash	3,753	165,450		161,471
Uladzimir Hancharyk	4,054	124,000		123,380
Sydney Haydukevich	2,136	175,832		136,259
Alyksandar Lukashenko	3,830			396,375

Source: *BelaPAN*.

On August 8, the Central Electoral Commission considered complaints filed by Mikhail Marynich and Leani Sinitsyn and denied their further participation in the election. Earlier, on July 25, Sinitsyn supplied 25,000 additional signatures asking that they be added to

* See a report of the Central Electoral Commission [electronic version] http://www.rec.gov.by/index.php?doc_id=52

those already filed. The Commission rejected the complementary lists, as the July 20 deadline had passed. On August 7, Sinitsyn filed another application to the Commission with attached copies of receipts signed by the heads of local administrations. The receipts certified that some lists of signatures had not been counted in the Mahilyow region. The Commission learned that the people who had allegedly signed the receipts did not work for the mentioned administrations and passed the documents on to the Public Prosecutors Office. Mikhail Marynich also requested that additional 4,500 signatures, supposedly collected in Minsk and not recorded by electoral commissions, be added to his previously filed lists. An investigation revealed that, in his case, this was due to a technical error: two receipts were given for one batch of signature lists. Mikhail Marynich stated that the investigation conducted by the Public Prosecutors Office "not objective."

THE "THIRD FORCE" IN THE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN

Other than Alyaksandar Lukashenka and representatives of a broad civil coalition, there were also candidates running with less legible political platforms, referred to as "the third force." This force is largely believed to be driven by Russia or its financial-industrial or political groups. When referring to "third force" candidates, the Belarusian media usually mentioned Leanid Sinitsyn, Natalya Masherava and Syarhey Haydukevich.

Of particular interest is the campaign of LDPB leader Syarhey Haydukevich, given the extraordinary ease with which he managed to register with the Central Electoral Commission. Mr. Haydukevich placed himself in opposition to both the regime and the united opposition. On November 24, 2000, his party announced the founding of "New Belarus - Unity," a left-centrist electoral bloc that was to convene a Congress of the Peoples of Belarus. Two like-named congresses had been held previously by the Popular Movement of Belarus, a puppet pro-governmental initiative inspired by the government of Vyachaslav Kebich, also headed by Syarhey Haydukevich.

The role successfully played by the Liberal Democratic Party was to

attract democratic-minded voters. Opposed to the tactic of boycotting parliamentary elections, the party stalked out of the Consultative Council of Opposition Political Parties in summer 2000. After the election, the party asked to be reinstated following a resolution adopted on October 26, 2000, by an expanded session of its Highest Council with Central Committee members and leaders of regional branches in attendance. On November 3, the LDP stated its readiness to join the Co-ordination Council of Democratic Forces, but future events would show that its only objective was to paralyse the Council. A statement issued by "New Belarus - Unity" on June 1, 2001, confirmed that any political agreements between the bloc and the five candidates or the democratic opposition in general were out of the question.

Any alternative nominee whose programme was not co-ordinated with the broad civil coalition only divided the opposition's potential electoral base and thus worked for the regime. Moreover, the entry of a third force blurred the lines of distinction between the president and the opposition in the eyes of the voter. The results of the registration process with the Central Electoral Commission clearly indicated that this was the role assigned to Syarhey Haydukevich by the regime. His campaign culminated in a verbal attack, disseminated by state-run media, aimed at discrediting Uladzimir Hancharyk as the opposition candidate.

CONCLUSIONS

The electoral marathon of 2001 showed that major Belarusian politicians, excluding the opportunist Haydukevich and the communist Kalyakin, are not associated with parties. The main force that challenged Lukashenka's regime in the presidential election was a broad civil coalition. It is noteworthy that its strategic alliance with representatives of the nomenclature yielded no positive political results.

The greatest blunder made by the coalition was to shift the focus of its campaign from promoting the candidate to promoting potential policies should the election be won.

THE PROCESS OF BUILDING THE ELECTORAL COALITION OF DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATES

Iryna YEKADUMAVA

The pre-electoral coalition of the democratic opposition was put together by public and political forces of widely divergent organisational forms. Out of the five opposition candidates (Hancharyk, Domash, Kalyakin, Kazlowski, and Chyhir) that agreed to co-ordinate their actions during the campaign, only Kalyakin belonged to a party, and even he was running rather as a representative of the democratic opposition than of his party. Although parties were active in campaigning, civil political movements intercepted the initiative of putting up and promoting a single candidate.

THE ELECTORAL COALITIONS OF THE OPPOSITION

The intention to establish an electoral coalition was first voiced by the Co-ordination Council of Democratic Forces. During the 4th Congress of Democratic Forces held on July 2, 2000, the CCDF presented itself as the centre for preparing democratic movements for the election. Simultaneously, the Council failed to unite all the political forces not controlled by the regime. It did not manage to pull in the Belarusian Social Democratic Party "Popular Hramada" (headed by Mikalay Statkevich, the Belarusian Party of Communists (headed by Syarhey Kalyakin), and the movement "Yabloko" (headed by Volha Abramava). To co-operate with these groups, the united opposition began to co-ordinate its activities with them within the Consultative Council of Opposition Political Parties with the mediation of the OSCE Advisory and Monitoring Group.

In October 2000, 11 well-known political activists founded "Choice-2001," an organising committee to select a single candidate from among democratic forces, upon the initiative of Henadz Usyukevich (a

member of the 13th Supreme Soviet). Mr. Usyukevich's colleagues in the committee were Supreme Soviet members Vasil Shlyndzikaw, Valery Shchukin, Uladzimir Nistsyuk, Uladzimir Tarasaw, Henadz Hrushavy, as well as Yazep Syaredzich, and others. Other than selecting a candidate, the committee intended to smooth over contradictions between the parties of the opposition. "Choice-2001" operated in parallel to CCDF until July 13 when it joined Vasil Lyavonaw's movement "For a New Belarus."

On May 21, 2001, a subsequent movement was created to select a single candidate from among democratic forces. It was founded on the basis of the "Land and Freedom" movement, with the involvement of Yawhen Luhin, former chairman of the Peasant Party, "Choice-2001" and the Consultative Council of Opposition Political Parties. Its constituent meeting was attended by all five of the democratic candidates. Vasil Lyavonaw, a former Minister of Agriculture and prominent figure in the Belarusian opposition, led the new movement, soon called "For a New Belarus." Being associated as a member of the Soviet-model nomenclature and advocating the restoration of the USSR and preservation of collective farming in the mid-1990s, Lyavonaw was seen as one of Lukashenka's most ardent adversaries. On July 21, the organisational committee of the coalition movement "For a New Belarus" sponsored a meeting of the five candidates in the office of the Belarusian Federation of Trade Unions. The meeting pronounced Uladzimir Hancharyk the single candidate of the broad civil coalition. A week later, Vasil Lyavonaw became Uladzimir Hancharyk's campaign director.

Other than the debut of members of the nomenclature as public politicians, another new phenomenon on the Belarusian political scene at the turn of the millennium was a coalition of regional movements, Regional Belarus. This group was formed in order to consolidate and co-ordinate the activity of NGOs, political parties and trade unions. It dates back to March 1997, when 25 democratic organisations of the Horadnya region founded the co-ordination committee "Horadnya

Initiative*." That was followed by similar structures in other regions and cities of Belarus (Mahilyow, Homel, Vitsebsk, Berastse, Maladzechna, Barysaw, Lida, Salihorsk, and Slutsk). On May 18, 2000, they united into the Regional Belarus movement, which selected Syamyon Domash as a candidate for president on May 26.

The association of non-governmental associations "Assembly" played a different role in the pre-electoral process. It did not nominate its own candidate, but adopted a resolution on December 2-3, 2000, stating its intent to carry out a mobilisation campaign taking into account the election experiences of Slovakia, Serbia and Croatia. As soon as the date of the presidential election was announced the mobilisation campaign "Vybiray!"** was launched, with about 200 organisations participating. The campaign united the coalition of women's organisations, the youth coalition "Peramenaw!" (Changes), the "Supolnasts" Centre (Community) and the Belarusian Association of Resource Centres.

In order to gain public influence, some members of the 13th Supreme Soviet also joined the CCDF during the 4th Congress of Democratic Forces held on July 2, 2000.

THE ROLE OF CCDF IN SELECTING A SINGLE DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATE

Following an analysis of the election to the House of Representatives, on November 2, 2000, the CCDF (now uniting 14 parties and associations) assumed the obligation to nominate a candidate for the presidential election and provide the candidate with all possible support. The Council meeting on December 15, 2000 nominated three persons as potential candidates, Uladzimir Hancharyk, Syamyon Domash, and Mikhail Chyhir. Pavel Kazlowski was

- * The Horadnya Initiative currently has 34 member organisations, trade unions, and movements, including the regional branch of the BPF "Adradzhenne," the city branch of the BSDP PH, regional departments of the Belarusian Helsinki Committee and the Civil Forum (youth wing of the UCP).
- * The word "Vybiray!" in Belarusian and Russian means both "Elect!" and "Choose!" – translator.

added to the list later in the month. It took much longer to single out the actual nominee; a CCDF meeting on March 13, 2001 postponed the decision until April. On May 14, the Council arrived at the following agreement: each candidate would collect signatures for himself to register with the Central Electoral Commission. By midnight July 21, the deadline for filing signatures for candidates, only two of the five nominees qualified to run as candidates.

When Uladzimir Hancharyk was eventually selected as the candidate of democratic forces, the Co-ordination Council of Democratic Forces focused on observing the operations of electoral commissions and conducting a mobilisation campaign including informational support.

To counter the CCDF, a left-centrist Confederation "For Social Changes" (CFSC) was founded on July 9, 2001. It united the supporters of Mikalay Statkevich, chairman of the Belarusian Social Democratic Party "Popular Hramada," and Alyaksandar Bukhvostaw, leader of the Belarusian Party of Labour, as well as some professional, ecological, women's and youth organisations. Considering the coalition of right-centrist political forces, the new alliance hoped that other left leaning parties would join it, namely the Party of Popular Accord (Syarhey Yarmak), the Belarusian Social Democratic Hramada (Stanislaw Shushkevich) and the Belarusian Party of Communists (Syarhey Kalyakin). The CFSC suggested that the "For a New Belarus" movement mediate and co-ordinate activities between the left-centrist and right-centrist coalitions.

Quite expectedly, the CFSC initiative was not welcomed by the CCDF, which following the nomination of a single candidate remained a forum of democratic parties, mediator between the parties and the public, an authoritative source of civil thought as well as a pre-electoral co-ordination centre for the entire political spectrum.

THE FIVE CANDIDATES AS A PRE-ELECTORAL COALITION

Uladzimir Hancharyk, Syamyon Domash, Mikhail Chyhir, and Pavel Kazlowski, together with communist Syarhey Kalyakin, signed an

agreement on April 25, 2001 to co-ordinate their activities and thus established the five-member body of potential presidential runners. On July 21, the day after the deadline for collecting signatures for candidates, the five selected Uladzimir Hancharyk. Their choice was largely dictated by the illusory hope to outbid the nomenclature and state bureaucracy, the task of which was supposed to be undertaken by Vasil Lyavonaw, Hancharyk's campaign director.

On July 27, the four democratic "single candidates" announced the establishment of a Presidential Council, inviting Mikhail Marynich and Alyksandar Yarashuk to join (other hopefuls who, like the five, agreed to co-ordinate the activities of their campaign headquarters to Hancharyk's campaign). Simultaneously, the single candidate's headquarters set up a Civil Council of political parties, the task of which was to work out a basic agreement between the parties and the candidate in case of winning the election. Alyksandar Dabravolski, UCP deputy chairman, headed the informational and analytical service of the united headquarters and became Vasil Lyavonaw's deputy. Also working at the headquarters were Valyantsina Palevikova, chairwoman of the Belarusian Party of Women "Nadzeya", Andrey Sannikaw, leader of Charter'97, and former candidate Mikhail Marynich. Mrs. Palevikova managed the electoral headquarters, while Vasil Lyavonaw provided general guidance over Hancharyk's campaign.

On August 13, an agreement was signed between the broad civil coalition and Uladzimir Hancharyk, under which Syamyon Domash was to withdraw his candidacy for the benefit of Hancharyk after the latter was registered as a candidate. Domash was to guide the Political Council of the united headquarters. Hancharyk, in turn, was to form a government headed by Domash should he win the election. The Hancharyk-Domash tandem succeeded in consolidating a significant portion of the forces opposed to Lukashenka, but was criticised by the BSDP PH (whose leaders preferred Hancharyk) and the CCP BPF. A session of the CCP BPF soym decided to call on Front members and supporters to vote against all the candidates.

THE CONGRESS OF DEMOCRATIC FORCES

On July 13, the CCDF ruled to hold the 5th Congress of Democratic Forces on August 4, 2001 to nominate a single democratic candidate. However, during the preparatory stage the role of the Congress was limited to approving the already asserted nomination.

YOUTH ORGANISATIONS

Many youth organisations backed the pre-electoral civil coalition. In autumn 2000, the youth coalition "Peramenaw!"* was established by several youth organisations, including the Young Front, the Young Hramada, Youth of the UCP, the Association of Belarusian Students, the Youth Christian-Social Union, Youth Solidarity, the Belarusian Association of Young Politicians and the Association of Young Entrepreneurs.

On the initiative of the Young Front, the Association of Belarusian Students, the Young Hramada, and other youth organisations, the Congress of Belarusian Youth was held on July 29, the purpose of which was to facilitate the co-ordination of politically active young people during the run-up to the election. The Congress adopted two resolutions: "Youth Against the Regime," signed by 200 members of youth organisations during July 2001, and "Youth Demands Changes" in support of Lukashenka's rival for president.

On June 6, democratic youth organisations of Belarus issued a joint statement against regime-sponsored repression during the pre-electoral campaign. The statement was signed by 17 organisations, including the Young Front, the Young Hramada, Youth of the UCP, the Association of Belarusian Students, the Young Social Democrats and Zubr. The statement said that repression of youth organisations was increasing as election day approached.

On August 8, representatives of the Young Front, the Young Hramada, Youth of the UCP, Zubr, and other organisations met with Uladzimir Hancharyk and delivered an appeal entitled "Youth for Belarus" signed

* "Peramenaw!" (Russian version: "Peremen!") means a demand for changes.

by 64 youth organisations and their branches in various areas of Belarus. The appeal pledged support for Hancharyk as a candidate of a broad civil coalition.

THE CAMPAIGN OF PRO-LUKASHENKA ASSOCIATIONS AND POLITICAL ORGANISATIONS

The National Co-ordination Council of Leaders of Political Parties and Non-Governmental Organisations, founded in January 2001, united 32 pro-presidential non-governmental organisations and political parties (the Communist Party of Belarus, the Belarusian Patriotic Party, the Republican Party of Labour and Justice, etc.). This structure is the president's pocket political force, used primarily to legitimise the regime in the eyes of the international community. On June 12, 2001 the Council was joined by four more organisations and it was decided to initiate a movement in support for Alyaksandar Lukashenka.

Meanwhile the Party of Popular Accord (PPA) began to split over the issue of which candidate to support. The PPA had always been a pro-Lukashenka party (founded as part of the BSDP PH that left the parent party on the initiative of Leanid Sechka). It united state bureaucracy and directors of state-owned enterprises who had never spoken against the policies of the Belarusian president. However, shortly before the election some PPA members spoke in favour of Hancharyk, the united opposition candidate.

THE CAMPAIGN OF ALYAKSANDAR LUKASHENKA

Valer BULHAKAW

Other than a set of political slogans, Lukashenka's campaign included a system of economic promises, the most important of which was raising the average monthly salary in Belarus to \$ 100. Opponents of the regime were sceptical. The opinion was voiced that numerous critical phenomena and trends (see Table 1) occurring in the command economy of Belarus would prevent this promise from being kept.

In early 2001, the Belarusian economy was characterised by such factors as declining capital investments, a major slow-down in residential housing construction, growing unemployment (a sign of recession), soaring inflation and plummeting imports.

Moreover, in the first quarter of 2001 GDP grew 1 % according to official data (but dropped 3 % as reported by independent experts). In January-February GDP grew 0.6 %, as opposed to the 7 % for the same period of the previous year; industrial production growth totalled a mere 1.8 %, while the production of consumer goods declined 2.5 %, including a 5.3 % drop in food products.

Meanwhile, prices climbed 16.8 % from January to April 2001 and funds of banks fell 6.4 %. The domestic debt increased 17.2 % (approximately \$ 265 million) in the first quarter alone, excluding government guaranteed loans.

Against the backdrop of the decline in major economic indicators, Belarus' trade deficit with Russia reached an all-time high of \$ 1,700 million.

Consequently, despite a formal increase in average wages, more than 40 % of Belarusians were living below the poverty line.

Lukashenka promised to raise the average wage to \$ 100 as early as in late 2000, and even then experts said that the state budget would require an extra \$ 200 million per month. Oddly enough, Lukashenka and official propaganda present the increase in the average salary to

Table 1

**Selected socio-economic indicators
of the Republic of Belarus January-May 2001**

	January -M ay 2001	% of Janua- ry-M ay 2000	as % of	
			May 2000	April 2001
Fixed capital investments, BRB billions	804.1	97.7	110.2	114.3
Dwellings completed in thousands of square metres	910	79.4	79.5	155.6
of which in rural areas	300	74.3	78.6	153.3
Turnover of goods by general-use transport companies*, millions of ton-km	13,068.0	90.9	99.4	102.5
Registered unemployment (at end of period), thousands of people	100.7	107.4	107.4	98.1
As % of the economically active population	2.3			
Consumer price index		119.9**	171.6	102.6
Producer price index		115.5**	195.2	100.8
Foreign trade turnover***, USD million	4,666.7	93.2	86.7	92.5
Export of goods	2,375.1	103.7	96.2	95.7
Import of goods	2,291.6	84.4	78.4	89.4
Balance	83.5			
Real income of the population		123	123	101
Real monthly average earnings per employee		122.7	127.9	100.5

Source: Ministry of Statistics and Analysis of the Republic of Belarus.

\$100 a month as an unprecedented achievement for Belarus. However, as Table 2 shows, it is merely a return to 1997's level.

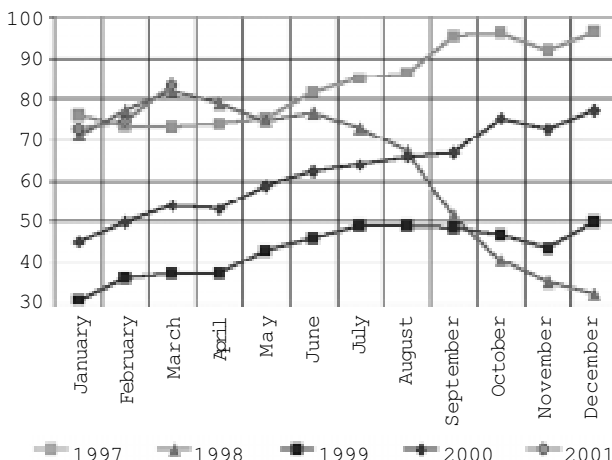
* Excluding inland waterway transport.

* End of period until January 2000.

** Services not included.

Table 2

Dynamic of the average salary of workers and office employees in Belarus
between 1997 and 2001 (in US\$)



Source: IntelConsult Group.

On the whole, the Belarusian government managed to live up to this pre-electoral economic promise*. In August 2001, official statistics maintained that the average salary in Minsk amounted to \$120. Compared to other east-European countries with a predominately Orthodox Christian population, this can be considered an accomplishment. The average Romanian earns \$75 per month while the average Ukrainian earns \$60. In Russia in spring 2001, a teacher with the highest qualifications and 20 years work experience earned

* In a closed society, it is difficult to say for sure where the government obtained the funds to fulfil this promise. It was obvious, however, that raising the average salary to \$100 became a goal of state policy, and that the entire machinery of state was working to meet it. Foreign loans were possibly used (of Russian or Arabic origin) along with non-budgetary funds and other sources. Arabic involvement in the presidential electoral campaign in 2001 is evidenced by the fact that Libyan leader Muammar el-Qaddafi planned to come to Belarus at the end of August (the visit was cancelled, otherwise it would have been Qaddafi's first visit to Europe since 1978).

an average of RUR 875 (approximately \$30), a beginning teacher RUR 500 (about \$17); while an industrial worker could earn up to RUR 3,800 (approximately \$130).

However, Lukashenka owed his re-election not only to economic achievements but to a carefully calculated campaign strategy, which was mainly authored by the Security Council and its leaders.

Tactically, the Lukashenkists did everything to disorient their opponents in real political constellations and prevent them from seizing the political lead. Lukashenkists' strategic aim was Lukashenka's victory with popular support equal to or higher than that in the referenda of 1995–96.

The main strategies of the pro-Lukashenka campaign are discussed below:

1. Diluting and buying pro-sovereign and protest voters. Creating pseudo-opposition forces in order to manipulate independent/protest voters. Splitting and marginalising the democratic forces, discrediting them in the eyes of the public by means of pseudo-opposition structures like the Liberal Democratic Party of Belarus. For example, 10 days before the election, all state-owned media in Minsk published a statement by Syarhey Haydukevich as their lead article. As this is a typical piece of pro-Lukashenka PR, it is worth quoting here in full:

Statement of Syarhey Haydukevich,

Candidate for President of the Republic of Belarus

On August 29, 2001, the citizens of Belarus had the opportunity to observe on their television screens the so-called single candidate of the opposition who is essentially an appointee of the [communist] party nomenclature – Uladzimir Hancharyk. What “the main opponent” said in his speech can be evaluated as an indicator of the complete failure of U. Hancharyk’s pre-electoral campaign.

As was to be expected, communist Hancharyk put the main accent of his appeal on ties with Russia and even turned for support to president of the Russian Federation V. Putin. Dear Uladzimir Ivanavich [Hancharyk], are you unaware that you are proposing that the Russian Federation interfere in the internal affairs of the Republic of Belarus?

Mr. Hancharyk, your devoted supporters recently burnt a Russian flag in a public square.

You, Uladzimir Ivanavich, appealed to representatives of the power "vertical," established by Alyaksandar Lukashenka, with an invitation to join your side. However, everybody remembers your promises to vet Lukashenka's functionaries. What has happened to you? I will explain: it is nothing but political prostitution.

In your speech, Uladzimir Ivanavich, you mentioned everyone: representatives of forces, functionaries, and even Alyaksandar Lukashenka. In a fit of despair, you turned for support to all but the ordinary citizens of Belarus. You do not need them!

We assess your appeal as a complete failure to continue your struggle for power. You are bankrupt! You represent no united opposition. There is no single candidate. There is only yourself, a mere pseudo-nomenclaturnik Uladzimir Hancharyk. This is what we congratulate you with!

If you, Uladzimir Ivanavich, have a conscience, you ought to ask for the forgiveness of the Belarusian people for all the lies that you have been telling over the past hour. You ought to ask for the forgiveness of S. Domash and all those who believed and supported you, whom you so obnoxiously and cynically deceived and, most outrageously, continue to deceive." ("Zvyazda", August 31, 2001).

2. Ensuring neutrality or passive support from the old and new economic elites that have substantial material resources at their disposal.

3. Exaggerating the self-destructive potential of the Belarusian regime and underrating its intelligence in the independent media, combined with large-scale promotion of Belarus' economic, social, military, and other achievements in the state-owned media. Forcing the image of Lukashenka as a "leader that consolidates the entire nation" through the Russian electronic media.

Lukashenka's camp launched a series of moves aimed at attracting the "undecided electorate" with the announcement of Natalya Masherava's desire to run for president. A phantom candidate, she was totally loyal to Lukashenka. Due to the image of her father, once the communist leader of Belarus, etched in mass consciousness as a "good

economist," Masherava was capable of winning strong emotional support from Belarusians. During the 2000 parliamentary elections, Masherava had demonstrated her absolute loyalty and subordination to her patrons. She had run in the same constituency as ex-Prime Minister Mikhail Chyhir and Alyaksandar Fyaduta, the former head of the socio-political information department of the presidential administration. She had won 49% in the first round against 23% for Chyhir and less than 10% for Fyaduta. In the second round, after Chyhir had withdrawn his candidacy, she won with 85% of the vote.

Leaniid Sinitsyn (ex-deputy Prime Minister and former head of the presidential administration) immediately gave a hand provocatively saying "if Natalya Masherava runs for president this year, even Lukashenka's chances will be scarce." The new candidate was most actively promoted by the Russian media. NTV and the newspaper *Izvestiya* had begun promoting Natalya Masherava as early as during the parliamentary elections in 2000 (note the purposefully aggressive title of her interview with *Izvestiya* at that time: '*Natalya Masherava: my natural state is that of struggle*'). Essentially, the campaign played on the irrational strata in the mass consciousness of Belarusian citizens; for example, it skilfully stirred up interest in the car crash Piotr Masheraw died in, in his career prospects in the Kremlin, etc. The resulting plot had features of both a detective story and a soap opera, the two genres traditionally most popular with the Belarusian public. It is also evidenced by Masherava's illogical electoral slogan, created perhaps by her boss Zamyatalin: "*A woman never enters a fight if she is not convinced that she will win*", as well as the alleged opposition between her and Lukashenka invented by the Russian media. Meanwhile, Masherava holds extreme Russophile and Belarusophobic views. For example, at the beginning of March 2001 she joined the organising committee of the Slavic Congress of the Russian Federation, Belarus and Ukraine. Her colleagues in the committee were officials of what in Russia is called a "popular patriotic orientation," such as Vyacheslav Klykov, a Russian sculptor, and Igor Shafarevich, a former leader of a chauvinist group called "Pamiat" (Memory). Yet earlier, she had been elected chair of the

Central Council of the Union Civil Chamber, a semi-communist non-governmental organisation under the Parliamentary Assembly of Belarus and Russia.

In general, during the run-up to the election the majority of the Russian media was busy creating the illusion of opposition to Lukashenka and that Moscow was unhappy with its Belarusian ally. With almost all power in Lukashenka's hands, the media neutralised the Belarusian opposition and its candidates while creating a favourable environment for Lukashenka to be re-elected as legitimately as possible.

Like Mikhail Marynich, Masherava had neither a platform nor a clear programme of action. In an interview with the Moscow newspaper *Kommersant* on June 22, she even failed to explain her political concept. In reply to the question as to whether her concept would at least be different from Lukashenka's, Masherava said "As for this, I will talk to you about it when I have registered."

Masherava differed from Lukashenka above all by not targeting any particular social group to avoid attracting any part of Lukashenka's electorate. She consciously avoided defining the social recipient of her campaign, preferring to emphasise her image as "the only daughter of the nation's leader who perished mysteriously" and actually counting on the votes of the undecided. To make it simpler for that part of society to choose, Masherava even resorted for some time to liberal democratic rhetoric à la Sinitsyn or Marynich.

Another candidate that represented nothing in particular, a phantom candidate whose nomination some sources ascribe to the Belarusian regime, was Mikhail Marynich. It is indicative that the person appointed the leader of his initiative group was Ileanid Sechka, the "terminator" of the former BSDP PH, who split that party and founded the pro-presidential Party of Popular Accord. For that achievement, Sechka was rewarded with a high post in the Committee of State Control. Like Masherava, Marynich presented no original political programme but rather a world-view, a sort of pro-Western liberal economic view, opposed to Lukashenka and concerned with human rights in Belarus. The media had been building up this image as early as in the first half of

2001. In his interview with *Sovetskaya Belorussiya* on March 1, Marynich ardently called to "work out an agreed position on promoting the policy of our state into structures of the European region and international community." On February 28, Marynich presented himself in a *Belorusskaya Delovaya Gazeta* article as a persistent advocate of Belarus' entry into the World Trade Organisation: "The fact that the year 2000 happened to be practically lost in terms of establishing ties with the WTO, is an enormous minus. And the sooner we solve this problem, the more beneficial it will be for a general renewal of trade." Marynich portrayed himself as a great economic patriot of Belarus. Incidentally, he suggested to Lukashenka in early 2000 that two Latvian ports be bought.

Lukashenka's campaigners used dummy candidates like Masherava, Sinitsyn, Marynich as well as lesser candidates (selected and approved by the Security Council according to some sources), to attract the undecided electorate. Such potentially anti-Lukashenka voters made up almost 37% of the electorate. This percentage of respondents polled by the IISEPS in April 2001 stated that they would not vote for Lukashenka. Lukashenka political engineers did their best to prevent those people from voting for a real opposition politician. For that purpose, they put up opposition mannequins like Masherava being perfectly conscious that those hesitating could and should be bought by flashy puppet figures.

The candidacy of Leanid Sinitsyn deserves separate consideration. Lukashenka's political engineers apparently assigned him the role of an unbalanced liberal in charge of relations with business circles. His actions in 2001 were carefully calculated and targeted. For example, he claimed that his group had managed to collect 160,000 signatures for his "five plus" initiative, which consisted in legitimising Belarus' puppet institutions of state in the eyes of the international community. He stirred up another scandal before the election by distributing a letter about the sell off of state property. Meanwhile, his target group, the economic elite, understood perfectly the real meaning of his message. The hottest sensation in the letter was that Minsk officials had given

away control over the Belarusian Metallurgical Works to the so-called Oryol group (headed by Yegor Stroyev, speaker of Federation Council of Russia) in return for support during the 1996 referendum.

Sinitsyn never hid his intent to work for Lukashenka. On September 27, 2000, after the Supreme Court restored his registration as candidate for Parliament (cancelled earlier by the Rahachow electoral commission), he told a press conference about his desire to return to politics and work as an election consultant for Lukashenka. Sinitsyn also said that he was maintaining relations with Lukashenka via his aides. It is indicative that Sinitsyn was then put forth as candidate by the committees of two state-owned companies (a road construction firm and a reinforced concrete plant).

Like Natalya Masherava, Sinitsyn was aggressively promoted by Russian media. He made a sensational confession to the ORT channel that the Belarusian authorities had drawn up a list of people not to be admitted on Belarusian state-run television and that, naturally, he topped that list.

Apart from Masherava, Sinitsyn, and Marynich*, the group of "candidates" in some way connected with Lukashenka included Viktor Tsyareshchanka**, Leanid Kaluhin (a Minsk delegate to the Council of the Republic in 1996–2000, appointed personally by Lukashenka), lower house MP Syarhey Skrabets, and Yuri Dankow***.

* The person who surfaced as the head of Sinitsyn's initiative group is noteworthy – Uladzimir Stsyapanaw, recently deputy head of the Berastse Regional Executive Committee, whose sudden resignation shortly before the pre-electoral campaign caused a stir in the media. Mr. Stsyapanaw is said to be a close friend of Stanislaw Havarushkin, Chairman of the Commission for Labour, Social Issues, Healthcare, Physical Culture and Sports within the House of Representatives.

* Note that Lukashenka's official mouthpiece *Sovetskaya Belorussiya* introduced him, director of the International Management Institute (who had received a higher education through a correspondence course), as "the director of a Belarusian-German joint venture."

*** Mr. Dankow was a deputy of the Minsk City Council as well as head of the National Socio-Humanitarian Charity and chair of the Society for the Protection of Animals. Along with these duties, he was the director of Dankoff-Club, one of Minsk's largest night clubs, which he founded jointly with the Belarusian Society of the Deaf (!). He won his city council membership by a four-vote majority against the head physician of a polyclinic.

Tributes to Mikhail Marynich published by *Sovetskaya Belorussiya* in 2000, leave the impression from today's perspective that he began his campaign some time before. Issue No. 9 of January 14, 2000: "many roads have been walked down ... However, whatever posts are occupied by this surprisingly modest and benevolent person, he always remains a standard of true decency. Yesterday, the president expressed his thanks to M. Marynich". Issue No. 165 of July 5, 2000: "M. Marynich has turned 60. Mikhail Afanasevich has done much in his life: he has built cities, roads, and bridges. His name is associated with the construction of the Minsk Underground and the capital's municipal improvements – M. Marynich was Mayor of Minsk. A talented person is talented in everything! Mikhail Afanasevich is a major politician."

Leamid Kaluhin is now a "deeply religious Orthodox person," according to an article by Yuri Dudzinaw, a major pro-Lukashenka ideologist. Having registered his initiative group for collecting signatures, the deep believer was still unable to answer the question posed by the Belarusian service of Radio Liberty as to the reasons for his nomination. Kaluhin: "I have told you, it is still early to talk about it. There's no need to, what for?" Interviewer: "But why did you decide to run?" Kaluhin: "Why? Because I am a citizen of the Republic of Belarus."

As for Syarhey Skrabets, an executive with the joint stock company BelBabayevskoye, he was "unwell" while filing in his application for candidacy according to Mikalay Lazavik, secretary of the Central Electoral Commission, who was probably referring to a state of alcohol or drug intoxication. Mr. Lazavik literally said the following: "One can feel the infirm hand of a person that was holding a pen with difficulty," and added that the Commission failed to find Mr. Skrabets later that day as he was neither at home nor answering his mobile phone.

All of these candidates had one thing in common – their profession. All were somehow involved with the economy or business. Registration of the initiative groups was crowned by a significant event, highlighted by the Belarusian media: a little-known businessman Alyksandar Batura sent in his registration application by post.

Through pseudo-opposition candidates, Lukashenka was signalling to industrial and financial elites disappointed in the economic policy of the state that understanding was still possible and loyal entrepreneurs would again enjoy certain indulgences and privileges should Lukashenka be re-elected. Alyaksandar Zimowski, another top official ideologist, also expressed concern about the nomenclature in his TV programme "Resonance" on June 10, 2001: "The following is obvious: attempts are once again being made to force Belarus to choose the less than best option. Of course, the nomenclature weaned from the public food trough support Domash due to their own personal interests."

On June 13, 2001, Lukashenka signed a number of decrees in the middle of the election campaign to liberalise some areas of the Belarusian economy. Decree No. 313 granted a tax credit to the radio-electronic and other industries. Decree No. 314 set limits for non-monetary payments for energy. Decree No. 315 was aimed at spurring industrial production by granting the right to unplanned profits to a governmental list of enterprises. Decree No. 316 improved conditions for foreign trade, in particular, liberalising the procedure of registering a foreign trade operation certificate with the customs office. The decree simplified the registration of foreign trade deals. Deals smaller than \$1,500 need not more be registered (\$ 200 previously). Decree No. 319 provided co-operatives with income, profit, and value added tax relief on state or municipal property they receive without payment.

Another, no less important reason for Lukashenka's heightened care for businesses was that the regime tried to eliminate the possibility of the Belarusian business community supporting real opposition candidates. The president and his political engineers hoped that those members of the Belarusian economic elite who did not believe the campaign promises of Lukashenka himself would fund the campaign of a politically correct candidate like Sinitsyn or Marynich rather than that of Hancharyk or Kalyakin.

The ultimate task set by Lukashenka for this kind of mobilisation

campaign "in the hour of decisive battle" consisted in the consolidation of all Belarusian elites (both liberal and revenge oriented) that still see independent Belarusian society and the values it cultivates as a threat to their vital interests. Lukashenka again employed the tactic of exaggerating the "right-wing revenge" threat fraught with catastrophic effects for the country, which brought him victory in the 1994 presidential election. At that time he easily managed to entice two sober-minded politicians, Viktor Hanchar and Mikhail Chyhir. He also paved the way to winning both referenda by preceding them with relative economic liberalisation.

Lukashenka's campaign had very professional media support. In May 2001, Ivan Tsitsyankow, former head of the presidential affairs department, suddenly began granting interviews to independent media. He was trying to convince the public that Lukashenka was leading a very reclusive life, listening to only three close friends, including Uladzimir Kanaplyow and his wife Ala. Such publications dulled attention and vigilance of the regime's opponents and portrayed Lukashenka as a simple-minded politician with narrow rustic intelligence inclined to rash decisions. This image was supposed to reinforce the next brilliant move by Lukashenka – the assignment of the writer Mikalay Charhinets (a retired general from the Ministry of Interior and then Chairman of the National Security Commission of the Council of the Republic) as head of his initiative group for collecting signatures.

The Lukashenka team played the Russian card very successfully. As the opposition media continued to blare the tune of Russia being "indecisive" or "neutral," Moscow was (and remains) interested in exporting Lukashenka's domestic policy to other CIS countries, above all in its cultural, informational and (it could be said) ideological components. Russia simply could not avoid supporting the most pro-Russian president in the CIS, as not doing so would have made a bad impression on the presidents of other post-Soviet countries with which Russia was in negotiations concerning their membership in the Union, specifically Moldova and Armenia. Lukashenka's failure in the election would have seriously slowed Moscow's drive to reintegrate

areas of the former USSR, and even question the further existence of the CIS.

The combination involving Masherava, Marynich, Sinitsyn, and others was a sign of the redistribution of labour in the camp of pro-governmental candidates. It was much more profitable for Lukashenka to advertise his mock candidates than real rivals. However, apart from a tactical advantage, the Lukashenka team was interested in a fundamental rearrangement of the Belarusian political arena based on a model well tried in Russia – the “guided democracy” scenario where the disloyal (in the government’s view) opposition is forced out. It was time to crown the pseudo-Parliament, pseudo-Constitutional Court, pseudo-democracy, and pseudo-lawfulness with pseudo-opposition, as only this could make Lukashenka power unlimited as well as his political system complete and perfect in its own way. Even a close friend of Lukashenka and a deputy chairman in the House of Representatives, Uladzimir Kanaplyow dabbled in the opposition: while in Strasbourg in mid-June he mentioned his intention to initiate and lead an opposition movement in the House of Representatives. The newspaper *Narodnaya Volya* hurried to print the news in the “Sensation” column.

With the signatures collected and counted, the campaign for pro-Lukashenka candidates was over; Natalya Masherava withdrew even earlier “on her own accord.” Notice the obscene quantity of signatures collected for Mikhail Marynich (91,021), Leanid Sinitsyn (80,540), and Leanid Kaluhin (91,345): these numbers seem to say “we did all we could but fell just short of 100,000.” Marynich and Sinitsyn continued to make a row threatening to sue but soon cooled down. Marynich was taking part in opposition activities, but without any distinction. Sinitsyn announced that he would run for the not-yet-established Parliament of the Union of Belarus and Russia, while Kaluhin immediately retired to the political shadows.

The professionally planned electoral campaign yielded its fruits for Lukashenka. A poll conducted in May (see Table 3) testified to his high rating, which would continue to increase day by day.

Table 3

	Will vote	May vote	Will not vote	Hard to say
Antonchyk S.	2	7	40	51
Chyhir M.	7	18	39	36
Domash S.	5	13	34	49
Hancharyk U.	1	14	38	46
Haydukevich S.	1	9	41	48
Kalyakh S.	1	6	43	50
Kazbowski P.	1	7	38	54
Kryzhanowski Y.	2	8	43	48
Levanewski V.	1	7	37	55
Lukashenko A.	26	13	40	22
Masherava N.	4	18	34	43
Paznyak Z.	2	7	54	36
Tsyareshchanka V.	1	7	38	54

Source: Lustra Sociological Service of BelPAN

THE DYNAMICS OF ALYAKSANDAR LUKASHENKA' S RATINGS AND THE RESULTS OF THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Andrey YEKADUMAW

In August, before the presidential election, the Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies (IISEPS) forecast the voting of those Belarusians who had not yet decided who to vote for. The IISEPS questioned 1,518 respondents. The maximum margin of error falls within 0.03.

The votes for four candidates were distributed as follows (see Table 1).

Table 1. Question "Who will you vote for if the following politicians run for president?" *(closed question)*

Options	(%)
Alyaksandar Lukashenka	47.4
Syamyon Domash	12.1
Uladzimir Hancharyk	11.4
Syary Heydukovich	4.1
None	10.6
Hard To Say/No Reply	14.4

These results were used to calculate a voting scenario optimistic for the opposition. According to IISEPS's calculations, Alyaksandar Lukashenka could win about 4% in addition to the share shown in the table. At best, the single opposition candidate could count on an additional 13-14% share.

However, even this best-case scenario gave Lukashenka more than half the votes, leaving the single opposition nominee with about one third (which is more than the sum of votes for Hancharyk and Domash). Even if the opposition as a whole voted for a single candidate, the president in office would have still maintained a respectable lead, which

means that the opposition was coming to the election predestined to lose to Lukashenka.

Hancharyk's low rating compared to Lukashenka was largely due to the time factor. According to the same IISEPS poll, one quarter of the undecided voters knew nothing at all about candidate Hancharyk.

Table 2. Attitude of undecided voters to Uladzimir Hancharyk and Alyksandar Lukashenka* (%) .

Attitude to:	U l a d z i m i r H a n c h a r y k	A l y a k s a n d a r L u k a s h e n k a
VeryPositive	1.6	2.9
RatherPositive	15.6	14.6
RatherNegative	14.3	37.3
VeryNegative	4.8	17.5
NeverHeardOf	25.7	0.3
DifficultToSay	37.9	27.5

Moreover, Lukashenka had been the central actor on the Belarusian political scene since 1994 and by election day remained the most famous person in the country.

As for the results of the voting, suspicion is aroused not by the fact that Lukashenka won, but by the high percentage of his supporters: two thirds of all voters according to official data. Meanwhile, the August poll by the IISEPS showed that Lukashenka could count on support from only about one half of all voters.

Comparing the official report of the Central Electoral Commission to the results of the presidential election in 1994, allowed Minsk officials to claim that Lukashenka's policy has been supported by the majority of the Belarusian population for the past seven years (see Tables 3 and 4) .

* Undecided voters are those who chose "None" or "Hard To Say/No Reply" as an answer to the closed question "Who will you vote for if the following politicians run for president?".

Table 3. Results of the presidential election on September 9, 2001.

	Voter frequency	For Syamhey Haydukevich	For Uladzim ir Hancharyk	For Alyksandar Lukashenka
Total	83.86%	2.48	15.65	75.65
Berastse region	85.84%	2.44	15.73	76.17
Homel region	85.74%	1.76	8.34	85.00
Horadnya region	85.67%	2.87	15.08	76.96
Mahilyow region	85.26%	2.17	9.84	83.03
Minsk region	84.12%	2.32	14.84	76.56
Minsk City	77.59%	3.37	30.5	57.37
Vitsebsk region	84.67%	2.41	12.76	77.45

Source: Central Electoral Commission of the Republic of Belarus.

Table 4. Voting during the presidential election in 1994 (%).

Round		Regions of Belarus						Minsk city	Belarus total
		Horadnya	Berastse	Minsk	Vitsebsk	Homel	Mahilyow		
I	Voter frequency	80.3	83.4	82.8	79.2	78.8	79.4	70.2	79
	Voted for:								
	A. Dubko	9.01	5.3	7.92	6.72	5.15	4.38	3.5	5.98
	V. Kebich	14.59	13.86	14.93	19.32	23.08	16.97	18.24	17.33
	A. Lukashenka	36.31	53.47	44.46	45.96	45.57	63.01	26.48	44.82
	V. Novkav	3.27	3.17	4.29	5.59	4.99	3.53	4.53	4.29
	Z. Paznyak	21.21	11.72	15.34	9.41	6.33	4.68	20.98	12.82
	S. Shushkevich	10.38	8.7	8.65	7.12	8.59	3.83	21.21	9.91
II	Voter frequency	72.1	77.7	76.7	72.7	72.5	73.5	51.9	70.6
	Voted for:								
	V. Kebich	12.6	10.3	12.3	15.2	18.1	11.6	19.8	14.2
	A. Lukashenka	81.0	84.9	82.4	80	77.4	85.3	70.0	80.4
	Invalid ballots	6.4	4.8	5.3	4.8	4.5	3.1	10.2	5.4

Source: Central Electoral Commission of the Republic of Belarus.

With voter frequency at almost 84% in 2001, approximately 75% of the participants voted for Alyaksandar Lukashenka according to the Central Electoral Commission. In 1994, Lukashenka had about 80% in the second round with a 70% voting frequency. This data indicates that the popularity of president Lukashenka has been stable or even increased over the past seven years. Note that in the first round of the 1994 election Lukashenka garnered only 45% of the vote, while in the second round his support came from Kebich's rivals who lost out in the first round.

Seven years later, in 2001, the share of president Lukashenka's open supporters was comparable to that in the second round in 1994, according to the Central Electoral Commission. However, in the period before the 2001 election (according to independent polls), and in the first round of the 1994 election, his level of support was approximately 50%.

The high percentage of votes for Lukashenka presented by the Central Electoral Commission in September 2001 appears questionable. These doubts are quite reasonable if the results of a series of polls carried out by IISEPS in Belarus are compared with the election results.

In February–March 2001, IISEPS conducted a nation-wide poll involving 1,489 respondents, the maximum margin of error is 0.03.

Table 5. Question "Do you intend to participate in the forthcoming presidential election?" (%)

Option*	02.01
Yes, I will participate in the election	76.1
I will make a decision as to whether to participate depending on the political situation during the election campaign	10.8
No, I will not participate in this election	6.5

* The options "Difficult to say" and "No reply" were absent in this and some other questions.

Table 6. Dynamics of popularity of Alyksandar Lukashenka (%) .

	In a new presidential election*					
	11'97	09'98	06'99	11'99	04'00	10'00
Would vote for Lukashenka	44.3	52.2	46.0	43.8	38.4	33.2
Would not vote for Lukashenka	55.7	47.8	54.0	56.2	61.6	66.8
	In a presidential election of Belarus and Russia					
Would vote for Lukashenka	35.2	44.7	32.8	31.6	22.3	25.2
Would not vote for Lukashenka	64.8	55.3	67.2	68.4	77.7	74.8
	Do you trust president?					
Trust president	45.0	48.0	41.0	39.8	39.2	33.9
Do not trust president	22.5**	22.1**	28.8**	32.5**	32.9**	35.6**
	Do you consider Lukashenka a real politician?					
Consider Lukashenka a real politician	50.4	51.5	45.7	44.9	37.0	34.3
Do not consider Lukashenka a real politician	49.6	48.5	54.3	55.1	63.0	65.7

* Answers to an open question (i.e., the respondents could write in a name of a politician themselves.)

** Did not trust the president.

Table 7. Voter attitude to candidates for president (%) .*(Read vertically)*

Candidate	Like	Do not like	Do not know this candidate	Trust	Will vote for	Will not vote for
M .Chyhir	21.2	29.7	11.9	19.8	17.9	45.1
S.Dom ash	9.8	17.2	38.9	7.5	8.1	46.2
U .Hancharyk	12.1	22.9	23.3	9.7	10.1	45.2
S .Kalyakin	3.6	20.1	41.1	2.6	2.8	51.7
P .Kazbowski	7.0	16.4	39.0	3.9	4.8	48.8
A .Lukashenka	39.8	34.4	1.5	39.4	39.8	36.4
Z .Paznyak	7.6	52.2	10.0	5.8	6.3	59.7

Table 8. Question: "Do you want Lukashenka to be president of our country for one more term?" (%)

Option	02'01	04'01	06'01
Yes	41.6	34.0	38.6
No	32.3	40.7	38.3

Table 9. Question: "If the presidential election was held tomorrow, for whom would you vote?" (%) (open question)

Option*	04'01	06'01
M .Chyhir	6.6	3.5
S.Dom ash	2.7	3.1
U .Hancharyk	1.3	1.0
S .Haydukevich	0.7	0.5
A .Lukashenka	37.2	36.3
N .M asherava		2.1
Z .Paznyak	2.4	0.9
S .Shushkevich	1.4	0.5

* Included here are candidates that garnered more than 0.5% of the vote.

Table 10. Question: "Whom would you like to see as president of Belarus?"

Option	%
Alyaksandar Lukashenka	36.7
One of the five democratic candidates (Hancharyk Domash Chyhir Kazbowski Kalaykin)	17.6
A candidate put up by the Co-ordination Council of Democratic Forces (CCDF)	3.9
Another candidate	7.3
Difficult To Say / No Reply	34.5

Table 11. Responses to questions as for whom among the well known politicians the respondents were prepared to vote in the presidential election, and for whom they would not vote under any circumstances (%) (closed question)

Option	Will vote for		Will not vote for		Have not decided		Forecast	
	04'01	06'01	04'01	06'01	04'01	06'01	04'01	06'01
M. Chyhir	17.9	17.1	45.1	45.0	37.0	37.9	28.4	27.5
S. Domash	8.1	12.0	46.2	44.6	45.7	43.4	14.6	21.2
U. Hancharyk	10.1	10.3	45.2	48.0	44.7	41.7	18.3	17.7
S. Haydukevich	4.0	4.2	50.6	52.1	45.4	43.7	7.3	7.5
S. Kalaykin	2.8	4.3	51.7	49.2	45.5	46.5	5.1	8.0
P. Kazbowski	4.8	6.1	48.8	47.4	46.4	46.5	9.0	11.4
Y. Kryzhanowski	4.3	4.1	47.7	50.0	48.0	45.9	8.3	7.6
A. Lukashenka	39.8	43.8	36.4	34.0	23.8	22.2	52.2	56.3
N. Masheva	*	17.0	*	39.9	*	43.1	*	29.9
L. Shitsyn	2.0	1.9	50.3	49.9	47.7	48.2	3.8	3.7
Z. Paznyak	6.3	5.0	59.7	62.7	34.0	32.3	9.5	7.4
A. Yashuk	2.6	2.3	49.2	49.2	48.2	48.5	5.0	4.5

* This candidate was not included in this poll.

The hesitant and discontent with Lukashenka outnumbered his supporters, however, as late as in February-March the former were an uncoordinated and disconnected mass who had not yet selected a candidate.

In April 2001, IISEPS conducted another nation-wide poll to study the dynamics of popular attitude to Lukashenka. The Institute questioned 1,461 people above 18 years of age. The results presented in Table 6 show that the rating of the Belarusian president was gradually waning (see also Table 9).

However, despite a lower rating Lukashenka remained the most popular leader compared to any possible candidate of the opposition (see Table 10).

In June, when the propaganda campaign was stepped up in the state-owned media, IISEPS questioned 1,499 people 18 years of age and older (margin of error 0.03). The share of those ready to vote for Lukashenka changed insignificantly. About one third of the respondents (the percentage comparable with that of the president's supporters) chose the option "Difficult to say." The option of a single opposition candidate received half as many favourable responses as Lukashenka (see Tables 8-11).

Therefore, Lukashenka's position remained quite stable, both during the campaign and the election itself. According to independent polls, his ratings oscillated within a range of one third to one half of all voters.

And still those estimates were radically at odds with the official results produced by the Central Electoral Commission, that is with the three quarters of the voters that came to the polling stations. Given that Lukashenka had 45% out of 79% of voters in 1994, the 75.65% out of 84% in 2001 means that his rating had grown and not declined, which contradicts the poll results.

Alyaksandar Lukashenka needed a high majority of votes to legitimise and justify his staying in power. References to the constitution are arguable, as the international community does

not recognise the 1996 constitution. The last resort is the old, well-tried ideological scheme: a president relying directly on the people, which takes more than just a victory, it takes a large victory.

FOREIGN POLICY FACTORS ON THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN BELARUS

Iryna YEKADUMAVA

In the 2001 election, the international community acted as an arbiter in charge of recognising or denying its results. The main foreign presence in this regard were observers delegated by Western international organisations (OSCE, European Union, and PACE) and CIS countries. More than 700 observers were present during the election, or, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, approximately 800 observers and just as many journalists. Half of the observers worked under the aegis of the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and the Association of Election Organisers of Central and Eastern Europe. The other half comprised observers from CIS and other countries invited by the Belarusian government.

After the election, observers presented differing opinions. CIS observers assessed the election as democratic, while their Western colleagues did not.

THE WEST AND THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN BELARUS

Relations between Belarus and Western countries worsened in 1996 and continued to deteriorate thereafter. International observers did not monitor the 1996 referendum or the parliamentary election in 2000. Excluding those from Vietnam and CIS countries, no head of state visited Belarus during Lukashenka's presidency.

Foreign missions in Belarus include embassies, TACIS representative offices, OSCE mission, etc. The Belarusian regime has traditionally considered them as a factor of instability within the country. In March 2001, the Council of Ministers adopted resolution 325 complicating the opening and operation of representative offices of foreign companies and organisations in Belarus. The government routinely accuses Western representatives of interfering in the internal affairs of

THE 2001 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Belarus. For example, on July 31 Lukashenka told an executive branch conference that OSCE ambassador Hans-Georg Wieck, "chief of staff of the entire Belarusian opposition," co-ordinated the entire activity of opposition candidates for president.

Only after Alyaksandar Lukashenka's re-election did the Belarusian regime begin trying to improve relations with the West. As heads of Western countries did not send congratulations to Lukashenka, Foreign Minister Mikhail Khvastow reasoned that the West needed time to think over the election results and make decisions concerning further co-operation with Belarus. During his post-election press conference Lukashenka promised a break-through in relations with the West within twelve to eighteen months.

THE NORTH ATLANTIC ASSEMBLY

On March 10, 1992, Belarus joined the North-Atlantic Co-operation Council, a consultative forum introduced by NATO to increase dialogue and co-operation with its former adversaries – countries of Central and Eastern Europe. In January 1995, Belarus joined NATO's "Partnership for Peace" programme. In March 1997, NATO froze its relations with Belarus because of the constitutional coup in November 1996. At present, Belarus continues to participate in meetings of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, however, the Belarusian president's enmity towards this organisation and his orientation at a close military alliance with Russia chills mutual trust.

THE ORGANISATION FOR SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

On January 30, 1992, Belarus became a full member of the Conference (now Organisation) for Security and Cooperation in Europe. This requires meeting certain standards related to domestic policy, including general, equal, fair, free and open elections, as maintained by a resolution adopted by the 2nd Copenhagen Conference on Human Dimension held by the OSCE in 1990. Belarus' contacts with this organisation did not cease after

the constitutional coup in 1996, however, the operation of the OSCE Advisory and Monitoring Group in Belarus and a number of its documents concerning the domestic political situation resulted in considerable misunderstanding between the OSCE and Belarusian government. On February 22, 2001, when the authority of the 13th Supreme Soviet came to an end, Belarus lost its membership in the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. Two Belarusian delegations (one representing the Supreme Soviet and the other the National Assembly) attended a session of the Parliamentary Assembly on July 6-10, each claiming to represent Belarus in this organisation. Despite solicitation of the Russian State Duma about recognising the authority of National Assembly deputies, the mandate commission of the OSCE PA Permanent Committee satisfied neither of the two applicants.

Belarus became the first member country of the OSCE that did not invite observers of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). The Office planned to start working in Belarus on August 1, of which it had repeatedly informed Belarusian officials since July 9. Nevertheless, invitation delays and visa refusals for two members of the observer group sabotaged long-term observation by the ODIHR. Consequently, OSCE observers worked within the International Limited Election Observation Mission (ILEOM), comprising representatives of the OSCE ODIHR and the parliamentary troika (the Parliamentary Assemblies of the OSCE, the Council of Europe and the European Parliament). ODIHR representation included 29 individuals from 20 states, including 16 from CIS, Central European and Balkan countries. Evaluating the election, OSCE representatives stated that monitoring was limited and numerous violations by the authorities were encountered, including press surveillance and pressure on observers. In the words of ODIHR director Gerard Studman, the office concluded that the election process did not meet OSCE requirements for democratic elections. Ukrainian MPs voiced a minority opinion within the OSCE claiming that the election was democratic and in-line with the law. According to Natalya Vitrenko, chair of the Progressive Socialist Party, the official conclusions of the OCSE were more a political evaluation

than a legal evaluation. Nevertheless, Hreir Beilian, head of the OSCE observation mission, stated on September 10 that the presidential campaign in Belarus was neither democratic, free, nor fair. In Mr. Beilian's words, the election itself was carried out well.

Alyaksandar Lukashenka, on his part was trying to link the problem of recognising the election by the OSCE with what he called "sabotage activity" by OSCE Ambassador Wieck. Meeting with voters on September 4, Lukashenka promised to send Mr. Wieck on his way out of Belarus after the election. The president confirmed this intent on election day in a conversation with Kimmo Kiljunen, head of the OSCE PA mission. However, the day after his re-election Lukashenka told a press conference that although he believed "the OSCE Advisory and Monitoring Group had nothing more to do in Minsk," he was not going to deport Hans-Georg Wieck. The government's intention to improve relationships with the OSCE was expressed in the statement by Foreign Minister Mikhail Khastow that the Belarusian authorities viewed the preliminary conclusions made by OSCE regarding the presidential election as "a constructive document" that opened possibilities for dialogue between Belarus and the OSCE. At a meeting of the Permanent Committee of the OSCE PA in Lisbon on October 9, Belarus was represented by a National Assembly delegation headed by Mikalay Charhinets, as well as a Supreme Soviet delegation headed by Anatol Lyabedzka. The Parliamentary Assembly did not adopt a resolution to grant the Belarusian National Assembly special guest status.

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

After the constitutional coup in 1996, the United States of America, a member country of the OSCE, adopted the tactic of selective dialogue in relations with Belarus. US officials expressly maintained contacts with Belarusian democratic leaders, independent media and non-governmental organisations.

Before the election, the Belarusian regime started a scandal on the basis of comments made by American officials. On August 25, US

Secretary of State Colin Powell, addressing the Belarusian people on the 10th anniversary of Belarus' independence, stressed the need to meet the standards accepted by Belarus as a member state of the OSCE and UN. Mr. Powell noted that the Belarusian authorities knew what specific steps they needed to make in order to comply with agreements within the OSCE and have the forthcoming presidential election recognised. Minister Khvastow commented on this appeal saying it was a "crude and blatant interference in Belarus' internal affairs" indicative of "ambassador Kozak's personal approach*." Another scandal resulted from *The Times* and *Guardian* newspapers printing a statement by US ambassador Michael Kozak, who compared the US policy of support for democratic initiatives in Belarus with support for the Contras in Nicaragua**. The news rippled across the Belarusian state-run media.

The US position on the election fully coincided with that of the OSCE ODIHR. According to Richard Boucher, US State Department spokesman, and his deputy, Philip Reeker, the election was not democratic. Mr. Reeker stated that an election that was neither free, nor democratic, could not be recognised by the international community.

THE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

Belarus received special guest status in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in 1992, and lost it in January 1997 due to the constitutional coup. Nevertheless, PACE continued to send delegations to Belarus and receive delegations from both the official authorities of Belarus and the opposition.

During a visit to Belarus in July 31–August 3, 2001, Terry Davis, chairman of the PACE political committee, stated that PACE would

- * See the verbatim record of the press conference by Mikhail Khvastow, deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus with the Belarusian and foreign media on September 6, 2001 [electronic version] [http://www.mfa.gov.by/cgi-bin/mfa8.pl?year=2001&month=09&file=07_09_2001_\(1\)](http://www.mfa.gov.by/cgi-bin/mfa8.pl?year=2001&month=09&file=07_09_2001_(1))
- * Langado A. US adopts "Contras policy" in communist Belarus // *The Times*. September 3, 2001. (<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/0,,3-2001303768,00.html>)

observe the election only if the OSCE ODIHR was able to timely and regularly undertake both long-term and short-term monitoring. Otherwise, PACE would not be able to use invitations to the election received from Belarusian officials. A PACE representative received an invitation from Mikhail Khvastow on July 31 together with a promise to send invitations for the ODIHR in the near future, however, the date was not specified. The Belarusian authorities did send an invitation to the ODIHR on August 17 when it was already too late to undertake fully-fledged monitoring.

Adhering to the ILEOM conclusions, PACE did not recognise the presidential election as democratic. The PACE session held in Strasbourg on September 24–28 decided to renew Belarus' status in the Assembly on the basis of a step-by-step strategy. Both the Council of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe expressed their wish to reconsider their policy in relation to Belarus, however, only when there is a proper basis for it. During the Strasbourg session, PACE took steps to meet the Belarusian regime halfway by reformulating the conditions for changing its policy towards Belarus. On September 21, the Council of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted a document entitled "Recommendation 1441. The Situation in Belarus" which mentions five conditions for the normalisation of relations:

- Freedom of speech;
- Equal campaigning possibilities for all candidates;
- Revised functions and competence of the Parliament;
- Release of political prisoners;
- Moratorium on the death penalty.

These requirements are a watered down version of the conditions for unfreezing the special guest status of Belarus as formulated by PACE on January 26, 2000.

THE EUROPEAN UNION

Elisabeth Schroedter, member of the European Parliament, told an interviewer of Radio Liberty's Belarusian service after the election that

in her opinion the election went peacefully, without obvious violations and voter turnout was high. At the same time, according to Javier Solana, head of the EU foreign policy mission, Lukashenka's re-election "raises some questions."

RUSSIA AS A FACTOR IN THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN BELARUS

Russia provided no support for democratic candidates during their campaigns. During a visit to Moscow, Syamyon Domash met with Anatoliy Volskiy and Anatoliy Chubays but did not succeed in securing their support. None of the democratic candidates received an audience with the Russian president, while Alyaksandar Lukashenka met with him seven times in the first nine months of 2001 (according to France Press). Russian politicians and businesspeople, representatives of Russia's financial and industrial community visited Belarus, however, they were solely interested in the existing regime, judging by the media coverage of their visits. As for the Russian public, a poll conducted by the Civil Thought Foundation in early September 2001 showed that only about 30 % of Russian citizens were interested in who would win the presidential election in Belarus. Moreover, the majority of the Russian public preferred Lukashenka. In the opinion of 44 % of the respondents, it would be better for Russia if Lukashenka were re-elected, 36 % could not answer this question, and 20 % believed it would be better for Russia with another president in Belarus. In general, Russians were not particularly interested in the Belarusian presidential election. According to data of Civil Thought and the All-Russian Centre for Public Opinion Research, at the beginning of September 2001, awareness regarding the election campaign in Belarus was so low among 35-40 % of Russian society that they could not state a preference.

Vladimir Putin congratulated Alyaksandar Lukashenka on his re-election an hour before the OSCE made public its conclusions about the presidential election in Belarus. A telegram sent by Mr. Putin asserted Russia's wish to adhere to the previous line of Russian-Belarusian integration.

To sweeten the pill, some Russian political forces, including those inspired by the Kremlin, flagrantly supported the opposition candidate. Before the election, Uladzimir Hancharyk received an official telegram from Boris Nemtsov, chairman of the Political Council of the Union of the Right Forces. Mr. Nemtsov welcomed, in the person of Uladzimir Hancharyk, the "efforts of the Belarusian opposition towards developing a democratic society in Belarus." After the election, Nemtsov said that Lukashenka's victory would "bring nothing good to Belarus." Sergey Ivanenko, first deputy chairman of the Duma faction "Yabloko," condemned Russia's attitude towards Lukashenka. In Mr. Ivanenko's opinion, the Belarusian president put fighting for power above the interests of the Russian-Belarusian Union, and called Moscow's silent support for Lukashenka "strategically wrong."

RUSSIA'S POLITICAL INTERESTS IN BELARUS

Belarus is important for Russia primarily as a geopolitical ally still hosting its military bases. As far back as 1995, Russia signed a 25-year agreement with Belarus concerning the order of construction, use, and maintenance of a missile attack prevention radar station in Baranavichy, as well as the maintenance and use of the naval communication centre in Vyaleyka, which is part of a submarine tracking system.

Evidence of Moscow's support for the Belarusian regime was the resolution of the Kasyanov government in giving Belarus a RUR 4.5 billion loan for the stabilisation of the Belarusian rouble. Formally, the credit was given under the condition that the Russian rouble was to be introduced by 2005 as the single currency for Russia and Belarus with the sole issuing centre in Moscow. The first RUR 1.5 billion instalment was transferred to the account of the National Bank of Belarus on July 23. The remaining RUR 3 billion were to be transferred to the National Bank by the end of 2001 after a programme of measures for the introduction of a single currency has been developed.

On August 3, Vladimir Putin said that Russia would not interfere in Belarus' internal affairs in connection with the presidential election. This

promise was de facto disavowed by other official representatives of the Russian Federation, such as Pavel Borodin, Gennadiy Seleznyov, Yegor Stroyev, Yuriy Luzhkov, Aman Tuleyev, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, Gennadiy Zyuganov, and others.

RUSSIA'S ECONOMIC INTERESTS IN BELARUS

CIS countries account for 71.3% of Belarusian exports, of which Russia accounts for 66.7%*. Since January 1995, Belarus and Russia have operated a customs union, which allows Belarus to receive oil and gas for lower prices. In February 1995, the two countries signed a treaty of friendship, good-neighbour relations, and cooperation, as well as an agreement concerning the joint management of customs services and collective border defence. Today integration between the two countries is on a level between a customs union and a common market.

Among all Belarusian industries, Russian capital is most interested in the petrochemical industry. In fact, the Russians have total control over this entire industry in Belarus. The oil company Slavneft (Slavic Oil), which participated in funding and modernising the oil refinery in Mozyr and processes its raw materials at it, intends to expand activity in Belarus. Slavneft is one of the participants in an oil extraction project in the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Republic (Russian Federation). For this purpose, it founded the Russian-Belarusian joint venture Slavic Oil Company (SOC) with 26% of shares held by Belnaftakhim, 24% by Belarusnafta, and 50% by Nenetskaya Oil Company. SOC obtained a licence for geological exploration of the Liginitskiy area of the Yamalo-Nenetski Autonomous District, and plans to explore 450 square kilometres of its territory in April 2002.

Itera (a company operating as well as Gazprom on the Belarusian natural gas market) is interested in the Minsk Automobile Factory, the Belarusian Metallurgical Works and the hydroelectric power station in Byaroza. Mr. I. Makarov, head of the Itera group, told the 2nd All-

* Belarus' foreign trade turnover in January-July 2001 [electronic version] [http://www.mfa.gov.by/cgi-bin/mfa8.pl?year=2001&month=09&file=10_09_2001_\(1\)](http://www.mfa.gov.by/cgi-bin/mfa8.pl?year=2001&month=09&file=10_09_2001_(1))

Belarusian Assembly that Itera intended to invest US\$ 200 million in the Belarusian economy in the near future. To demonstrate the seriousness of his intentions, Mr. Makarov visited the Keramin factory and the Belenerha concern. Itera plans to modernise Keramin and use Belenerha to renovate the Byaroza hydroelectric power station.

Gazprom retains a strong position in Belarus, having begun work on a new gas pipeline from Russia to Kobryn to Wielke Kapuszany (Poland). For the past three years, Gazprom and the "Yamal-Western Europe" pipeline accounted for 60% of direct investments in the Belarusian economy. Gazprom is interested in transforming Beltransgaz into a joint-stock company and integrating the concern into its network of gas pipelines.

Representatives of the Russian company Lukoil also visited Belarus before the election. In 1996, Lukoil and Yukos opened joint representative offices in Belarus: Lyubel-Oil and Rosbelnafta. Shortly before the election, Lukoil's boss Vagit Alekperov met with Alyaksandar Lukashenka and Prime Minister Uladzimir Yarmoshyn and proposed an investment project for the Belarusian petrochemical industry. In particular, Mr. Alekperov expressed the wish to invest US\$ 100 million in the Navapolatsk-based Palimir production complex.

In the automotive industry, a financial and industrial group is to be established with the participation of MAZ and BelAZ (the Minsk Automobile Factory and the Belarusian Automobile Factory, respectively) and Russian capital. After getting his stock of Slavneft shares in return for allowing the Kremlin to control the ORT TV channel, Roman Abramovich, a Russian oligarch, became interested in the operations of the Mozyr oil refinery.

At a press conference on August 27, Vasil Lyavonaw (Uladzimir Hancharyk's campaign director), released a transcript of a conversation between Oleg Deripaska, head of Sibirskiy Aluminium, Valyantsin Hurnovich, director of MAZ, Anatoliy Lisitsin, governor of the Yaroslavl region, and Belarusian Deputy Prime Minister Leanid Kozik concerning the transfer of control over MAZ to Sibirskiy Aluminium, which is negotiating a merger between MAZ and an automobile manufacturing

holding company, along with UralAZ and the Yaroslavl engine factory. On September 12, Yaroslavl governor Anatoliy Lisitsin met with Alyksandar Lukashenka. Mr. Deripaska arrived in Minsk together with a representative delegation of the Yaroslavl region. They discussed the entry of the Minsk Automobile Factory into the holding company RusPromAvto suggesting a possible purchase of MAZ shares by Sibirskiy Aluminium.

THE COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES (CIS)

As a political structure, the CIS has little influence on Belarus' domestic politics, primarily due to the nature of relations between member countries of the Commonwealth, within which multilateral agreements only outline a framework while real co-operation occurs on the basis of bilateral agreements. Alyksandar Lukashenka invited all CIS countries to delegate observers to the presidential election. The 20-person CIS monitoring mission unanimously recognised the voting results.

THE ROLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY IN OBSERVING THE ELECTION

International observers of the presidential election were provided by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and the Association of Election Organisers in Central and Eastern Europe (AEOCEE). The ODIHR mission comprised 10 members of the European Parliament mission, 57 of the OSCE PA mission, and 12 staff members of the ODIHR itself. Invited on a bilateral basis were 259 observers from 34 countries and 6 international organisations, including 114 MPs representing more than 20 countries and 5 international organisations. ODIHR reported that the presidential election in Belarus fell short of its requirements, whereas preliminary conclusions by the AEOCEE were less categorical.

On July 18, the AEOCEE began its own monitoring. The process involved covering the delegation of initiative groups, the collection of

signatures for the candidates, registration, campaigning in the media, voting, and counting. During the final stage of the observation process, the AEOCEE group was joined by 64 people from 10 countries of Central and East Europe and the US. In a preliminary report drafted on September 10, the AEOCEE mission noted a lack of pluralism and transparency in the presidential election, and the fact that in a number of cases democratic conditions for organising the electoral process were not met. At the same time, the mission accepted the preliminary results of the election announced by the Central Electoral Commission. The AEOCEE's lenience in evaluating the election can be explained by the organisation's relatively low level of requirements for democratic elections compared to those of the OSCE, as well as by the fact that electoral commissions from Russia and Ukraine played key roles in its activity.

DOMESTIC OBSERVATION OF THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Mikhas PLISKA

THE ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE OF INDEPENDENT NON-GOVERNMENTAL OBSERVATION

Two organisations comprised the core of independent non-governmental observation, the Central Co-ordination Council for Election Observation (CCC) and the non-governmental "Vyasna" Human Rights Centre. The Council was an association of several non-governmental organisations: the Belarusian National Voters Club, the Belarusian Helsinki Committee, the Belarusian Federation of Trade Unions, the Lew Sapeha Foundation, the Belarusian Women's Informational Co-ordination Centre, the Belarusian Initiative Centre, and the organising committee of the Movement for Democratic and Free Elections (then in the process of being established). The CCC was established in autumn 1999 and since then had gained some experience through observing the elections to the House of Representatives. Despite its membership in the CCC, the Belarusian Helsinki Committee distinguished itself by conducting its own observation programme simultaneously with the joint programme.

Early in 2001, the Assembly (of Democratic Non-Governmental Organisations) made public its intent to organise an independent observation of the presidential election. Approximately 200 member organisations participated in the observation programme, including the Society of Belarusian Language, the Association of Belarusian Students, the "Vyasna" Human Rights Centre, the non-governmental organisation Legal Assistance to the Population, and the non-governmental association Centre for Human Rights.

In order to avoid creating parallel structures of non-governmental observation, CCC and Assembly negotiations ended in spring 2001 with the signing of an agreement to establish a single system of independent

non-governmental observation. The efforts of OSCE ambassador Wieck contributed to the agreement being reached.

This joint observation system was named Civil Initiative "Independent Observation". Its organisers choose not to register with the Ministry of Justice. "Independent Observation" was directed by two co-chairmen: Mechyslaw Hryb, the de facto leader of the CCC, and Ales Belyatski, head of the Assembly and the "Vyasna" Human Rights Centre.

The Belarusian Federation of Trade Unions expressed a desire to participate in "Independent Observation." However, this participation was limited to that of an observer.

"Independent Observation" had its branches in every region and Minsk City, as well as in virtually every district and major town. Two co-ordinators (formally a chairman and deputy chairman) were responsible for each branch. The initiative had a press office (managed by Tatsyana Ravyaka), a web site, and a united legal service network (managed by Valyantsin Stefanovich).

THE CONCEPT OF INDEPENDENT OBSERVATION

The activities of the CCC and the Assembly were characterised by the struggle of two different, albeit similar, concepts of independent observation.

One concept (mainly characteristic of CCC) was based on the observer not being directly involved in the election process and therefore not entitled to interfere in the proceedings of the election. This strictly limited the task of the observer to simply registering violations committed by any participant in the election process. The adherents of this approach repeatedly stressed their neutral position and independence in relation to the authorities and the political opposition. Mechyslaw Hryb told the press repeatedly that the CCC observation system is independent and that it had no contacts with any observation systems run by any of the candidates or parties. Practice, however, disavowed this statement. The backbone of independent observation was made up of members of the opposition political parties.

Independent observation co-ordinators in virtually every region, town, and district were also leaders of one or another opposition political party.

This independent observation approach coincided conceptually with that of the OSCE observers, otherwise they could have been accused of interfering in Belarus' internal affairs and denied accreditation. Therefore their activity in a country is usually confined to registering violations during elections, which they later evaluate in order to assess whether and to what extent the election was democratic. Among advocates of this approach was OSCE Ambassador Hans-Georg Wiecek, head of the Advisory and Monitoring Group in Minsk.

An alternative approach to independent observation was based on the observer's more active participation in the election process. The adherents of this approach argued that the observer must go further than simply register violations of the Election Code and undertake activities to prevent them. Those people associated with this approach were not afraid of publicising their connection with opposition political parties (for example, by holding a meeting at the BPF headquarters) and understood that a well-branched network of independent observation could not be set up without the participation and assistance of members of parties.

THE REGIME CONTRA INDEPENDENT OBSERVATION

The regime's main strategy in regard to independent observation of the election consisted in intimidating ordinary people in order to discourage them from participating as observers. Election observation and observers faced various kinds of accusations; participation was equated to anti-state and anti-popular activity. Lukashenka compared observers to guerrillas. In a BT programme on August 27, Lukashenka propagandist Yawhen Novikaw called upon "the competent organs" to immediately arrest all leaders of the independent observation network. Straightforward as they were, these measures succeeded in dissuading many people from participating in observing the election. Under such conditions, calls to participate in the observation teams

regularly published by the independent media had little effect. The number of observers within "Independent Observation" was just slightly more than during the parliamentary election and eventually totalled some 8,000 people, falling short of the hoped-for 14,000. As for other observers, a total of 21,887 were accredited at 6,700 polling stations, according to Lidziya Yarmoshyna, chairman of the Central Electoral Commission.

Official propaganda particularly targeted the attempt of the "Independent Observation" network to organise parallel vote counting. On September 3, a roundtable meeting devoted to the "Social and Legal Consequences of Parallel Vote Counting" was held under the pro-governmental National Co-ordination Council of Leaders of Political Parties and Non-Governmental Organisations. Top officials of the Public Prosecutors Office, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Justice and the Central Electoral Commission all agreed that parallel vote counting would be illegal and inadmissible. Belarusian TV broadcast choice and selected segments of the meeting. Earlier, on August 16, the Ministry of Justice went as far as to issue a special warning to "Independent Observation" leaders concerning the inadmissibility of working on behalf of an unregistered organisation and participating in parallel vote counting.

In fact, none of the observation organisers even thought of usurping the functions of local electoral commissions. The idea was not to set up a system for alternative voting but to establish the overall voting results by reviewing the original data of the local counting commissions. Organisers of the independent observation network had every reason to think (based on the observation of the election to the House of Representatives) that the voting results would be forged during the transfer of records up the hierarchy from the individual polling stations to the territorial committees. At this stage, actual data was substituted with 'votes' more favourable for the existing regime. As it was impossible to collect the necessary data from all polling stations within a short period of time, "Independent Observation" decided to simplify the task by sampling selected stations and extrapolating the results to cover the entire country. For this purpose, 500 polling stations were selected by

representative sampling to proportionally represent urban, rural and closed polling stations across the country. This method would allow voting results to be estimated within a 2% margin of error. Should results obtained in such a way significantly vary from official results, it could have been indicative of possible vote tampering. This technique had been successfully applied in many countries, including Ukraine, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Bulgaria, Peru and Philippines.

Along with propaganda, the regime used other means of countering independent observers. Before the start of early voting, special methodological guidelines were distributed among members of electoral commissions containing techniques for hampering the work of independent observers. Naturally, this literature was printed anonymously.

One of those brochures, entitled "On Tactics for Neutralising the Activity of 'Independent' Observers," instructed chairmen of electoral commissions to assign places for observers that would "disallow normal observation to be conducted" and not to hamper "all observers at once but start with those most active." The regime organised delegations of loyal observers to polling stations for the first time during the election to the House of Representatives. This innovation was developed during the presidential election when the government drew up a list of organisations entitled to delegate "proper" observers. The list included the Belarusian Patriotic Union of Youth (which at the peak of the campaign claimed it would provide 26,000 observers), pro-governmental political parties and veterans' organisations.

The fight against independent observers reached its peak with the Central Electoral Commission's decision to cancel the accreditation of all the observers delegated by Vyasna. The decision was made on September 8, the day before the election, and denied access to polling stations to about 2,000 observers. Additionally, the Horadnya regional electoral commission denied access to all observers delegated by the Lew Sapeha Foundation.

THE OUTCOME AND SIGNIFICANCE OF INDEPENDENT OBSERVATION

The goal set by "Independent Observation," to establish an effective observation network in order to ensure a democratic, open, public and transparent election process, was not met.

The network failed to obtain reliable and precise data, which would allow the course of the election and the results of the voting to be evaluated. This fact is reflected in the constantly alternating reports concerning voting results presented by participants of the independent observation network. For example, on September 9, the press office of "Independent Observation" reported that parallel counting conducted at 415 polling stations indicated that more than 17% of voters took part in early voting as opposed to the 14.6% mentioned in official bulletins. A few days later Mechyslaw Hryb quoted a figure of 20% that later grew to 25-30%. According to "Independent Observation," the Vitsebsk region noted the highest turnout in early voting, with the Dubrowna district noting the highest level of 50%.

Although "Independent Observation" claimed that the network observed approximately 70% of the polling stations on election day, it was impossible to draw any reliable results. Mrs. Tatsyana Protska, chair of the Belarusian Helsinki Committee, told a press conference on September 12 that "this election has no results. The regime sabotaged both the observation and the election." Uladzimir Hancharyk stated that he won 41% of the votes against Lukashenka's 47%.

VIOLATIONS OF THE ELECTION CODE DURING THE CAMPAIGN AND ELECTION

Mikhas PLISKA

VIOLATIONS BY THE CENTRAL ELECTORAL COMMISSION

Violations committed by the Central Commission for Elections and National Referenda (Central Electoral Commission, CEC) are so numerous that all of them cannot be mentioned here. Therefore, only the most important violations will be noted (i.e., those that violated the interests of the incumbent's rivals and made the election more opaque).

On August 17, the CEC violated Article 45 of the Electoral Code by issuing a resolution that banned candidates from holding open-air public meetings. Essentially, a candidate had to ask permission to hold such a meeting from a local administration 15 days in advance of the meeting. As early voting began on September 4, this resolution left the candidates a mere five days to hold meetings with their potential voters. The Central Electoral Commission issued a warning to Uladzimir Hancharyk for meeting with the public on Kastychnitskaya Square on September 2.

According to Article 45 of the Electoral Code, each candidate receives a mere USD 12,000 from the state to conduct the campaign. These funds could be used for other campaign needs if political parties or other non-governmental organisations produced campaign material for a candidate. To prevent that, the CEC adopted a special resolution on August 17 that banned this type of publishing activity even when the material contained information pertaining to the publisher. This resolution violated Article 45 of the Electoral Code and the laws "On Political Parties", "On People's Associations" and "On Trade Unions."

Article 55, part 2 of the Electoral Code requires that votes be counted separately. This was ignored by the CEC in its "Report on

Voting Results by Local Electoral Commissions," passed by the Commission on June 8. Electoral commissions at polling stations counted ballots from all the boxes together, which provided an opportunity to manipulate both the number of voters as well as the choice made by voters in early voting or away from the polling stations (e.g. at voters' homes).

The day before the election, on September 8, the CEC adopted two additional illegal resolutions. One of them related to the kind of identification documents required in order to receive a ballot. Under the new procedure, a ballot could be obtained after producing any document with a photograph as well as first and last name (not necessarily a passport*).

The second resolution ordered territorial and local electoral commissions to cancel their accreditation of "Vyasna"-delegated observers. The fact that the Central Electoral Commission passed resolutions violating existing laws and common sense indicates that the changes had a political rather than legal purpose. Moreover, these resolutions introduced norms rather than explaining the law.

VIOLATIONS DURING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ELECTORAL COMMISSIONS

The Electoral Code (Article 11, part 1) specifies four types of entities entitled to delegate representatives to electoral commissions, namely political parties, non-governmental organisations, staffs of enterprises, and individuals (by filing applications). This means that all four categories must be represented on an electoral commission. The actual composition of commissions showed the opposite: in an overwhelming majority of territorial commissions, not to mention local commissions, political parties were not represented at all, nor were pro-governmental or opposition organisations. None of the 600 representatives from the

* In Belarus, a passport is the main identification document required for any legal proceeding. It is also valid for foreign travel, although the holder must first obtain a special authorisation stamp to be able to leave the country - [translator].

political opposition who were nominated for the territorial electoral commissions was enrolled in them.

VIOLATIONS DURING THE COLLECTION OF SIGNATURES

Almost all the initiative groups collecting signatures were registered: the authorities did not hinder the initiative groups of democratic candidates. Trouble was waiting for them at the stage of filing the signature lists in the electoral commissions. Under various pretexts, many commissions refused to acknowledge the signatures of initiative group members on the signature lists. Moreover, some lists simply vanished after being filed in territorial commissions.

VIOLATIONS DURING THE CAMPAIGN

Most violations occurred during the election campaign. According to monitoring conducted by the Novak Sociometric Laboratory between July 23 and August 13, of all the airtime devoted to the candidates, Belarusian TV gave 91% and radio 99% to Lukashenka.

The print media followed the same trend. For example, Belarus' largest state-owned newspaper *Sovetskaya Belorussiya* devoted 94.5% of candidate-related space to the incumbent, *Respublika* 91%, *Narodnaya Gazeta* 98%, *Zvyazda* 98%, *Sem dney* 72%, etc.

By publishing the official text of Alyaksandar Lukashenka's election platform on August 21, *Sovetskaya Belorussiya* directly violated the CEC resolution "On Establishing the System of Using State-Owned Media," as texts were limited to 9,100 characters and Lukashenka's platform, as printed, contained 12,085 characters.

The two events described below characterise the extremes to which Lukashenka abused his office.

On September 3-5, a newspaper was delivered to every post box in the country. *Sovetskaya Belorussiya*, issue No. 255 dated September 5, 2001, featured a reprint of Lukashenka's platform in contravention of the Electoral Code. The officially declared print run was 629,316 copies,

however, none of the 3,780,000 flats in Belarus failed to receive a copy of the paper. The publication of this special issue was, of course, financed from non-official funds provided to Lukashenka as candidate (the total sum of official funds would not even cover the officially declared print run). On September 4, Lukashenka held a meeting with voters in the Palace of the Republic, which was broadcast live on the radio and later twice on BT. This presentation was not on the approved schedule of candidate appearances drawn up by CEC.

The Electoral Code (Article 47, part 2) prohibits a candidate from "exerting influence upon citizens by promising them money or material goods." Alyaksandar Lukashenka violated the code precisely by resorted to this method during every meeting he held with the employees of enterprises, which were dutifully broadcast daily on BT. Usually, he promised to slash taxes on this particular company, assist in purchasing new equipment, etc. Lukashenka even presented a cow to an employee of the Mir Agricultural Complex in the Baranavichy district.

Moreover, the CEC ignored incidents of foreign nationals campaigning for Alyaksandar Lukashenka (Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, Gennadiy Zyuganov, Stanislav Govorukhin, Nadezhda Babkina, etc.).

VIOLATIONS DURING EARLY VOTING

The Electoral Code in Article 53, part 1, states that only voters that have no possibility to be present at their place of residence on election day are eligible to participate in early voting. There are no other legal avenues for early voting.

Nevertheless, officials resorted to open intimidation (threatening to fire, refuse bonus payments or scholarships, postpone holidays, expel from dormitories, etc.) to 'encourage' subordinates to vote early, going as far as requesting that they bring a receipt from an electoral commission testifying that they had done so.

Other violations of the Electoral Code that frequently occurred included refusing to provide information on early votes to observers,

not providing voter lists to observers and sabotaging the observation process under various pretexts.

VIOLATIONS ON ELECTION DAY AND DURING VOTE COUNTING

Just as during early voting, electoral commissions did not allow observers to familiarise themselves with voter lists and concealed data concerning voter frequency and the number of ballots received.

Voting at place of residence (at home) was characterised by major offences against the Electoral Code. Almost all the observers reported that the electoral commissions did not draw up special lists of voters who requested home voting, as required by the Code. Home voting was often reduced to combing flats in search for voters with electoral commission members carrying many more ballots than the number of applications they had received.

In contravention of the Electoral Code (Article 51, part 1), not all the ballot boxes were within eyesight of observers. Moreover, chairmen of electoral commissions usually flatly refused demands to abide by this law.

Voting reports were also manipulated. Members of electoral commissions attempted to fill them out in pencil or filled them out only after receiving permission from the higher-level electoral commission or local administration. Signed protocols were frequently rewritten after the commission chair returned from a meeting with a higher level commission. For obvious reasons, many local electoral commissions refused to publicly display a copy of their protocol as required by Article 55, part 13 of the Electoral Code.

Based on reported violations of the Electoral Code and observers' reports, voting results were forged in the following ways: a) by replacing ballots in early voting boxes; b) by intentionally miscounting votes in polling stations; c) by electoral commissions reporting false numbers in result protocols; and d) by fixing combined results in territorial commissions of districts and towns according to the numbers requested by local administrations.

LESSONS FROM THE 2001 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Andrey LYAKHOVICH

1. In 1999–2000, the Belarusian regime was weeding out opposition from the political field, which made Belarusian society lose trust in political parties and politicians of distinct political orientation.

Polls conducted in 2000 showed that only a politician with an independent image would have a reasonable chance to win the presidential election.

Question: "Who, in your opinion, should be the future Belarusian president?"	
Representative of the opposition	6.1%
Independent candidate	50.4%
Does not matter	40.1%

Source: IISEPS.

As weak as the democratic forces were, their election campaign was too important for the regime to ignore. Once again, Lukashenka's camp needed masters of subtle intrigue that would work with people while remaining in the shadows.

At the end of November 2000, a Lukashenka decree appointed Ural Latypaw as State Secretary of the Security Council. He was also appointed Lukashenka's campaign director. Under Latypaw, the Security Council turned into an analytical centre, and Sheyman's "men of forces" were replaced by people with KGB counterintelligence careers.

On September 12, 2001, Lukashenka expressly gave Latypaw credit for staging "an elegant and brilliant victory" and promoted Latypaw (to head of the presidential administration) and his team.

2. In March 2001, the balance of electoral forces became obvious:

Who will you vote for in the presidential election and who will you never vote for?			
	Will vote for	Will never vote for	Hard to say
Chyhir	17,9	45,1	37,0
Domash	8,1	46,2	45,7
Hancharyk	10,1	45,2	44,7
Haydukevich	4,0	50,6	45,4
Kalyakin	2,8	51,7	45,5
Kazbowski	4,8	48,8	46,4
Kryzhanowski	4,3	47,7	48,0
Lukashenka	39,8	36,4	23,8
Paznyak	6,3	59,7	34,0
Shitsyn	2,0	50,3	47,7
Yarashuk	2,6	49,2	48,2

Consider the outsiders among the five opposition candidates. Pavel Kazlowski and Syarhey Kalyakin had neither networks, nor resources, nor any significant voter support.

Colonel-General Kazlowski was dismissed as Defence Minister and reduced in rank by Lukashenka in July 1994 for "economic damage to the state." The "Kazlowski case" reverberated throughout society. Word had it that during the severe economic crisis Colonel-General Kazlowski used state funds to finance his son's wedding as well as post-wedding celebrations, which lasted several days and to which several hundred people were invited. Earlier, his son had jumped the queue and received a flat in a prestigious area of Minsk while one third of Belarusians did not have their own house or flat.

Polls showed that Belarusian society did not welcome a military president.

Question: "Who, in your opinion, should be the future Belarusian president?"	
Civilian	44.2%
Military (possibly retired)	5.1%
Does not matter	48.6%

Source: IISEPS.

3. When Uladzimir Hancharyk was nominated to be the single candidate, the regime started a smear campaign against him, portraying Hancharyk as a representative of the communist nomenclature.

Belarusian voters had a clear attitude to politicians of nomenclature background.

Question: "Who, in your opinion, should be the future Belarusian president?"	
Someone associated with the nomenclature	9.3%
Someone not associated with the nomenclature	32.3%
Does not matter	55.9%

Source: IISEPS.

Hancharyk's advisors also helped in increasing the effect of negative PR directed against their own candidate. Blind adherence to the chosen tactic consisting in accumulating positive poll ratings through the other candidates (particularly Alyaksandar Yarashuk and Mikhail Marynich) throwing their support to the single candidate backfired: in fact, it was their negative ratings that Hancharyk accumulated.

Lukashenka's propaganda machine skilfully intimidated the Belarusian public with threats of "nomenclature revenge" masterly referring to the decline in living standards in 1991-94, under the "absolute power of the nomenclature." Various media repeatedly propagated the stereotype into mass consciousness that "the old regime has already stolen enough, a new regime will only steal more."

Lukashenka's campaign machine emphasised the fact that in the

recent past united candidate Hancharyk had not been opposed to the establishment of a strict authoritarian regime. Moreover, as the leader of the Belarusian Federation of Trade Unions, he had not gained a reputation for being a "fighter for workers' rights." His statements concerning the deteriorating economic situation in the country and the worsening living standards of workers had not distinguished him from the other candidates. Only government pressure on the BFTU resulted in some of its leaders becoming more actively involved in politics.

Lukashenka was campaigning to assume the stature of a "nationally elected" president, therefore the third sector also fell within his political appetite. Non-governmental organisations became the target of another line of his smear campaign.

4. Hancharyk should not be referred to as the "united candidate of a broad civil coalition." Excluding Syamyon Domash, the other "united candidates" actually only represented themselves; there was neither a powerful organisation, nor a broad social base behind them. The collection of signatures is evidence of this. Only two candidates that were actually opposed to Lukashenka gathered enough signatures to register. It should also be noted that organisations more democratically orientated campaigned on behalf of Domash.

Hancharyk's selection as the single candidate resulted in Domash becoming a mere spectator of the election marathon, despite all declarations.

As a result, rather than nation-wide support, some segments of democratic voters felt alienated with Hancharyk as the single candidate. It is indicative that Lukashenka did not allow himself to personally criticise Hancharyk.

5. Although economic growth in Belarus slowed in 2001 (GDP increased a mere 3%), it nevertheless provided economic stability. State funds were distributed to back Lukashenka's popular pre-electoral promises. Slashed investments in fixed capital freed resources for social expenses (to increase salaries, pensions and other payments) and municipal improvements (downtown Minsk and all other regional centres underwent general renovation).

Opponents of Lukashenka's economic policy accused it of being inefficient, pointing out that average incomes in Poland amounted to \$ 350-400 against \$ 70-100 in Belarus. Official propaganda countered those attacks by pointing out that the unemployment rate in Poland was 15-20 % compared to 1-3 % in Belarus.

In this context, Lukashenka's promise to establish a \$ 250 monthly minimum wage by 2005, while keeping prices at current levels, did not strike the majority of Belarusians as fantastic.

6. The campaign of democratic forces lacked the positive component concerning a vision of the future in order to convince the public of the advantages of the socio-economic, cultural, international, interethnic and other policies to be pursued by a new, democratic government. Instead, the democratic camp resorted primarily to the use of negative PR.

Criticism of the regime was based on speculation surrounding the disappearance of opposition politicians Yury Zakharenka and Viktor Hanchar, entrepreneur Anatol Krasowski and the journalist Dzmitry Zavadski. Lukashenka was also indirectly accused of killing Henadz Karpenka. This criticism was extremely inefficient, as evidenced by a poll revealing that by election day 30% of voters knew nothing of the above-mentioned facts.

Until as late as mid-August, Hancharyk had not produced a platform (this document became available only 20 days before election day). Although it contained a rather well-formulated socio-economic section, Hancharyk avoided specifics while speaking at meetings about improving the socio-economic situation in the country. The single candidate did not address specific issues of vital concern for society.

7. A large portion of the election campaign of the democratic forces was directed against Lukashenka as a person (graffiti, stickers, caricatures in newspapers, etc.), which was neither socially or politically ethical. The exaggerated accent on Lukashenka's personality left the impression that his rivals were more opposed to him as a human being than as the founder of a crude authoritarian regime.