The Geopolitical Place of Belarus in Europe and the World

Edited by
Valer Bulhakau

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Andrzej S. Kamiński

INTRODUCTION

There can be no common measurement
If man cannot measure
his role in the world.
Czesław Miłosz, *Native Realm*

The materials from "The Geopolitical Place of Belarus in Europe and the World" conference are a collection of interpretations of socio-political activists and representatives of contemporary Belarusian culture, who took part in two days of roundtable debate and follow-up discussions. These materials will give readers, students, academics and ministry officials responsible for contacts with Belarus a chance to acquaint themselves with a wide range of interpretations concerning the current political, economic, social and cultural situation in the country currently dominated by Alaksandr Łukašenka. Even though no agreement exists among political scientists as to whether Łukašenka is Vladimir Putin's obedient puppet or an independent player, Łukašenka's control over the country is unquestionable.

Readers will notice that the varying interpretations concerning the situation in Belarus were not determined by the writers' allegiance to a particular state, but rather resulted from differing evaluations of the level of national consciousness (identities) in Belarusian society and different opinions on the effectiveness of the coercive system and the secret police (Belarusian KGB). I would like to emphasize that issue because it indicates the lack of a successful Iron Curtain dividing the Belarusian intellectuals from the rest of the world.

The fact that all the Belarusian participants at the conference, who expressed criticism of Łukašenka's regime to varying degrees, were all able to come to Warsaw forms an interesting aspect of the meandering

politics of Belarus, the explanation for which was the subject of the November conference. The image which emerged from the participants' statements was one of a country in which executive power has been completely consolidated in the hands of an autocratic president, while the all-powerful secret police quell, oppress and marginalize not simply democratic and national opposition, but all signs of disagreement with the prevailing regime. Contrary to its Polish and Slovak predecessors, opposition to Łukašenka had thus far been unable to find the universal slogans and symbols which could allow it to assume the role of the nation's spiritual leader. Not surprisingly, the discussions on this topic were often accompanied by bitter irony and sarcasm, concealing a deep feeling of helplessness.

The materials from this conference are an excellent source for readers seeking to learn about the current state of intellectual perspicacity, analytical proficiency, the sense of moral responsibility, and the political vision of opposition-oriented, Belarusian intellectuals. I do not expect that judgments expressed ten years from now will be as severe as contemporary internet discussions on conditions in Belarus, but such judgments will undoubtedly focus on what was missing from the opinions of the participants. This is not a question of topics omitted in the discussions, but one of forgotten or marginalized frames of reference that would cast a different light on the state of Belarusian identity.

In writing this introduction I would like to share two thoughts: one of them concerns the Belarusian past and, the other, the Belarusian future; however both of them are closely connected with Belarus' sense of national identity, which is currently undergoing an acute crisis. There are many causes for this situation, but, in my view, the most serious stems from the loss of Belarus' own history. The dying out of knowledge of Belarusian history is so advanced that according to research data from 1993 and 1994, Belarusian students from the seventh grade consider, along with Janka Kupała and Francišak Skaryna, Catherine The Great (sic!), Suvorov, and the murderer of the Polock Bascilians – Peter I – to be their national heroes. On the other hand, the same children mention Hitler and Gorbachev among the greatest criminals of the twentieth century. Gorbachev's crime was bringing about the collapse of the Soviet Union, while Stalin, whose victims exceed in number those of Hitler's by several fold, is mentioned only sporadically. In such a situation, the lack of references to Belarusian

history throughout the conference was painfully significant. Of course, this problem might have been altered by including two or three sessions on topics which, though of a strictly historical nature, might have contributed to understanding contemporary Belarus. The problem, however, was not in the number of historians represented at the conference, but in the insufficient historical awareness of the political scientists, economists and sociologists who were present.

Perhaps I am being unfair to the guests of the Institute of Civic Space and Public Policy at the Lazarski School of Commerce and Law, but let me note that, during the discussions, when Barbara Skinner, a professor from Indiana University, drew the participants' attention to the absence of the above mentioned references to the past while analyzing the present and making prognoses, her remark evoked no response from the participants. Therefore, one has the impression that despite the efforts of such historians as Hienadź Sahanovič, Andrej Katlarčuk, and Aleś Kraucevič, no one regards the war they have waged to recover Belarusian national history as a sine qua non in the battle against the entrenched Soviet-style regime in Minsk.

For most of Belarus' neighbors (as for the majority of Europeans) national history provides a treasure chest of arguments that can be used to support present-day political debate (ideas). By correlating political arguments with *national* patterns of behaviors, informed by centuries of experience, one can give them greater seriousness, as well as justify enormous risks and allow oneself to curse or grant absolution in the name of one's forbearers. Of course, politicians prefer to listen to political scientists, economists, sociologists, and public opinion researchers rather than to historians, because by doing so they can reduce the amount of data upon which they make decisions. No great political debate, however, has ever avoided invoking the voice of one's predecessors. That voice, and moreover, the understanding of its importance, has always accompanied every major political party and every influential intellectual circle.

In Russia, the debate over the reforms introduced by Peter I divided the intellectuals into two opposing groups, which propagated completely different social and political programs in the nineteenth and even the twentieth century. Joseph Stalin, by referencing the figures of Ivan the Terrible and Peter I in his directives sought to justify his own role in the history of the country. Putin, who is constantly strengthening his autocratic government, wants to erect monuments commemorating Dzerzhinskii

rather than Emelian Pugachev. Moreover Putin's pride in his own national history does not significantly differ in power or ideological expression from that of Karamzin.

In Poland, during the preparations for the 1000th anniversary of the baptism of Poland, Gomułka lost the battle over the understanding of national history to Cardinal Wyszyński. In its own historical mythology, Solidarity associated itself with the heroic Confederacy of Bar, singing the Confederacy's religious songs and printing its patriotic poems. To this day, proponents of the supremacy of executive power caution their audiences against the dangers of widespread political anarchy associated with the *szlachta*, while their opponents continually note that certain, basic, modern principles of democracy and religious tolerance were created in the 16th century in the territories of present-day Poland, Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine. For Hungarians, on the other hand, an almost pious respect for the crown of St Stephen has been used to justify their policies towards Slavs and Romanians. One could continue to cite such examples, such as the importance of the 1848 heroes for those participating in the heated days preceding the Hungarian Uprising of 1956. Further, we might mention the weighty significance that the battle of Kosovo Field continues to hold of Serbs, or that Jan Hus and the Prague defenestration in 1618 evoke in Czechs. There is no need to provide further examples to convince my readers that our contemporaries employ history to justify their political choices. In such a situation, attempts to win control or interpretative dominance (esp. in school textbooks, radio speeches, and television content) are an inseparable element in the fight to gain political power. One may despair over this vested interest in violating historical truth, one could extol historical truth and objectivism, but one cannot deny the importance of historical awareness in the life of any nation.

It is well known that the winners (e.g. empires) take upon themselves the burden of writing the history of conquered nations. This imperial vision often acquires widely accepted academic recognition, a kind of academic patina. Until this day, it has been extremely difficult for historians from the conquered countries of the former Russian Empire and the Soviet Union to introduce their own anti-imperial vision of their national history to the world. This incessant fight about history and its interpretation is both an internal fight and a fight about sovereignty, or even about survival. In that fight a nation may forfeit its language and still survive, as did the

Irish, but we must remember that that nation never introduced English heroes to their national pantheon. Naturally, the moment we start to think independently and begin to sort out our accumulated stereotypes, we have to critically revise many national myths. Those myths that still survive, link us – by their universalism – to the world, and – by their national tinge – to the shadow of our ancestors. Taking up the fight to preserve national history and culture appears to be one of the most vital tasks facing not only Belarusian, but all proponents of individual and national autonomy must face.

Nowadays a large number of Belarusians, despite their aversion to NATO, are willing to join the European Union. I do not know how many of the proponents of joining the EU are aware that, for their country, such an endeavor would not be an expedition into the unknown, but a return to the civilization in which their ancestors participated for over 300 years.

It is worth mentioning here that Belarusian Europeans of those days were not necessarily the Chreptowiczes, Sapiehas, Ogińskis, Pociejowes, Pacows, Bilewiczes or Tyszkiewiczes who participated in public life and took posts in the Senate, but there were also numerous Orthodox and Uniate priests such as Meleti Smotrytskii, Semeon Polocki, Hipacy Pociej, Jozef Welamin Rucki, Antoni Sielawa, Jakub Susza, Rafael Korsak and many more, including no less than Piotr Mohila, who belonged to two, if not three, European cultural circles. All of these men were fluent, both in speaking and in writing, not only in their own, rich language, but in the universal language of the time – Latin, as well as Polish and, not uncommonly, Greek. Their works and abundant collections of letters display such high intellectual standards, original thoughts, biting wit and excellent understanding of the world and human nature, that these authors continue to surprise scholars to this day. Most of them felt equally at home in Rome, on Mount Athos, in the capital city of Vilnius, or in the proverbial Smorgonie of the Sapiehas. It is not their fault that most of their descendants are less familiar with their work than with those authors officially recognized by the East and West.

Many educators from Belarusian Jesuit schools, or like Bazyli Rudomycz, scholars from Zamoyski Academy were unquestionably Europeans. The works of the latter, as far as I know, have never been translated into the Belarusian language, despite the fact that his enormous, extremely

interesting diary, resembling in parts that of Samuel Pepys, was written in three languages: Latin, old Belarusian and Polish, depending on the mood of the Rector Magnus. Investigating the choice of topics, emotions or passions which determined his choice of language might reveal many unknown aspects about seventeenth century Belarusian identity.

The burghers of the great and small towns of Belarus were also Europeans who knew how to defend their personal and self-governing rights. Even more interesting, a consciousness of human rights and dignity existed not only among the Cossacks of Ukraine, but also among Belarusian, Uniate peasants, a fact which becomes obvious when reading the paper included in this volume by Barbara Skinner. One could debate the extent to which the material quoted by Barbara Skinner reflects only the consciousness of the clergy and to what extent such consciousness penetrated into the minds of average citizens; however it cannot be denied that, Belarus made itself, by its own efforts, a country of civic space. What is immensely impressive is the civic consciousness of Belarusian townspeople, their respect and belief in the effectiveness of the law, their attachment to their municipal government, which they fiercely defended, and their great religious tolerance. I cannot refrain from supporting my opinions with the voices of the seventeenth century townspeople of Mohilev, Orsha, Vitebsk, and Krichev which were published over 100 years ago in Saint Petersburg as Akty Otnosiashchijesia k Istorii Juzhnoj i Zapadnoj Rosii sobrannyje i izdannyje Archieograficheskieju Komissieju (Acts relating to the History of the Southern and Eastern Russian Empire), v.14 (supplement to v.3) St Petersburg 1889. The material that I will emply comes from the fourth volume, entitled: The Unification of Belarus, 1654–1655:

Let me begin by providing some background and context. In 1654, after accepting Bohdan Khmel'nets'kyi's Ukraine as a province subject to his rule, the father of Peter I, tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich, marched off to subjugate the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and its Baltic ports. To justify his military conquest, he described it as a religious crusade, which was meant to bring liberation to Orthodox believers suffering Egyptian slavery, to destroy the union, to annul the public cult of the Catholics and Evangelicals, and to bring death, slavery or exile to the Jews. Readers interested in more information on this subject should refer to a well-known book by Hienadź Sahanovič (Nieviadomaya Wojna – The Unknown War), for I will concentrate only on certain basic facts. The Tsar issued decrees

and wrote personal letters in which he summoned Orthodox bishops, Orthodox noblemen and townspeople to support his army in the war against the enemies of Orthodoxy, i.e. Polish pagan heretics of the Latin rite. He called upon the representatives of all the bishoprics, towns and provinces to come to his military headquarters to take an oath of loyalty. While the tsar's army was besieging Smolensk, large Muscovite forces, backed up by Khmel'nets'kyi's Cossacks, set forth to capture Belarusian towns. Messengers from Smolensk were sent to all the towns and villages to convince the Orthodox citizens to open their gates. This, however, was not an easy task. In all the towns where the citizens were forced, following a defense of any length, to open their gates, even in Mohilev, the most submissive town, the burghers stoutly demanded that their hitherto existing legal situation be maintained. They opened the gates only when their conditions were accepted. Obviously, these burghers were afraid to share the fate of the "tiaglei" people inhabiting the tsar's towns; they feared the arbitrariness of the officials and representatives of the tsar's government. The Orthodox townspeople wanted to maintain the very way of life from which the Orthodox tsar planned to liberate them. For this reason, they demanded the preservation of their elected municipal government and their municipal courts of justice; moreover, they insisted on maintaining the rights of people of different religions, or at minimum, a guarantee that such people could safely leave for Lithuania or Poland. Townspeople further requested consent to dress in their own manner, rather than that of Muscovy. The conditions for surrender of every town sounded very similar. Before deciding to surrender, townspeople sometimes requested permission to send messengers to Smolensk and other cities under siege in order to make a collective decision; sometimes they promised to surrender only if other towns surrendered as well.

Thus we see that this uninvited "liberator" was not greeted with an enthusiastic response. For further confirmation of this fact, let us turn to the voices of the townspeople themselves: "We bow down to Your Tsarish Majesty and request that, in accordance with the public pledges of the tsar, all the rights and privileges of the city of Mohilev be preserved in their entirety, and that all the burghers living in Mohilev be judged without alteration according to their rights and privileges under the Magdeburg code of law, with one court as well as an annually elected mayor, town councilors, jurors, and a reeve. If someone should not be satisfied with

a ruling, then he must not appeal to any other court than to His Tsarish Majesty's, and only in cases of great significance." (p. 260). "In order that the major, town councilors and juries as well as burgemeister have to be elected by the burghers as a whole from the city's population which is to be judged only by their own in the high court which has to rule in accordance with Magdeburg law. If someone is displeased with the court's decision, their only recourse for appeal is to the throne of Your Tsarish Majesty." (p. 413). Notably, the Krichevian townspeople, wrote to the Tsar, bowing down before "Your Tsarish Majesty, requesting that we retain all the privileges and liberties bestowed upon the people of Krichev by Polish kings of glorious memory". (p. 413) The people of Krichev, as with other cities, did not fail to intercede on behalf of their Jewish co-citizens in their hour of greatest danger. "We bow to Your Tsarish Majesty to request that the vice captains safely, and with all their possessions, as well as the Jews who inhabit Krichev, be allowed to leave Lithuania, or, if Your Tsarish Majesty allows, to remain in Krichev". (p. 416) A similar request concerning the vice captains and the Jews was issued by the citizens of Mohilev, the outcome of which was the subject of a later investigation. (p. 370–380) For the representatives of Vitebsk province, a condition of their ceasing battle and submitting to the tsar was the right to escort the Jews and noblemen out of the city protected by armed guard. (p. 292) Finally, it should be observed that the citizens of Mohilev, like citizens of other cities, bowed to the Tsarish Majesty in order to be granted the right to dress according to their ancient traditions. (p. 261)

These demands were so common and so similar that one cannot fail to perceive that, during the battles of Smolensk, Krichev, Vitebsk, Orsha, Mscislav and Old Bykhov, there was also a clash between the ideas, customs, and social and political structures represented by the East and the civilization that today we call Western, a civilization which, from the sixteenth century, was deeply rooted in the Dnieper area. The Russian tsar, Russian laws, and Russian customs were, in spite of their common Orthodox faith, foreign and unwanted in these lands. Those who defended Belarus against Aleksei Mikhailovich's army were mainly identified by Russians of the time, as evidenced by our source, as neither Lachy (a pejorative term for Pole) nor Lithuanians, but as Belarusians.

Delivering the annual Dinur lecture at Hebrew University in Jerusalem in 1976, I referred to the behavior of the townspeople and the Belarusian

population in general towards the Jews during the period of Moscow's invasion. My lecture evoked surprise (such surprise always results when stereotypes are questioned, especially with the help of experts such as Simon Dubnow), which underscores the fact that this moment in Belarusian history does not deserve to fall into oblivion and, moreover, should be included in all books on to the history of European civic societies. Europe needs that kind of civic tradition to enrich its seventeenth century history, which otherwise is represented rather poorly by the history of France and Spain.

Towards the end of eighteenth century, the borders of European civilization, which up to that time had been secured by Magdeburg law, statutes and constitutions, as well as self-government, in cities, provinces, and parliaments, were pushed further west as imperial powers succeeded in destroying civic societies. In the nineteenth century, Western Europeans and even Belarusians began to forget that, in the past, because of Magdeburg law, local self-government, the Lithuanian Statute, and the Lithuanian Tribunal the borders of Europe extended to the Dnieper. A Russian who crossed that border in 1696 was utterly bewildered, as one can easily discover by reading The Travel Diary of Peter Tolstoi (specifically, his arrival and description of Mohilev). Two hundred years of tsarist rule, followed by the reign of Soviet Russia, destroyed and warped the memory of Belarus' European heritage. Currently the line between Europe and Dugin's Eurasia does not run along country borders, but along a line marked by the symbols of different values. Hussers eschatology of the European spirit does not tolerate any symbols of totalitarianism, and it ceases to apply in places where Lenin's monuments still stand today, places that have forgotten the gulags and the famine holocaust, places where the symbols of the red star, the hammer and the sickle are still ubiquitous. Fighting against those symbols is just as crucial as fighting against symbols of fascism: both Soviet and fascist symbols served, and continue to serve those who want to destroy the world of human rights, tolerance, self government and democracy. The line marked by Lenin's monuments divides not only the Belarusians, but Ukrainians and Russians as well. The fact that the line has existed for a long time does not help the efforts of those who, if for purely pragmatic reasons, would like to enjoy the advantages of the European Union.

The euphoria of the Orange Revolution has died out recently, and the paeans to Viktar Yushchenko have ceased. The dramatic and important

victory of the Ukrainian opposition has been undermined not only by the continued power of the oligarchs, the petty infighting of the leaders, and the influence of a powerful secret police, but also by the confusion caused by conflicting systems of values and the distance between the individual and his/her ability to influence the government, even at the local level of neighborhood, town, or municipality. The Ukrainians, consciously trying to restore the tradition of civic society, which has yet to be realized, are turning to the history of the Cossacks and parliamentary participation under Austrian rule. Similarly, Belarusians could turn to the civic traditions of Polock, Vitebsk, Krichev or Sluck. Acquainting themselves more closely with this tradition would help all participants in self-government who are struggling to build a democratic system from scratch. Moreover, focusing on the spiritual values and conscious moral choices (of their predecessors), mentioned several times during the conference, appears to be a good direction towards finding Europe. Without any significant change in Belarusian national consciousness, any centrally-made political changes will bring results important only to a victorious elite and powerful interest groups.

Freedom imported from abroad is always dangerous. The so-called liberation of Central and Eastern Europe by the Red Army brought only a new occupation and the loss of sovereignty under a government of communist collaborators (who, unfortunately, are never in deficit in any political system). Rules and regulations meant to create a civic society equally pose a danger, if introduced from the outside. The twentieth century history of postcolonial countries and the current experience in Iraq appear to be exceptionally clear examples of this theory. Nevertheless, many nations have in their own culture, traditions and history a period or a brief moment of democratic practice, ideas and experience, which could serve as foundations for attempts to build a system of self-government appropriate to their conditions and customs. The establishment of this self-government could, in turn, contribute to creating a sense of citizenship and a real democracy that controls both executive power and the parliament.

Belarusians, unlike many other nations, have a very rich tradition of civic rights and self-government. They have many reasons to be proud when looking at their distant ancestors. Belarusians currently know very little about their predecessors, but that is a different issue and one that can be overcome without much difficulty. We should, however, no longer passively

tolerate imposed, pedagogical ignorance and degrading lies. Belarusians could still choose the road to Eurasia, out of indifference, intellectual laziness, decades of acquired habits and the fear of the unknown. All the residents of Belarus, who still grieve at the collapse of the Soviet Union, have already gone a long way down that path. Even those Belarusians who are not offended by that thoughtlessly tolerated idiocy, the loss of their national language, will also find that path, even if they hope to become Russian-speaking Europeans. The remainder will hopefully try to resume a spiritual connection with their forefathers who were able to draw up the Lithuanian Statutes and defend themselves against the father of Peter I. They must do it by themselves. Without such an effort, any attempts at modernity and transformation à la Balcerowicz or Majdan will rest on a very brittle foundation.

Andrzej S. Kamiński

I.

BELARUS AS A GEOPOLITICAL PARIAH

Ethan S. Burger[1]

THE DIVERGENCE BETWEEN DECLARATORY AND ACTION POLICY: U.S. NON-RECOGNITION OF THE RESULTS OF THE BELARUSIAN MARCH 2006 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

"There will be no rose, orange or banana revolutions [in Belarus]."
Alaksandr Łukašenka
Quoted in Itar-Tass Russia and CIS News Summary
January 8, 2005

Introduction

The United Nations has in excess of 180 members. Yet from a practical perspective, there are arguably only about 40 countries in the world. The remaining states are merely territories ruled by elites whose principal objectives are their own enrichment and the perpetuation of their own

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power. These ruling elites generally show little concern for the rights and needs of the individuals who inhabit the land-areas they purport to govern.

Nonetheless, international law regards the nation-state (country) as being the principal actor in international affairs. It is treated as a sovereign entity that enjoys certain rights that have developed over time from tradition and treaty. This paper briefly examines the logic of this system. In doing so it outlines developments in one country.

What is unusual about this country is that it is not widely regarded as a "failed state". Rather, it is a dictatorship as the term is commonly understood. It does not pose a military threat to its neighbors. Furthermore, its ruling regime, in most respects is less reprehensible in its conduct than occurs in many other locales. What is different in this case is that the state in question lies on the eastern border of the European Union and NATO – not in some remote part of the world. Perhaps as a result, it is judged according to different standards than most states in the world.

These standards are defensible as they arise from obligations that the state itself undertook to observe. As an American philosopher and writer observed "Foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of small minds". Indeed, Belarus represents a special case – perhaps due to its strategic importance or because many of its neighbors view the direction of the country as representing a litmus test for countries undergoing political and economic transformations.

Initial Thoughts on Łukašenka's Rise to and Consolidation of Power

It is often overlooked that Łukašenka was elected Belarusian President in 1994 in what was generally regarded as a fair election. He did not seize power by force, though Europe knows of other dictators who obtained and consolidated power in a quasi-legal manner. Łukašenka brings order to Belarus in the sense of stability, through the application of force deemed necessary; not through the rule of law.[2]

[2] The author thanks Kennan Institute Director Blair Ruble for making this distinct at an event examining the rules of Belarus March 2006 "Elections".

Andrew Wilson explains in his book *Virtual Politics: Faking Democracy in the Post-Soviet World*, that many of the other leaders of the USSR's successor states, like Łukašenka, feel compelled to hold elections and establish a system of government that seemingly is based on a form of constitutional rule. This actually is a vestige of the Soviet era, where the leaders still felt compelled to hold elections to the country's Supreme Soviet (legislature).

Nonetheless, despite the sense that the pretense of elections is necessary, Łukašenka and his agents don't feel any compunction from violating the law when it serves their purposes – the government functions as a tool of control. The regime has benefited from the "selective disappearance" of opposition leaders like former Deputy Chairman of the Belarusian legislature Viktar Hančar and former Minister of the Interior Yury Zakharanko.

Łukašenka pursues a policy of harassing opposition political leaders and suppresses (or eliminates) the independent media within the country. He is generally clever in that he traditionally ran a jail with the door open. Those unhappy with his rule were until recently free to leave. Students could study (and stay) abroad – there were to be no refusniks or martyrs if possible. Łukašenka's Belarus worked towards the ideal of driving the opposition abroad by depriving them of the resources necessary to challenge his actions.

Elections Without Real Political Debate

It is a rare occurrence when a ruler permits elections without feeling confident that the results he wants are guaranteed. Łukašenka was not an exception to this principle. On September 9, 2001, Belarus held its first presidential election under the 1996 Constitution. Not surprisingly, Łukašenka was able to orchestrate a decisive "victory". He allegedly won 75.66 percent of those votes counted. An extraordinary 83.86 percent of the 6,169,087 Belarusian electorate allegedly cast ballots. The opposition decided to back a compromise candidate, trade union leader Uladzimer Hančaryk. The principal rationales for combining their forces behind Hančaryk were that he was a known "commodity" to the generally risk adverse Belarusian electorate and would not be viewed as a threat by Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Ultimately, Goncharik allegedly received only 15.65 percent of the vote. Over 6 percent voted against all the candidates. The OSCE concluded that the elections were neither fair nor free – that they violated Belarus' OSCE commitments and other international standards. Its criticisms covered both the campaigning and voting process. The fact that the allegedly "independent" Belarusian Central Election Commission (CEC) announced the final "results" only hours after the polls closed is but one of the factors pointing to the large scale state intimidation and fraud that occurred during pre-election day voting as well as during election day voting on September 9, 2003. The use of unnumbered paper ballots made it fairly easy to fix the results.

While the opposition was not naïve about their ability to win an outright victory over Łukašenka given its lack of resources and access to the people through the state controlled media, it seemed genuinely surprised by Łukašenka's ability to manipulate the process to the extent he did. Opposition exit polling suggested that they had succeeded in denying Łukašenka a majority of votes cast; thus a run-off would have been required.

In 2001, the Belarusian opposition's hope and ultimate disillusion was palpable. Opposition election observers submitted petitions to international election observers identifying acts of fraud and intimidation in the vain hope that their actions might have some impact. They were to learn that Łukašenka would seek and obtain a decisive electoral victory to demoralize the opposition and silence his critics abroad.

Certain Factors Facilitating Łukašenka's Consolidation of Power

Two days after the Belarusian election, the world was changed by the events of 9/11 and their consequences. Belarus largely fell off the radar screen of most Western government officials. The long anticipated "peace dividend" disappeared and the stock market dropped. International human rights organizations found that their financial sponsors had fewer grants to give.

In the following years, Łukašenka took steps to deprive the opposition of an infrastructure from which to mount a challenge. Increasingly, he relied on the legal system to intimidate the Belarusian press by bringing actions for "slander" and closing down publications for minor transgressions. As

repression increased, a greater number of people feared the consequences for their families if they continued their activism.

The Belarusian government expanded its control over Belarusian society by frequently denying the registration of non-governmental organizations that might "harbor" opposition supporters and give them a means of financial support. With domestic human rights groups finding themselves with fewer resources, many organizations became less effective, or simply disappeared.

At the same time, many of those who had hoped to change the Belarusian political scene became demoralized. Many left for opportunities in the West, often in the academic world. Others moved to Russia in pursuit of a materially better life for themselves and their families.

Obtaining a Compliant Legislature and the Right to be President for Life

One way to ensure a pliant legislature is to prevent the opposition from placing its candidates on the ballot. The allegedly independent CEC validated only 26 of 58 of the opposition United Civic Party (UCP) candidates and 20 of 30 Belarusian National Front candidates. The CEC most frequently cited missing documents or inaccurate financial statements as the basis for its action. Ultimately, the CEC rejected 313 of 912 individuals who sought to be candidates to a largely powerless legislative body.

The composition of the pool of candidates should be discussed. Most opposition supporters would probably be reluctant to run out of fear of possible negative ramifications for themselves and their families. Of those who nonetheless chose to run, were they doing so to "make a statement", or did they believe that they actually had the possibility of being elected? One can only speculate on their motives.

In 166 cases, candidates' petitions were denied at the District Election Commission (DEC) level of which the CEC reinstated 43. Of the total of 123 candidates who were denied registration and appealed to the Belarusian Supreme Court, only two were reinstated. Subsequently, the DECs deregistered candidates just prior to election day. Many other candidates decided to withdraw. This left 10 election districts with only one candidate.

After several years during which the OSCE was not permitted to freely operate in Belarus, the Łukašenka government decided that it served its interests to have the OSCE observe its legislative elections. If the OSCE were to find the elections complied with international norms, it would be a great propaganda coup. Alternatively, if the OSCE were to find that the elections were not satisfactory, the Belarusian government would have the opportunity to argue that the observers were biased, acting beyond its mandate and interfering in Belarus' domestic affairs.

The Belarusian government also delayed finalizing its decision to permit OSCE observers (both long and short-term) operating under the auspices of OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). Given the delay in inviting the OSCE to send observers, it proved particularly difficult for the OSCE to fulfill its mission. The OSCE Observation Mission began its work in Belarus on August 30, 2004 Ambassador Audrey Glover of the United Kingdom and the ODIHR did their best to prepare under severe time constrains. Ultimately, 38 OSCE member states sent approximately 270 observers to cover a country almost the same size as Poland.

Having decided to invite the OSCE to send election observers, Łukašenka announced his September 7th surprise. In addition to holding the legislative elections, the Belarusian electorate were to be asked whether Łukašenka should be permitted to run for President at the conclusion of his current term (recall, he was elected first in 1994 under the post-independence Constitution, which had replaced the Soviet-era document and again in 2001 under the amended 1996 Constitution). The referendum's text could not be described as artful prose. According to the Belarusian Embassy's Washington website: the question the Belarusian citizenry was to consider was:

"Do you allow the first President of the Republic of Belarus Alaksandr Grigoryevich Łukašenka to participate in the presidential election as a candidate for the post of the President of the Republic of Belarus and do you accept Part I of Article 81 of the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus in the wording that follows, "The President shall be elected directly by the people of the Republic of Belarus for a term of five years by universal, free, equal, direct, and secret ballot".

The wording of the referendum is interesting in a number of respects. First, it overlooks the fact that Šuškevič's was the first *de facto,* albeit

not *de jure* president of Belarus, not Łukašenka.[3] If the question was considering only the 1996 Constitution, then Łukašenka would have been permitted to run for re-election in any event in 2006. Second, there is no term limitation of any type in Article 81; that is, Łukašenka can run for an indefinite number of times. Third, since a referendum to the 1996 Belarusian Constitution requires 50 percent plus 1 vote of the electorate; while to be elected president, the candidate need only 50 percent plus 1 of the number of citizens voting, why would Łukašenka choose this time to hold the referendum?

According to some observers, since the 2001 Belarusian Presidential Election, Łukašenka's popularity had fallen. If this were indeed the case, why take the risk of holding the referendum when Łukašenka could arguably run for re-election under the 1996 Constitution pursuant to which he had only been elected once?

An aspect of the referendum that makes the situation complex is accurately determining the size of the Belarus electorate. If Belarusian nationals abroad are considered part of the electorate, Łukašenka might have created a very high hurdle for himself. In 2001, the Belarusian electorate numbered 6,169,087 Belarusians. With the aging of the population, had the size decreased? In addition, one might think that as the oldest segment of the population gets older, the likelihood of their voting could decrease.

According to CEC Chairperson Lidzija Jarmošyna, Łukašenka received support from 86.2 percent of those who voted. According to Jarmošyna, this figure corresponds to 77.2 percent of the Belarusian electorate. According to exit polls conducted by an organization established by Gallup, Łukašenka received only 48.4 percent of the vote (and a lower percentage of the electorate). While exit polling, particularly in a country such as Belarus may be misleading (to say nothing of a country such as the U.S.), it is not surprising that the opposition raised accusations of large-scale fraud.

If fraud did occur, how was it committed? BBC television filmed poll workers handing out referendum ballots already marked "za" [yes] on the referendum. The Central Election Commission did not comment on the BBC film. Second, the "early voting" ballot boxes, which were used to

[3] In fact, Prime Minister Kebič exercised the greatest power under the original 1994 Constitution.

collect ballots voted by citizens in the five days prior to election day, were obviously stuffed as many of them could not be fully closed. The fact that such ballots were kept in safes overnight during the pre-voting period can be of little comfort that ballot stuffing did not occur.[4] There seemed to be no system in place to confirm that the number of ballots used in fact equaled the number counted. Since the paper ballots were not numbered, it would be exceedingly difficult to reconstruct whether Belarusian voters in fact cast the ballots counted.

According to Ambassador Glover there were "police raids on campaign offices, the detention of a candidate, campaign workers and domestic observers, as well as numerous reports of coercion on certain groups, particularly students, to vote. The dominant influence of the State administration was apparent at all levels of the election process".

Significantly, unlike 2001 many of the so-called "domestic observers" did not seem to be tied politically to a party or interest group. They generally did not take notes. Actually, in many polling stations, it was not possible for the domestic observers to monitor the voting process, much less the counting process.

This tends to suggest that in the three years since the 2001 Presidential Election, Łukašenka has been successful in (i) intimidating the opposition, and (ii) improving his control over the allegedly independent election commissions. OSCE officially was not observing the referendum since it did not have sufficient time to put in place a system for monitoring the referendum voting. OSCE observers were, however, told that they were to take into account the impact of the referendum on the legislative voting. In most cases the pro-Łukašenka candidate (invariably not officially affiliated with any political party), had on the informational poster, made available at the precinct, language indicating that such candidate favored the adoption of the memorandum.

Of the 110 legislative races where a candidate received a majority of the vote, the opposition candidates did not win a single seat. In two districts, no one candidate received the necessary 50 percent +1 of those actually voting to win, and under Belarusian law, it would be necessary to hold a run-off.

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[4] Russian Central Election Commission Head Alaksandr Veshniakov has made certain statements where he indicated that the Belarusian electoral authorities manipulated the pre-voting process to ensure favorable election outcomes.

Just two days after the voting Belarusian riot police carried out violent attacks on a number of leading Belarusian opposition figures and journalists following a political demonstration in Minsk. UCP Chairman Anatol Labiedźka was hospitalized as a result of his injuries. Belarusian Social Democratic Party Chairman Mikałaj Statkevič and the former Malady Front Chairman Paveł Sieviarniec were, together with about 40 other persons, arrested or detained. Łukašenka's lack of tolerance for any dissent or acts that may be viewed as disloyal was cogently demonstrated by the dismissal of State Security Chairmen Leanid Yeryn for having met with opposition activists and independent journalists.

After nearly three years, both chambers of the U.S. Congress unanimously passed the Belarus Democracy Act (BDA), introduced in the Senate by Jesse Helms (R-NC). The BDA did not have a natural domestic constituency with political influence. Nonetheless, the U.S. Helsinki Commission Co-Chairmen Congressman Christopher Smith (R-NJ) and Senator Benjamin Nighthorse Campbell (R-CO) fought over the years to keep the BDA alive since it was the right thing to do. The law was signed into law by President Bush in 2004.[5] Currently, Congress is considering a new bill to reauthorize the BDA that not only will refine

[5] Section 2 of the Belarus Democracy Act sets forth 13 "Findings". They are set forth below:

(1) The United States supports the promotion of democracy, respect for human rights, and the rule of law in the Republic of Belarus consistent with its commitments as a participating state of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

(2) The United States has a vital interest in the independence and sovereignty of the Republic of Belarus and its integration into the European community of democracies.

(3) In November 1996, Łukašenka orchestrated an illegal and unconstitutional referendum that enabled him to impose a new constitution, abolish the duly elected parliament, the 13th Supreme Soviet, install a largely powerless National Assembly, and extend his term of office to 2001.

(4) Democratic forces in Belarus have organized peaceful demonstrations against the Łukašenka regime in cities and towns throughout Belarus that led to beatings, mass arrests, and extended incarcerations.

(5) Viktar Hančar, Anatol Krasoŭski, and Yury Zakharanko, who have been leaders and supporters of the democratic forces in Belarus, and Dźmitry Zavadski, a journalist known for his critical reporting in Belarus, have disappeared and are presumed dead.

(6) Former Belarus Government officials have come forward with credible allegations and evidence that top officials of the Łukašenka regime were involved in the disappearances.

the language of the bill and make some of its sanctions stricter; it also will explicitly provide funding for anti-Łukašenka programs. This bill is currently designated H.R. 5948.

Łukašenka apparently views the BDA as a direct challenge to his remaining in power. He feared the consequences of increased foreign radio broadcasts ending his control over the information heard by the Belarusian population. At the same time, the BDA allowed Łukašenka to complain about foreign interference in Belarus' domestic affairs and make claims that the opposition was merely acting at the behest of foreign interests.

Łukašenka's Anxiety over Developments in Ukraine

The Ukrainian 2004 Presidential Election's outcome clearly disturbed Łukašenka. While the situation in Ukraine was significantly different (e.g. no incumbent president running for president, an independent judiciary, a more active press, and a proliferation of non-governmental organizations), Łukašenka did not want to take any chances.

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(7) The Belarusian authorities have mounted a major systematic crackdown on civil society through the closure, harassment, and repression of nongovernmental organizations, and independent trade unions.
(8) The Belarusian authorities actively suppress freedom of speech and expression, including engaging in systematic reprisals against independent media.
(9) The Łukašenka regime has reversed the revival of Belarusian language and culture, including through the closure of the National Humanities Lyceum, the last remaining high school where classes were taught in the Belarusian language.
(10) The Łukašenka regime harasses the autocephalic Belarusian Orthodox Church, the Roman Catholic Church, the Jewish community, the Hindu Lights of Kalyasa community, evangelical Protestant churches (such as Baptist and Pentecostal groups), and other minority religious groups.
(11) The Law on Religious Freedom and Religious Organizations, passed by the National Assembly and signed by Łukašenka on October 31, 2002, establishes one of the most repressive legal regimes in the OSCE region, severely limiting religious freedom and placing excessively burdensome government controls on religious practice.
(12) The parliamentary elections of October 15, 2000, and the presidential election of September 9, 2001, were determined to be fundamentally unfair and nondemocratic.
(13) The Government of Belarus has made no substantive progress in addressing criteria established by the OSCE in 2000, ending repression and the climate of fear, permitting a functioning independent media, ensuring transparency of the elections process, and strengthening of the functions of parliament.

To reduce the risk that the Belarusian political opposition might be able to organize, he arranged for Parliament to move the date of the next presidential election up by four months from July to March 2006. This action produced numerous results. It further denied the atomized Belarusian opposition a real opportunity to organize a campaign. It reduced the likelihood of spontaneous anti-regime demonstrations in the cold weather. It also meant that the election was to be held a week before the Ukrainian legislative elections. Furthermore, there was little likelihood that the members of the G-8 would assign the situation in Belarus (as opposed to energy) a prominent place on the agenda of the forthcoming G-8 Meeting in St. Petersburg.

Yet, the so-called "Orange Revolution" may have made some Belarusians think that political change in Belarus is possible.[6] Of course, hope is a two-edged sword. If expectations are not met, disillusionment may set it. Hope also may give rise to a lack of caution that can produce unfortunate consequences.

The Opposition's Campaign for the Hearts and Minds of the Belarusian People

There is an old saying that it takes one charismatic lunatic to turn thirty cowards into a fighting force. It would seem that Łukašenka had taken all necessary measures to ensure that such an individual would not emerge in Belarus. The opposition lacked a candidate of great stature with the Belarusian people who would have the ability to wage an aggressive campaign. Most of the political opposition narrowly decided to throw their support to a single unified candidate – Alaksandr Milinkievič, a former docent at the University of Grodno later Grodno's deputy mayor. Milinkievič narrowly edged out the leader of the best organized opposition party, Anatol Labiedźka, of the United Civic Party. Before the election, some European leaders and senior officials of international organizations met with Milinkievič to signal that they preferred him to Łukašenka.

[6] Ukrainian President Yushchenko's inability to form a government that supported the purported goals of the EU remains a reminder that it is still premature to write a thorough history of the Orange Revolution.

Milinkievič in his public statements indicated that he had no doubt that Łukašenka had already taken steps to make the voting a mere formality. He thus called on supporters not to regard winning the elections as the goal of the campaign, but to convince the Belarusian people opposed to Łukašenka that in the future it would be possible to achieve a peaceful regime change, though most likely led by others.

One unexpected feature of the campaign was the emergence of former Belarus State University Rector Alaksandr Kazulin as a candidate who was willing to express his hostility to Łukašenka. Kazulin attempted to attend the All Belarusian People's Congress, but was prevented by the Belarusian authorities and subsequently assaulted and arrested. He was, nonetheless, nominated by the gathering. While it is possible that Łukašenka and his inner circle of advisors might have sanctioned the action, it is also possible that low-level personnel who for many years acted with impunity and in violation of Belarusian law may have "educated" or given courage to a segment of the Belarusian population.

Łukašenka's Steps at Risk Avoidance

On August 17, 2005, Łukašenka issued a decree establishing new restrictions on foreign technical assistance to Belarus. This decree prohibits organizations and individuals from receiving and using assistance for "preparing and conducting elections and referenda, recalling deputies and members of the Council of the Republic, staging gatherings, rallies, street marches, demonstrations, picketing, strikes, producing and distributing campaign materials and for other forms of mass politicking among the population". It provided a legal basis for prohibiting technical assistance in the form of organizing seminars, conferences and public discussions.

With a similar goal in mind, on November 1, 2005, the Belarusian Parliament adopted a law restricting the creation and activities of political parties. The law contained provisions outlining reasons that would allow the Belarusian Supreme Court, upon an application of the Ministry of Justice, to suspend the right of a political party to engage in political activities. This law was applied against not only the Union of Belarusian

Poles and the youth umbrella organization RADA, but in all practical respects prevented the establishment of new political entities.

That same month the Belarusian Council of Ministers issued a degree aimed at establishing a state monopoly over new opinion polling entities and creating a new body under the National Academy of Science of Belarus to exercise control over existing entities that were authorized to conduct polling activities. If the panel determined that there were irregularities in the activities of a pollster or if released poll results were regarded as "biased and unreliable", it risked losing its accreditation.

Łukašenka was determined to prevent events like those in Ukraine from occurring in Belarus. For example, some Belarusians who went to Kiev to see the Orange Revolution first-hand were arrested upon their return to Belarus. Łukašenka arranged for the Belarusian Parliament to provide him with additional tools to prevent the opposition from mobilizing "people power" if electoral fraud was being used to defy the electorate's will. For example, new legislation was enacted that increased the criminal penalties for organizing protests, becoming a member of a banned organization, or speaking out against the national interest.

In December 2006, President Łukašenka signed a law providing for criminal penalties for activities deemed to be "discrediting the state powers" in Belarus. The text of the law was broad; it amended the Belarus Criminal Code making it a crime to train people to take part in street protests, discrediting Belarus' international image abroad, and appealing to countries and international organizations to act, "to the detriment of the country's security, sovereignty and territorial integrity".

In addition, the Belarusian Parliament amended the Law "On Interior Ministry Troops of Belarus" explicitly empowering internal security troops to disband anti-government demonstrations. Parliament granted the President the right to order Belarusian troops to use weapons and other military equipment to maintain order domestically. The right of Belarusian servicemen to refuse to follow what they deemed to be an illegal order, such as a prohibition on shooting at, or using military vehicles against civilians, was restricted. Furthermore, reminiscent of having the armed forces pledge their allegiance to Adolph Hitler, rather than the fatherland, Belarusian military and police personnel henceforth swore allegiance to Łukašenka rather than the Republic of Belarus or its Constitution. This was

done to lessen the likelihood of units choosing to support the opposition in the event of bloodshed.

Łukašenka also had confidence in his ability to prevail even if it meant coercing the population or using force. On December 13, 1981, when Poland's General Wojciech Jaruzelski declared martial law, he was able to rely on approximately 25,000 paramilitary riot police known as *Zmotoryzowane Oddziały Milicji Obywatelskiej* (ZOMO). This force, supplemented by the Citizens' Militia Voluntary Reserve called *Ochotnicza Rezerwa Milicji Obywatelskiej* (ORMO), was estimated as having more than 100,000 members. In addition, the Ministry for Internal Affairs had available nearly 80,000 troops in addition to the regular police forces. In all, General Jaruzelski had a force of almost 250,000 available to implement martial law. General Jaruzelski was not entirely certain whether the largely conscripted Polish Army could be relied upon. Poland at the time had a population of roughly 34 million people.

By way of comparison, with a population of about 1/3 the size of its neighbor, Łukašenka has at least 110,000 paramilitary forces available, including the special police (*Otryad Militsii Osobogo Naznacheniya* – OMON [Detachment of the Militia of Special Designation] and), with the ability to supplement this force with a significant number of reserves. In 2006 another quasi-police unit was established (just before the Presidential elections) called Polk Milicii Osobogo Naznachenija [Squad of the Militia of Special Designation], which was, in fact, a very well-equipped riot police.

This latter entity was led by Dźmitry Paŭlichenka, who allegedly commanded the "death squad" which murdered Gonchar, Zakharenko and others. In addition to the highly secretive contingent of Łukašenka's personal body-guards, which, according to some estimates, include more than 200 enlisted men, specially-trained and equipped with cutting edge equipment and who are personally selected by the dictator himself on the basis of personal loyalty, there is also a powerful and highly secretive SWAT team within the Ministry of Interior, called "Alma" (Diamond).

The Łukašenka Government also strengthened another paramilitary detachment – SOBR – "Specialny Otryad Bistrogo Reagirovania" [Quick Reaction Special Detachment]. This unit was placed under the command of Colonel Dźmitry Paŭlichenka, who was involved in the beating of presidential candidate Alaksandr Kazulin.

In January 2004, the U.S. and the EU imposed a visa ban, which applies to Interior Minister Uladzimer Navumaŭ, Presidential Administration head Viktar Shejman, the then Sports Minister Yuri Sivakov and Dźmitry Paŭlichenka, commander of SOBR. The latter three were implicated by the so-called Pourgourides Report in the alleged abduction and murder of politicians Viktar Hančar and Yury Zakharanko, as noted above.

Solidify Support to Ensure a Favorable Result

Like most dictators, Łukašenka is also a politician who knows how to appeal to a segment of the population. He moved onto the political stage by decrying corruption. So it should not be surprising that he seeks to repeat his earlier success by having his government bring criminal charges against the chairman of the State Committee on Aircraft Industry, Fiodor Ivanov, and General Director of the Republican State Enterprise "Belaeroaviatsiya" Ivan Šymaniec. These individuals have been accused of embezzlement of state property by abusing their positions.

The opposition sought to demonstrate the regimes' hypocrisy by publicizing the so-called case of Halina Żuraŭkova. In that matter, the former head of the Presidential Property Management Department, she was given a free pardon after being condemned to prison under Part 4 of the Criminal Code's Article 210 (embezzlement through abuse of office duty made by the organized group or in the especially large scale). She admitted to stealing 1.5 million dollars. At approximately the same time, another prominent Belarusian political figure, Michail Marynič, was sentenced to 5 years on a spurious charge of theft of equipment provided to his non-governmental organization.

Many Belarusians watch Russian television. They are troubled by the emergence of the "oligarchs" as a result of privatization. In Belarus, there does not appear to be as extreme income differences of the populations. Łukašenka has made it a high priority to pay salaries and pensions on time. In addition, Łukašenka has promised to unprofitable enterprises a support in the form of credits. He has indicated that the state should nationalize unsuccessful enterprises, so that people are not taken out of work. At the same time, there have been accusations that Łukašenka and

other government officials[7] have taken for their personal use, money which should have been paid to the state. Some of this money is believed to have found its way into banks abroad. As part of his strategy, Milinkievič attempted to draw the Belarusian public's attention to Łukašenka's alleged use of such funds for his personal use by offering to provide him with a private house in the Belarusian countryside.

It is often taken as an article of faith that Łukašenka enjoys the support of a majority of the Belarusian citizens. This view is repeated so often that it is frequently accepted as fact, even though there is no way to test it. Over the years, the Łukašenka government has developed tactics to ensure favorable voting outcomes: pre-election day voting, mobile voting (allowing ballot boxes to be brought to people's homes who allegedly would have difficulty going to the polls) and ballot stuffing (made easy since the ballots were not numbered). At the same time, the government made an extraordinary effort toward prevent exist polling by opposition or neutral observers. If Łukašenka's pollsters and high-level officials were confident of a favorable result, why did it go to such extremes to obtain a result that defies credulity?[8]

Ironically, despite the steps being taken by Łukašenka to guarantee the appearance of a decisive electoral victory through fraud or intimidation, many Western journalists accept as an article of faith that despite his authoritarian rule, Łukašenka remains popular in the country and would win an open and free presidential election (although perhaps he might not win an outright majority on the first round – thus avoiding a run-off). The veracity of such beliefs is easily subject to challenge.

According to the Belarusian Central Election Commission, Łukašenka won with 82.6 percent of the votes cast. Milinkievič received just 6 percent of the vote. Liberal-Democratic candidate Siarhiej Hajdukevič, who had run in 2001, got 3.5 percent for the vote with Kazulin allegedly receiving 2.3 percent. On March 20, 2006, both Milinkievič and Kazulin termed the vote a fraud and demanded new elections. The Belarusian Central

[7] The possibility that such officials have laundered money abroad has made them vulnerable to potential blackmail by Mr. Łukašenka and others. If they were to turn against the Łukašenka government, they might face criminal charges in Belarus.

[8] Under Belarusian law, the paper ballots for elections must be preserved for 6 months following the election. This period expired on September 19, the period expired for which ballots must be kept from the March 19 presidential election. Consequently proving fraud becomes a more difficult task.

Election Commission, Supreme Court, or legislature saw no need to take any action to re-examine the outcome. Łukašenka began his new term on April 8, 2006.

Post-Election Maneuvering

Economists and political analysts have done considerable research on the topic of Belarus' economic dependence on Russia. Monitoring the vagaries of Belarusian-Russian relations is a full-time occupation. The perception many people have is that through the supply of below market prices for natural gas and petroleum, the Belarusian economy has performed far better than what otherwise would be the case. In addition, Russia provides a market for many Belarusian producers. Nonetheless, if should not be overlooked that Russian arms exporters may have Belarusian enterprises transship weapons to countries that the Russian government would be reluctant to ship to publicly.[9] In addition, Russia's natural gas resources to Western Europe go through pipelines crossing Belarusian territory – so the economics of the situation is a bit more complex than may first appear.

For many years, there have been discussions and symbolic actions connected to the formation of a Belarusian-Russian Union. This area has been like a roller-coaster with each side at some point seeing advantages to changing the nature of the relationship between the two countries. Some believe that Łukašenka viewed at one point the formation of a single state as being an opportunity to rule a great power. Many Russian officials thought of the Union as merely being economic or being primarily a public relations gimmick.

Others have suggested that a Union would provide Putin with a vehicle to hold onto power after his term as President expires in 2008. In this latter scenario, Belarus would simply be absorbed into the Russian Federation as a single political subdivision or a number of oblasts. No doubt, this situation would not be attractive to either Belarusian nationalists or Łukašenka. As things stand, Russia has announced that Belarus will be paying prices for energy at or approximating market rates. Łukašenka

[9] E.S. Burger, *Belarusian Weapons Exports: A Possible Source of Laundered Funds?*, "Belarusian Review", Vol. 15, No. 4 (Winter 2003).

has threatened to terminate the Belarusian-Russian Union if this in fact occurs.[10]

According to some observers such as Murray Feshbach and Paul Goble,[11] Russia is a demographic nightmare. Roughly 3/4 of the ethnic Russian population lives west of the Ural Mountains and the country's natural resources are largely in areas historically populated by non-ethnic Russians. The fear that the Russian Federation may follow the path of the Soviet Union cannot be ruled out. National policy today is aimed at re-centralizing political power in Moscow and obtaining "great power" status for Russia as the country enjoyed during the Soviet era.

At some point, this will present new political and economic circumstances for Moscow. Recently, the Russian government has pursued policies to encourage families to have larger families. The date on which ethnic Slavs will no longer constitute a majority of the Russian Federation is uncertain. What is clear is that if Russia were to annex or otherwise gain control of Belarus and Eastern Ukraine, the day of reckoning will be postponed.

Increasingly, the U.S. and the EU are pursuing policies of active disapprobation towards the Belarusian government. The U.S. is treating the Łukašenka government as the *de facto* but not the *de jure* government of Belarus. While both the EU and the U.S. will not permit a limited number of Belarusian officials into their country, they both seem unwilling to ratchet up the pressure. For example, while there are discussions about ending trade preferences in the future for the USSR's successor states that do not respect human rights, in the near term, they have rejected the idea of economic sanctions. Neither the EU countries nor the U.S. has severed diplomatic relations or recalled its ambassador from Minsk, though some have recalled their ambassadors for consultations.

Compared to the U.S., the EU countries have much more cautious policies towards Belarus, irrespective of official declarations. Latvia,

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[10] *See* Лукашенко заявляет о намерении разорвать союзные отношения с Россией в случае значительного повышения стоимости российского газа для Беларуси [Łukašenka declares his intention of terminating union relations with Russia in the case of a significant increase of Russian Gas for Belarus], September 29, 2006, available at http://news.tut.by/politics/74963.html (accessed October 2, 2006).

[11] In fact, Paul Goble and others have speculated that at some point individuals of Islamic origins may constitute a majority of the population of the Russian Federation.

Lithuania and Poland,[12] bordering on Belarus, are the most explicit in publicly criticizing Łukašenka. Generally, they are reluctant to upset economic relations. This should not be a great surprise since according to the Pontis Foundation, there has been a reorientation of Belarusian trade patterns towards non-CIS states.

For example, Lithuanian Prime Minister Gediminas Kirkilas recently rejected the idea of EU economic sanctions against Belarus. The Lithuanian Prime Minister contended that isolating Belarus and imposing additional hardships on the Belarusian people would not have an impact on Łukašenka's rule. In fact, most of the countries that have taken a stand on the issue such as Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Greece and Cyprus were against the proposed imposition of trade sanctions; the Czech Republic, Italy and Slovakia declined to take a position on this issue at a recent EU meeting. This is illustrative of a tendency of EU states to oppose trade sanctions as counter-productive.

Instead, EU member states feel content with taking some symbolic actions and working behind the scenes. For example, some EU states provided limited support to the political opposition, by giving them access to printing presses and premises in which to meet. Some of the EU countries may discretely raise human rights issues directly with Belarusian officials. In addition, EU officials apparently were instrumental in the decision to award Alaksandr Milinkievič the Andrej Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought in 2006 and to the Belarusian Association of Journalists in 2004.

Adrian Severin, a Rapporteur on Belarus in the UN, stated in his report that the human rights situation in Belarus requires intervention from the UN Human Rights Council. Severin called, on, the Belarusian authorities to use law-enforcing investigations against the highest Belarusian officials.

Milinkievič is treated as a legitimate political figure who can meet with European officials. This has increased his ability to give the opposition a voice (at least outside of Belarus), though perhaps not providing any significant organizational capability. He responded to a question of the "Politics" available at www.tut.by: "Our strategy is simple: to live in a free

[12] It is unclear whether the recent Belarusian harassment against Belarusian citizens of Polish origin that are active in the Union of Poles in Belarus such as Andżelika Borys, Tadeusz Gawin and Mieczysław Jaskiewicz is the cause or the consequence of the deterioration of Belarusian-Polish state to state relations.

Belarus, we need free elections. Today's regime does not want to carry them out. We can secure fair elections only with the help of peaceful street protests. Our activities' aim is to make those rallies mass ones…. It is pointless to wait for 2011; it is going to be an even more brazen-faced farce. My aim is to do everything to hold free elections in our country much earlier. Victory is possible under the following conditions: when several hundreds of thousands of people would take part in protest rallies. Then even the passive part of population would side with those who would be on the square."

Increasingly, Belarusian youth seem more willing to confront the authorities. Approximately 10,000 Belarusians took part in the "Big Jeans Festival", an action of solidarity with political prisoners and families of abducted Belarusian politicians. Blue jeans T-shirts are used as a symbol. This began about a year ago when Mikita Sasim put up a jeans shirt as a flag during a rally as he was being surrounded by the Belarusian militia.

Former Belarusian presidential candidate Alaksandr Kazulin was convicted of hooliganism, organizing group actions grossly violating public order connected with insubordination to legal demands of the police, or caused interruption of work, of transport, enterprises or other bodies and sentenced to 5.5 years in jail. Kazulin termed the charges against him "falsified and unsubstantiated". Kazulin has initiated a hunger strike to draw attention to his plight. Apparently both the EU and the U.S. have expressed their interest in this matter.

Łukašenka seems confident that he won't lose power as a result of actions in the streets. Ironically, he is taking steps to limit the chance that opposition figures may get elected to public office. Belarusian Central Elections Committee member Lidziya Jarmošyna noted, when describing new amendments to the Belarusian Election Code, that the Belarusian legislation: plans to consider amendments to the Electoral Code, which would be tried out in January 2007 during the elections to local Soviets…. We are preparing two variants of holding local elections, one based on the old law, and another based on the new law [where] pre-election meetings in public places would be regulated. It would be required to receive sanction of local executive committees for their holding.

No doubt these changes are being done to strengthen Łukašenka and to discourage opposition supporters.

Revisiting the Distinction between Recognition of States and Governments

The Restatement (Third) Foreign Relations Law of the United States (Restatement) provides that: "a state cannot recognize or accept a regime as a government without thereby accepting the statehood of the entity which the regime claims to be governing. A state can, however, recognize or treat an entity as a state while denying that a particular regime is its government".

The theoretical non-recognition of President Łukašenka as the legal and legitimate president of Belarus does not automatically result in consequences. Most governments will differentiate between *de jure* and *de facto* governments, but this differentiation in practice is merely symbolic. The decision to recognize a government principally constitutes a political decision. In most cases, the non-recognition of a government does not entail serious consequences as the international community seems content to deal with *de facto* governments. Most states are reluctant to make a different distinction: between legitimate and illegitimate governments.

In a world where only a minority of states are functioning democracies, it will be difficult, if not impossible, for the international community to reach agreement on the factors that make one government legitimate and another illegitimate. Yet, the failure to punish illegitimate governments, no matter how defined, is analogous to having a criminal code without punishing transgressions. Perhaps it is time for those states operating on the rule of law to take a different approach in this regard. Such states must grapple with whether they are only concerned with the international character of the *de facto* government or may a government be deemed illegitimate based on how it treats its own citizens.

It would be naïve to expect international obligations pursuant to international instruments to trump foreign policy considerations or the wishes of key domestic interest groups. Even if not universally applied, the time may have come where certain states should adopt a policy that, where a foreign government was not placed into power by fair and free elections or is involved in the large-scale violation of its citizens rights, it should be deemed to be illegitimate.

The international community should be encouraged to act against illegitimate regimes in a common fashion. The diplomatic corps of an

illegitimate regime should not enjoy any diplomatic privileges. Other nations should deny visa applications to Belarusian officials, human rights violators and known supporters of the regime. In practice, this may be difficult to implement. The fact that one works for the Belarusian government does not automatically mean the individual would not prefer new leadership that respects the rule of law and human rights. This is a complex question. On the one hand, making elite segments of the Belarusian population aware of the "costs" of Łukašenka's rule might undermine his support. On the other hand, it will deprive Belarusians opportunities to establish contacts with people abroad and to better understand the repressive nature of the Łukašenka regime. There are strong arguments on both sides.

In addition, illegitimate regimes should be unable to import goods other than food, medicine and consumer items though this could have the undesirable effect of making Belarus more dependant on Russia and other states that do not respect human rights. Officials of illegitimate regimes should have their bank accounts frozen and their real estate holdings abroad should be placed under a trusteeship.

Mykoła Ryabchuk

IS THE WEST SERIOUS ABOUT THE 'LAST EUROPEAN DICTATORSHIP"?

The common wisdom about Belarus as the 'last European dictatorship' tells us a lot about the essence of the regime and prompts a clear-cut moral stance vis-à-vis the dictatorship but hints little at a practical policy that could and should be effectively applied towards the country. First, even if this policy was to be one hundred-percent value-based, and moral, and idealistically driven, it would not be so easy to apply harsh political and economic measures against the regime and, at the same time, not to harm the society at large. Secondly, it would be barely possible to assist the civil society, to encourage dissent within the ruling elite, and to facilitate a mutation and/or fall of the rogue regime if, in response to international isolation, it imposes a similar isolation from within, pursuing a policy of autarchy and of limited contacts with similar 'pariah' countries. And thirdly, Western policy vis-à-vis rogue regimes has never been and would hardly be in the foreseeable future, coordinated, coherent, and one hundred-percent value-motivated. Rather, there have always been and will long be a lot of opportunism, particularism, separate deals, hypocrisy, double standards, and other disgusting things called, euphemistically, *Realpolitik*.

To find a proper balance and an optimal line between all these factors and circumstances would certainly not be an easy task, but two major imperatives should be clearly pursued. First, Western civil societies should apply pressure on their governments and private businesses to make their policies vis-à-vis undemocratic regimes more coherent and less hypocritical. They should not tolerate cynical statements made by their own politicians or leading journalists like, for example, a piece of *French News* wisdom expressed earlier this year, on the eve of parliamentary elections in

Ukraine and the presidential election in Belarus: "From the Baltic to the Black Sea, Russia is faced with NATO or would be NATO states and, as a much invaded country, feels nervous for the future. Paradoxically in this situation the best [sic!] result for the people in both countries [i.e., Belarus and Ukraine], at least in the short term would seem to be a vote against the Western tendency". (Harneis 2006)

And secondly, while sanctions against rogue countries should be limited and fixed, the sanctions against the officials should be extensive and flexible. Visa denial and freezing bank accounts is the main, and probably the most effective, instrument for punishing rogue officials. Each infringement on human rights, harassment of opposition, act of lawlessness by police, in courts, in customs, and elsewhere should evoke a response of Western governments by blacklisting the concrete names of the concrete officials who infringed the law here and there. Lawlessness in Belarus is not anonymous and is not committed by Łukašenka alone. The list of official 'pariahs' should be expanded daily, top down, person by person. Moreover, since the top Belarusian officials boast openly that they can bypass sanctions by getting new documents with forged names, the introduction of biometric control would be highly desirable.

Coordinated, coherent international pressure is certainly not the only factor that may ultimately facilitate the regime change, but, as I argue in this presentation, it might be the most effective, so far, and the easiest to employ.

Sustainability of Authoritarian Regimes

In a series of break-through articles, Lucan Way has examined trajectories of various competitive authoritarian regimes and outlined three variables that are of particular importance in explaining the regime outcomes: (1) incumbent capacity; (2) opposition unity and strength; and (3) the international context. His analysis was based on the assumption (empirically confirmed) that "incumbents in competitive authoritarian regimes seek to remain in office, and extra-legal tactics (such as electoral fraud and various forms of repression) are among the options they consider as they pursue that goal". He proposed a model that explores in detail interaction of the three major variables and explains comprehensively "why some competitive

authoritarian regimes democratize in the face of crisis while others remain stable or experience authoritarian retrenchment". (Levitsky & Way 2002a) The model provides the students of semi-authoritarian regimes with a good instrument for the analysis of probable developments in the respective countries and appropriate policy recommendations.

In this view, incumbent capacity has three main dimensions that are particularly important to regime survival: elite cohesion, coercive capacity, and electoral capacity. Elite cohesion refers to the degree of discipline and loyalty that executives can command from other regime elites. Coercive capacity stands for a government's ability to control and repress opposition forces. It requires both an infrastructure of surveillance and repression, and effective control over that infrastructure. Electoral capacity means a government's ability to win elections through a combination of voter mobilization and fraud. Both ventures require an organizational infrastructure – a formal or informal "party of power".

Opposition capacity is measured along two dimensions: cohesion and mobilizational capacity. Cohesion primarily means an opposition's ability to unite into a broad anti-authoritarian coalition and to defy a government's divide and rule strategies. Mobilization capacity stands for the ability of an opposition to mobilize citizens against the government. This depends on the strength of opposition party organizations, the strength and independence of civil society (particularly labor, student, and human rights organizations), and the degree to which civil society organizations are aligned with the political opposition. (Levitsky & Way, 2002a)

All these elements are extremely important since, as another expert remarks, opposition victory in a semi-authoritarian regime "requires a level of mobilization, unity, skill, and heroism far beyond what would normally be required for victory in democracy". (Diamond 2002, p. 24) Often, too, it requires international observation and intervention to preempt and prevent or to expose and delegitimate the electoral manipulations and fraud of the authoritarian regime. Therefore, the international context or, specifically, Western influence is duly featured as the third key variable that determines regime change or persistance.

Stephen Levitsky and Lucan Way contend that, in the post-Cold War period, ties to the West raise the cost of authoritarian entrenchment and strengthen incentives for elites to play by democratic rules. The scholars disaggregate Western influence into two dimensions: linkage and leverage.

Linkage, in their view, includes geographic proximity, economic integration (actual and desirable), military alliances, flows of international assistance, international media penetration, ties to international NGOs and other transnational networks, and networks of elites employed by multilateral institutions and/or educated in Western universities. By leverage, they understand the ability of the Western governments and international bodies to influence non-democratic regimes who are certainly more compliant if they depend on the West economically and/or militarily.

The outlined model helps to interpret the developments in virtually all post-Communist countries as a complicated interaction of three variables. It can be represented, also, as a close contest between the authoritarian state and civil society in the international context that has some "catalyzing" effect. In such a conceptual framework, one can easier understand the successful democratic transition in Central East Europe and the Baltics where society was strong enough to take over the Leninist state and transform it into a liberal democracy. By a similar token, one can understand the aborted transition in Central Asia where civil society had been meager, if it existed at all. And finally, one can conceptualize the processes in the Balkans and western post-Soviet republics as a protracted struggle between two equally strong or, rather, equally weak rivals – a dysfunctional authoritarian state and an underdeveloped civil society.

The latter two cases are the most complicated and, therefore, the most interesting from an analytical point of view. In particular, if juxtaposed, they reveal the importance of Western influence – highly positive in the case of the Balkans, and rather neutral or negative in the case of the western post-Soviet republics. It is worth remembering that all of these countries had very similar democracy scores in the first half of the 1990s. (Actually, western post-Soviet countries stood, at the time, even better than the post-Communist Balkans; see Freedom House annual reports as compiled by Emerson & Noutcheva 2004).

All these relatively competitive political regimes emerged in the late 80s and early 90s, after the collapse of the Soviet/Communist empire. They arose largely as a mutation of the *anciens regimes* rather than due to the triumph of a strong and determined civil society. All of them had in common, the continued dominance of an old elite with a weak commitment to democracy, a lack of democratic history, a weak tradition of civility, and weak rule of law. The Balkan states, however, had gotten the

long-run membership prospects from the EU within the Stabilization and Association Agreements, and eventually improved their scores from "non-consolidated authoritarian regimes" to "non-consolidated democracies", while the European post-Soviet states had not gotten any EU incentives and moved, in the second half of the 1990s, in the opposite direction – from "non-consolidated democracies" to "non-consolidated" (yet) authoritarianisms. This just confirms the earlier observations of many experts: "Transitions with the prospect of European integration in sight are clearly more prosperous and secure than transitions without it. This is not just a matter of increased foreign aid or direct investment, though both matter greatly. The incentive of European accession changes the political climate within applicant countries, overriding nationalist appeals and luring elites from almost all parties. (Mungiu-Pippidi 2004, p. 50)

EU conditionality differs fundamentally from other less successful forms of international pressure. Unlike all other Western states or transnational agencies, the EU demands full compliance with democratic norms and uses extensive and highly institutionalized monitoring. Perhaps most importantly, in contrast to standard political conditionality, the (real and perceived) benefits of EU membership are sufficiently large as to induce far-reaching concessions on the part of broad groups of the elite. The result is that countries such as Romania, with an equally troublesome post-Communist legacy, have democratized to a remarkable extent. To date, the EU has not seriously considered Ukraine for membership. However, if this were to change, the prospects for democracy would improve dramatically." (Way 2004, p. 15)

Still, the trajectories of the western post-Soviet republics diverged substantially in the second half of the 1990s not only from the Western-guided Balkans but also from each other. In the beginning of the decade, all four countries – Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, and Russia – had been relatively open and exhibited dynamic and competitive politics that resulted in electoral turnovers in all of them except Russia where turnover was prevented by Yeltsin's anti-parliament coup and subsequent redrafting of the constitution. This competitiveness, however, was "rooted less in robust civil societies, strong democratic institutions or democratic leadership and much more in *the inability of incumbents to maintain power or concentrate political control* by preserving elite unity, controlling elections and media and/or using force against opponents". It resulted primarily from the

sudden collapse of the USSR that deprived authoritarian rulers of the organization, skill, and finances necessary to maintain power and/or concentrate political control. (Way 2005)

In other words, the post-Soviet regimes in these countries emerged less as struggling democracies, where leaders strive to build more pluralistic institutions, and much more as a kind of failed authoritarianism aptly defined by a scholar as "pluralism by default" – a form of political competition specific to weak states: "Pluralism by default describes countries in which institutionalized political competition survives not because leaders are especially democratic or because societal actors are particularly strong, but because the government is too fragmented and the state too weak to impose authoritarian rule in a democratic international context. In such cases, leaders lack the authority and coordination to prevent today's allies from becoming tomorrow's challengers, control the legislature, impose censorship, manipulate elections successfully, or use force against political opponents. Such countries are caught in paradox: The same state weakness and governmental fragmentation that promotes pluralism also undermines effective governance and may ultimately threaten long-term democratic consolidation". (Way 2002, p. 127)

Over time, however, the post-Soviet elites had gained substantial wealth through shadow privatization and other dubious deals; learned how to manipulate elections, mass-media, and political opponents; and eventually transformed the state weakness into a specific strength that meant primarily methods and scopes of coercion.

To understand the last change as the real (and central) part of "transition", one should remember that the weakness of the post-Soviet states resulted not so much from the institutional void that emerged allegedly after the Soviet Union collapsed but, rather, from the essential dysfunctionality of all Soviet institutions inherited by the post-Soviet republics. All those institutions, including parliaments and governments, local councils and executives, courts and customs, police and security services, played a subsidiary role vis-à-vis the real center of power, which animated the entire system, making it rather effective, albeit not efficient. It was the Communist party that made all important decisions, initiated all changes, and extorted loyalty and obedience from its subjects. As its power declined by the end of perestroika, the dysfunctionality of the Leninist state became obvious. The failed communist coup and the ultimate removal of the Party from

the political scene deprived the communist state of its driving force and made the collapse of the Soviet Union inevitable.

Local elites in post-Soviet republics that inherited dysfunctional pieces of the dysfunctional empire, had two options – either to build new state institutions based on the rule of law, democratic procedures, and civic mobilization, or to re-animate the dysfunctional quasi-institutions of the Leninist state by some other informal methods and semi-legal bodies. Only the Baltic republics opted clearly for the first way. All the other post-Soviet states chose the second option. Thus, the Presidential Administrations replaced the Central Committees of the Communist party while presidential representatives ("governors"), with a similar apparatus, assumed the role of local communist bosses. The only thing needed was to make the modified system work.

The shadow power of the Communist party was based on communist ideology, which was compulsory for everybody who held any more or less important position and/or strove for any social advancement. It was an effective tool of state domination since loyalty could be extorted from any subject by a sort of "ideological blackmail". In the post-Soviet non-ideological regimes, loyalty should have been achieved by other means – partly, as usual, by bribery and co-option, partly by a new sort of blackmail – economical, facilitated by the advent of oligarchic capitalism. (Darden 2001)

Western Linkages and Elite Defections

Most scholars agree that in countries where civil society is underdeveloped and democratic traditions are weak, any radical change is a direct or indirect consequence of fragmentation and split within the ruling authoritarian group. "Elite defection is an important component of pluralism by default"; (Way 2003) "a highly divided elite is likely to undermine authoritarian consolidation by reducing the incumbent's control over subordinate state agencies necessary to impose non-democratic rules of the game. Orders to the media to provide biased coverage, to security agencies to repress opposition, or to local governments to steal votes are more likely to be ignored". (Way 2005)

The consequences of elite contestation are exacerbated by the fact that the main rivals of authoritarian rule emerge usually from within their close

circle: in Ukraine, not only was Yushchenko Kuchma's prime-minister, but Kuchma himself was a prime-minister under Kravchuk; and Kravchuk was one of the Communist party bosses under Shcherbytsky. All benefited from their top positions, honing there their political skills, forging their public images, and establishing reputations of moderate and competent politicians. Acquiring these traits would have been impossible had they started their careers in the opposition; these leaders had always been either denied access to dominant media, or demonized as dangerous radicals, or even worse, ridiculed as infantile and incompetent idealists.

Elite defection certainly played a decisive role in the peaceful turnover of the Milosevic and Shevardnadze regimes as well as in the fall of the communist regimes in 1989–1991. A rather natural fragmentation of the ruling group would not have necessarily led to an overt defection of some of its members or even to hidden sabotage. To make this possible, two more factors were usually needed – powerful pressure from "below", from politically mobilized masses, and perceptible pressure from "above", from international government and non-government bodies, which can legitimize or de-legitimize an authoritarian regime.

Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way point at four arenas of contestation, which exist in competitive authoritarian regimes due to the persistence of meaningful democratic institutions, and through which opposition forces may periodically challenge, weaken, and occasionally even defeat autocratic incumbents: the electoral arena, the legislature, the judiciary, and the media (Levitsky & Way 2002a, p. 54). One can easily notice that, in Ukraine – unlike in Belarus, all these institutions have never been fully subjugated by the authorities. Elections have always been competitive and vote counting rather fair, despite large abuses of state power during the election campaigns. The national parliament has not become a puppet of the president – like in neighboring Russia or Belarus. Even though it had not had much power over government policy, it still "functioned as a key staging ground for opposition activity by giving deputies relatively easy access to media and immunity from prosecution". (Way 2005a, p. 133)

The judiciary, albeit manipulated, oppressed, and often corrupt, retained some degree of independence, especially on the top level of the Supreme Court where judges could not be removed from their position until 65, when they are to retire. And finally, independent mass media, however harassed and marginalized by the government, still disseminated uncensored

information within the society. Even in the worst months of 2004 when the agonizing regime seemed to break loose, opposition still had access to large-circulation newspapers like pro-Socialists *Silski visti,* pro-Yushchenko *Ukraina moloda,* pro-Tymoshenko *Vechernie vesti,* independent *Dzerkalo tyzhnia,* as well as to some FM-radios and the notorious TV 5 that was squeezed out from most regions but still was available, albeit in cable, in one third of Ukraine, including the capital city of Kiev.

All this resulted not only from the relative strength of society that had some traditions of civility, at least in central and western Ukraine, and proved to be more resilient under the authoritarian pressure than many observers could expect. Polarization and fragmentation of the Ukrainian elite has been also of paramount importance since it effectively hindered the consolidation of presidential autocracy by creating, in fact, an informal system of checks and balances. The competing oligarchic clans on the one side, and the appreciable democratic opposition on the other side, interacted in multiple ways, making and unmaking whimsical situational alliances between different groups and members.

Good relations with the West, in the meanwhile, has become a priority for many oligarchs who, on a personal level, have undergone a profound "Euro-Atlantic integration" – i.e., on the level of personal bank accounts, real estate, and the nice post-Communist habit of educating their children in good western universities, of treating themselves in Baden-Baden (rather than in the Kremlin hospital), and enjoying *la dolce vita* in the best international resorts. All these Western linkages made Ukrainian elites reluctant to undertake any radical steps that might have weakened their relations with the West. For many of them, including the metallurgical magnate Victor Pinchuk, Kuchma's son-in-law, the loss of power and some economic privileges was considered to be much less catastrophic than possible international sanctions that may have included visa denials and, as Madeleine Albright hinted, the freezing of bank accounts. (Albright 2004)

Corridor of Opportunities

The successful "electoral revolutions" in Ukraine, as well as in some other post-Communist countries that long ago were written off from the

list of prospective democracies, evoked vivid discussions among politicians, scholars, and journalists about the possible spread of the "democratic contagion" across the still dictatorial landscape of the former Soviet Union. A Belarusan analyst Vital Silicki remains rather sceptical about the prospects for new democratic breakthroughs in the post-Soviet area. Ironically, he says, the democratic revolutions of recent years will make it harder, rather than easier for more revolutions to occur. He raises two major arguments – that the remaining post-Soviet countries are not semi-authoritarian but, rather, fully authoritarian, with virtually no meaningful political competition to be worked up, and – that the main lesson their leaders have drawn from the "colorful" revolutions around is to tighten their authoritarian grip on power even more.

Most of the remaining ex-Soviet states simply do not possess the basic social and political features seen in competitive authoritarian systems. Authority is firmly concentrated in the hands of the president. Representative institutions serve largely as window-dressing. Control of economic resources is much more concentrated, partly owing to the availability of easily controlled natural resources. The elites have been thoroughly purged and rotated to prevent the rise of internal opposition, and dissenters are quickly punished. Civic society and political opposition is weak (if it exists at all), and, wherever it has managed to develop into a sizable community, there is a growing tendency to destroy and discredit it.

"[A] more consolidated authoritarian system still conducts elections but, rather than relying on the vote-rigging and post-election repression applied in softer versions of non-democratic rule, they simply destroy their opponents and in this way deprive the people of the belief that political change can be achieved. They carefully nurture the myth that there is no alternative to the system's leaders and, in a broader sense, to the political order itself... Repression in these systems is not a way of salvation; it is a way of life". (Silicki 2005)

Even though some regimes, like Armenian or Russian, still look pretty "liberal" if compared with Central Asian "sultanates", they also are quickly learning that "too liberal" autocrats may not last long. Their survival tactics, so far, is simple: make harsher the laws, tighten the controls, and make more preemptive strikes on the opposition. As a result, Silicki concludes, "it will be more dangerous to run for elections, more dangerous

to organize, more dangerous to vote for the opposition, more dangerous to admit it publicly, and more dangerous to go out onto the streets and defend one's vote". Ultimately, the autocrats may simply get rid of the actual vote counting and just rubber-stamp the election results prepared beforehand.

In such circumstances, the democratic opposition, even if it does manage to win hearts and minds, may not be able to do what their colleagues in "soft" autocracies have just managed: to back their claims to power with the law. With no ballots available for recount, no protocols given away and signed, no commission members ready to publicize the fraud, no courts daring to hear the cases, there will be little opportunity to check the official numbers. Exit polls may be one – but those can easily be disrupted (or silenced with "official" exit polls showing nearly unanimous endorsement of the incumbents).

In such circumstances, the paths to political change may not lie through polls, and, whatever those alternative paths are, they may take longer. Nowhere in the post-Soviet space is the death of the president, a palace coup, or a popular revolt a realistic prospect at present. (Silicki 2005)

The author does not claim, however, that all efforts are doomed, and no silver lining exists among the heavy post-Soviet clouds. He just reminds us that the promotion of democracy is a hard, boring, and sometimes risky job, with no guaranteed immediate results. The development of post-Soviet countries depends primarily on their own people, but Western assistance for the respective civic societies would be certainly beneficial, and Western sanctions against post-Soviet "elites" would cool down, in many cases, their authoritarian zeal. Human rights and democracy issues in Russia or Azerbaijan should not be bargained for gas and oil, and even less for personal political benefits of Messrs. Chirac and Shroeder.

Successful political and economic development of post-revolutionary countries like Ukraine and Georgia might substantially influence all the post-Soviet nations, giving them a viable and persuasive example of a success story that can be more realistically replicated than those of remote Czechs and Slovenes. This means that the West should get actively engaged in the development of these countries, giving them no less incentive than they previously gave Albania, Serbia, or Macedonia. Zbigniew Brzezinski who has been very critical about the Western policy vis-à-vis the post-Soviet states, especially vis-à-vis Ukraine and Russia, still believes that things

can be changed – "especially if the West assists Ukraine in its westward trajectory". (Brzezinski 2005, p. A14)

Clearly, any country is a subject of some restraints imposed on its possible and/or desirable development by political culture and historical tradition, geographical location and patterns of regionalism, national identity and many more factors. The adherents of the path-dependence theory are right when they claim that the point of arrival depends on the point of departure. They are wrong, however, when they represent the entire trajectory of development as a simple straightforward line. Rather, it evolves within a "corridor of opportunities" that can be broadened (or narrowed) by people themselves. There are clear determinants to be counted, but no crude determinism to be deified. This is perhaps the major lesson that all the "colorful revolutions" in the post-Soviet states teach us.

In a Way of Conclusion

The consolidated authoritarian regime, which is fully established in Belarus as well as in many other post-Soviet republics, tends to be quite a stable, albeit stagnant, phenomenon, which can persist for a long period of time. Since those who are best positioned to change the system are those who are most interested in preserving it, a vicious circle, which is very difficult to break, takes hold. It can only be broken by a strong civic society, but the regime does its best to arrest its development. Nevertheless, there are some signs that the situation is not completely hopeless.

First, the authoritarian regime, however despotic, is not totalitarian. It leaves some room for different views, ideologies, even for some political and economic freedom.

Second, the authoritarian regime, however unified by corporate interests, is not monolithic. It consists of competing groups that have their own economic interests and political preferences. Moreover, since Belarus' natural resources are rather limited, its backward economy cannot sustain the society and even less the elite that is growing in number and consumer needs. While the dominant parasitic group remains rather satisfied with Łukašenka's autocracy, "inner dissidents" will inevitably emerge within the ruling elite and, sooner or later, bring about a kind of Khrushchevian thaw, Gorbachovian perestroika, or Ataturkian revolution.

Finally, Belarus' European location makes it inevitably an object of Western attention and influence. In regard to the mass media, human rights, and the rule of law, Western aid means primarily monitoring of numerous violations in the field and exerting international pressure on the Belarusian government, including personal sanctions against each official involved. As the example of Yugoslavia shows rather dramatically, more sticks for the authoritarian government and more carrots for various agents and institutions of the nascent civil society may well bring about some positive results.

True, Western leverage in Belarus is rather limited since no large-scale privatization has ever occurred here, no oligarchic clans emerged, and no 'pluralism by default' evolved as a result. The Belarusian authoritarianism is largely personalized in the figure of the erratic dictator, but this does not mean he is omnipotent and unchallengeable. The Belarusian elite could inevitably fracture – as happened even in more consolidated dictatorships like Romania or the USSR. The western linkage in Belarus is rather strong, since the Belarusian society is basically European, the flow of information and people is relatively high (actually, more Belarusians as a part of the whole population traveled to the West than Ukrainians), and the invisible hand of the free market operates, albeit limited, in petit-trade, services, and small-scale production.

The West certainly cannot do the job of the Belarusians, but it certainly could and should do its own job, in regard to Belarus, much better.

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BELARUS: ANATOMY OF PREEMPTIVE AUTHORITARIANISM

Introduction

The wave of democratic electoral revolutions in Eastern Europe and post-Communist Eurasia revived one of the most appealing and, at the same time, disputable arguments in the theory of democratization: that is, that successful democratic breakthroughs in one of several places help to shape the timing and dynamic of transformation in others where the regime change has yet to occur. This interconnectivity of transitions in time (and space) is described in terms such as 'contagion', 'diffusion', or 'demonstration effect'. Indeed, although hardly a decisive factor, the evidence that contagion played certain important roles in transmitting the spirit of democracy, and techniques for achieving it, from Serbia in 2000 to Georgia in 2003 to Ukraine in 2004 to Kyrgyzstan in 2005, is evident.[1] Needless to say, there is more than enough evidence that a large community of activists, policy advisors, local and international NGOs, and media were purposefully involved in translating the experience, strategy and tactics of successful revolutions to the new territories. This often led to a feeling of deja vu once an observer saw TV scenes of yet another autocrat being ousted and a new democratic leader being installed by the people's power.

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[1] For more discussion about the role of diffusion in recent electoral revolutions, see the work of Valerie Bunce and Sharon Wolchik; in particular. See also their article "International Diffusion and Post-Communist Electoral Revolutions", forthcoming in a Special Issue of *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 2006.

Why is contagion so important and vivid in this wave of democratic revolutions? First, as Valerie Bunce asserts,[2] there is a unique fellowship of democratic activists in the entire post-Communist world (that is, spreading from Prague to the Far East in Russia) who share the common experience of the past and, on its basis, have developed a sense of responsibility for helping less fortunate neighbors and comrades to achieve their dreams and goals. In the broader sense, contagion is definitely facilitated by the proximity of historical experiences and the present-day concerns and dilemmas that most societies in the region face: in other words, in so far as they face similar problems, the societies throughout the post-Communist world may have immediate understanding of what sort of solutions are suggested by the 'roaming revolutionaries'. Second is a generation profile of new democracy-builders in the region: most of them are relatively young and relatively idealistic personalities, many well-traveled and well-proficient in foreign languages, who combine a sense of purpose with a feeling for adventure. Third, there is the dramatic proliferation, over the last decade and a half, of a democracy promotion community and international civil society. Much of it initially settled in the region with the more humble tasks of 'assisting' in democratic transformation in the early 1990s, and benefited from the initial benevolence and readiness of incumbents who took the reins of power after the collapse of the Soviet system to play democratic games. Fourth, there is the advance of computer technology, international electronic media, and mobile communication that made recent revolutions truly the first 'hi-tech' political transitions in history. The newest technologies allowed inspirational images of people-power as well as knowledge and political know-how to spread at the speed that the newest technology could accommodate. And while off-limits for many in the impoverished societies of Eurasia, computers, mobile phones, and satellite dishes are definitely in use by the activists in the region. Needless to say, these newest technologies assisted enormously in mobilization and coordination of both electoral efforts and street protests during the recent revolutions.

But democrats and revolutionaries are not the only ones who can learn from the past and apply the knowledge to fulfill their political goals.

[2] Valerie Bunce's keynote address at the Fisher Forum on Color Revolutions at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, http://atlas-real.atlas.uiuc.edu:8080/ramgen/reec/reec-v-2005-1/smil/reec20050912_Valerie_Bunce.smil

Indeed, their antagonists appeared to have mastered the science and crafts of democratic transitions in order to stop them at their borders. What is more, they are becoming increasingly aware, paraphrasing George W. Bush's second inaugural address, that the 'survival of autocracy at home increasingly depends upon the failure of democracy abroad'. The first trend, learning to combat the democratic contagion, is an essential element of the new political trend in post-Communist Eurasia, defined by the author as *preemptive authoritarianism.* The second trend, joining efforts to combat democratic contagion, is reflected in the rise of an *authoritarian international,* which is rapidly emerging in the post-Soviet space.

This paper consists of three parts. The first explains the concept of preemptive authoritarianism. The second gives an overview of preemption drawing upon Belarus, a country where such actions have been used the most extensively and proficiently. The third highlights the international dimension of preemptive authoritarianism, focusing on the example of Belarus-Russia cooperation, which has increasingly taken on the responsibilities of combating democracy. A brief conclusion addresses some implications of preemption and authoritarian international for scholars and democracy builders.

Conceptualizing and Explaining Preemption

Preemption is a strategy of combating the democratic contagion by anticipating the political challenge, even when there is no immediate danger of regime change. Preemption thus aims at opposition parties and players that are still weak. It removes from the political arena even those opposition leaders who are unlikely to pose a serious challenge in the next election. It attacks the independent press even if it reaches only small segments of the population. It destroys civil society organizations, even when these are concentrated in a relatively circumscribed urban subculture. Last but not least, it violates the electoral rules even when the incumbent would be likely to win in a fair balloting. This type of preemption (attacking the opponents and the infrastructure of the opposition and civil society), that can be named *tactical preemption,* does not exhaust the repertoire of available means of combating democratic contagion. Another, more profound instrument, is *institutional preemption*, which consists of tightening

the fundamental rules defining the political game, once again, before the opposition becomes strengthened. Examples of institutional preemption include rewriting the constitutions to strengthen presidential powers at the cost of the powers of parliaments and local legislatures; amending electoral rules to ensure stable majorities of loyalists in the parliaments; adopting of tougher media and libel regulations; restricting, de-legalizing and even criminalizing certain types of civic society activities. A final and crucial instrument is *cultural preemption:* manipulation of public consciousness and collective memory to spread stereotypes and myths about the domestic opposition, democracy in general and democracy promotion, in particular, the West and former Communist countries that shifted to the democratic track. These cultural assaults instigate public fear and aversion of the very idea of regime change.

Before going further with the analysis, three specifications concerning the concept of preemption need to be made. First, preemption is not purely voluntaristic, but is pursued on already well-nurtured ground, enhancing the already existent incumbent capacity[3] to combat political challenges. For example, twisting institutions to ensure advantage for the incumbent is easier, and in many cases, only possible when imbalances in favor of presidential authority are already in place and existing regulations concerning freedom of opinion and association are insufficiently democratic and transparent. Likewise, cultural stereotypes are more persuasive when they strengthen and amplify already existing collective memories, myths, fears, and prejudices. Moreover, already weak and fragmented oppositions are much easier to manipulate and weaken with repression than opposition groups that are professionally organized and politically efficient. Preemptive strikes against democratization, therefore gain strength from contexts where authoritarians have already weakened the forces in support of a more liberal order.

Second, the autocratic incumbents' capabilities to learn, and hence effectively use, preemption are also affected by their structural and institutional advantages, as well as time. Thus, it is logical that the preconditions for electoral revolutions first matured in unconsolidated semi-authoritarian regimes that were prone to regime change by the very flaws

[3] Way L., (2005a) *Authoritarian State-Building and the Sources of Regime Competitiveness in the Fourth Wave: The Cases of Belarus, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine*, "World Politics" 57 (January), 231–261.

in their construction. With no experience in sight, soft authoritarians were more likely to fall into excessive self-satisfaction and arrogance in their own power (contrast to the knowledge acquired by the opposition through contagion and diffusion) both of which were important agency-related factors that allowed the regime change to happen. For example, one reason why Milosevic's regime fell in 2000 was because the Serbian strongman was the first in the region to be taken down by an electoral revolution. While his regime was growing increasingly hard-line in 1998–2000, Milosevic had no advance warning of the danger that lay ahead. In contrast, opposition, civil society, and democratic promotion of community could have learned from the experiences of the Philippines in 1986, Chile in 1988, and even elections in Romania, Croatia, or Slovakia. Although those were not electoral revolutions many of the instruments, such as voter mobilization, were fine-tuned before being applied by the Serbian opposition.[4] Kuchma or Shevardnadze might have learned something from Milosevic's downfall, but Serbia seemed to be far a field, and both leaders and their subordinates chose instead to contemplate why Georgia or Ukraine 'was not Serbia'.

Once the wave of democratization wiped out most semi-autocratic regimes, however, more resilient and consolidated ones remained in place. Thus, these autocrats enjoyed not only structural advantages but also knowledge of the techniques most likely to be applied to oust them and, in more general terms, awareness of the danger of democratic contagion. The Orange Revolution in Ukraine was the true watershed in the political development of the region, due to that country's size and geopolitical importance. Once an electoral revolution had occurred so deep in Soviet territory and in the country thought secure for post-Soviet authoritarians, the possibility of contagion could no longer be discounted. While democrats found themselves agitated and hopeful as a result of the Orange revolution, their thinking was often locked in what has become a standard model of regime change. Meanwhile, the incumbents immediately began using their structural advantages to further consolidate their regimes and make

[4] Ironically, while the 1996–1997 protests in Serbia following the annulled local elections won by the opposition should have sent Milosevic an advance warning, they did not. After all, he ended up as a winner, successfully surviving the challenge by playing his usual game of dividing the opposition from within and ruling it. His opponents, however, not only learned bitter lessons from self-defeating internal strife, but also drew positive lessons about what a united opposition can achieve both in elections and on the streets.

the technologies of electoral revolution obsolete.[5] Ironically, the advance warning from recent revolutions not only enlarged the list of targets but also enhanced the repertoire of positive games played by incumbents to buttress their domestic legitimacy. They founded and promoted youth movements with 'anti-revolutionary' agendas and co-opted artists and singers just as democratic revolutionaries did. In brief, they camouflaged anti-revolutionary efforts by making them look like revolutions on the exterior. Kazakh president Nursultan Nazarbaev went so far as to run a 'color-coded' campaign for his reelection in December 2005. A similar pop-culture approach to combat contagion, although without a color code, was taken by Belarus' Alaksandr Łukašenka in the run-up to the March 2006 presidential elections.

The buttressing of structural and institutional strengths of the surviving authoritarians by the newly-acquired knowledge advantage over potential opposition challengers hints at the self-limiting character of the democratic diffusion. The process began in countries with the strongest domestic pre-requisites for political change, and spread, by virtue of demonstration effect, to those countries where "local structural support for change"[6] was considerably weaker. When revolutions began to be driven more by contagion than by domestic conditions, they are increasingly characterized by "declining mass participation, more violence and less powerful democratic consequences".[7] As a result, later revolutionary cases (particularly Kyrgyzstan, but, to some extent, Georgia as well) were less suitable as transmitters of democratic enthusiasm and

[5] Examples of preemptive attacks against democratic movements following Ukraine's events are ubiquitous. The Belarusian president has strengthened his security forces and introduced a new law that allows the police to shoot street protesters when the president deems necessary. In Kazakhstan, a major opposition party has been outlawed. Moldova, something of a post-Soviet oddity but still a semi-authoritarian country, blocked the entrance of Russian and Belarusian observers (mobilized by the Moldovan opposition) to its parliamentary elections last March. In Tajikistan, the government issued new regulations restricting contact between foreign diplomats and local civil society groups. In Russia, President Putin recently announced an upcoming ban on democracy assistance from abroad. Almost all surviving Eurasian autocrats have issued public statements vowing not to admit another 'colored' revolution on their home territories, referring to what had happened elsewhere mostly as terrorism and banditry.

[6] V. Bunce, S. Wolchik, *International Diffusion and Post-Communist Electoral Revolutions*, Unpublished manuscript, forthcoming in the special issue of Communist and Post-Communist Studies, 2006.

[7] Ibid.

hope to new territories in the region. If anything, the increasingly violent transitions in these countries and the political instability that followed them endowed the surviving regimes with powerful propaganda resources, enabling them to scare the public away from the idea of regime change and favorably contrast the stability of consolidated regimes with the chaos in newly-transformed ones.

Third, preemption is not necessarily pursued as a substitute for lacking electoral legitimacy. Ironically, it may help to enhance one. In fact, some of the main purposes of advance strikes against protagonists of democracy are removing visible and credible democratic alternatives from the public horizons and strengthening popular perceptions that the incumbent is the only available and realistic choice (and even when the election is rigged, the public may be left convinced that an incumbent would have won even in a fair election). This last implication of preemption may be particularly counterintuitive for external observers of the region. Having access to independent information and various reports produced by the opposition and international monitors, they often fail to realize that the domestic audiences may not be exposed to the same data and sources, and that the governments do thorough advance work to discredit the opposition (including its voting monitoring efforts). Likewise, political repression, when compartmentalized (i.e., applied to a fairly limited segment of the society) is perhaps more visible from abroad than from inside undemocratic countries. The same applies to vote fraud, especially once techniques for its administration become more sophisticated and are not limited to primitive ballot-stuffing and multiple votings. It should be added here that authoritarian regimes have instruments at their disposal to block attempts to produce any credible alternative information about voting outcomes – for example, by disorganizing or banning altogether exit polls and removing 'unreliable' election observers. One more important factor is the general apathy and lack of interest in politics among vast layers of the population in repressive systems. This aids repression and helps preemption go unnoticed. In these conditions, when repression is compartmentalized and political alternatives are not only weakened but also invisible to the domestic audience, it is easy for incumbents to sell their message that opponents cannot defeat them because they are incompetent, unrepresentative, and unprofessional. Thus, they fail the test of democratic contestation. Needless to say, another common message, that the failed

opposition can only exist as mercenaries of external forces, usually follows and is often accepted as a foregone conclusion.

The Belarus Case: Łukašenka's Learning Curve and Landmarks in Perfecting the Policy of Preemption

Belarus is the focus of analysis in this paper since this post-Soviet country in particular has brought the policy of preemption to perfection – and to some extent become a model for 'catching-up' autocrats. President Alaksandr Łukašenka has made frequent headlines in the last decade by relentlessly cracking down on the political opposition, and the country now ranks among the most oppressive regimes in post-communist Eurasia. The Belarusian leader's authority is based not only on outright repression, however, but also on a fairly high level of popular backing. His flamboyant autocratic style finds favor with a vast constituency of rural and elderly voters still nostalgic for the Communist era; his oratorical skills and ability to manipulate public opinion through mass media are hard to beat while his policies produce reasonable economic performance and contribute to a fair degree of social cohesion. Moreover, the weakness of a "widely popular national identity that can be framed in anti-incumbent terms"[8] severely disadvantages the nationally-minded opposition.

Nevertheless, Belarusians do not seem to lag hopelessly behind their neighbors in terms of appreciation of democracy and reform. Indeed, some international opinion surveys rank them as the most committed democrats in the former Soviet Union.[9] Moreover, Łukašenka's approval ratings have rarely exceeded 50 percent in the last decade, and Belarusian nationalism has gradually strengthened over a decade and a half of independence. Considering these circumstances, it becomes clear that the unlikelihood of political change in Belarus in the foreseeable future reflects in large measure, Łukašenka's policy of preemption, which he has perfected since his accession to power a decade ago.

[8] Quote from L.A. Way, *Authoritarian State Building and the Sources of Political Liberalization in the Western former Soviet Union, 1992–2004*, "World Politics", forthcoming, (Page 3 in the manuscript).

[9] Ch. Haerpfer, *Electoral Politics in Belarus Compared*, [in:] E. Korosteleva, C. Lawson, R. Marsh (eds.), *Contemporary Belarus: Between Democracy and Dictatorship*, New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003, 85–99.

Łukašenka's initial expertise in preemption had nothing to do with contagion but was rather a logical necessity in his drive to accumulate and preserve power. He launched his political career as a maverick parliamentary deputy and head of a collective farm. He captured public sympathy in 1993 as chairman of the parliamentary anti-corruption commission, a position he used to promote his stature among potential voters in advance of the 1994 presidential election. Capitalizing on public outrage during the worst period of economic decline and collapsing living standards, he used corruption charges to back up his claim that the country was being robbed by the elites. Łukašenka also attacked the government for allowing the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, which he insisted served no purpose but to facilitate the robbery of the state.

The June 1994 presidential elections ended in a huge upset. Still a political outsider, Łukašenka triumphed with 80 percent of the vote in the second round against Prime Minister Viachaslaŭ Kebič.[10] Although he lacked the support of a political organization and was ostracized by the entire political spectrum–from Kebič's conservative government to the nationalist opposition Belarusian Popular Front (BPF)–Łukašenka managed to take advantage of the public confusion and disorientation that prevailed in the post-Soviet era. His success also was made possible by the fair degree of political openness that had followed the demise of communism. Belarus had been the last former Soviet republic to establish the institution of the presidency; this had prevented the concentration of power and left room for a certain level of political and social pluralism (although the former party *nomenklatura* was never displaced). In 1994, the electoral process was relatively free and fair, in part because the incumbents had not yet discovered the finer points of manipulation and rigging. Finally, although major media outlets were controlled by the state, they respected freedom of speech and provided fair campaign opportunities for all contestants.

Łukašenka's convincing victory in a clean election made a strong impression on the public consciousness for years to come; it remained the foundation for popular perceptions of his invincibility at the polls. But experience also made Łukašenka realize the potential threat of 'people

[10] For more details on Łukašenka's road to power, see V. Silicki, *Explaining Post-Communist Authoritarianism in Belarus*, [in:] E. Korosteleva, C. Lawson, R. Marsh (eds.), *Contemporary Belarus: Between Democracy and Dictatorship.* The best Russian-language source is A. Fiaduta, *Łukašenka: Politicheskaya Biografiya* [Łukašenka: Political Biography], Moscow, Referendum, 2005.

power' to an incumbent who experiments too much with democracy. As Łukašenka came to power virtually out of nowhere, he did not have a support base within the state machinery; all he could initially rely on was his sky-high approval rating. Within months of his July 1994 inauguration, however, his popularity began deteriorating due to persisting economic decline. As a result, he faced two tasks on his quest to unlimited power: trounce the existing opposition to consolidate his gains, so that in turn the opposition would never have a chance to rise again.

Cultural Preemption: Defeat of Nationalism and Promotion of 'Incumbent-Friendly' Identity

The first task was achieved by carrying out, in May 1995, the constitutional referendum on giving Russian the status of the official language, changing state symbols to remodeled Soviet-era ones, and approving integration with Russia. The referendum ended up in a resounding victory for Łukašenka, as all the questions passed with huge majorities. This act of cultural preemption had a profound effect on future political developments in Belarus. By uprooting the feeble results of the national revival of the new regime in the early 1990s, it firmly linked Łukašenka to the Sovietized political outlook of the majority of Belarusians. In other words, the Communist-era 'Soviet Belarusian' patriotism that the referendum revived as de-facto official ideology of the new regime, was a basis for blocking the creation of 'anti-incumbent identity' that would have enabled mass mobilization by the opposition. The opposition itself was deprived of moral ground as long as it was associated with descendants of Nazi collaborators during World War II (one argument of the official propaganda was that the independence-era national symbols, the white-red-white flag and 'Chase' coat of arms, were used by the pro-German nationalists during the War). Moreover, insofar as Łukašenka confirmed his pro-Russian orientation through this plebiscite, he won much sympathy and support inside Russia, where he began to be seen as its only faithful ally among the neighboring countries. As a result, political and economic support for Łukašenka's regime was quick to arrive.

Institutional Preemption: Legalization of Presidential Absolutism and Its Aftermath

The second task was fulfilled by conducting, in November 1996, a constitutional referendum that amended the Basic Law so that all formal power and control over all branches of the government, including the judiciary and legislature, were transferred into the hands of the President. Once again, this was an act of political necessity: the parliament, elected in the May 1995 elections and the by-elections in December 1995, had only a weak democratic opposition, and included not a single representative of the main opposition party, the Belarusian Popular Front, which had been trounced by the referendum results. Nevertheless, the new legislature proved to be of little help to Łukašenka, as the communists and the agrarians eventually joined the democrats in opposing his power grab. Moreover, the Constitutional Court continued to show remarkable independence by striking down nearly twenty presidential decrees in 1995–96. In November 1996, opposition MPs initiated impeachment proceedings. This attempt failed, however, due to the government's blackmailing of parliamentary deputies and Constitutional Court justices.

Łukašenka responded to this resistance by calling a second referendum for November 1996. On the ballot was an amended version of the constitution, which extended Łukašenka's first term in office by two years, concentrated power in the hands of the presidency, and replaced the unicameral Supreme Council with a much weaker bicameral legislature consisting of a 64-seat Council of the Republic and a 110-seat House of Representatives.[11] Presidential decrees were given the status of law, meaning that they would supersede acts adopted by the legislature.

[11] To attract more public interest in the referendum and support for the change in the constitution, Łukašenka proposed three additional questions. Two of them were completely populist: Voters were asked to reject the abolition of the death penalty and disallow private ownership of land. The last question aimed at a further destruction of Belarusian nationalism: Łukašenka suggested abolishing the independence day celebrated on July 27 commemorating the adoption of the declaration of sovereignty in 1990, and shifting the official holiday to July 3, the day Minsk was liberated by the Soviet army from the Nazis. The Supreme Council put three questions in response, asking the voters to approve its own draft of the constitution that eliminated the presidency altogether; to authorize direct election of provincial governors; and to ban uncontrolled presidential funds.

Furthermore, the prerogative of appointing members of the Constitutional Court and the Central Election Commission (CEC) was transferred from parliament to the presidency.

The official tally eventually reported that 70 percent of the electorate had voted in favor of Łukašenka's amended constitution, and even independent post-election polls challenged the referendum results on the constitution by only a few percentage points.[12] As a result, the referendum results, in spite of substantial evidence of abuse, caused no large public protests. The referendum was carried not only by manipulations but also by the substantial public support for Łukašenka, who effectively turned the ballot into a plebiscite on his own authority. The referendum's only negative effect for the government was that the House of Representatives[13] was boycotted by European parliamentary institutions, and Belarus' observer status in the Council of Europe was suspended.

With the 1996 referendum, the institutionalization of personalist authoritarian rule in Belarus was completed. The referendum eliminated all meaningful political competition and evicted the opposition from the decision-making process. Endowed with tsarist powers, Łukašenka had little problem further consolidating his power. First, control over all branches of the government meant almost unlimited ability to manipulate elections and turn them into meaningless exercises. Indeed, their irrelevance to political choice was firmly institutionalized: the electoral code enacted in 2000 contained no guarantees for an opposition presence in electoral commissions, severely restricted the work of election observers, and failed to provide all candidates equal campaign opportunities. Second, Łukašenka single-handedly restructured the security forces and the repressive apparatus of the regime to ensure its absolute loyalty. It was prepared to perform whatever task necessary to ensure his survival in office. More specifically, he reorganized the security forces and boosted riot special operation units which were formed in conjunction with each 'power ministry' of Belarus (that is, the Interior Ministry, Defense Ministry and KGB). All these units were conveniently located in or around the capital

[12] A. Jekadumau, *Aficyjnyya Vyniki Referendumu 1996 Hodu i Dadzenyja Sacyjalahichnych Dasledanniau* [Official Results of the 1996 Referendum and Sociological Survey Data], [in:] *Belaruskaja Palitychnaja Systema i Prezydenckija Vybary 2001* [Belarusian Political System and 2001 Presidential Elections], Warsaw, IDEE, 2001, 65.

[13] Whose first composition was hand-picked by Łukašenka himself out of 198 members of the old Supreme Council.

and were capable of acting on the first call. According to unconfirmed reports, secret squads that carried out 'particular' secret tasks were also organized on the basis of special operation units. Allegedly, their first acts were eliminating prominent mobsters, and they then shifted to more specific political tasks.[14]

Tactical Preemption: Decapitating the Opposition

In 1999, some of the opposition leaders who were considered potential contenders for the September 2001 presidential contest either died or disappeared. First to go missing was Łukašenka's former Minister of the Interior, Yury Zakharanko, who had lost his job in 1995 after refusing to evict opposition deputies from parliament and forcefully dispersing a strike in the Minsk metro. Zakharenko had become a leader of the United Civic Party, and just weeks before his May 1999 disappearance he announced the creation of a new opposition group, the Union of Officers. In September of that same year, former MP and chairman of the Central Election Commission Viktar Hančar disappeared together with his financial backer.[15]

Hanchar's disappearance eliminated the most active, charismatic and controversial opposition figure. After entering the political scene in 1990 as a newly-elected member of the Supreme Council, he quickly became popular thanks to his photogenic looks, oratorical skills and legal expertise. Hanchar backed Łukašenka in 1994, but soon began to oppose the president's authoritarian style. He distinguished himself as an energetic and risk-taking opposition leader whose unorthodox style inspired rank-and-file activists and attracted media coverage. Still claiming to be the legitimate head of the CEC, he organized a "shadow election" in the spring of 1999 to mark the expiration of Łukašenka's term according to the

[14] Information of these units can be found in A. Fiaduta, *Łukašenka: Politicheskaya Biografiya*, Moscow, Referendum, 2005; P. Sheremet and S. Kalinkina, *Sluchainyi Prezident*, Moscow 2004.

[15] This was not the only loss by the opposition in 1999. Hienadź Karpienka, deputy leader of the United Civic Party, died on April 8 under mysterious circumstances ostensibly from a brain hemorrhage at the age of 50. Although no credible evidence emerged about the authorities' involvement, Karpienka's abrupt death could not have arrived at a more convenient time for Łukašenka.

pre-1996 constitution. Although the "balloting" ended in embarrassment, Hančar gained popularity among democratic activists.[16] By the time of his disappearance, he was emerging as a key figure in the opposition but was still far from becoming its undisputed leader. Nevertheless, Hančar's commitment to fight openly against Łukašenka was apparently more than the regime could tolerate.

Investigations of these disappearances carried out by the Prosecutor-general's Office, allegedly cast suspicion on a special police unit overseen by then National Security Adviser, Viktar Šejman.[17] Dźmitry Paūlichenka, an alleged commander of the unit, was arrested in November 2000 in connection with the disappearances, but Łukašenka ordered him out of jail and fired the KGB chief and the prosecutor-general who had released from charges. Sheiman was then appointed as the new prosecutor-general, which conveniently placed the investigation under his direct control.

Early Acquaintance with Revolutionary Scenarios: Learning from Milošević's Downfall

Demonstration effects then entered into the calculations of Łukašenka. He learned more avidly than his colleagues in the former USSR from the October 2000 overthrow of Serbian dictator Slobodan Milošević that even the semblance of competitive elections can be a threat to an authoritarian regime. The reason for his watchful attitude towards the first electoral revolution in the post-Communist world partly had to do with the special bond that developed between the two leaders at a time

[16] The logistics of the balloting were as follows: opposition activists carried ballot boxes from door to door, asking the residents to cast votes for one of the two candidates who joined the race. Hančar declared that 53 percent of the electorate took part in the vote, whereas independent opinion polls discovered that only 5 percent did so. Moreover, out of two "contestants" in the elections, one was in exile (the leader of BPF Zianon Paźniak) and the other was put in prison on corruption charges (the former Prime Minister Michail Čyhir).

[17] According to media reports, the evidence produced by former security officers who defected to the West and the findings of international investigators, the unit was created out of several security agencies and special operations forces in 1996. See: *Disappeared Persons in Belarus*, Report to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe by Cristos Pourgourides, 4 February 2004. http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=http://assembly.coe.int%2FDocuments%2FWorkingDocs%2FDoc04%2FEDOC10062.htm

when they shared the dubious reputation as the last dictators in Europe. Moreover, opposition and international NGOs made no attempt to conceal the fact that Belarus would be the first place where the Serbian scenario of regime change would be attempted for replication. Although his earlier strikes against the opposition had him fully equipped to avoid his colleague's fate, Łukašenka remained anxious. As the presidential balloting approached, he grew highly suspicious of his own inner circle, whereas regime-controlled media began to frame public opinion about the 'Serbian scenario' as, first, an external plot that had nothing to do with domestic politics, and, second, as a coup that was achieved through the spin created by the opposition and media rather than by genuinely defeating the incumbent. In the course of the election campaign and the voting day on September 9, 2001, Łukašenka's regime worked out and applied many successful techniques to combat the electoral revolution scenario. He derailed the work of independent observers, disorganized exit polls, turned off mobile and internet communications on election night, and sabotaged mass mobilization by the opposition by blocking democratic activists in the periphery of the country from traveling to the capital for the protests.

Łukašenka's reelection with the official result of 75 percent of the votes cast[18] was demoralizing for the opposition. Its attempt to mimic Serbia's electoral revolution had been prevented with ease, and the polls showed that Łukašenka would have won even a clean election. The defeat also led to a search for scapegoats within the opposition and public accusations by journalists and dissaffected activists about the squandering of democracy assistance funds which generated a publicity disaster. Nonetheless, Łukašenka himself did not feel like his long-term political survival was assured. First, following reelection, his popularity witnessed a slump, apparently due to his failure to deliver immediately on his generous campaign promises. Second, the job remained to fully institutionalize his unlimited rule: that is, to remove the presidential term limits for the presidency that he had kept in the 1996 Constitution. Moreover, although

[18] The opposition questioned the official returns, whereas independent polls hinted that at least 25% of the votes were rigged in favor of the incumbent. Still, even these alternative data suggested a huge margin between Łukašenka and his main challenger Uladzimer Hančaryk, who gained only 15% at the official count and 21% according to alternative estimates. See: *25% Dorisovano*, "Belorusskaya Gazeta", 12 November 2001.

the Belarusian opposition was in tatters, and civil society still existed in an embryonic state, it had become clear during the 2001 election that both were gradually expanding and becoming capable of launching nationwide campaigns.

Unlike Milošević, who ignored warning signals, Łukašenka thought in the long term and operated from an assumption of insecurity, rather than omnipotence. Łukašenka chose not to hold a referendum on removing term limits immediately, but rather took a long road, unleashing along the way familiar forces of institutional, cultural, and tactical preemption. Although he easily survived the attempt to oust him in a Serbia-style revolution, he chose to eliminate those elements in uncontrolled political and social life that could serve as bases for a repeat performance: and, unlike Milošević, he did not wait until the last moment.

Thus, regulations punishing unauthorized street protests were radically hardened. Protesters at unsanctioned rallies (sanctioned rallies could be held only in one location on the outskirts of Minsk) faced not only physical beatings and imprisonment, but also prohibitive fines of up to US$ 2,500—a yearly income for an average family. The regime also forced almost one hundred NGOs to close down or self-liquidate in 2003–2004.[19] Since many of these organizations were prominent human rights groups or regional umbrella NGOs that assisted in the development of grassroots initiatives, the infrastructure of civil society was deeply damaged. Creating new organizations with agendas running counter to official policy became practically impossible, and the media faced severe penalties for reporting on the work of deregistered NGOs.

The independent press was also effectively silenced. Dozens of regional papers were closed down or suspended in 2001–2004. After receiving official warnings that they would be closed down, most independent newspapers resorted to self-censorship. The government tightened its grip on electronic media by replacing Russian TV and radio broadcasts with homemade substitutes. This curtailment meant that the regime became the sole source of information for most of the population.

The cost of disobedience was also drastically raised for the general public. The regime stepped up its control over the educational system and closed down several independent institutions of secondary and higher learning.

[19] A. Dautin, *Kniga ne dla Shirokogo Chtenia* [Book Not for Common Audience], "Belorusskaya Delovaya Gazeta", 14 September 2004.

New regulations forbade institutions from granting students and professors leaves of absence to travel abroad, prohibited contacts with Western universities, and even prescribed "measures to prevent access of strange elements on campuses".[20] In January 2004, the permanent-employment system at state-owned enterprises was replaced with mandatory one-year contracts extended at the discretion of the management. As a result, any form of protest (even passive protest, such as refusing to take part in falsification of election results) could carry a very high price for state employees.

Tactical preemption continued with the 'soft' removal of prominent opponents from the political scene. In April 2004, Łukašenka ordered the arrest of Michail Marynič, a former government minister who had defected to the opposition during the 2001 presidential election and had emerged as one of the strongest potential contenders for the 2006 presidential election. Marynič was sentenced to five years in jail for allegedly stealing computers from his own NGO. His sentence was eventually reduced to two and a half years, and he was eventually released in April 2006 – conveniently, weeks after Łukašenka was re-elected.

Last but not least, Łukašenka managed, in 2001–2004, to reinforce the moral ground for his authority by crafting propaganda based on his own version of 'Soviet Belarusian' patriotism. His earlier version of practical ideology proved to be insufficiently reliable to validate his position of unlimited ruler of the country. Since pro-Russian rhetoric made the status of Belarus as an independent state ambiguous, (and hence, Łukašenka's claim to absolute power in this state), Łukašenka was vulnerable to possible attacks from the Kremlin, especially in the absence of a method for rallying the public in support of his regime. This was particularly visible during the 2002 brawl between Łukašenka and Putin. This started in June 2002, after the Russian leader announced his unwillingness to further subsidize Belarus without political union; he soon demanded a full unification in a format that would have turned Belarus into seven provinces of Russia. In the meantime the popularity of unification with Russia had fallen dramatically over the decade of Łukašenka's rule due to the gradual strengthening of the Belarusian identity. In response, Łukašenka had to boost pro-independence rhetoric and even started accusing his eastern neighbor of imperial ambitions. But what Łukašenka pursued was not

[20] *Shutki v Storony*, [No Jokes], "Belorusskaya Gazeta", 19 April 2004.

a retreat to nationalism, but rather a boosting of the earlier version of Soviet Belarusian patriotism, somewhat reinforced with anti-Russian overtones but evoking memories of the Soviet past and World War II to denounce encroachers on Belarus independence. The latter were identified primarily as Russia's oligarchs and remnants of its liberal establishment. Łukašenka also reinforced this ideological cocktail with 'regime patriotism' by personalizing his independence rhetoric through linking, in the public discourse, the survival of independence with the political and economic model he had imposed and, more generally, with his own survival in power.[21] Eventually, the campaign to support Łukašenka in the constitutional referendum that removed term limits did not even mention his name. Instead, it was carried out under the slogan 'For Belarus!'[22]

The results of the series of preemptive strikes became visible once Łukašenka finally decided to carry out the referendum in October 2004 in conjunction with the parliamentary elections. No meaningful resistance was organized, in spite of the fact that opinion polls continuously showed, for several years, that a majority of Belarusians would have voted against the proposition. Any attempts to organize opposition were immediately blocked by the authorities.[23]

According to the official CEC report, 79 percent of all voters supported allowing Łukašenka to run again for president. The official results were

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[21] In his most characteristic remark, he warned that if he were be defeated in the upcoming presidential elections, "we will loose the country". Łukašenka's address to the Third All-Belarusian People's Assembly, 2 March 2006. "Sovetskaya Belorussiya", 3 March 2006.

[22] Łukašenka, however, never endorsed nationalism of his opponents; moreover, while the stepping up pro-independence rhetoric, he continued to issue fatal blows to it. Thus, in the same period, the Belarusian language was virtually evicted from official TV, new history textbooks written from ostensibly pro-Russian positions were brought into the school curriculum and the only Belarusian-language college in Minsk, the National Humanities Lyceum, was closed. In 2004, when Łukašenka condemned the omnipotent presence of Russian music on the Belarusian FM station and demanded quotas for local performers, the most popular Belarusian language rock groups were banned from all FM radio stations because they played at opposition rally (the FM broadcast was eventually filled with Belarusian-born Russian speaking performers who produced lower-quality substitutes for Russian pop music).

[23] The announcement for the referendum came on September 7, the day of mourning for the victims of the Beslan massacre in Russia. A crowd of youngsters assembled in Minsk for a memorial rally, had to watch Łukašenka's announcement instead. Only one man in the crowd publicly expressed disapproval: he was immediately arrested and sentenced to ten days in prison for petty hooliganism.

immediately attacked for their lack of credibility based on Gallup's extensive exit poll, which indicated that no more than 49 percent had supported the referendum.[24] There was plenty of evidence to support allegations of massive vote-rigging.[25] But Belarusian society at large remained uninformed about these electoral abuses and alternative results, so there was no large-scale resistance against the fraud. Street protests drew no more than 5,000 demonstrators on the day of the vote, and they were brutally dispersed. A post-referendum survey found that 48 percent of respondents agreed that the referendum had been conducted in a free and fair manner, and only 35 percent disagreed.[26] Most importantly, the overall perception that Łukašenka could win any ballot remained unchallenged.

Resisting the Orange Threat: The Tool Kit of Preemption Enhanced

The Orange Revolution in Ukraine was a political landmark for the entire former Soviet Union, and, as mentioned above, galvanized the use and perfection of preemptive techniques by the surviving authoritarians across the region. Conveniently for Łukašenka, it happened just after he carried out, in October 2004, a constitutional referendum that removed presidential term limits (technically providing for his infinite rule) and in advance of his planned re-election campaign in March 2006. His reaction to the events in Ukraine proved that resistance to the democratic contagion had turned into the primary task of the entire regime, regardless of whether a similar scenario of regime change was likely in Belarus. The KGB was explicitly directed by Łukašenka to resist the 'export of democracy' in

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[24] D. Hill, *Belarus: Election Officials Say Voters Back Łukašenka*, *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty,* 18 October 2004. Available at *www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2004/10/80d71056-54eb-42cd-9313-084f9aeceb17.html.*

[25] Independent observers and opposition activists had unearthed stuffed ballot boxes, pre-marked ballots distributed to voters, and vote-count protocols that had been signed before election day. On pre-signed protocols, see *www.charter97.org/bel/news/2004/10/14/elections*; on staffed ballot boxes, see *www.oscepa.org/index.aspx?articleid=+367+367&newsid=255*; on pre-marked ballot papers, see *www.charter97.org/bel/news/2004/10/17/lebedka.*

[26] V. Silicki, *They Knew Too Much: Leading Independent Thinktank Faces Attacks*, "RFE/RL Belarus and Ukraine Report", Vol. 6, No. 48, 29 December 2004. Available at *www.rferl.org/reports/pbureport/2004/12/48-291204.asp*

Belarus. Anti-Orange propaganda intensified in the state media, which created countless reports, documentaries, propaganda broadcasts, and newspaper articles to explain to the population the official take on the revolutions. Security forces began publishing special analytical reports and even manuals unmasking the efforts to organize the regime change in Belarus and giving the officials advance instructions on how to combat the efforts of the opposition.[27] The use of new police tactics to disperse a few small demonstrations in early 2005 made it clear that the country's security forces had been specifically trained to stop street protests at their very start. Overall, it appeared that the regime was overreacting, possibly in part because it fell hostage to its own propaganda: that is, it came to believe that colored revolutions were indeed externally-manipulated events rather then home-grown uprisings against vote rigging.

In the run-up to the March 2006 presidential elections, the regime explicitly criminalized most opposition-related activities and established a direct legal basis for repression (unlike before, when opposition organizations, civil society activists, newspapers and journalists were harassed for hooliganism, failure to comply with housing regulations or persecuted on corruption charges). Thus, Article 193-1 of the Criminal Code established punishment for up to a two year prison term for participation in the activities of a de-registered NGO (whereas the organization of such NGOs became punishable for up to three years). Article 293 was amended so that teaching or other training of persons involved in organizing 'mass upheaval' could be punished by up to three years in jail. Calls to the international community to take actions detrimental to 'the external security of Belarus' became punishable by up to five years in prison. And the new article 'Discreditation of the Republic of Belarus' established punishment of up to two years in prison for 'provision of foreign state, foreign or international organization with deliberately falsified data on the political, economic, social, military, or international situation in the republic of Belarus or its power bodies'.[28]

Tactical preemption received a new focus: the main target of attack became not prospective presidential challengers but rather street organizers and

[27] A review of the most notorious such report, *Colored Revolutions on Post-Soviet Space: Scenarios for Belarus*, can be read in Russian at http://www.belgazeta.by/20051212.49/0 10030141/

[28] http://www.charter97.org/bel/news/2005/11/25/new

grass-root activists who were capable of mobilizing the masses. Two of them, Mikałaj Statkievič, former chairman of the Belarusian Social Democratic Party, and Paveł Seviaryniec, leader of the unregistered Young Front movement, were both sentenced to two years of forced labor in May 2005 for organizing anti-referendum protests. Another veteran politician, former member of Parliament (MP) and political prisoner Andrej Klimaŭ, was sentenced to 1.5 years of forced labor in May 2005 for staging unsanctioned rallies two months earlier which he'd advertised as the beginning of the democratic revolution in Belarus. Immediately after enacting the amendments to the criminal code, the police arrested and charged several activists from the Young Front and Zubr movements: both of these are unregistered groups that unite young, radical, and more revolution-minded opposition activists. Another target for repression was election observation, and, in a broader sense, any organization or institution that would systematically question the official election data. Thus, leaders of the largest election monitoring group, 'Partnership', were rounded up in February 2006 on charges of terrorism and organizing an unregistered NGO. The Independent Institute for Socio-Economic and Political Studies, the leading independent polling agency that questioned the official election and referenda data in the past, was closed down by court order in April 2005, whereas conducting public opinion surveys without a license began to be considered a crime.

The official propaganda was reinforced with new techniques and overtones. Much of it consisted of a traditional repertoire but was specifically tailored to discredit and demonize the revolutionary aspirations of the opposition. Most importantly, it reached dramatic proportions, with each of four official TV channels (and a few Russian ones that routinely overlapped with Belarusian broadcasts) repeatedly showing state-authorized documentaries and propaganda shows, sometimes several times a day. Some of that propaganda was typical for Łukašenka's media, for example, the work of director Yury Azaronak (now deputy head of State TV and Radio Company), who was instrumental in the success of Łukašenka's first referendum in 1995.[29] His new cycles of propaganda, called 'Spiritual War' and 'Conspirology', picture the battle between Łukašenka and the

[29] His production 'Hatred: Children of Lies' scared viewers by alternating pictures of Nazi atrocities with pictures of opposition politicians and rallies, and definitely helped to both pass the questions on symbols and the Russian language and create a long-lusting repulsion for the BPF opposition with the population.

opposition, and by extension, the West, as one between the adherents of Christ and the Pharisees (i.e., Jews, Americans, and Europeans).[30] This type of propaganda, however, was apparently intended to consolidate the base of Łukašenka's traditional supporters. More subtle productions targeted uncommitted citizens and worked to scare them away from political alternatives. These included the series 'Belarus: the Look from Outside', in which prominent politicians, singers, artists, and sportsmen from abroad praised Łukašenka; and 'Fifteen', a series of documentaries that emphasized day-to-day problems, social hardships, economic decay, civil wars, etc., in every former Soviet republic, expect Belarus (naturally, the most horrific reports were produced on the Baltic countries, Ukraine, and Georgia). Finally, the regime media attack also targeted the groups where support for the regime was the lowest, that is, the younger and urbanized constituency. This audience was targeted not so much with verbal propaganda but rather with a different series of TV shows, concerts, and discos that initially had appearance of apolitical entertainment, but, by the time of the elections, turned into propaganda exercises, with pop singers from Belarus and the entire former USSR campaigning, once again, 'For Belarus', and, now more specifically, 'For the Daddy' (a popular nickname for Łukašenka: this style of message apparently was meant to clear the organizers from accusations of illegal campaigning). There was one particularly interesting thing about this pop-propaganda. It was organized and presented in the form of mass rallies of flag-waving crowds, and, colors and messages aside, was somewhat reminiscent of the political-music show scenes that could have been observed during the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, with the difference that the show business campaign in Belarus carried out the anti-revolutionary message.[31]

During Łukašenka's reelection campaign, the official media perfected themselves in information dramaturgy and media spin by creating virtual conflicts and threats that justified repressive actions by the regime.[32]

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[30] At this time, however, Azaronak's production caused some outrage among the Orthodox believers, and the Belarusian Orthodox Church even withdrew his works from the church film festival in Minsk in April.

[31] Łukašenka was not alone in using this technique: for example, Kazakh president Nursultan Nazarbaev went even further, running a 'color-coded' campaign, for his reelection in January 2006.

[32] A. Wilson, *Virtual Politics: Faking Democracy in the Post-Soviet World*, Yale University Press, 2005.

Since he ran for reelection only once before and parliamentary and local elections never presented voters with real choice or drama, election-related information dramaturgy was only occasionally used by Łukašenka before the 2006 campaign. This time, however, the regime felt it necessary to employ spin in full swing. One remarkable technique was an 'advance warning' to the society of the possible techniques which could be applied by the opposition while campaigning, with the attached information of the vile secret agenda. For example, the official newspapers would publish extensive excerpts of some classic books on democratization, including Samuel Huntington's 'The Third Wave' (especially his manuals on regime change), and Gene Sharp's 'Technique of Non-Violent Action;' or give particular interpretations to flash mobs[33] and exit polls, warning that peaceful techniques of regime change and non-violent actions would be only a cover-up for destructive and potentially bloody efforts that the opposition was planning to apply to take power.[34] The purpose of these publications was clear: to make the public dislike and fear the opposition. Another tool of information dramaturgy was preemptive revelations publicized by the state security agencies and the official press. For example, arrests of Partnership activists (see above) were accompanied by 'revelations' by the KGB which claimed to have unmasked a plot by election monitors to overthrow the government through organizing explosions in the center of Minsk on election day and using the victims as a justification for violent actions against the authorities. This particular attack was poorly executed, as KGB head Sciapan Sukharenka ended up telling the audience completely unbelievable stories. For instance, he insisted that the opposition was planning to poison running water in Minsk with rotten rats. But the spin worked much better in another example, when the government dealt with the protesters who filled the central square in Minsk and occupied it for several days after the voting results were announced. The official media distributed fabricated images of homosexuals and drug addicts, and even charged that there was a spread of contagious diseases on the central square of Minsk on the eve of the crackdown on the protest. The media images helped reduce the size of the protest and secured overall approval by the

[33] The official military newspaper, for example, called flash mobs 'an instrument of US imperialism'.

[34] See, for example, *Tekhnologii destabilizacii*, "Vo Slavu Rodiny", http://www.vsr.mil.by/index/nobrev.html

public for police actions immediately following it. Overall, by associating violence with the opposition, the government propaganda prepared public opinion for whatever measures the regime would take again the opposition. The spin continued after the crackdown was accomplished: for example, after the brutal dispersal of the protests in Minsk on March 25, 2006, the official media broadcast pictures of riot policemen and official TV crews beaten up by opposition supporters.[35]

How did this new round of preemptive attacks help Łukašenka in his reelection? On one hand, March 19, 2006 produced no surprise: the incumbent claimed victory with 83 percent of the vote, and it appeared that overall society took positively his message of stability. The opposition, meanwhile, while managing to consolidate the pro-democracy electorate, nevertheless failed to make a great impression on larger audiences. Less predictably, the official announcement provoked a wave of mass protests, starting on election night in Minsk, when at least 20,000 persons assembled on the main square in defiance of threats from the KGB a few days before the vote to prosecute protesters on charges of terrorism, even pressing for death sentences. This spontaneous outburst was partly caused by unrealistic official returns, but was also the result of the overall effort of the opposition during the election campaign, its ability to establish credibility with the core anti-Łukašenka constituency, and the efforts of two opposition candidates, the leader of the united opposition, Alaksandr Milinkievič, and the former rector of the Belarusian State University, Alaksandr Kazulin, who managed to campaign energetically in spite of restrictions and repression. The protest continued for several days with a tent camp set up on October Square, emulating the 'Orange Revolution' in Ukraine in 2004.

The size and persistence of the post-election protest (which must be regarded in the context of a highly repressive state that has a fine-tuned and well-trained security apparatus) confirmed, first, that increasing political repression has inadvertently radicalised the democratic electorate in Belarus, especially the core of opposition activists who proved ready to engage in seemingly hopeless and illogical protest actions. Second, it showed that civil society, when committed to democracy building in

[35] Dozens of opposition supporters were badly beaten on that day, three disappeared and were feared dead. The official TV reported that only one protester, but eight riot policemen, were injured.

spite of serious consequences – even criminalisation – of its activities, can spontaneously self-organize even when the political leaders and street organizers are effectively wiped out by arrests (it should be noted that dozens of opposition activists were rounded up and sentenced to brief terms in jail days before the vote).[36] One more remarkable factor was the emergence of the internet as an important alternative medium of information. During peak political events, such as the beating of Kazulin by riot police, voting day and the protests in the aftermath, the number of visits to the principal independent sites, in spite of the attempts to block them, was several times higher than usual. Likewise, spontaneous protest actions were mostly coordinated online. The internet has also become a tool of campaigning for the 'traditional' NGO sector, even if this was a consequence of the near impossibility of continuing its work legally. Although the internet is still easily blocked by the regime, it appears that it cannot restrict access forever and for all, which created ample opportunities to inform and organize.

However, the Belarusian opposition, due to complete elimination of the opportunities for verifying the election outcomes and the actual defeat in the elections, did not even try to declare victory for its candidate, merely argued for a fairer margin separating Łukašenka and his challengers. So, with no political breakthrough in sight, it could not count on sustained public support. Moreover, the security forces remained totally loyal to Łukašenka and blocked off the square, arresting those trying to enter or leave. As a result, the protest quickly dwindled to just a few hundred activists and was ended early on March 24, when riot police destroyed the camp and arrested the campers. Moreover, the show of defiance and activism also highlighted the gap that separates this democratic subculture in Belarus from the rest of society, as the combination of fear imposed by the government on some parts of society and acceptance of the regime by

[36] Particularly remarkable was the change of mood among Łukašenka's passive opponents, i.e., those who voted against him in the elections but chose not to join protests or engage in political activism in general. This mood changed from waiting until the political opposition would do something to get rid of Łukašenka to getting ready to make small independent actions by themselves. This segment of the opposition, for example, was responsible for an outburst of unconventional protest activities, such as flash mobs, in the Belarusian capital following the election. Internet blogs and discussion fora were full of spontaneous suggestions and calls for action, be it *samizdat* printing of leaflets or creating alternative web sites to make up for the ones blocked during the campaign.

others proved to have put insurmountable restrictions on the opposition's appeal and following. As a result, passers-by on the streets and squares of Minsk (in sharp contrast to Kiev in November-December 2004) evinced as much indifference and loathing for the protesters as defiance and solidarity. It appeared that the radicalization of the democratic subculture would be brief if this subculture remained rather small by itself and came to appreciate its own limits, so that repression continued targeting only a limited segment of the society. Last, but not least, the ease and harshness with which the protest was dispersed confirmed that the regime remained capable of efficiently rebuffing any challenge put forward by the opposition, and sent a message to society that the personal price for disobedience had increased.

Preemptive Authoritarianism in the International Context

As mentioned above, cooperation between non-democratic regimes is an important external dimension of preemptive authoritarianism. This importance is defined, first, by the increasingly internationalized character of the democratic movement and civil society that transcends national borders and restrictions. Second, democratic breakthroughs in close neighborhoods always create new opportunities for aspiring opposition movements in the remaining authoritarian states (in terms of informational and organizational resources provided by sympathetic elites in new democracies, opportunities for legal registration, publication, and training of the activists in neighboring countries, etc.) Last, but not least, smaller authoritarian regimes often need backing and cover-up from larger ones that possess more resources and influence on the international arena. It is from this vantage point that Russia in particular is emerging, after its own recent retreat from democratic experiments at home, in the newly-emerging 'authoritarian international'.

It should be noted that the politics of Russia's president Vladimir Putin are increasingly reminiscent of what Łukašenka has perfected himself over the last decade, and they are characterized by the same logic of preemption. While Putin's initial ascension to the presidency occurred through a dynastic succession rather than victory in a fair electoral contest, his popularity is still genuine and unmatchable for those who attempt to

challenge him. Nevertheless, he chose to destroy the independent TV channels that attempted to derail his rise to power in 1999. Similarly, he expelled regional governors from the upper house of parliament in 2000 and replaced them with appointed representatives in 2004 – even though most of those expelled fully supported his administration. In 2005, he pushed through new electoral rules that make it nearly impossible for parties uncontrolled by the Kremlin to pass the threshold to enter parliament, even though Putin's brand of 'managed democracy' had already succeeded in keeping them out of the State Duma in the 2003 elections.

For Russia's elite, strengthening the authoritarian international in the region is clearly dictated by the perception that the advance of democracy would reduce its sphere of influence in the region. The degree to which this perception dictates its foreign policy became visible with the failed attempt to promote Victor Yanukovych's candidacy in the 2004 presidential elections in Ukraine. Once the Orange revolution was not prevented, Russian elites only grew in commitment to fending off democracy elsewhere in the CIS. The most vivid and controversial example of Russia's new role in CIS is, perhaps, the Kremlin's full backing of the Uzbek president Islam Karimov after the May 2005 massacre in Andijon, and the extradition of Uzbek opposition activists who sought asylum in Russia. Another example is the economic attacks against the newly-democratized states in the former USSR (such as the 'gas attack' against Ukraine, Georgia, and the Baltic states, in December 2005, as well as numerous bans on the import of products from Georgia and Moldova in 2006) being presented by the Kremlin-controlled media as acts of punishment for 'colored revolutions' and (or) for striving by these countries' governments to leave the Russian orbit. As the most far-reaching integration project on the post-Soviet space, the Russia-Belarus alliance logically becomes a cornerstone of this 'authoritarian international', even in spite of the fact that relations between the Kremlin and Łukašenka's regime are uneasy at times.

The first example is Russia's efforts at boosting the international legitimacy of post-Soviet autocratic regimes, first of all in Belarus, the only CIS autocracy located in Europe and thus most severely scrutinized and criticized by its observers. The team of CIS election observers, usually led by Russia's former national security supreme, Vladimir Rushailo, rubber-stamps approval reports on any election in the CIS countries (minus Ukraine or Georgia). Moreover, Russia actively lobbies to undermine

international election monitors that it can't control. First of all, the OSCE observers' missions. For the last two years, the Kremlin actively lobbied to downsize this dimension of OSCE activities, threatening to block the financing of the organization along the way. When it failed to block international efforts, the officials in Moscow recently began to engage in diplomatic counterattacks. Thus, after the OSCE issued its harsh statement on non-recognition of the March 19, presidential election in Belarus, Russia's Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov, accused the observers of 'instigating mass disorders' in Minsk.[37]

The second example is Russia's role in cultural preemption that extends its geographical borders. Here it should be mentioned that much of the democracy-bashing in the former Soviet Union (and given the position of the Russian language, Kremlin-controlled media has a huge impact in forming public attitudes even outside Russia's borders) is going on under the slogan of combating international terrorism. This message is still credible with audiences in the former Soviet Union, and it is not always understood as a vehicle of anti-Western propaganda, given the fact that Russia joined the tactical alliance with the West in 2001 exactly under this slogan. While the abuse of anti-terrorist rhetoric for the sake of covering up antidemocratic politics in Russia itself is well-known, its security agencies began helping other regimes in establishing a link in public consciousness between democracy and terrorism. Thus, almost a year before the Belarusian KGB declared that the opposition planned explosions during the elections and even poisoning of the water supplies with rotten rats, Russia's FSB director, Nikolai Patrushev, 'unmasked', in May 2005, a plot by the West to use unspecified terrorist organizations to finance the Belarusian opposition in the run-up to the presidential election.[38] It should be mentioned that similar terrorist allegations have been issued against the opposition in other post-Soviet countries as well, and, more generally, Russian official media spares no effort in discrediting the newly democratized states of Eurasia not only for its domestic audiences but also for a broader CIS audience. Another form assisting cultural preemption is the assistance provided by Russian spin doctors (who notoriously failed

[37] *Russian foreign minister accuses OSCE of instigating protests*, "Belapan News Line", 24 March 2006, http://elections.belapan.com/president2006/eng/show.php?show=49325

[38] Information of the Belarus news agencies, available at http://www.pravo.by/showtext.asp?1115912591081

during the Orange revolution in Ukraine) in various internal propaganda campaigns. It is not surprising, for example, that the Kremlin's principal spin doctor Gleb Pavlovsky, who currently hosts a propaganda program on one of Russia's nationwide TV networks, has become a frequent visitor to Belarus, was offered a lavish opportunity of interviewing Łukašenka, praised him in his program, and was possibly involved, alongside Russia's image making agencies, in framing the official propaganda line during and after the elections.[39] During the March presidential election campaigns, the Russian media replicated the claims of official Belarusian TV networks in the aftermath of the vote that described the failed protest effort in Minsk as an action driven by a bunch of extremists.[40]

The third example is assisting in tactical preemption. While the most notorious case in this respect was arresting and deporting Uzbek opposition activists from Russia after the Andijon events, a similar pattern, although with less grave consequences, began to emerge in Russia-Belarus relations as well. Thus, in the run-up to the March 2006 presidential elections, Russian printing houses located in Smolensk refused publication of the Belarus independent press before the election, forcing some of them to suspend publication altogether. Interestingly enough, the Russian embassy in Belarus made little effort in assisting the release of Russian citizens arrested in Minsk following the post-election protests.

A final example is the 'fraternal' economic assistance provided to help allies survive the political storms. Thus, before the March 2006 presidential elections, Russia froze natural gas prices for Belarus at only a fraction of the price paid by Ukraine. This subsidy for Łukašenka's 'economic miracle' helped him to maintain impressive rates of economic growth in general and wage hikes in particular, boosting his propaganda about stability as the main theme of the official election campaign. At the same time, such benevolence was meant to send a signal to the less compliant regimes, particularly in Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia.

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[39] See brief transcript of the interview at http://www.afn.by/news/view.asp?newsid=71486 Official Belarus media welcomed and praised Pavlovsky's work. See, for example, http://www.sb.by/article.php?articleID=49872

[40] Russia is currently the largest shareholder in Belarus. The Euronews Russian version coverage and great discrepancies between this and other language version was pointed to by several internet blogs.

Conclusion

This analysis adds a sober note to any discussion abaut further prospects for democratization in post-Communist Eurasia. Łukašenka might be a champion and front-runner in preemption, but his example shows how far it can go and how profoundly it may affect society. Political change can be blocked for a very long period of time. Moreover, other incumbents in the region are definitely catching up. Recent attacks on NGOs in Russia, mysterious killings of opposition leaders in Kazakhstan, and televised revelations of coup attempts just before the 2005 parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan are all examples of preemption being extensively used and perfected elsewhere in the region.

Moreover, authoritarian international is not constricted to Russia and Belarus, but is expanding in the region – and even beyond. The Russian parliament, for example, established for the first time in 2005 its own funding program for 'civil society' groups both in Russia and abroad, and officially private foundations cloning Western democracy promoting institutions increasingly engage in founding media, recruiting politicians, and even founding political parties in neighboring countries.[41] Anti-contagion measures have been prominent since 2005 on the agenda of such groups as the CIS Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. The latter group recently reaffirmed its opposition to 'meddling' in the internal affairs of member states on behalf of human rights protection,[42] and has adopted peculiar 'anti-terrorist' policies that, in fact, facilitate extradition of political opponents from one member of the alliance to another.[43] There are also signs of increased cooperation between like-minded regimes from inside and outside of the former Soviet Union, as can be judged by the intensification of political and economic contacts of several former Soviet republics with Venezuela

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[41] See: I. Krastev, *Democracy's Doubles*, "Journal of Democracy" 17, No. 2, 2006, 56-62; K. Gershman, M. Allen, *The Assault on Democracy Assistance*, "Journal of Democracy" 17, No. 2,2006, 36-51.

[42] *Authoritarian Internationale Leads Anti-Democratic Backlash*, "Democracy Digest" 3, No. 1, March 2006. Available online at http://www.civnet.org/journals/democracy_digest_3_1.html

[43] http://ru.iras.ir/rendermodule.aspx?SelectedSingleViewItemID=1175&ModuleID=348&rendertype=print

and Iran, as well as by the high-profile show of solidarity at the Non-Aligned Movement summit in Havana in August 2006.

Overall, preemptive authoritarianism seems to be, not only well-endowed with repressive capabilities and financial means, but also with intellectual resources. Autocrats can be smart, and use to their advantage the examples and systematic studies of democratization which present them with manuals of how to avoid democracy at home, at least for a substantial period of time. They are also not home-ridden anymore, and demonstrate a remarkable capacity to organize internationally and establish some sort of self-defense. Last but not least, they are capable of making preemption legitimate and even fun for home audiences. As of now, it is hard to predict when and where preemptive authoritarianism will run out of steam, and which obstacles will be insurmountable for it. However counterintuitive it can be, given the overall tone of the paper, I would suggest that three surprising circumstances that were revealed during the failed post-election protests in Belarus (that is radicalization of the democratic subculture, and, in a broader sense, of the part of the society affected by repression; ability of civil society to spontaneously organize; and limitations on the regime's ability to restrict access to information) may be considered as factors that can potentially reverse and even defeat the forces of preemption. On the international front, preemption may eventually stumble due to decaying financial capabilities, and, by extension, political influence of the 'core' petrol states that seem to be taking the lead in the authoritarian international. For the foreseeable future, however, we have little else to expect but witnessing a slowdown, and even reversal, of the recent wave of democratization.

Andrew Wilson

BELARUS BETWEEN 'COLORED REVOLUTION' AND 'COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY TECHNOLOGY'

Mine is not yet an academic paper, just an attempt to lay out some theses for discussion. Many scholars have looked at the 'learning effect', 'contagion effect' or even the 'modular transfer' of colored revolutions;[1] others have begun to look at the fact that regimes have been learning too.[2] My aim is to look at events in Belarus through the prism of these and two other factors: 'political technology' and the use of Russian 'soft power'. The basic argument is that the second factor (authoritarian learning) overcame the first (the possibility of a local colored revolution), with some assistance

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[1] See G.P. Herd, *'Colorful Revolutions and the CIS: 'Manufactured' versus 'Managed' Democracy?*, "Problems of Post-Communism", Vol. 52, No. 2, 3–18, and Herd, *The 'Orange' Revolution: Implications for Stability in the CIS*,Conflict Studies Research Centre, Central & Eastern Europe Series 05/01, January 2005, at http://www.da.mod.uk/CSRC/documents/CEE/05(01)-GPH.doc/file_view; J.A. Tucker, *Enough! Electoral Fraud, Collective Action Problems and the '2nd Wave' of Post-Communist Democratic Revolutions*, http://www.wws.princeton.edu/jtucker/Tucker_EFCA_2005.pdf; M.R. Beissinger, *Structure and Example in Modular Political Phenomena: The Diffusion of the Bulldozer/Rose/Orange/Tulip Revolutions*, draft at http://polisci.wisc.edu/~beissinger/beissinger.modrev.article.pdf; M. McFaul, *Transitions from Post-Communism*, "Journal of Democracy", Vol. 16, No. 3, 2002, 5–19; V. Silicki, *Has the Age of Revolutions Ended?*, www.tol.cz, 13 January 2005; G.J. Bekkerman, *The End of the Last Dictatorship in Europe: Four Keys to a Successful Color Revolution in Belarus*, www.kentlaw.edu/perritt/courses/seminar/jerry-bekkerman-BELARUS%20THESIS.htm

[2] L. Diamond, *Authoritarian Learning: Lessons from the Colored Revolutions*, "The Brown Journal of World Affairs", Vol. XII, No. 1. Summer/Fall 2005; V. Silicki, *Preempting Democracy: The Case of Belarus*, "Journal of Democracy", Vol. 16, No. 4, October 2005, 83–97; V. Silicki, *Still Soviet? Why Dictatorship Persists in Belarus*, "Harvard International Review", Vol. xxviii, No. 1, Spring 2006, 46–53; V. Silicki, *Contagion Deterred: Preemptive Authoritarianism in the Former Soviet Union (The Case of Belarus)*, "CDDRL Working Papers", No. 66, June 2006, http://iis-db.stanford.edu/pubs/21152/Silicki_No_66.pdf

from the third (political technology). As yet, the political space in Belarus is too narrow for the application of the fourth factor. Russian 'soft power' is actually deployed more effectively in relatively open societies like Latvia and Ukraine.

Colored Revolution

The regime in Belarus in 2006 had many start-line advantages that the Ukrainian regime in 2004 did not.

(i) Basic popularity. Not 82.6 percent, but Łukašenka has regularly polled around 50 percent. Exaggerating the level of victory or claiming a plurality as a majority are serious forms of election fraud, but were never likely to trigger as much protest as an actual steal. The opposition was never likely to be able to claim that their candidate had actually won.

(ii) Conversely, Milinkievič was not a popular former prime minister like Yushchenko. He had no equivalent of Tymoshenko at his side. The opposition was more united than many expected, but the division between Milinkievič and Kazulin was a serious one.

(iii) Limited opposition finance. Ukraine in 2004 had a hard core of businessmen who were *already* quasi-independent of the authorities in the early 2000s, and stuck with Yushchenko when their interests came under pressure after they first backed him in 2002. Belarus has no equivalent of men like David Zhvaniia, Yevhen Chervonenko and Petro Poroshenko, and has had no equivalent to the Yushchenko government in 1999–2001 that brought such men into being (Zhvaniia), or the Gongadze affair that made others jump ship (Poroshenko). Ukraine in 2004 also had a lot of 'fence-sitting' oligarchs like Victor Pinchuk worried about maintaining their options in the West. Some Belarusian businesses are rumored to have toyed with the idea of backing the opposition, but the fact that this is only rumor is testimony to the power of continued state control over enterprises in Belarus. There are no oligarchs in Belarus.

(iv) Belarus had no domestic demonstration effect equivalent to Our Ukraine's strong showing in the 2002 Rada elections and the 'Ukraine without Kuchma' campaign of 2001. The political cycle in Belarus in 2006 was more like the situation in Ukraine over the winter of 2000–01, when the opposition was demoralised by Kuchma's private promise to

introduce the 'toughest possible order' after his re-election in 1999, and proved unable to mobilise effectively when the Gongadze scandal broke. Łukašenka was clearly worried that the March demonstrations could encourage an upswing of activism *after* the elections, and therefore cracked down hard.

(v) Elite unity. Belarus is less marked by the regional and clan divisions that make for 'pluralism by default' in states like Ukraine and Moldova.[3] It is an open question whether some of Łukašenka's methods, such as selective prosecutions (Rybakov, Żuraŭkova), elite circulation,[4] and over-reliance on the KGB may make the regime more fragile in the long run. However, the weakness of the Belarusian 'national idea' is a factor hindering the long-term consolidation of the elite,[5] just as it is that of the opposition.

(vi) The possibilities for foreign (Western) intervention were extremely limited, both in terms of support for due process and/or the opposition, and any repeat of the Kwaśniewski and Adamkus 'insertion' four days into the Orange Revolution. In fact, given the regime's choice of campaign *dramaturgiia* (see section 'Political Technology' below), any heavy-handed foreign intervention was likely to make things worse, and life for the opposition more difficult.

With these advantages, Łukašenka had a good chance of winning a genuine plurality in 2006. But he had two completely different benchmarks. First, was his apparent desire to win more than his 75.7 percent in 2001 – and probably more than Putin's re-election score of 71.2 percent in 2004.

Second, given that Łukašenka's relations with Russia were sometimes difficult in 2001-4, with Putin replacing Yeltsin in the Kremlin and Łukašenka failing to deliver on promises to open up the Belarusian economy to Russian capital after his 're-election' in 2001, Łukašenka has successfully reinvented himself since 2004 as a bulwark against the 'Orange contagion'. Russia, meanwhile, has been quietly developing both 'hard' and

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[3] L. Way, *Pluralism by Default and the Sources of Political Liberalization in Weak States*, available online at www.yale.edu/leitner/pdf/PEW-Way.pdf

[4] K. Matsuzato, *A populist island in an ocean of clan politics: the Łukašenka regime as an exception among CIS countries*, "Europe-Asia Studies", Vol. 56, No. 2, March 2004, 235–261.

[5] L. Way, S. Levitsky, *The dynamics of autocratic coercive capacity after the Cold War*, "Communist and Post-Communist Studies", Vol. 39, No. 3, September 2006, 387–410.

'soft' forms of its own 'counter-revolutionary technology' since the same time. Belarus was happy to be a testing ground for the former.

Counter-Revolutionary Technology

Significantly, therefore, Łukašenka concentrated on what was openly described by many as 'counter-revolutionary technology'. Equally significantly, local 'technology' was notable for focusing very specifically on disabling all the key triggers that had helped set off the Orange Revolution in 2004. The opposition was kept off election committees, foreign observation was kept to a minimum, real exit polls were replaced by fake polls that echoed the official result, no real youth movement was allowed, election day itself was rendered less important by the four days of early voting, new legislation and draconian threats completely altered the cost-benefit calculus of potential demonstrators, especially those less pre-committed who would be needed to raise numbers to a tipping point.

Political Technology

So-called counter-revolutionary technology is in part a substitute for what are by now older forms of 'political technology' developed since 1991, to the extent that political technology involves manipulating democracy rather than preventing its effective operation.[6] One type of political technology, artificial party 'projects', was less important in Belarus in 2006, as parties were less important. The major exception was Siarhiej Hajdukievič, with the LDPB leader reprising his Zhirinovskii role as jester-cum-hired-gun in the 'middle ground'.

Questions have also been asked about Kazulin, although it is not clear whether he was a Russian or a Łukašenka project, or even an independent KGB one. His actions on March 25, 2006 suggested he was a possible *provocateur*, the fact that he is now sitting in prison suggests Russian backing. Others claim to detect a project backed by Belarusian émigré capital, although this is limited in quantity (see point 'Colored Revolution'

[6] See A. Wilson, *Virtual Politics: Faking Democracy in the Post-Soviet World*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005.

iii above). The fact that his sentence is so harsh suggests all the speculation surrounding his role may have been unfair.[7] In any case, many of the accusations may reflect the persistent cultural clash between the more 'national' opposition (Milinkievič) and the younger, Russian speaking; more 'cosmopolitan' wing (Kazulin).

A second type of political technology involves not the creation of virtual objects, but the manipulation of virtual moods, or the *dramaturgiia* of election campaigns. This was much more important in Belarus in 2006. Belarusian strategists leant from the pro-Yanukovych dramaturgiia in Ukraine in 2004, which had been too narrowly anti-American. Even Sergei Markov admitted, "I told them [the Yanukovych team] to use anti-Polish rhetoric".[8] Łukašenka's 'technologists' added the anti-Polish element and successfully demonised Milinkievič as a stooge of the Vatican (possibly helped by the new German Pope) and Warsaw *kresy* – politics, as well as the USA. Milinkievič's popularity in foreign capitals was therefore a double-edged sword.

Political technology (factor 3) therefore backed up counter-revolutionary technology (factor 2). By keeping control of the dramaturgiia and depicting demonstrators as foreign-backed, social 'marginals' and a threat to stability, the regime prevented the opposition from reaching out to a broader hinterland of more 'civic' support.

Gleb Pavlovsky was a frequent visitor to Minsk before the elections, but it was not clear if his job was to advise on technologies of type 2 or 3 – or both. Russia, however, was interested in Belarus as an extreme demonstration effect, a warning to potential oppositions in Russia – that events in Moscow in 2008 might not be an action replay of events in Minsk in 2006, but would be more like those than Kiev in 2004.

Soft Power

Despite all their bluster during the 'Orange Revolution', Russian political technologists, who regard themselves as masters of technology, were disconcerted and disgruntled to be out-manoeuvred, and even made

[7] P. Usaŭ, *Rasiia, satsyial-demakratyia i "praekt Kazulin"*, "Arche", No. 7–8, 2006.

[8] As cited in F. Mereu, *Spin Doctors Blame Yanukovych*, "The Moscow Times", 30 November 2004.

to look old-fashioned, by the Ukrainian opposition in 2004. Since 2005, Modest Kolerov in particular, a former colleague of Pavlovsky's appointed to head a department for 'cultural and inter-regional relations with foreign countries' within Putin's Presidential Administration, has devoted much attention to 'cloning' technology, helping produce 'our', Russia-friendly NGOs, 'our', Russia-friendly internet and even 'our', Russia-friendly parties and politicians.

However, just as it is hard for genuine NGOs and the internet to operate in Belarus, it is hard for fake ones too. Kolerov, for example, has had much more success in neighboring 'anti-Russian' Latvia, seeking to work through organisations like the National Harmony Party and even Pravex Bank, because political conditions there are more open.[9]

Conclusions

In other countries, the mix of the four factors will be different. But we will understand the situation better by looking at all four rather than just the first, or even the first two. Russia will use 'soft power' where hard power does not work. In Belarus, the regime may have demonstrated some long-term weakness by going so negative across the board. Other papers have looked at the gradual development of 'creole nationalism' in Belarus. Clearly, the regime needs some more positive consolidating factor of this type if it is to outlive Łukašenka himself, or if Łukašenka were to seek an eventual fourth term.

[9] See the report drawn up by circles close to Pavlovsky that can be found in Russian at http://www.nlvp.ru/text/reports/60.html

BELARUS AS A GEOPOLITICAL PARIAH[1]

Moderator: Vital Silicki
Presenters: Ethan S. Burger, Alaksandr Lahviniec, Mykoła Ryabchuk, Stephen L. White, Andrew Wilson, Rafał Sadowski
Discussants: Karen Akopaŭ, Alastair Rabagliaati and Pavel Usaŭ, Grigory Ioffe, Andrej Dyńko

Vital Silicki. [Introduction] Geopolitics usually refers to things, which do not have moral connotations like hard politics, interests, realism, and the balance of power. There is no room for morality in this perspective. Pariah is more or less a moral category. Are we dealing here with a little bit of an oxymoron? Is Belarus really a pariah? I'll give you an example. Two months ago the European Commission was discussing introducing economic sanctions against Belarus. They were voted down by our most cherished and reliable friends in the West, well in the immediate neighborhood, including Poland, Lithuania, who are the most outspoken defenders of democracy promotion in Belarus. They found that this was something not in their own interests. If there are interests like these how can we talk about the pariah? Even if we are a pariah in the West, do we take it for granted that there is no world outside the West? How do we treat everything, which is developing in Belarus relations vis-à-vis Russia and countries like Iran and Venezuela? And what are the implications of this marginal world for the future economic, social, political and national developments in Belarus? These are real questions and we need to search for answers. Those were my preliminary thoughts and may be some motivations for our speakers.

Vital Silicki. [Comment on Ethan S. Burger's presentation] It is not only with Belarus. It is something we stumble on in democracy promotion

[1] Authorized statements

and in US and EU foreign policies. Passing judgments is easy. To make something specific on a foreign country you need leverage. For leverage, you need linkage. And when you are speaking of a geopolitical pariah, how do you develop this linkage? It is a question we may address later in the discussion. There is some sort of a vicious circle. Remember two years ago, there was that inaugural address by President Bush, and all the talk about the spread of freedom. And just two days ago I delivered a lecture at Stanford on Authoritarian International in the former Soviet Union, about dictators getting together to prevent the spread of freedom. That is where the real leverage is.

Aleś Lahviniec. [Presentation] I will be acting not only as a lecturer at the European Humanities University, but first of all as executive director at the Belarusian Schuman Society and also as a young politician.

I will try to come from within to look at Belarus not as an object, but as a subject of international politics. I would like to look at Belarus as an actor and to see how its role in Europe has changed over the last 15 years since it gained independence. If we take a classic approach to geopolitics, we can say that it is completely in accordance with the opinion widely spread by the Russian ruling elite that Belarusian independence was an accident. I do not subscribe to this point of view. I would like to suggest that we look at the dynamics within Belarus during the last 15 years. What comes from the ruling elites in Belarus, what comes from the government as to their vision of international politics and of how national interests are defined in Belarus? Taking into account the fundamentals of geopolitics one may say that Belarus is a relatively small country, which is heavily dependent on Russia for energy resources and economic well being in general. Belarus has no access to the sea. For a long time, it has not been perceived as an actor. More often it was seen as a subject for disputes; just an object of international politics.

Let's see what the developments in Belarus were since we obtained independence. How did the ruling elite perceive Belarus at that moment and how did they want to govern this country and organize the foreign policy of that new player on the international stage? Surely, one can say that at the very beginning the governing elite was unprepared for independence, even shocked by it. Those in power were not able to think in the categories of an independent state. The initial stage was dominated by the understanding that everything was decided in Moscow and that it was

enough to look at Moscow and follow what they were doing. The Kebich team and the Łukašenka team, at the beginning, were not even using the term "national interests", the expression itself was taboo for them. Only at the end of the 1990s Łukašenka began to use the words "national interests".

So, the first point is that the governing elite in Belarus was not prepared to think in categories of an independent national state. And it is still an ongoing process; even if there have been some achievements. Today, everybody can see that Łukašenka's slogan is "For Belarus". Now it is different because everybody starts to think of Belarus, its choices and its interests on the international scene from the point of view of an independent country.

If we take these political fundamentals, what could be the foreign policy options of such a country? In today's world each government generally tries to achieve at least four goals in its foreign politicy – first of all, security, autonomy, well-being and prestige or status. If one looks at the foreign policy of Belarus during these 15 years, one can say that the major threats to sovereignty and security are coming from the East. So, looking for military engagements with Russia is a threat in itself for an independent and neutral Belarus. We could also say that Belarus' political regime is inward-looking and east-looking, and so in terms of security, and its normal understanding, the government has not been working for security of the nation, but for security of the regime itself.

In terms of political autonomy, the Belarusian government has been following Russian foreign policy choices in international affairs. At the very beginning at least, the country's representatives in Europe and elsewhere acted in Russian national interests; not Belarusian national interests. It also seems that the government has tried to think of political autonomy within the country, which means it has sought to get rid of any credible political alternative within the country that could have chances, scenarios and opportunities to decide on foreign policy issues. As for the well-being, surely the well-being has improved in Belarus over this period, but the economy has shown huge limits for further improvement because of the foreign policy options, which have been made by the ruling elite. As for prestige, at the beginning the country's leadership, as well as large portions of its population, thought in the categories of a super power because they still perceived themselves as part of, or at least as closely connected with Russia. Any success in Russian foreign policy or even sports was seen

as a success in Belarusian foreign policy or sports. Now, the country is searching for prestige in different parts of the world, in the non-aligned movement for instance. But this prestige is a very delicate thing.

These four categories are not inter-exchangeable. If one puts too much emphasis on security, he'll lose in prestige, or in political autonomy or in well-being. So, there should be a more or less even distribution of efforts of the state or government to achieve those goals.

I think Belarus as an independent actor can play a geopolitical role in Europe. For this purpose, it should have a responsible foreign policy embedded in the regional context. Surely, the country is heavily dependent on Russia; it is a sheer fact that we have to acknowledge. Can we deal with that? Yes, we can; both internally and internationally. Internally, we should have a very good understanding within the society of what our national interests are. And also we need a national consolidation of the ruling elite. We are now coming more or less to an understanding among all the elite that independence is a value.

The second, international possibility is to counterbalance – we cannot end dependency on Russia in Belarus – but we can counterbalance it. First, as I mentioned, by a strong national consolidation. And second, by the Europeanization of Belarus. Belarus can be engaged in different initiatives in Europe, and improve its political relationship with its European neighbors. It is in our national interest to develop strong links with the EU, to strengthen the European core of our identity and to be Europeanized. The best option is to combine these two leverages to counterbalance the Russian influence. So we should develop, this is my final point, a European national identity of Belarusians.

Vital Silicki. I just want to comment on this slogan "For Belarus", which is often used as a sign of national consciousness; is being developed even among the authorities in Belarus and even in Mr. Łukašenka's government. You know, in the cynical field of economics and marketing there is such a term as re-branding, when you take a brand and turn it into something different in an effort to target a new audience. Is this nationalization or just re-branding, where Belarus is taken away, let us say from nationalists, and filled with a completely new meaning? This can have very uncomfortable implications for us. But that is again a point for future discussion.

Mykoła Ryabchuk. [Introduction to his presentation] Let me start with a joke. A few years ago I was traveling from Budapest to Belgrade with

two neighbors in the same compartment. They conversed; one of them spoke Bulgarian and the other Serbian. The Bulgarian man pretended to be an expert on Russia and told his friend a lot of funny stories about that country. Finally, the Bulgarian changed the track and said: "Well, there is even a stranger country called Belarus. They have such an erratic president that he forbade the use of the title "president". Only he is entitled to be a president, nobody else. Nobody can be the president of a company, of an institution and so on. You know, his name is… well… Shevchenko!"

The Bulgarian apparently confused the name of a Ukrainian football player. But I felt that the story could have been even funnier if the Serb came to Ukraine and found a lot of monuments to Shevchenko all over the country (since Shevchenko is also Ukraine's most venerated nineteenth century poet). The Serb could have been completely puzzled: why are Ukrainians so eager to celebrate everywhere the Belarusian dictator Shevchenko?!..

The story, I feel, provides a graphic example of how a rather dramatic situation can be trivialized. Actually, this is what Vital Silicki said. We may easily label a country a pariah or a rogue regime, but what are the consequences of this, except for some jokes and some kind of orientalisation, as Edward Said may have put it. The real problem comes from the fact that a pariah country is really difficult to influence. They are really independent.

Vital Silicki. [Comment on Mykoła Ryabchuk's presentation] Mykoła Ryabchuk was talking about the lack of people who would give money. There are some people like these in Belarus. We all know who they are. Fewer of them can now enjoy holidays out of Belarus as they used to because of some visa bans. But still, the question is whether we have to regard these visa bans as anything substantial at all. I once had to comment on those initiatives in Brussels. My reply was very harsh, I said I was disappointed because these visa bans looked to be very concrete and very substantial on the surface but are absolutely inconsequential.

What is the real issue is how to shut down the environment for the elite and find ways to open it for everyone else. And here we have real bans. The European Union is going to increase the cost of visas for ordinary Belarusians. That's a more substantial ban.

Stephen White. [Presentation] When we visited Belarus in spring last year, we found it very difficult to speak to anybody representing the regime,

except a single figure in the Foreign Ministry. It seems to be unfortunate from the point of view of the regime itself that it is unwilling to meet reasonably independent Western academics. It is a loser in that. We also did focus groups and surveys.

I want to speak today about a survey, which was gathered in 2006. I want to introduce evidence found in Belarus as compared to Ukraine and Russia. I think we will continue in the theme of Europeanization, which has been raised by some of the speakers. We asked all kinds of questions, and I hope our evidence will be presented more fully in a written version available in due course.

One of the first questions asked was whether Belarusians felt themselves to be European. Possible answers were: "I often think of myself as European", "I sometimes think of myself as European", "I rarely think of myself as European" and "I never think of myself as European". About a half, or just under a half of Belarusians, between 40 and 50 percent, thought of themselves often, or at least sometimes, as Europeans. This may not be too high, but it's higher than in Ukraine and Russia.

We also asked questions about choices of identities like, "Do you think of yourself first of all as a European, a Eurasian, a Soviet citizen, or a citizen of Belarus". We found that about 20 percent thought they were firstly or secondly European. This may not be a high level; it is lower than the average in Europe. But, it is higher than in Ukraine and much higher than in Russia. So, we found that the self-identity of Belarusians, defined in European terms, remains significantly competitive compared with their neighbors.

We asked more specific questions like, "Would you like to join the EU". You know, of course, that the offer has not been made by the European Commission; it was a very hypothetical question. We found that about half of Belarusians would like to join the EU. That is very similar to Ukraine and Russia. It has been very stable over time. We asked more or less the same questions in 2000, 2004 and 2006.

Of course, we have a very different picture when we ask, "Would you like to join NATO". There are some who would, but there are some who say, "NATO is a hostile organization", but still they would like to join it. Some strange people.

This was the evidence for the European choice, but there was also evidence for the Soviet choice as well. You remember the referendum

in 1991 on the existence of the Soviet Union? I think that the highest support among those republics was in Belarus. We found that Belarusians very much regret the demise of the USSR. But Belarusians are actually the least likely to regret the demise of the USSR among those three countries: something like 30 percent in Belarus, whereas in Russia it is about 60 percent.

When they were asked, "Would you like a stronger CIS, would you like countries in the CIS to be more closely associated or would you even like them to form a single state like the USSR", we found that something like half of Belarusians (this year it is 52 percent, just over half) would like the CIS countries to associate more closely than they presently do. And another 17 percent would like a single state to be formed, not a union state with Russia, but a state representing the post-Soviet USSR.

It seems to our standard that there is support for both of these choices. Support for the European choice could be expected looking at Belarusian culture, heritage, religious values, the way the territory has been formed over time and considering that the Belarusians share much of their experience with the rest of Europe. But there is also support for closer association with Russia.

We asked people to choose between these two. That was very difficult indeed, clearly Belarusians would like not to choose but have both. Asked to choose the path of development, very few, five percent, would like a Soviet path of development. The largest number, about 49 percent, would like their own, independent path – neither following directly the West nor following directly the East. But we found that about 40 percent, the largest proportion in any of these countries, Ukraine or Russia, would like to follow the way of European countries.

So, the survey seems to me to be speaking about Europeanization; to be speaking about relations. Of course, for the moment you might say this is irrelevant. One of my colleagues said, "Why are you going to do a survey in Belarus? You really need to know only one opinion".

But it seems to me that looking beyond Łukašenka, looking to the source of changes, there are objective prerequisites for closer association with other European countries.

Vital Silicki. [Comment on Andrew Wilson's presentation] In this case authoritarian learning is also a function of internal strain resolution. Instead of the diffusion of democracy we have some sort of Darwinist

process of survival, when agents who survive the wave of contagion work out immunity to make sure that this will not effect them. This process of survival of the fittest is sometimes ignored by scholars and practitioners alike. It's a really important question whether this is a problem at all. Or, do we need a new model for Belarus and what sort of a model will it be.

Ethan S. Burger. There is an old saying that, it takes only one charismatic lunatic to turn 30 cowards into a fighting force. When you have an atomized society without access to accurate information via mass media, and a country of 10 million people, when one multiplies the population by 1 percent, it leaves 100,000 people. This is a sufficient number of thugs with batons and clubs to maintain control in most situations. This is particularly the case when a government system does not provide individuals with opportunities to evolve into leaders. Currently, Belarus lacks a credible opposition leader behind which to unite. Consequently, the hope that change will come peaceably from within Belarus is naïve.

The reality is that Western Europe, the OSCE, the EU, and the United States, (the latter's budget is already stretched to the limit), are not going to come to the rescue of Belarus. I think this is an important fact to face. To think otherwise could produce a situation like Hungary in 1956.

Aleś Lahviniec. On creation of the brand "For Belarus". I think that despite the political victory of Łukašenka over the nationalistic forces in 1995, the pro-independence theories are still attractive. The recreation of this slogan "For Belarus" shows that the regime is learning and reacting to what is going on in society. From that perspective, I think for pro-democracy activists it is very important just to be there. They cannot overthrow the regime, but they should be there to influence the regime and be ready to come to power when the regime is falling. And, international politics shows that if the regime is reacting to what we are doing, then we are heading in the right direction. So, we are much more credible to the West than the regime. And also the EU should capitalize on what they have. They have the support of at least one third of the population, they should capitalize on that. That is important.

Vital Silicki. I would like to comment on the internal and external factors. What happens with all those conducive external factors, like the collapse of the Soviet Union? Developments in Belarus were pretty much turned by these events. External events happened, but the subsequent pathways were determined by the internal events. So there are both sides of the story.

Talking about the slogan, "For Belarus", I wonder if it was a reaction to what we do, or if it was a preemptive action. They forbade the use of the word "Belarusian" in the names of national independent organizations and the media. It was an attempt to privatize the word "Belarusian"; redefine it and use it for official discourse. It was also a move to exclude us from being Belarusians.

Stephen White. On external influences, I think everybody agrees that Putin economically matters far more than philosophical Western governments. I would suggest that we discuss, what will happen if the Russian government decides effectively to abandon its current support with oil and gas. We should talk a bit about the possibility of changes coming in the Łukašenka regime from within. If we consider the changes that took place in the Soviet Union around 1985, they came from within, from people who were brought up and educated in Leningrad and Moscow. But nevertheless, in the end they represented a challenge from above. And in that respect, I wonder if the West always acts in the most effective way. Because my experience, at least in Belarus, is that a lot of Western support goes to organizations and newspapers, but my experience is that these organizations become dependent on the West, become perceived in effect to be the voice of the West; rather than the voice of Belarusians themselves.

Is there a danger that the opposition becomes irresponsible clients? Is there a danger of undermining an attractive alternative to the present regime?

Andrew Wilson. I have one more point to add. Russia has the possibility of exercising influence on Belarus too. They have the energy weapon, because the political space in general has been so dramatically vibrant.

Vital Silicki. First of all, some structural things work both ways. Belarus' dependence on Russian oil and Russian gas is very structural; it is a very strong dependence that has enormous political implications. But who created the situation? Łukašenka created the situation by using Russia to cut Belarus off from all those alternative influences by means of providing economic stability and security. Łukašenka closed down the political field. But then Russia has zero possibilities to engage with anyone except Łukašenka in Belarus. That is a really interesting development. More pluralistic and more open countries are easier to subvert from outside. That is a paradox. And when you have this pressure from the outside, you have a response intensifying domestic preparations for destroying political

alternatives and possibilities for change. So, in reality what is happening, is that you have some opportunities to break Łukašenka, but it will cause the destruction of agency, a Russia-friendly agency, let's put it very directly. It was exactly this control factor which we were talking about. Because of this, even if all things are crumbling there are fewer opportunities for Russia to control demolition.

And then, with regard to Western puppets, clients etc… are we blaming the West? We have to assess our options realistically. These constructive moderate bureaucrats in Belarus, we all wish them to exist. Where are they? When this new gas row started, you could see the way Łukašenka treated Mr. Sidorski, who was a possible candidate for this moderate group. It was an act of preemption by Łukašenka. And when we are talking about it, yes it would be nice to have these moderate good guys who we would engage. We wish we had them. But they are preemptively eliminated and downgraded. It is also part of the authoritarian authority. Each change, each episode that happened before you, gives you a source of information. Just a quotation from one expression about the Russian Army: when the enemy is learning our location, we are changing landscapes.

Karen Akopaū. Geopolitics is dominated by powerful nations, while small and medium-sized countries have to adapt themselves to their game. Can Belarus in general, even if it were a democratic country and a member of the EU, influence geopolitical relations and relations among other countries? I think Belarus should concentrate today on what it can give its neighbors, and what it can take from its neighbors. Considering its population and economic potential, Belarus should seek a greater role in the region.

Paveł Usaū. I am a former teacher of political science in Mahilou State University. I was dismissed because of my political activity in Mahilou and now I am a fellow of an academic program in Wrocław.

I want to talk about the geopolitical situation of Belarus. Firstly, I want to say a few words about Belarus as an object of geopolitics. Unfortunately, Belarus is much more important for Russia than for Western Europe. And if you read any geopolitical materials and books in Russia, and get acquainted with the Russian geopolitical conception, you will read that Russia will not be a great power without Ukraine and Belarus, or Russia will not be able to exist without Ukraine or Belarus. Ukraine and Belarus are considered to be the main elements of new Russia. Unfortunately, you

will never come across such theories in European literature on geopolitics. European geopolitical books do not say that Europe will not exist without Belarus. And that is a problem. Belarus is not part of the geopolitical conception of Western Europe. Without it, the geopolitical development of Belarus is impossible.

On Belarus as a subject of geopolitics... despite the political and geopolitical isolation of Belarus, the Belarusian authorities are trying to elaborate some geopolitical and civilization theories on the existence of Belarus. The theories say that Belarus is trying to place itself in a geopolitical niche between East and West and trying to work out its own way of geopolitical development. According to Belarus' official ideology and official geopolitical theories, Belarus is a main part of the Slavic civilization which has been exposed to the evil influences of the West. That means that Belarus is a frontier, a vast frontier of Russia, and without dependent Belarus, Russia cannot exist any longer.

The Belarusian official geopolitical theory, political theory and ideology criticized Russia's position and role in the Slavic world. According to that ideology, Russia betrayed the idea of Slavic unity because it adopted a liberal ideology, allegedly under Western political influence. While Belarus in this sense is a real independent state because it did not adopt any liberal, Western values in the first place.

One more point is that Belarus tried to join countries that do not belong to any geopolitical system, the so-called non-aligned countries. The last visit by Łukašenka to Havana shows that the Belarusian president seeks to make Belarus one of the elements of geopolitics.

Vital Silicki. Thank you very much for mentioning this "pure Slavic Belarus". We remember this famous phrase by Łukašenka, "Белорусы такие же русские, только со знаком качества". (Belarusians are the same as Russians on account of quality)

About this moral line that separates, it is where prestige is manufactured for internal presentation to the local public. Someone who still remembers Soviet times, remembers all those festivals of culture in cities and countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America. Belarus seems to be returning to that time.

Rafał Sadowski. I would like to talk on current developments in Belarusian-Russian relations, their influence and possible changes in Belarus' political and economic system. At present, the Belarusian system

seems to be quite stable, Łukašenka extended his tenure after the March elections, Belarus' democratic opposition is, in fact, in crisis and Belarusian society is passive.

And also I want to discuss the problems of Western countries' support for changes in Belarus. It seems to me that the current conflict between Minsk and Moscow could stir up some changes in mid or longer-term perspectives in the relationship between Belarus and Moscow. In the political sphere Russia has focused on the question of the integration of Belarus and Russia and seeks to pressure Belarus into forming a Belarusian-Russian union state, but the Belarusian authorities are determined to withstand the pressure. And this causes serious friction between the two nations. If Belarusian authorities satisfy Russian demands, even in a longer-term perspective, that will result in a change of government in Belarus. On the other hand, Minsk's resistance to Russia can increase tensions in bilateral relations and reinforce its isolation in relations with Russia, not only with the West.

I think Russia will gradually force Łukašenka to accept its demands and also to change his economic policies. Reduction of Russian economic support also will force Belarussian authorities to change their economic policy. Then Minsk could face the dilemma – strengthening the state economy by its liberal modernization and openness to the world markets, or to adjust Belarus to the Russian political and economic system. However, in the second case, prospects for the democratisation of Belarus itself and for its integration with Europe, in all likelihood, will not improve.

Grigory Ioffe. It seems to me that ordinary Belarusians are totally exempt from this discussion. And I think it would be correct to say that there are certain opinions that are taken for granted and never called into question. For instance, there is the opinion that Belarusians are poorly informed. Let me ask you a question. Whence comes this adamant conviction that Belarusians are poorly informed? And what if those Belarusians who support Łukašenka are acting rationally; not because they are poorly informed? Let me tell you where I am coming from. I teach human geography in southwest Virginia in the United States. I know for a fact that my students are poorly informed, even though all the information is at their fingertips. When I deal with Belarusian students they are usually better informed than my students. It seems to me that we need to renounce this double standard. Information is there, but it is a human function to solicit that

information. There is the Belarusian Service of Radio Liberty if you prefer Belarusian. There is the Deutsche Welle in Russian if you prefer Russian. There are some other sources of independent information in Belarus, the Internet in the first place. According to various data, only between 16 and 21 percent of Americans have passports. 16 percent of Belarusians visited just two countries, Poland and Germany, over the course of the last five years. How can they be poorly informed?

Andrej Dyńko. I have learnt here a lot of new and interesting things about what is going on in Belarus. I have heard from Professor Ioffe that the Belarusians are better informed than the Americans; the Belarusians can listen to Radio Liberty and Deutsche Welle. But what you did not say is that both radio stations broadcast on short waves, while short-wave receivers are not available in Belarus. Those who have short-wave receivers left from the Soviet time can listen to these stations, but they are a small minority. What you also did not say is that Deutsche Welle's daily program for Belarus is just 15-minutes long. Your statement was reminiscent of Alaksandr Łukašenka saying at every news conference, "You can buy any opposition newspaper in every kiosk". In reality, there are just four or five stores in Minsk that dare to sell the opposition press.

You can go crazy if you rely on Łukašenka-controlled sources of information. Yes it is true, Radio Liberty's signal is not jammed, and people have the right to travel, but this is not the point. The point is that the system of harassment and intimidation is very efficient.

One note with regard to Mr. White's remark that clients of international organizations in Belarus receive much assistance… Yes, Belarus received substantial assistance under the TACIS program. For instance me, I got help. I was thrown in a jail built for TACIS money. It was comfortable, although it was cold and I slept without taking my hat off, the toilet was separated from the actual cell.

The Western public is often misled by stereotypes. It is aware that Ukraine received much aid and it thinks that Belarus gets the same amount of attention. The greatest aid to Nasha Niva from European organizations was the payment of a subscription for the DPA news line. But the German wire service does not even have a correspondent in Belarus so it did not even provide this help. This is to illustrate how efficient assistance is.

II.

POLITICAL DISCOURSE: BELARUSIAN STYLE

Imke Hansen

THE BELARUSIAN POLITICAL LANDSCAPE OF DISCOURSE AND ITS ICONOGRAPHIC AND PERFORMATIVE ELEMENTS

An examination of the political discourse in Belarus reveals that it consists of two streams: the official, governmental, and the oppositional. At first glance, they seem to exist independently of one another, as they do not interact directly – but they do very much refer to each other.

From a political perspective, one could state that due to this lack of immediate communication, the Belarusian landscape of political culture is determined by two discourses which react to and reflect one another. On the one hand, the official discourse focuses on the president and his performance. On the other, his opponents cannot find themselves within the official discourse, and therefore create their own. The fact that these two modes of discourse do not interact contributes to the stagnation of political culture – a stagnation which, in the official discourse, is reinterpreted positively as stability – but this will be discussed later.

From an academic perspective, it is easy to make out just one bipolar discourse – for two reasons. First, the main aim of both parts is to contradict each other and to compete, so the lack of immediate interaction is more than outweighed by the indirect references to each other. Second, many of the actions, contents and ways of mediation are hardly understandable without the counterpart of the interwoven discourses.

This duality of discourse should be seen as a lack of pluralism. Even though there are nuances within the steams of discourse, it makes sense to use this dual model. First, because the contrast produces more visible and comprehensible results which can be used in strategic planning; and

second, even if there is pluralism and even if it is continues to develop, this duality is still the dominating feature in the media and in public space.

In what follows I will give a short description of the mentioned discourse streams and their traditions. Then I will show the contradictory construction and dynamics of the discourse, presenting examples from three different narratives of discourse: the media through which discourse is transmitted, the rhetoric, and the presence of discourse in public space. Finally I will look at the standing of the people in this setting and draw conclusions.

The official discourse is very Soviet in style. One is strongly reminded of the code of norms and values which determined Soviet public language: it was shaped by the literary norms of so-called Socialist Realism, decreed by the Soviet Congress of Authors in 1934. The key figures of this discourse were: optimism, comprehensibility, ties to the common people and a romantic Utopia. These can all be found in the Belarusian official discourse – in its contents, but even more strongly in its iconography and performance. Examples of the latter can be encountered in flag and crest, media presentations (as for example the daily news format "Panarama"), street names and the arrangement of public space, as well as various performances like concerts, memorial days and sports events. Admittedly, in the present discourse the romantic Utopia takes very pragmatic forms: lacking a convincing all-embracing ideology – notwithstanding the fact that "ideology" is a required subject in schools – Łukašenka is mapping out a future picture of Belarus that basically focuses on economic growth and welfare – for instance promising salaries of $500 per person by 2010. Generally, however, the official discourse refers to the future much less than the oppositional one.

Further, in every important official statement there is not only optimism, but also a reminder about the "threats" and "enemies" of Belarus. The conception of threats is very flexible. Almost everyone and everything can be turned into an enemy to find the roots of a current problem. The assignation of blame is followed by the presentation of a strategic move or plan of action which allegedly should help to overcome the threats. This method is used extensively in inner politics, to keep all guilt away from the president: for every grievance, a scapegoat is chosen and removed from office.

Another difference is the downright verbosity of the official discourse. Compared to the Soviet discourse which was very much iconographic, and

verbally largely limited to slogans such as "Peace for the People" and "Lenin lived, lives and will live", the recent official discourse is rather talkative, as determined by the speeches and decrees of President Łukašenka.

Very important for the official discourse are references to history which is limited to a heroic interpretation of the Second World War, determined by the construction of a strong partisan myth and a self-perception as winner and crucial force in the war. Concomitantly, war veterans or, even more, former partisans are presented as an important moral instance and are therefore instrumentalized by the discourse. The Second World War, still called "The Great Patriotic War" (Vjalikaja Ajchynnaja vajna, Velikaja Otechestvennaja vojna) occupies not only a huge part in the teaching and perception of history, but is also an important part of the construction of the past, and plays an enormous role in literature, drama and art. Other events present in the discourse are the October Revolution and the "reunification" with the western territories in 1939, especially since the Belarusian-Polish relationship became uneasy. Periods earlier than Soviet history are hardly addressed in the discourse, and if they are, it is in the context of Russian history.

However, the official discourse does not only consist of Soviet bonds. As Łukašenka always conventionalizes himself to a key image of, and a sufficient icon for, the discourse – no other stakes are needed. The renaming of two streets in the summer of 2005, – Praspekt Skaryny/Prospekt Skoriny became Independence-Praspekt (Praspekt Niezalezhnasci/Prospekt Niezavisimosti) and Praspekt Masherava/Prospekt Mosherova Conquerors Praspekt (Praspekt Peramozhcau/Prospekt Pobeditelej) – showed that he does not want to have any relevant personalities in the middle of town. The memory of Masherau in particular became especially inconvenient for him – he seems not to want images of comparable leaders to be so present in public space.

The content of the discourse is changing even in its basic ideas, for example from fighting corruption in the mid-90s to the union with Russia in the late 90s, to creating a strong independent state in the new century.

The official discourse occupies almost all the political, economical, jurisdictional and ideological space within the society. Alternatives must search, and even fight, for spaces and platforms to speak and are often pushed into illegality. For the majority, the official discourse is very easy to understand as it uses the same language and the same items which dominate

the surroundings of the average simple citizen. Aleg Manayew called this discourse strategy a social Radiolocation; it senses the expectations and impulses of the majority, focuses on them and echoes them back in a re-interpreted form, connected with the values and messages that one wants to transmit.

A part of the oppositional discourse is rooted in the nationalist rhetoric of Zianon Paźniak and the Belarusian National Front (BNF) of the late 1980s and early 1990s. But calling the oppositional sphere a nationalist movement in the Western European meaning of the term would be misleading. Contrary to official propaganda, which considers all opponents to be nationalists and fascists, the oppositional sphere has recently been opening up and becoming more diverse. First of all, liberal tendencies play a much more important role than they did before, partly because of the common presidential candidate. It is also necessary to mention that more and more people and groups are pushed into the opposition by the tightening repressions.

The oppositional discourse also refers to history – but to much older periods. It concentrates on the Duchy of Polock and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and perceives these as forerunners, or even early forms of a Belarusian national state. Indeed, Polock was trying to gain more and more independence from the two centers of the Rus', Kiev and Novgorod, and expressed that even architecturally with the creation of the Sophia Cathedral, symbolizing both independence from, and equality with, Kiev. Additional, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania used "Old Belarusian" as a Chancellery language and the majority of the inhabitants were Belarusians, even though the elites were not. Nevertheless, to call either the Duchy of Polock or the Grand Duchy of Lithuania an early Belarusian national state is a nationalization and Belarusification of history.

At the same time, the unofficial discourse very much refers to the future and analyzes possible, or desirable, scenarios including nearly fantastic future prospects which are characteristic of some actors from the nationalistic wing of the discourse. This should come as no surprise, as the possibilities for action in the present day are quite limited as are the actors' desire for political change.

Politically, the discourse focuses on opposing the president, the state and the economic structure by demanding democracy, civil freedoms and adherence to international human rights standards. Further aims are the

support of Belarusian culture and language (which are in many respects repressed by the present regime) and closer ties with the European Union. The oppositional discourse is not limited to parties and actors on the political scene, but is interwoven with the so-called third sector: associations, NGOs and other parts of civil society.

In two ways the oppositional discourse tends to be more iconographic and performative than verbal. It is almost impossible to be verbal as there is no forum. Even the few independent newspapers which still exist have almost no possibilities for distribution and so reach only a small circle of people while other public verbal manifestations are suppressed. This situation is reflected in the rules for flash mobs which became very popular expressions of the oppositional discourse: "No slogans! Just actions!" Second, due to the diversity of the discourse, the terms which everyone agrees upon – democracy, freedom and independence – are used in an inflationary way – the never-ending dwelling on these basic ideals has turned them into banalities. The independent discourse therefore is turning to icons, images and symbols, as for example the white-red-white flag and the Pahonja, the crest of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania that was used by independent Belarus until 1995. The attempt to establish a common color following the Orange Revolution has thus far not been successful.

Mediums of Discourse

Thinking about the media of discourse, one can say that the official discourse completely occupies TV, radio and most of the press sector, while the oppositional discourse is limited to the Internet and some newspapers and magazines, which have virtually no opportunities for legal dissemination. But in the case of Belarus there is a more important medium to analyze: language itself. A fundamental difference between the sub-discourses is the usage of two different languages. The official views are, with some exceptions, presented in Russian, which is no surprise due to the affinity to Soviet culture. Belarusian is presented as an inferior language, useful for talking to people from the countryside, but not suitable for political discourse and the expression of intellectual ideas. This is not only grounded in the conformative language policy of the Soviet Union, but also in the post-War domination of the industrialized cities by Russians,

who were intentionally sent to Minsk to rebuild and enforce economic development. This made Russian the language of the city, while Belarusian acquired a rural, primitive image. Recently, Belarusian is also presented by the official discourse as a dangerous medium, because it is used by the opposition. However, none of these views are directly stated in the official policy. The attitude towards the Belarusian language can be felt rather in the anonymous discrimination against the language by the system, and the arrogance of officials at different levels of power.

The oppositional discourse, by contrast, mainly uses Belarusian partly due to nationalism, partly because Russian stands for cultural and linguistic repression during Soviet times, and partly as a sign of current opposition – and it is becoming increasingly trendy among young members of the opposition. This outlines an opportunity, but also a problem for the opponents of the government: using Belarusian makes them easily recognizable which helps networking and trust-building. On the other hand the Belarusian language, which, indeed, the majority of the population does not prefer as an everyday medium of communication on an individual level, cannot offer the same understandability, familiarity and even intimacy as Russian, as, for most citizens, Russian was the language of literary socialisation.

Rhetorics: Key Words and Metaphors

Even more than by languages, discourse is determined by words. Using certain terms and avoiding others, their contextualization, combination and valuation transport the political message and shape the geography of the discourse. Not only have the terms shaped the discourse, but also vice versa. The constant repetition of terms in recurrent or varying contexts gives each term a certain meaning and significance. Depending on the context, terms can be discredited as well.

Raymond Williams named these over present terms “key words” and presented a whole collection of them. He also stated that words continually change through discourse and one has to discuss and define the meaning to avoid misunderstandings.[1] It seems to be a problem of the Belarusian intellectual and political scene that there is hardly any discussion about

[1] R. Williams, *Key Words, a Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, Glasgow 1967.

terms. They are used by different sides in various contexts but do not mean the same thing. This might be a problem between Belarus and the West, too: terms have been shaped in different ways and have different meanings. One has to address this and agree on definitions before using them in discussion.

A keyword appearing ever and anon in the speeches and statements of Alaksandr Łukašenka is the "young state". The word "young" automatically gives a good impression: it sounds dynamic; is associated with growing, with great ability and opportunity. Łukašenka himself defines the "young state" as a "dynamic country stably proceeding". Also, a young state without experience can still make mistakes, so it can be used as a justification. But the term "young state" does not only leave a good impression, it also illustrates the whole official construction of history. The official discourse considers Belarus to be a young state because it does not recognize Belarusian statehood as existing before the declaration of the BSSR by the Soviets in 1919. In contrast, the Opposition (as mentioned above) highlights pre-Soviet forms of Belarusian statehood. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, the expression "young state" suggests to the people how helpless they would be without the governing power elite and the president. It presents the state as a young girl, of whom the "Backa", "daddy", has to take care.

An even more significant key word in the official discourse is stability. In a speech two days before the presidential elections in March 2006, Łukašenka described the course of Belarus under his rule as "a way towards political stability".[2] In this context, political stability can only mean personal stability. Łukašenka himself is here the determinant and guarantor of stability. One could even say he is political stability itself. This stability, however, is interpreted by his opponents as stagnation, and thus stability takes on a negative connotation, so the term is not used in the oppositional discourse at all. In fact, the opposition does not want stability, it wants change.

The third term to be mentioned here is democracy, a key word in the oppositional discourse. It is used in such a variety of contexts that it has lost any concrete content and has instead become a vague catchword – but it still has an enormous positive connotation. Democracy seems to be defined

[2] Doklad Presidenta Respubliki Belarus na tret´jemVsebelorusskom narodnom sobranii 02.03.2006.

in different ways, not only between the opposition and government and the opposition and Western advisors or donors, but also among members of the opposition as well.

The way in which the official discourse perceives what the oppositional discourse calls democracy becomes obvious in several presidential statements. Two days before the March elections, the President said: "I have to say something about civil order: some candidates will call on going to the streets when the results are not the way they would have liked them to be. Is that democracy? It is disorder, pogrom, violence".[3] What in fact is a basic part of democracy, the freedom to express oneself by demonstrating for or against something, is here presented as the embodiment of chaos. Łukašenka not only reduces political opposition to chaos, but also gives a deep insight into his basic structural principles: order and chaos. He and his conception of power and state guarantee order while everything else, including democracy, leads to chaos. Here he employs a basic religious conception, for order and chaos, or, in other words, cosmos and chaos are primordial religious antipodes. The president uses the term "democracy" very often in a specific context: he points out social problems and scandals in the US or Western European countries and asks then: "And these countries want to teach us democracy?"

Another rhetorical tool intensively used, especially in the official discourse, is metaphor. The best known metaphor used by Alaksandr Łukašenka is probably the use of a picture of a tree in order to describe his understanding of the separation of powers: he compared the president's office with a trunk, from which the other powers branch off. This metaphor describes not only his conception of government structure, which he has implemented on a large scale, but gives this authoritarian, vertical structure an image of nature and organic growth. In the trunk metaphor, all three key words mentioned above come together: the dynamic growth and the stability can be associated with a tree, and the organic order of the branches reflects a contradiction to chaos.

For the oppositional discourse it is almost impossible to produce such a strong metaphor, as they ground their policy on the principles of individual freedom and a democratic separation of powers. To use an equivalent picture, democracy would be not a tree but a meadow. This implies two problems: simple and strong metaphors and pictures are more

[3] Teleobrashchenie Alaksandra Łukašenki, 17.03.2006.

easily perceived and understood than long explanations. In terms of that, the rhetoric of the official discourse holds more direct appeal. Second, unity can be more attractive than diversity and pluralism, especially when the people feel socially and economically insecure.

Discourse in Public Space: Icons and Performances

As mentioned before, the Belarusian public space is occupied by the official discourse, which finds expression in holiday celebrations, festivals, street names, flags, monuments and monumental buildings such as the new Minsk Railroad Station, or the new National Library. An omnipresent and very expressive element of the official discourse since 2004 has been the poster campaign "Za Belarus". This political campaign initially started in 2004, and was in support of a Referendum which would enable Łukašenka to run for a third term as president, which was not allowed by the constitution. On the form the people had to mark "za" (for) or "protiv" (against) the possibility of a third term. So the campaign did not operate with political ideas or Łukašenka as a person, but with the catchword "za", written in fat, green-red letters. Referring to the national flag, the slogan, "For Belarus" was put in a national context. This slogan appeared on a variety of different posters. The campaign was prolonged throughout 2005 and enlarged in 2006, with new images added before the presidential elections. The iconography of the posters, dominated by rural images, images of working people, partisans and children, was very much reminiscent of Soviet times. The posters showed veterans in a school, explaining something to students, girls in traditional costume presenting loaves of bread at a harvest celebration, happy children running through golden wheat fields, elderly women doing traditional handiwork, laughing workers in overalls, marching soldiers and many other very clear and comprehensible situations. The campaign works in at least three ways: first, the posters are all showing joyful situations and happy people, so they communicate positive moments and paint a picture of Belarus: one simply has to be "for" and cannot be "against". Second, by presenting certain situations and labeling them as components or typical features of Belarus which give not only a concrete impression of Belarus, but also an image one would agree upon and be proud of, the campaign functions as

iconic nation building. Third, the campaign is directed toward people in a very personal way, as for every possible target group, in terms of age, or profession, or environment, one can find an appealing poster. The campaign actually manages to address people individually, by offering everyone something with which to identify.

The public space is not only occupied by the official discourse, but also maintained by repression – there is even a term specifically addressing the "crime" of active entering and reoccupation of public space by the opposition, called "hooliganism". Still, the oppositional discourse is present – in graffiti, in white-red-white flags appearing on roofs, leaflets and so-called flash mobs. I myself experienced my first flash mob at the square in front of the Kamarouski market: young people were walking across the square, separately and from all different directions, reading "Sovietskaya Byelorussiya". Then they would crumple up the newspaper and throw it into one designated trash bin. Within several minutes the trash bin was overflowing and the surroundings were already covered with crumpled newspapers. The police reacted with confusion and helplessness. This is a very good example of flash mobbing, where one avoids the danger of being arrested. The participants are not gathering in "illegal" crowds, but do something completely legal: they read the "official" paper and act mechanically in keeping the city clean. Another such expression very similar in message involved opposition activists standing in front of the huge TV screen on October Square in Minsk with blindfolded eyes. Though the events are brilliant, they point to a structural deficit of the oppositional discourse: they tell more about the regime than about the opposition. Telling something about itself and being correctly understood is not that easy, as another performance in public space shows.

At the Congress of Democratic Powers, the song "Mahutny Bozha" by Natalia Arsenhewa was sung. Parts of the opposition treat this song as an alternative anthem to the official national anthem, which is the old Soviet anthem with slight changes in the text. Natalia Arsenhewa was a poet who emigrated to Prague during World War II, and was among a group of people who hoped to separate Belarus from the Soviet Union, and believed in the possibility of building a national state. They collaborated during the war with the Germans, and after the war, everyone from this group was recognized as a collaborator and traitor, without looking at the reasons for their actions. Natalia Arsenhewa was called a traitor and

her texts and poems were banned. People who know that and have heard for almost their entire life about her being guilty of high treason have a difficult time understanding why the opposition has chosen exactly this song as their anthem. Even someone who connects with the politics or values of the opposition might not be able to locate him or herself in this narrative because of its history and connotation. These activities and connotations are too far away from what people know, have learned and how they were raised.

Conclusions

This last example points, as do all the others, directly to the crucial moment in political discourse in general, and in transition countries in particular: the proportion of change and continuity. Change, though necessary for growth and development, creates feelings of insecurity, fear and excessive demands while continuity, though meaning also stagnation, provides security, comprehensibility, familiarity and trust. The oppositional political discourse includes too much change while the official discourse consists almost only of continuity. Reading speeches of Łukašenka it is striking how often he uses the word "strong" while in the oppositional texts, for example the manifesto of Milinkievič, the word "new" is notably present: new possibilities for the country and the citizens; new markets; new places of employment. However, the new and the familiar and the changing and the strong must be in a certain relation.

From an academic standpoint, one can conclude that a certain amount of continuity is necessary to foster change, and that in Belarus continuity is psychologically a little bit more appealing than change. One can further say that the duality of the discourse forces people into two different groups, and a lot of people cannot find themselves in either of the two. But I think that these people rather tend to stay with the official one, as it operates on an emotional level which is appealing to people: at least they know it.

From a political perspective, the crucial question is: how much continuity is necessary to implement change? The opposition would do well to integrate considerations about this question into their strategic planning. Looking at Belarus' history and reality, the opposition's difficulties and deficits in terms of performance and perception are absolutely comprehensible.

The conditions for their work are worse than bad. It is difficult for the opposition to oppose the omnipresent, easily comprehensible official discourse. Moreover, they commit strategic mistakes, and would probably be more successful if they tried more to pick up the people from where they are now and not from where they should be or might be some day. The desire for change among the opponents of the system is understandable, but it tends to turn into a self-limiting factor as too much change is often perceived as overstraining by the people.

Recently, one can see an interesting trend developing: each of these discourses is attempting to occupy the space of the other. The official discourse, traditionally Soviet and anti-national, has introduced more and more national and nation-building elements into the discourse – items which were traditionally occupied by the opponents. The "Za Belarus" campaign is an example already mentioned, but one can also sense it in Łukašenka's regular speeches and in the presentation of the news. The usage of the Belarusian language in some contexts is another tool to take certain space away from the opposition.

The oppositional discourse uses this method as well: when Milinkievič marched with the crowd on the evening of election day to The Conquerors' Square (Ploshcha Peramohi), to lay down flowers, the marchers reoccupied one of the central elements of official discourse: the most central and important monument, the memory of the Second World War and the construction of victors of the war. It was completely natural and familiar for the people to go there and put down flowers, as it is a traditional place for official and, earlier, Soviet celebrations. This move was a good example of keeping formal or cultural continuity but introducing a change in content.

Apart from the discourses which are dominated by a very small layer of actors, another change became visible in 2006. During and after the March elections the people on the street seemed different from before. The change affected a narrative which is just gaining attention in the social sciences, the narrative of human interaction, as described by Jeffrey Goldfarb in "The Politics of Small Things": the way people talk to each other, deal with each other, integrate with each other. The most obvious example was traveling by Marshrutka (small bus) from Minsk to Mahilou (Mogilow) a week after Election Day. A pretty, talkative woman in her sixties asked everyone in the car for whom they had voted. Instead of ignoring her or

changing the subject, people talked openly about their choices and brought forward arguments and reasons for their votes. A situation like that would hardly have been imaginable one or two years earlier.

I experienced a similar situation in the office of a human rights organization. It was filled by angry and furious mothers who complained loudly and simultaneously about the imprisonment and treatment of their children in particular, and the government in general. Experiencing this situation and their energy one doubts that there is a force stronger and more powerful than angry mothers. These changes in human interaction will probably not change the system, but they build a good base for civil politicization and engagement. In terms of the picture of reaching people at the place where they are, one can say that the people themselves have made a move towards the oppositional discourse.

Andrej Kazakievič

REGIONAL PECULARITIES IN THE CONTEXT OF THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS OF 1994, 2001 AND 2006[1]

This article is aimed at specifying the problem of Belarus' territorial division. The most common models envisage the division of Belarus into two parts – western and eastern – or three parts – western, eastern and central. Usually, these divisions are of a prejudiced nature and are very frequently connected with the partition of Belarus in 1921 between the newly established Soviet and Polish states. Accordingly, the peculiarities of the political choice in Western Belarus are usually linked to the smaller experience of Sovietization and stronger Western influence, which is frequently regarded as Polish-Catholic influence. In more historical versions, this division is linked to the earlier partition of modern Belarus into Lithuania and "White Ruthenia", which emphasizes the specific ethnographic and, in radical versions, even ethnic grounds for the division.

Our task is not to contest this division, which obviously is of an empirical nature, but to trace the political manifestations of this division through an analysis of the results of the election campaigns of 1994, 2001 and 2006. This will help to not only specify the model of regional peculiarities in Belarus in the political dimension but also to more accurately localize areas with different types of political behavior.

As an empirical basis for this article, we used the official results of the first round of the 1994 presidential election, and the presidential elections

[1] The article is based on a survey that was conducted by the Center of Political Analysis of the journal *Palitychnaya Sfera* in August and September 2006. The author of this article was the director of that survey.

of 2001 and 2006. Owing to the fact that we failed to find official aggregate tables of the results of the 1994 vote, we used the election data that were published by local newspapers. As other instances reveal, these figures may differ from the official results. Usually this difference is linked to journalists' errors or is cited as evidence of ballot-rigging. Apart from this, not all district newspapers published voting results. Thus, the 1994 factual basis is incomplete and, perhaps, not accurate in specific details and calls for further refinement. Nonetheless, the available figures provide a more or less full picture of voting throughout the country. There is a similar situation with regard to the 2006 election. When we started work on this article, a comprehensive official report on the results of the election was not available; that is why the main source of information was again local newspapers, which leads to the above-mentioned flaws such as incomplete data, and possible errors on the part of journalists.

As a source of information about the results of the 2001 election, we used a report from the Institute of Social and Political Studies (ISPS) of the Presidential Administration on that election campaign ("Belarus: The Results and Lessons of the 2001 Presidential Election", by Y. Dmitriyev and M. Khurs). Information about voting at the district level is contained in a supplement titled "Information about the Results of the Election for President of the Republic of Belarus on September 9, 2001. The Administrative and Territorial Aspect".[2] As an additional source, we used regional reports for verifying general data and establishing the degree of error.

Owing to the fact that this analysis is based on official data, there emerges the legitimate question as to how those figures correspond to the actual preferences of the voters. The 1994 campaign is viewed in this regard as the most transparent and its official election results are considered the most trustworthy. Despite the fact that there were many allegations of electoral fraud in favor of the then prime minister, Viachaslau Kebič, as well as other candidates, there is no credible information confirming this. Certain ballot-rigging may have occurred at the level of provincial elites, but it is not possible to establish its degree and scale. Nonetheless, in our opinion, even if these tricks were used, they hardly influenced the general results very much. They had a still smaller effect on the localization of

[2] Y. Dmitriyev, M. Khurs, *Belarus: The Results and Lessons of the 2001 Presidential Election*, ISPS, Minsk 2002, 249–258.

political areas. This approach seems to be the most rational and justified, as alternative approaches require additional information.

The situation looks more complicated with regard to the 2001 and 2006 election campaigns. Critical attitudes toward the official results of those elections are prompted by numerous instances of disregard for electoral regulations, which were reported by international and independent domestic observation groups,[3] as well as by opinion polls findings. In particular, the Independent Institute of Social, Economic and Political Studies found that the official and actual vote shares of Alaksandr Łukašenka differ by approximately 18 percent.[4] Here emerges the question as to how we should treat the official results. Of interest in this regard are not the official results themselves, which were obviously falsified, but the preservation of territorial disproportions and, accordingly, areas, which correspond, to a certain degree, to the results of the 1994 election. This means that the official results of the 2001 race, although they look very doubtful, somehow reflect different models of political support.

In the case of the 2006 election, we have still more difficulties. Given the obvious fabrication of the official results and the probable imposition of a required minimum for political support of the incumbent, it is more difficult to identify the distinctions and peculiarities of the election results in different areas. Nonetheless, some trends that were discovered in the 1994 and 2001 campaigns can also be detected, which requires an explanation.

An immediate subject of the analysis will only be the electoral preferences in rural areas and small towns. This approach in our survey should establish the existence of territorial divisions among the most conservative part of the Belarusian voters, which would reveal deep-rooted territorial divisions and distinctions at the social and political levels. This, of course, excludes a significant part of the Belarusian electorate, but meets the objectives of this article. We excluded more or less large populated localities from our

[3] Republic of Belarus presidential election, 9 September 2001: Final report/Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. OSCE/ODIHR Limited Observation Mission/Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Warsaw 2001.
Belarusian presidential election: Independent observation results/Belarusian Helsinki Committee, Association of Central and Eastern European Election Officials, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, 2001.

[4] A. Manajeŭ, *The Presidential Election: How It Actually Was. Notes by a Sociologist / the 2001 Election for President of the Republic of Belarus*, "Fakty i Kommentarii", Minsk 2002, 122.

analysis where that was possible, but the proportions of urban and village residents in different districts may be different. This could distort the picture, especially if we take the "town-village" correlation as the main one for detecting voters' preferences. Nonetheless, a microanalysis showed the relativity of this correlation, especially with regard to the 1994 campaign. Certain areas that had a large urban population showed smaller opposition to the authorities than almost entirely rural areas.

An analysis of election results can be multifaceted and concern different aspects of the election process. Useful information can be found in data about not only the vote gained by major candidates, but also the votes for secondary candidates, the percentage of the "against all" votes, and early voting figures. Given the limited size of this article, we will only dwell on one criterion – the percentages of the vote shares of the pro-democratic opposition in the 1994, 2001 and 2006 elections. In this case, we reject the assumption that this is the indicator that most vividly illustrates territorial distinctions in political preferences and convictions.

We view Zianon Paźniak and Stanislaw Šuškevič as the pro-democratic opposition in the 1994 presidential race. An indicator of support for the pro-democratic opposition is, thereby, the total quantities of votes given for them. Despite the difference between their campaign platforms and political backgrounds, they adhered to similar stances on what concerns democracy, the independence of Belarus, a pro-Western path of development for the nation and national culture. These stances were fundamental for determining their political positions. As the vote share of the pro-democratic opposition in 2001, we will regard the quantity of votes gained by Uladzimer Hančaryk, the common candidate of the united opposition forces who was supported by all major opposition political parties and organizations. As for the 2006 race, we will rank all those who voted for Alaksandr Milinkievič and Alaksandr Kazulin as the pro-democratic electorate.

A particular problem is the selection of a scale for analyzing the results of the election campaigns of 1994, 2001 and 2006 and the comparison of these results. The use of a general scale makes no sense because of a considerable change in the percentage of the pro-democratic electorate after 1994. Owing to this, we will use different scales. To illustrate the 1994 voting results, we divided areas into four major groups and one additional group. The major groups are:

1. Support for the pro-democratic opposition below 10 percent (low level);
2. Support for the pro-democratic opposition at 10 to 20 percent (middle level);
3. Support for the pro-democratic opposition at 20 to 30 percent (high level);
4. Support for the pro-democratic opposition higher than 30 percent (areas of domination).

The additional group includes the districts where representatives of the pro-democratic opposition gained less than five percent of the vote. The isolation of this group is important for identifying and localizing the areas where pro-democratic opposition forces enjoyed almost no support. These districts were a sort of antipole to the districts where the pro-democratic opposition dominated. Levels of support could differ 15-fold in different districts. The isolation of the additional group is also expedient because it creates a solid area, which can be interpreted in regional terms.

For marking out areas in the 2001 election, the use of the above-stated scale would be inexpedient because of a considerable decrease in gaps between figures announced by election authorities for different areas. The final election results became more similar. In 1994, indicators of support of the pro-democratic opposition could differ tenfold and even 15-fold, whereas in 2001, this gap decreased three to five times. Given what we said above, we used a new scale of classifying areas, which also consists of four major groups and one additional group:

1. Support for the pro-democratic opposition at up to five percent;
2. Support for the pro-democratic opposition at five to 10 percent;
3. Support for the pro-democratic opposition at 10 to 15 percent;
4. Support for the pro-democratic opposition higher than 15 percent.

The additional group included the districts where the official results put the level of support for the opposition at less than two percent. For 2001, the isolation of the additional group was not as necessary as it was for 1994, as only three districts (Lelchytsy, Brahin and Vetka) fell into it. It is also important that the antipole to opposition almost entirely covered the Mahilou region in 1994, whereas it shifted to the Homyel region in 2001. The antipole did not constitute a solid area, but it included districts that were heavily affected by the Chernobyl accident.

For the 2006 election, it was still more difficult to determine the degree of support for the opposition in each district because the similarity of

official election results became stronger. That is why we used a shortened version of the 2001 scale:

1. Support for the pro-democratic opposition at up to five percent;
2. Support for the pro-democratic opposition at five to 10 percent;
3. Support for the pro-democratic opposition higher than 10 percent.

As an additional means of analysis, we used the territorial localization of districts where, according to the election authorities, the opposition gained less than two percent and more than seven percent, the country's average vote share of the opposition candidates.

Thus let us get down to a direct analysis of election results by administrative and territorial units. We would like to note again that data are not complete for the 1994 and 2001, elections and there are no data available for 15 percent of the districts.

Presidential Election of 1994

The official results of the 1994 presidential race show the existence of rather solid areas with different levels of support for the pro-democratic opposition. Despite the fact that there is no data for about 15 percent of the districts, the available data make it possible to draw certain conclusions. Contrary to the received view of Western Belarus as the center of opposition at the level of small towns and rural areas, we have grounds to assert that this center is located more northward, along the Lithuanian border, not the Polish one. The area of opposition domination begins in the southwest of Minsk and constitutes a triangle whose corners are Minsk, Lida and Braslaw. Thus, the eastern part of the Hrodna region with Lida, Navahrudak, Iwye, Smarhon and Ashmyany falls within this sector, which also includes the northwestern part of the Minsk region with Vileyka, Maladzyechna and, apparently, Myadzel – unfortunately, data for this district is incomplete – and the western part of the Vitsyebsk region with Pastavy, Braslaw and Hlybokaye.

The official results indicate that this is the region of Belarus that formed a rather solid area with a high level of support for the pro-democratic opposition. We should note here that this area has a specific model of nation building. Formerly, this area was almost entirely part of the historic Vilna province and sometimes was a place of competition between Belarusian,

Polish and, to a smaller degree, Lithuanian national and cultural influences. This zone does not necessarily include areas with high concentrations of ethnic Poles and Catholics. Some districts where there are more ethnic Poles and Catholics, such as Voranava, Shchuchyn, Vawkavysk and Zelva, are outside the zone. And the Hrodna district is within the zone with a middle – 10 to 20 percent – level of support of the opposition. At the same time the Minsk region's Orthodox and Belarusian districts show a high level of support. The city of Smarhon and the Smarhon district become the center of opposition domination in terms of both the level of support and geography. With its 54 percent, Smarhon was the only district in the country where the pro-democratic opposition gained an absolute majority of votes. Apart from the solid area in the northwest of Minsk, a high level of support for the pro-democratic opposition is showed by the Nyasvizh and Stolin districts. An explanation for this phenomenon requires a separate survey. In the Stolin district, this is possibly connected with the existence of numerous Protestant communities, but this needs to be confirmed. It is interesting to note that all areas with a high level of support of the pro-democratic opposition had not been part of the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic before 1939. However, this rule does not apply to all districts in Western Belarus. For instance, in the Kobryn and Kamyanets districts, the levels of support of the pro-democratic opposition are even below 10 percent.

The zone with a support level of 20 to 30 percent is an immediate continuation of the area of domination and forms with it a relatively solid territory that covers the entire central part of the Hrodna region, stretching southward, including the southeastern part of the Brest region, except the Byaroza district, Central Belarus with the Stowbtsy, Minsk and Smalyavichy districts, and extends over the entire western part of the Vitsyebsk region. Thus the zone constitutes a rather solid area with several exclaves, which covers all of Southwestern Belarus and the districts around the city of Minsk. If we continue to come back to history, we should note that almost the entire zone with a high support level, with the exception of the Minsk and Smalyavichy districts, was part of the Polish state between 1921 and 1939. It is indicative that the capital city is within this zone.

It is quite surprising that the zone with a support level of 10 to 20 percent also constitutes a solid area, which makes it possible to rather accurately determine its boundaries, which in fact run eastward through

the geographic center of Belarus. This zone includes all the remaining districts of the Hrodna region, the greater part of the Brest region and almost the entire Minsk region. The zone with a support level of 10 to 20 percent can be regarded as an intermediate zone that separates the zone with a high support level and the low-support zone. Only in one place in the zone – in the Vitsyebsk region – the zones with high and low support levels meet. Unfortunately, owing to the absence of data for some districts, we can confidently mark out only the Homyel district as an enclave of the zone with a middle support level.

The zone with a low – below 10 percent – level of support is in fact concentrated in the eastern part of Belarus only. It covers almost the entire eastern part of the Vitsyebsk region along Rasony-Polatsk-Orsha line – also there are certain exclaves – almost the entire Mahilov region, and the Homyel region with the exception of the Zhytkavichy and Homyel districts. It is difficult to explain why the Kobryn and Kamyanets districts in the southwestern Brest region also belong to this zone.

The districts where the pro-democratic opposition gained less than five percent form an additional group with the lowest level of support. This group also constitutes a rather solid area and covers the central and eastern part of the Mahilou region. In the Vitsyebsk region, its enclave is the Lyozna district. The territory with the lowest level of support can be regarded as an antipole to the area centered on Smarhon.

Presidential Election of 2001

Official data about the results of the 2001 presidential election considerably change the zones determined for 1994 but partly continue general trends in the regional division of electoral preferences. It is evident that this would not be in place if the authorities fabricated election results without taking the actual vote shares into consideration.

The zone where there is a relatively high level of support for the opposition – for the official results of the 2001 race, this is more than 15 percent – becomes considerably smaller and fractionizes into enclaves, although it renews, to a certain degree, the 1994 area of “domination”. It is evident that a considerable effect on the zone’s configuration was produced by not only the fabrication of election results but also political

influence in the provinces on the part of the central government. This especially concerns the Hrodna region, where this time we can find a district with a record level of support for the pro-democratic opposition and a district – Shchuchyn – with support of less than five percent. Other regions show a greater succession. Nonetheless, the geographic center of the high support area, which we determined for the 1994 race somehow still survives. In the Smarhon district, according to the official election results, more than 20 percent of the votes are for the opposition forces' common candidate, which is the highest percentage – together with the Minsk district – for the vote outside large cities. The neighboring Myadzel and Vileyka districts also have a high level of support for the opposition. These three districts constitute a solid area.

The zone with a support level of more than 15 percent also includes the Hlybokaye district in the west of the Vitsyebsk region, and an enclave formed by the Minsk and Dzyarzhynsk districts, which, to a certain degree, coincides with the model of 1994. A separate enclave is formed by the Brest and Zhabinka districts, which this time falls within the high support zone. This may be connected with a relatively low level of ballot-rigging.

The zone with a support level of 10 to 15 percent turns out to be divided into enclaves and only partly shows a succession of the 1994 trends. The zone includes the center of the Hrodna region and stretches through the Berastavitsa, Masty, Vawkavysk, Lida and Navahrudak districts. However, according to official data, the configuration of the Hrodna region in terms of electoral preferences considerably changes. Many of the districts in which there was a high level of support in 1994, now fall out of the zone. For instance, the Iwye district has nine percent compared with 44 percent in 1994, and the Shchychyn district has only 4.25 percent. In addition, the zone with a support level of 10 to 15 percent includes a part of the Brest region: four districts along a Kamyanets-Ivatsevichy line and the Luninets district. Official data also levels the high support phenomenon in Stolin in 1994. Apart from this, the zone includes the central part of the Minsk region, but of particular interest is the stability of the area formed by the northern part of the Minsk region and the western part of the Vitsyebsk region. The outlines of high support levels here almost entirely coincide with the corresponding zones of 1994. The Horki district of the Mahilou region is an enclave of the 10–15-percent zone. If we summarize the results of the analysis, we can note that the greater part of the zones with

support levels of more than 15 percent and between 10 and 15 percent is located on the territory of Western Belarus plus districts around the city of Minsk. Despite the fact that the map of political preferences in the country looks different in the official data of 2001, we find a continuity in trends, especially to the north of Minsk and in the western part of the Vitsyebsk region.

The remaining part of the Minsk region, except the Lyuban district, the Hrodna region and the Vitsyebsk district, except the Polatsk district, form a zone with a support level of five to 10 percent, which relatively corresponds to the 1994 zone with the medium level of support. This zone also includes the northwestern part of the Mahilou region together with the Mahilou district.

It is indicative that the zone with a support level of less than five percent in fact constitutes a solid area that is strongly attached to the Mahilou and Homyel regions. The boundaries of the zone largely correspond to the boundaries of Belarus' areas hardest hit by the 1986 Chernobyl disaster. We should also note that the center of the lowest support level shifts from the Mahilou region to the Homyel region. The districts in which the opposition gained less than two percent of the vote do not constitute solid areas, but all of them are located within the Homyel region. These districts are Lelchytsy, Brahin and Vetka.

Presidential Election of 2006

The 2006 race is the least amenable to interpretation. Official data suggest that distinctions between areas are more indefinite and the political map is more homogeneous. The analysis becomes more complicated because the data is more incomplete. The identification of zones with high and low levels of support for the pro-democratic opposition becomes more relative and less certain because of smaller gaps between vote shares in different areas. This homogeneity was evidently increased by active efforts by provincial and central authorities to even the political field. Nonetheless, it is possible to trace certain trends even in these conditions. The traditional center of opposition partly remains in place. The Smarhon district falls out of it, but the Maladzyechna and Vileyka districts, with support of more than 10 percent, are still within the area. Unfortunately, no data is

available for the central part of the Minsk region. The zone with support of more than 10 percent also includes the Slonim and Pinsk districts, which is difficult to comment upon because of the possible accidental nature of these results. Drawing a comparison between the zones with support of five to 10 percent and less than five percent provides more information. The five-to-10-percent zone does not constitute a solid area but considerably shifts toward Western and Central Belarus. The zone with support of less than five percent includes the eastern part of the Vitsyebsk and Mahilou regions and almost the entire Homyel region. However, six districts in the Hrodna region and at least eight districts of the Minsk region are also within the zone. The Homyel region shows its great uniformity again. In order to increase the efficiency of the territorial analysis, it is possible to identify districts in which the vote share of the opposition exceeds seven percent and is below two percent. For the former case, we have a chain of enclaves that do not constitute a solid area but stretch lineally from the southwest to the northeast: from the Kamyanets and Luninets districts to the Braslaw and Hlybokaye districts. This is also within Western and Central Belarus. As for the zone with support of less than two percent, it is located in the Homyel region and constitutes areas along lines from Lelchytsy to Narowlya and from Karma to Loyew.

We can draw some conclusions, which, however, can only be of a preliminary nature, as a considerable part of the available data requires refinement and additional study.

Firstly, we can note that a considerable part of the official data about the results of the 1994, 2001 and 2006 races reflects certain territorial disproportions and makes it possible to distinguish certain areas, the existence of which requires an explanation, especially considering the alleged ballot rigging in 2001 and 2006. There is partly a succession of support levels from 1994 to 2006, especially in the Vitsyebsk region.

Secondly, the authorities' policy obviously led to a leveling of distinctions and/or their preservation, which would make the situation regarding political preferences in individual areas hardly predictable if Belarus becomes a democratic country. Particular emphasis was placed on the process of transformation in the Hrodna region.

Thirdly, we can note the existence of substantial regional distinctions along a west-east line or a northwest-southeast line. The possibility of precisely determining the boundaries of areas requires additional study,

but an examination of available data confirms the existence of considerable and stable distinctions.

Territorial division is not connected, at least directly, with the percentages of the Polish minority and Catholic believers among the population. A relative center of opposition is located in areas along the border between the Minsk and Hrodna region and in the west of the Vitsyebsk region. The antipole includes districts in the Homyel region along the Ukrainian and Russian borders. The location of the antipole is more indefinite and unstable.

POLITICAL DISCOURSE: BELARUSIAN STYLE[1]

Moderator: Andrej Kazakievič
Presenters: Jury Čavusaŭ, Imke Hansen, Andrej Lachovič
Discussants: Andrej Jahoraŭ, Siarhiej Lubimaŭ, Aliaksiei Pikulik, Aleś Lahviniec, Mikoła Kacuk, Andrej Dyńko, Valer Bulhakau, Piotar Rudkoŭski

Andrej Kazakievič. [Introduction] The title of our panel is "Political Discourse. Belarusian Style". It sounds theoretical, but I think our panel will be the most practical one and we will speak about the political system of Belarus and its style, language and political arrangement.

Andrej Kazakievič. [Question to Imke Hansen after her presentation] I think dynamics is very important. When was the political discourse of contemporary Belarus formed, both opposition and official discourse?

Imke Hansen. The political discourse exists and has been developing for years and years. Of course, you have steps, canyons and breaks and whatever. But, you still have a development, so I think that the official discourse was shaped mainly from 1995–1996, but it is still developing. And the opposition, some parties are rooted in nationalist ideas which are very old, from 1905 or 1918. There were certain dates when they were important from 1991.

Aleś Lahviniec. I just wanted to draw some parallels. I don't think that the question "What kind of hymn the Belarusians are singing?" is very important. It would mean that if that logic applies, the French should renounce the "Marseillaise" and the tricolor because the Vichy regime also used these symbols. As for the Belarusian language, 98 percent normally speak Russian in the constituency where I stood for elections and will be standing during this campaign. People do not care mostly what your

[1] Authorized statements.

language is. At least half of the people say they do not care and that they understand both.

Imke Hansen. What about the other half?

Aleś Lahviniec. The other half is divided – there are those who are strongly against the Belarusian language and those who are very much in favor of it.

Andrej Kazakievič. I can add a few words to my question as to when the discourse was formed. I do not think the opposition discourse of contemporary Belarus was formed in the beginning of the 1990s. I think it greatly changed in the mid 1990s and we should take that into consideration. The official discourse was formed in the beginning of this century, may be during the last five years. For instance, if we compare the ideology and official discourse of the second half of the 1990s and contemporary political discourse, the difference is great.

Imke Hansen. You are absolutely right when we are talking about the contents of discourse. But what I wanted to do in this paper, was not to highlight the content of discourse, but to highlight certain aspects like the media of discourse, the discourse and public space, and the rhetoric of discourse. This is why I did not talk about the contents of discourse and how they changed throughout the last five or 10 years, because, I think, others will address this subject. My understanding of discourse is not only what is said, but also how it is said. You can say whatever you want, if you can't get through this firewall, if you cannot go and address the people and transmit it, it does not matter what you say.

Aliaksiei Pikulik. Just a short remark regarding the discourse and the way it is transmitted. If you extended the topic a little bit more, it would be explicitly clear, that in Belarus we witness simultaneous work of the ideological and repressive state apparatuses, to put it in Marxist terms. In this light, the technology of the discourse – who speaks and through what channel acquires an additional meaning. It is not only about who speaks and how they deliver their message, but how the repressive apparatuses make the alternative discourses marginal, and pushed out of the arena. So, in this conjuncture the question of the discourse could be enriched.

Andrej Kazakievič. [Question to Jury Čavusaŭ after his presentation] Could you be more specific, you said that, first of all, the function of civil society technically differs from that of the political system?

Jury Čavusaŭ. I did not say that.

Andrej Kazakievič. I guess I understood you this way. Anyway, what functions, including political ones, can civil society perform in Belarus?

Jury Čavusaŭ. I have mentioned one function being performed by the state part of civil society – channelization, or disposal of spontaneous public activity, which is present in any society. This is a function of the state part of civil society. In this sense, one of the functions of the non-state part of civil society can be to stir up public activity. This is exactly what it did during the presidential election campaign. It is a difficult question what civil society can do in Belarus. Many people in the provinces maintain that civil society should depoliticize at the current stage. I hear more often that someone has to publish books and study local history. But the depolitization of pro-democratic organizations is just an opportunity to survive and continue activity.

Andrej Jahoraŭ. Jury Čavusaŭ said that the state wants loyalty in both actions and thoughts. I think loyalty in actions is primary. Ideology and the whole official discourse does not exist in a situation where everybody believes it. I do not think that even Belarusian Youth Union functionaries believe that Belarus' history began in 1994. Most take a cynical attitude to ideology. There is a corporate agreement between the government and the public, whereby the public is entitled to certain social benefits if it behaves in a loyal way. This is my opinion. I would challenge Juras' remark that Belarusian society rejects the official discourse. A majority accepts it.

Andrej Kazakievič. In any case, discourse is not so much about beliefs, but it is more about the simulation of certain beliefs. Ideology of a developed democratic country does not boil down to beliefs, but to traditions, compulsory rituals, some stereotyped actions. Is this normal for society that people follow some rituals without reflecting on them properly?

Jury Čavusaŭ. Do they share state ideology? I do not think so. I do not say they reject it. They view it as an accepted standard of behavior in society, otherwise they would end up in the opposition. One may say they have surrendered to the dominant political discourse.

Andrej Kazakievič. Do enterprises play the role of electoral vertical, or is their function to influence the vote, to ensure that voters support the regime?

Jury Čavusaŭ. Both. As we could observe during the elections, with such a perfect mechanism to achieve a desired result of the vote, the authorities

did not need large-scale campaigns like "For Belarus!" but they do conduct such campaigns.

Andrej Jahoraŭ. A thesis on the role of the public sector was formulated at a seminar held in Kiev in 2005. Enterprises and establishments like schools and hospitals no longer just perform their functions. Their direct functions have been replaced with political ones. The education system must provide quality instruction. However, Belarusian universities do not punish students for poor knowledge, but for voting the way authorities do not want them to vote.

Andrej Kazakievič. Belarus' civil society is a blend of different elements. What sectors does it consist of, and how big are they in terms of numbers?

Jury Čavusaŭ. This is something we do not know. We know, for instance, the number of registered NGOs in Belarus – about 2,000 – the number has not changed since 1999. Some NGOs were closed down, while new, mostly pro-government ones, were registered. There are also approximately 2000 unregistered NGOs.

Andrej Kazakievič. Does that mean that there is a pro-government sector and pro-opposition sector? Are there some groups in between, trying to keep some balance?

Jury Čavusaŭ. Sure, there are organizations that are trying to do their job regardless of external political influences. Someone has to publish books, organize tours, study local history and traditions and open local museums. Some organizations pursue political goals – work toward a change of regime in the country. State sector associations are not all the same either. They include organizations directly controlled by the state and non-state organizations that are also controlled or guided by the state like the Belarusian National Youth Union. There is a certain level of pluralism in this state sector as well, as each of these organizations works toward its particular goal. At the same time, all of them play the role of a channelizer of public activity.

As for the statement that the regime is losing the support of young people, I would refer to my subjective experience. When I studied at the university from 1995 to 2000, it was impossible to tell other students that you are a member of the National Youth Union. There were not many members of opposition organizations, but there were also fewer active supporters of Łukašenka. Now the situation has changed in the auditorium.

Lukashism is an establishment, an opportunity to make a career. It is no longer considered to be a shame to join the National Youth Union. It is no longer considered "not cool" to say that you support the policies of the current regime. Therefore, I would not say, judging by my own experience, that the regime is losing young supporters.

Andrej Kazakievič. That means that mentality is changing. It was a shame before, whereas now it is normal behavior.

Mikoła Kacuk. Polls suggest that opposition supporters were a majority among youths at one time; now they got older. People who oppose the regime are children of Perestroika. The following generations, those who grew up under the Łukašenka regime, are not any different from the rest of the population. And the proportion of Łukašenka supporters in them is the same as in other groups.

The system of values has changed as well. Perestroika children were more romantic, whereas the new generations are more pragmatic. They think about the future in pragmatic terms and consider the options that the government offers.

Siarhiej Lubimaŭ. My comment is: when we discuss "Belarusian youth" we should not substitute this term by the term "youth in Belarus". There is one more phenomenon to be analyzed – youths who leave Belarus, Belarusian students in Lithuania, Poland and other countries. On the one hand, we can say that this group is the diaspora, i.e. Belarusians who live outside of their homeland but represent themselves publicly precisely as Belarusians, strive to influence their homeland from abroad and therefore gain a certain political significance. On the other hand, this group is still in the process of acquiring its shape and specificity, and can serve as an amazing sample for studying the trajectory of the insertion of Belarusians into the European social space.

My claim is that, in analyzing the case of the Belarusian diaspora, we can coordinate the discourses of Europeanization produced by this group, and the framework of practices within which this Europeanization actually happens. Such an angle shows more than surveys do, where people just postulate their values concerning Europe, democracy, etc. I teach at the European Humanities University in Vilnius, and students, when asked, say that they left Belarus because they want to receive a European education. At the same time, I know that quite a lot of students in my group are motivated first of all economically: they get a multiple-entry visa

to Lithuania and do business, and sometimes just a simple "buy-and-sell" business. Basically the same trend can be found among the Belarusians in Warsaw who I researched. I would say then that when we focus exclusively on the public statements addressed by these groups, we do not grasp the material conditions of their integration into the social world, and hence our knowledge of them remains fragmented.

Andrej Lachovič. When talking about support for the regime among the youth, we should take into account changes in society. Before 2003 Łukašenka never made statements about Belarus' independence. Since 2003 he is a staunch defender of independence. This is evidence that society has changed its opinion. And the authorities, willingly or unwillingly, had to take into account that opinion. The question of independence gained prominence because of changes in voters' mentality. Independence is the biggest issue, other ones are secondary.

Andrej Dyńko. The subject of this discussion is "Political Discourse. Belarusian Style". One thing indicative of the Belarusian style is that when representatives of Belarus' independent society meet for a political discussion, they start complaining and persuading themselves that the situation is bad, very bad and even worse, and there is no way out. I would like to stress that 2006 inspired optimism, much more optimism than the 2004 referendum or the 2001 presidential election.

Let us take a look at the situation we had in 2006. The country's average pay rose from $70 in 2001 to $270 in 2006. Nevertheless, after five years of unprecedented economic growth, when living standards improved considerably, the opposition managed to garner the same number of votes as in the previous election, or even more.

Apart from the economic factor, the authorities increased political pressure on opponents, but still they managed to show a fairly good performance. Under more favorable conditions for the opposition – the situation will surely change one day – it will show a much better performance.

One more important point… Despite the increased pressure, Belarusian culture continues to create essential products, even more products than before. I see it as a guarantee that everything will be fine in Belarus in the future.

And finally, one of the most important results of the year is a final change of political discourse, as speakers noted, both official and unofficial.

Aliaksiei Pikulik. First, I would like to start with a bit of a summary and to express my views on the presentations in this panel. First, speaking of a political discourse, we have to bear in mind, in what conditions this discourse is created. Much of the analysis was presenting the role of Łukašenka in Belarus as a man who defines the pathway of Belarus, which is in my opinion a little bit constrained simply because authoritarianism is a regime that consists of equilibriums between various groups of interests; it is definitely more than a one-man-show. We can use notions like bureaucratic capitalism or captured state, to learn from Latin American and examples other transitions. From this point of view I would like to propose that we not hyper-rationalize Łukašenka as an actor and that we pay attention to the structure as well.

Now I would like to present some thoughts over the first part, which is "The Ideology of Political Discourse in Belarus". First of all, my impression is that in Belarus the administration of the president and the ones who create the ideology and the discourse have started to read books. One can find exquisite references to various famous scholars that are being re-worked and re-articulated in the discourses of the official state ideology. Thus, in regards to international relations, ideologists implicitly refer to Wallerstein; in terms of geopolitics, their values seem to be those which interested Bhabha and Said. Speaking of the initial economic reforms and the role of privatization, they seem to adopt some of the ideas of Stiglitz. For democracy-building, they quote the 'pre-conditions literature' (on Latin America) and play with Schumpeterian notion of democracy. Their manuals to authoritarian-learning definitely include Althusser, Milliband and Gramsci.

Second, I would like to make a short institutional statement regarding the political discourse. Most of my colleagues were speaking about the political determination of the discourse and how that discourse defines the further consolidation of authoritarianism, disregarding the market and those institutions, beliefs, discourses, ideas and ideologies constituting different types of economies and different types of market behavior, which is very important, in my opinion, simply because of institutional change, which affects the system.

Third is the political economy argument. Here, in Belarus, we have a state that monopolizes the representation of public interest. This is something that can be referred to as a lack of heterarchy in terms of

David Stark. In this sense, the state reminds one of Mussolini's quote, "Everything for the state, nothing against the state".

Fourthly, notorious is the notion of democracy in Belarus as it is depicted in the official discourse. Generally, after the collapse of socialism it is clear that there is no ideological alternative to democracy created. Łukašenka does not claim that Belarus is an authoritarian state. However, in his opinion and in the opinion of Belarusian policy makers, democracy is only about having elections. Belarus is definitely not a polyarchy. In Belarus the regime emphasizes vertical accountability.

Finally, speaking of the opposition it is clear that we see the process of making the opposition an object, without the capacity to speak and represent itself. Adding a little bit to features, symbolic features of the political discourse in Belarus, revenge, the payback is clearly present with regard to the opposition: trying to recover the gaps in history, trying to assert some values at the best.

Paternalism is a very important feature of the Belarusian political discourse. Łukašenka himself behaves as the father of the nation. It can be seen in various ways starting from the problem of female trafficking.

There is a rule of revenge. For example, if you take a look at these symbolic marathons – he makes bureaucrats from cities run, sweat and die in the track, although in celebration of healthy rural power. These were my comments about ideology.

Right now, I would like to make a few short remarks on civil society. Civil society should not always be seen as highly politicized. Civil society is also about the groups that are taking care of dogs in the neighborhood, helping the homeless. In my opinion, it would be too simplistic and too optimistic in a sense to say that civil society is weak and shattered just because of the political reasons and political pressure, although it is a very important thing. Here again, a Putnamian type of argument – referring to the lack of trust in society, which leads to the lack of cooperation, civic culture, social mobilization and acting – is also clear in Belarus.

The second point regarding civil society is that one of the only channels that remains to create, sustain and develop the public sphere, the Web, is not fully used. Simply because if you take a look at the mobilization that occurs in relation to NGOs – forming NGOs and NGO networks in different states – using the technology, using the Internet, which helps the NGOs to become, although locally rooted, globally connected – it

is not enough present in Belarus. In my opinion, there is a failure in using technology and a failure in using the Web for creating normal social alignment and social action. These would be the provocative points that I am trying to make.

Valer Bulhakau. The church is an interesting and profound issue. I do not agree with Mr. Čavusaŭ that the Orthodox Church has a State status in Belarus. Łukašenka seems to be wary of the Orthodox Church. It is an exaggeration to state that it has become an instrument of the government.

But I am not so much interested in the Orthodox Church, which has always existed in traditions of Caesaropapism, merged with the state apparatus in one way or another; I am more interested in the Roman Catholic Church in Belarus. When authorities were harassing the Polish minority, the Catholic Church took an opportunistic position. Cardinal Świątek regularly attended events involving President Łukašenka. Łukašenka sent official letters to the Vatican and received reciprocal signs of appreciation. This was in contrast with the treatment of the Polish minority in Belarus. How would you explain it, if you think my question is relevant?

Andrej Jahoraŭ. The issues of the Polish minority, Catholics and the Orthodox are manifestations of general trends in Belarus. The post-Socialist revanchism (the restoration of an undemocratic system) manifests itself in greater state control over private institutions. The state eliminates, step by step, private institutions that can resist it. It started with universities. It also targets religious minorities, for instance Protestant communities; like the Catholic or Orthodox Church, they are independent of the state. The state wants them to be loyal.

Piotar Rudkoŭski. I just wanted to go to a church for worship when you started discussing the role of the Church in Belarusian society as a factor in ideological processes. In this sense, we deal mostly with the lack of social position, the lack of position with regard to political, social and cultural developments in Belarus. Should we regard the lack of position as support for the regime or opportunism? I do not know. I think both of these conclusions are arguable.

Both Orthodox and Catholic hierarchies often say that they exist beyond politics. I have repeatedly criticized this position. They do not realize that existence beyond politics often means support for one policy or another.

Take for instance their silence in response to human rights abuses and the persecution of dissidents. To some extent it is equivalent to support for the current policy. Nevertheless, the hierarchies do not think so. They believe their mission is limited to evangelizing people. The fact that priests show up at state celebrations, they think they are not in a position to reject invitations. This is as far as the hierarchy is concerned.

Many ordinary priests and churchgoers think differently. Among both Orthodox and Catholic believers there is a cautious trend toward the acceptance of Europeanization, democratization, pluralism and liberal values. There are also supporters of authoritarian thinking, because Christianity in some places carries a certain charge of anti-liberalism. Orthodox and Catholic believers sometimes distance themselves from the West, from liberalism. This creates an impression that they may sympathize with the regime.

III.

ARE THERE BELARUSIANS IN BELARUS?

(THE QUESTION OF BELARUSIAN IDENTITY)

Grigory Ioffe

BELARUS: A STATE, NOT YET A NATION[1]

A person who does not understand who he is is actually a Belarusian. That, however, does not mean that others have any good understanding of him.
From Belarusians, like from a cocoon, sometimes come out "Russians". These are local silkworms.

Aleś Ancipienka[2]

Two discussion tables at this conference have titles that I relish: "Belarus as a Geopolitical Pariah" and "Are there Belarusians in Belarus?" I'll touch upon the latter title in due course. As for the former, I could not possibly put it better. Belarus is not just a pariah; it is a geopolitical one. My reading of this assertion is that Belarus doesn't have oil and is overly close to Russia. The second of these circumstances is geopolitical by definition, the first by implication. Preempting a suspicion that I trivialize human rights violations and voter fraud as another plausible reason to think of Belarus as a pariah of some kind, I have to say that I do not, but in this area much depends on one's reference point. Compared with Switzerland or Denmark, Belarus's human rights record is downright awful; compared with Azerbaijan or Kazakhstan, it is not. Yet the president of Azerbaijan

[1] I am indebted to Uladzimer Abushenka, Aleś Ancipienka, Valancin Akudovič, Ihar Babkoū, Valer Bulhakau, Yury Drakachrust, Andrej Dyńko, Elena Gapova, Elena Korosteleva, Rainer Lindner, David Marples, Zachar Šybieka, Vital Silicki, and Theodore Weeks, whose publications have provided me with indispensable food for thought.

[2] A. Ancipienka, *Zatsemki na Paliakh Belaruskai Mentalnastsi*, "Nashe Mneniye", www.mnnby.org; 23 September 2005.

was recently graced by a White House reception. And in 2006, the leader of Kazakhstan met with both Vice President Cheney and President Bush.

Because discovering a mammoth oilfield in Belarus any time soon is unlikely, there is only one way to rectify its geopolitical pariah status and that is to unhook it from Russia. But what is the best way to accomplish this? Would it be by overt democracy promotion? By ostracizing political leaders? Capturing their non-existent American accounts? Sending presidential letters to Congress that cite such dignified sources (on Łukašenka) as a Moscow-based tabloid called *Moskovskyi Komsomolets*? Or would it be by using what Elena Korosteleva called "a client-based approach to certain members of the opposition",[3] and/or groups with irredeemably poor followings? Finally, would it be *all of the above*? The trouble is that a strategy subsuming all the above has been in place for ten years without any meaningful results at all. If anything, the Łukašenka regime has become more entrenched and has broadened its social support base since 1996, when this Western strategy was initiated.

Common sense suggests that if a way that has been used again and again over the course of ten years is demonstrably not working, then there may be some other way. In order to close in on the alternative way, one should pose provocative and sometimes awkward questions, the answers to which (equally awkward at times) should invoke what we know about Belarus plus common sense and minus rhetorical delicacies like 'Belarus is Europe's last dictatorship' and the like.

Why indeed is Belarus clinging to Russia to the extent that as many as 37.5 percent of Belarusians probed by a national survey claim that there is no difference at all between them and Russians?[4] Why is it that when asked which of the two entities, the EU or Russia, would you rather choose to join if joining one of them is imperative, 24.8 percent say EU and 51.6 percent say Russia?[5] I know that some analysts tend to disqualify surveys conducted in Belarus once they reveal attitudes not to those analysts' liking, so I promise to stay away from those polls for the most part. Before, however, I start keeping that promise, just a quick look at one more poll. According to the agency *Eurasian Monitoring*, almost half

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[3] E. Korosteleva, *Political leadership and public support in Belarus*, [in:] *The EU & Belarus* (ed.) A. Lewis, London, The Federal Trust for Education and Research, 2002, 61.

[4] IISEPS' national survey of March 2003.

[5] IISEPS' national survey of December 2005.

of those questioned in Belarus in 2006 were not at all worried about the possible loss of national distinctiveness and traditions. For comparison, only 28 percent of respondents in Russia and 33 percent of Ukrainians are in that category.[6] Common sense suggests that if you do not have a clear idea of what it is that you have or may have, you do not worry about losing that. Which is what brings us to the key issue: many Belarusians are not sure what it means to be a Belarusian. At the very least they are not united about this. Their national identity is indistinctive. Valer Bulhakau put this bluntly: while Belarusians have a state, they do not yet have a nation.[7] Zachar Šybieka made a similar point.[8]

Between Russia and Poland

The Belarusian national idea was first packaged for popular consumption at the very beginning of the twentieth century. Prior to that, and for some time thereafter, most Belarusians identified themselves as *tuteishiya* (locals). Nina Meckovskaya writes about their "lasting existence in the shadow of Russian and Polish cultures",[9] while Yury Drakachrust says that they lived "between two great... cultural and mental magnets of Russia and Poland."[10] It is useful to remember, though, that the relationship between the *tuteishyya* and each of those "magnets" was not quite symmetrical. Whereas people with Polish identity strived to "civilize" the population of the *Polskie Kresy Wschodnie*,[11] the message that Russians sent en masse to the *tuteishyya* was "you are us".[12] Russians and Poles, though, belonged, and perhaps still

[6] P. Kirillov, *23% belorusov boyatsia diktatury i repressii*, "Belorusskiye Novosti", 31 May 2005, www.naviny.by

[7] V. Bulhakau, *Forum, on-line conference of the Belarusian Service of Radio Liberty (BS RL)*, 31 May 2006, www.svaboda.org

[8] Z. Šybieka, *Forum, on-line conference of the BS RL*, 5 July 2006, www.svaboda.org

[9] N.B. Meckovskaya, *Belorussky Yazyk: Sotsiolinguisticheskiye Ocherki*, Verlag Otto Sagner, Munchen 2003, 61.

[10] Tsi zyavilas' u Belarusi alternatyva Aliaksandru Łukašenku? *Prague Accent*, a talk show of BS RL, 29 January 2006, www.svaboda.org

[11] An excellent treatment of this issue can be found in Z. Rykiel, *Podstawy Geografii Politycznej*, Polskie Wydawnictwo Ekonomiczne, Warsaw 2006, 135–142.

[12] It is safe to say that this difference still reverberates in the historical memory of many Belarusians. If one does not take this into account one would have hard time understanding why the official propaganda in Belarus put a rumor to use that Alaksandr Milinkievič is actually a Pole and a Catholic despite his own admission to the contrary

belong, on the opposite sides of what some call a civilizational fault line, a cultural divide that runs across Belarus. Joining hands across a divide like this has always been difficult, and many locals preferred to choose sides. On the basis of his archival inquiries, Theodore Weeks has shown vividly how tormented some local intellectuals were (e.g., Ferdinand Senčikoŭski) in the early 1860s when they faced the necessity of choosing whether to cling to Poles or to Russians; and – after having made their choice – they sometimes changed their mind.[13] That was then. *Now*, according to Ihar Babkou, choosing sides is not a worthwhile pursuit anymore, as any version of Belarusian identity that will prove to be inclusive cannot but be trans-cultural.[14] It's worth keeping this point in sight, as it has to do with the greatest challenge that Belarus faces, the challenge of national consolidation across the cultural divide. Regrettably few influential public opinion leaders in Belarus have been up to this challenge.

Shortly after it was born, the Belarusian idea forked down the old division line. On the one hand, a historical tradition emerged that cast Belarusians as an inherently Western community, the descendents of the Great Duchy of Lithuania [e.g. Lastouski and Gritskevich (1910), Dovnar-Zapolsky (1919)]. The other tradition, older than the Belarusian idea itself, was West-Rusism, a theory that emphasized Belarusian peculiarity but only within the confines of the Russian cultural universe. Among those who embraced this alternative tradition was Yauchim (Yevfimii) Karsky, the most reputable Belarusian linguist of all times. Incidentally, Karsky, a pure ethnographic Belarusian, as he introduced himself, was from 1905–1915 rector of the Warsaw University and was reportedly one of the most ardent Russifiers of Poland, not just Belarus. Needless to say, most historical accounts of Belarus published under the Soviets embrace the view that Belarusians constitute one prong in a three-prong Russian ethnicity that gave rise to three East Slavic nationalities interrelated closely, almost to the point that makes their differences unworthy of a serious discussion. The greatest common experience that solidified the bond was, of course, the Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945.

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and that Inna Kulei, his wife, may actually be a relative of a great Polish boxer Jerzy Kulej.

[13] T. Weeks, *'Us' or 'Them'? Belarusians and Official Russia, 1863–1914*, "Nationalities Papers", Vol. 31, No. 2, June 2003.

[14] I. Babkoŭ, *Genealyogiya Belaruskai Idei*, "Arche", 3, 2005, 136–165.

Could There be Three Belarusian National Projects?

Until recently, there were "just" two Belarusian national projects, each a corpus of normative ideas about Belarus' past, present, and future. Rainer Lindner aptly called them memorial cults.[15] Some authors of the *Arche* and *Nasha Niva* call these projects Nativist/pro-European and Muscovite Liberal or just Russophile.

As if to make matters worse, today there seem to be *three* national projects, as some Belarusian analysts (e.g., Abushenka, Bulhakau, and Babkou) have shrewdly added the so-called Creole nationalism to the equation. Obviously they would not have been able to do this without Mykoła Ryabchuk, who (in his research on neighboring Ukraine) repeatedly called into question dichotomies like Russians – Ukrainians, Ukrainian speakers – Russian speakers, and nationally conscious – mankurts (i.e., people without memory) and authored one of the most conceptually fertile ideas in the field of nation-building, the idea of Creole nationalism. It turned out that many Belarusians who speak *trasianka* are quite patriotic and nationalistic. As described by Uladzimer Abushenka, these people are midway in their socio-cultural evolution. For them, things Russian no longer belong in "we", but they cannot yet be assigned to "they". Similar ambiguity typifies their attitude to things Belarusian. Creole consciousness is interpreted as an extrapolation of "tuteyshasts", i.e., a Belarusian variety of localism,[16] and Łukašenka was once defined as the president of the Creoles.[17]

Valer Bulhakau, who authored that definition, later recanted. My earlier referral to Łukašenka as a nationalist, said Bulhakau, was a mistake.[18] In my judgment, though, it is this change of mind that is a mistake because a nationalist is not a title that can be graciously conferred upon somebody and then taken away at will. Anybody who fosters the idea of a nation *apart from the significant other* is *de facto* a nationalist. "By his policy Łukašenka eliminated one of the founding myths of colonial thinking, that Belarus is

[15] R. Lindner, *Besieged Past: National and Court Historians in Łukašenka's Belarus*, "Nationalities Papers", Vol. 27, No. 4, 1999, 643.

[16] U. Abushenka, *Mickiewicz kak 'kreol': ot 'Tuteishikh Geneologii' k Geneologii Tuteshastsi*, 2004; accessed at http://www.lib.by/frahmenty/sem-abuszenka.htm

[17] V. Bulhakau, *Vybary Prezydenta Kreolau*, "Arche", 4, 2001; accessed at arche.home.by/2001-4/bulha401.htm.001.

[18] V. Bulhakau, *Forum, on-line conference of the BS RL*, 31 May 2006, www.svaboda.org

so wretchedly poor that it cannot survive without becoming part of Russia... Under Łukašenka, national passports, army, courts, police, embassies and other institutions exist that form national identity. Finally, under Łukašenka, leanings toward independence developed in the consciousness of the masses. If now one conducts free elections, then whoever takes part in them on the platform of the unification with Russia is unlikely to win over many voters".[19] One may also choose to pay attention to how in his most recent (September 29, 2006) press conference to Russian media Łukašenka categorically rejected any inkling of Belarus being incorporated in Russia. To be sure, he thereby was defending his regime, but the trouble is that Belarus has only one political regime, and it did not descend from the moon.

Although the idea of three national projects on Belarus was conceived by pundits who represent just one of them (Nativist, henceforth referred to as Project One), it proves to be a useful abstraction. Indeed, most, if not all, Belarusian intellectuals concerned about the future of their country can be assigned to one of the three projects described above. This is not to say that the borderlines between the projects are set once and for all. For example, some Muscovite Liberals (henceforth referred to as Project Two) expressed concern about the possibility of collusion between the two other national projects behind their back. Most eloquently, this concern was expressed by Grigory Minenkov, a dean of philosophy at the European Humanities University.[20] As for the ideologues of Project One, they expressed similar concerns that somehow Łukašenka, the president of the Creoles, (from now on referred to as the constituency of Project Three) befriends Russian-speaking liberals behind their back. By the same token, one may speculate about a common ground between Projects Two and Three. After all, *trasianka*, called the lingo of the Creoles, is more Russian today than it is Belarusian. And as in Russia, where the historical argument between the Slavophiles and Westernizers does not undermine ethno-national unity, so in Belarus, Projects Two and Three may be viewed as the ideological flanks of the same entity, a Russian-speaking republic of Belarus. In this regard, the label Creole may be considered pejorative: just

[19] Ibid.

[20] G. Minenkov, *Zametki o Yazyke, Znanii, Puti i Prochem*, "Nashe Mneniye", 23 August 2005, www.nmnby.org

speaking Russian spiced up (or not) with Belarusian phonetics does not undermine a sense of belonging to Belarus or of Belarusian patriotism.

The Strengths and Weaknesses of the National Projects

The principal strength of Project One is a tight-knit community united by their conscious choice of the Belarusian language, devotion to it, and an anti-colonial national liberation ethos, including a fight with Russian cultural colonialism. Devotion to language is a *strong* trait because it really helps distinguish nationally-conscious Belarusians from Russians. Given the overall deficiency of traits by which to tell Belarusians from Russians, language may indeed be viewed as an important agent of nation-building. Such a suggestion draws from the actual experiences of other Europeans (e.g. Czechs, Slovaks, Lithuanians, Latvians, Estonians, and Norwegians) who overcame linguistically alien influences even though this had looked like an uphill battle. Yet they proved that linguistic nationalism can win despite overwhelming odds and be instrumental in nation-building.

Some of the *weaknesses* of Project One are extensions of its strength. The project's community is insulated from the country's ambient environment. If "nationalism is essentially the general imposition of high culture on society",[21] then one may say that Project One performs this function superbly, considering the unfriendly political climate. *Arche* and *Nasha Niva* set standards of high culture, Belarusian style. The problem of the nativist cultural elite, however, is in its constituency, which still leaves much to be desired in terms of sheer numbers. To some extent, this is the case because the members of the elite come across as arrogant; they claim monopoly on Belarusian patriotism and are prone to accuse all those who speak Russian or disagree with their version of history of ulterior motives.

The intransigence of the nativist community's spiritual leaders, their unwillingness to build bridges, is as impressive as it is self-serving (in the short-run) and potentially self-destructive. It may be that the title of [my] discussion table, 'Are there Belarusians in Belarus?" is indicative of this intransigence. Indeed how can all those people who do not share my idea of Belarusianness be considered Belarusians? Screw them! How

[21] E. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press 1983, 57.

dare they not agree with me and the couple of people I rub shoulders with! The legacy of three unsuccessful Belarusification campaigns also works against Project One, as does its wholesale negativism in regard to the Soviet period, which is the longest period of Belarusians' nationally conscious existence to date.

Valancin Akudovič, one of the most revered critical intellectuals in the nativist community, came up with a stunningly bitter criticism of the entire project. In his essay pointedly titled "Without Us" published on 28 April 2003 in conjunction with the tenth anniversary of the *Nasha Niva* weekly, he wrote: "The Revival [Adradzhenne] movement denied any value whatsoever to real Belarus. Lurking behind the need to return to the historical legacy, language and cultural experiences of the past is a rigid ideological construction that does not sit well with the achievements and values of contemporary Belarusian society, because all its triumphs, accomplishments and delights are either of communist or colonial origin... We have remained lonely not because somebody abandoned us but because in their absolute majority the denizens of the state, in whose God-forsaken spot we are holed up, do not even budge to take a trip to the "new land" that we discovered for them. Even if they were pushed towards us by tommy-gun barrels on Łukašenka's orders, even then they would flee to their comfy quarters... It does not make sense to think that the situation will change if there is somebody other than Łukašenka at the helm of power. It is not us but the 'Belarusian people' who elected him, and the same 'people' will throw him out (sooner or later), and then again they will elect not our but their own president; and we will again write about Belarus as a hostile territory".[22]

In his later essay, Akudovič writes that Belarusians have been too late with their "national revival" and that in a qualitatively new, information-based society the declared goals of that revival can no longer be achieved. Openness to communication is something which even totalitarian regimes cannot escape. But cultures whose formative experience is not yet over are the first to fall victim to this openness.[23]

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[22] V. Akudovič, *Bez Na*s, "Nasha Niva", 28 March 2003; may be accessed at www.litara.net

[23] V. Akudovič, *Vaina Kulturau ili Piramida Kheopsu za Muram Minskaga Zamku*, 2005, http://www.knihi.com/

A *strength* of Project Two is that it embraces the language of the overwhelming majority of Belarusians. In Belarus, all bureaucratic, scientific, technological, economic and much inter-personal communication is in Russian, so using Russian presents itself as a cultural norm. Because high proficiency in English and other Western languages is not everybody's forte, Russian continues to be the prime medium in cultural exchange with the West as well. Another strength of Project Two is that it is not as elitist as Project One and is less insulated from the larger society. Finally, a strength of Project Two is in its connectivity: critical intellectuals who de facto speak on behalf of this project (such as Alaksandr Fiaduta, Yury Drakachrust, Piotr Martsev, and Olga Abramova) are more open to communication and less confrontational compared with the members of the two other projects' constituencies. Such openness is the prime social capital to use for the benefit of national consolidation.

A *weakness* of Project Two is its lack of a defining historical narrative and blueprint for the future that would go beyond the mere statement that Belarus should maintain its statehood and be a democratic country. Also missing is a cohesive explanation of Belarusians' differences from Russians. In that regard, a book by Yury Sheutsoŭ[24] enriches the theoretical basis of Project Two as much as it does Project Three (see below). In a way that does not antagonize Russians, Sheutsoŭ pays attention to the Belarusians' Baltic substratum and the presence of homegrown Catholicism as factors that set Belarusians apart from Russians. In many ways, however, the national project of Russian-speaking liberals remains putative. Its backers seem to form a community when there is a commonly shared sense of threat, but they get atomized when it recedes. In August 2005, Vital Silicki mobilized (apparently inadvertently) this sense of threat when he issued an open letter protesting a German broadcaster's decision to use Russian in their roundups of Belarusian news. In his letter, Silicki claimed that the German broadcaster's decision to use Russian in their new project is "despicable" and a testimony to European bureaucrats' "wholesale support of the politics of annihilation of the Belarusian language and culture".[25] Silicki's letter contains a caveat that he is not calling for the "removal of Russian from the Belarusian media space". Rather, he is "protesting the

[24] Y. Sheutsoŭ, *Ob'yedinionnaya Natsiya: Fenomen Belarusi*, Moscow, Yevropa 2005.
[25] Obrashcheniye Vitaliya Silitskogo, *Nashe Mneniye*, 10 August 2005, www.mnnby.org

removal of Belarusian from that space".[26] However, this disclaimer did not fit the tenor of the letter, which ended up with an appeal to Belarusian politicians, journalists, analysts and public servants to boycott the new radio project until it changes its language policy.

Silicki's letter contributed to the inner consolidation of the core constituency of Project Two by sparking a lengthy and not always friendly debate between it and Project One, but because a mobilizing sense of threat is not often incited by another brand of self-proclaimed democrats (but mostly by the Łukašenka regime), the Muscovite Liberals remain blissfully disorganized. Their evolution into a tight-knit community will most probably intensify if Łukašenka indeed forges an alliance with the nativists, as some Russian-speaking liberals fear, and/or if Łukašenka is gone.

An obvious *strength* of Project Three is that its social base is broader than that of the other projects. Its other strength is in its sponsorship by the ruling regime. The economic success of post-1996 Belarus, all doubts of which should have evaporated after the 2005 reports by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, can also be attributed to national mobilization techniques within the so-called Creole project, and so can the loyal, professional, and disciplined cadre of Belarusian bureaucrats and their relatively low level of corruption.[27]

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[26] Ibid.

[27] From 1998–2002, Transparency International (TI) considered Belarus to be one of 50 countries with the least corruption. More specifically, the 2002 ranking of 102 world nations on "perceived corruption" had Belarus as number 36, tied with Lithuania and less corrupt than Poland (ranked 45), not to mention Russia (71), and the Ukraine (85). In 2003, Belarus was ranked 53; in 2004 its rank was within the range 74–78; and in 2005, within the 107–116. A change of this magnitude within just three unremarkable years defies objective explanation and allows one to suspect regrettable corruption of TI's criteria, that is, their infusion with politics. This suspicion finds tentative confirmation in the October 25, 2005 broadcast of the Prague Accent, a talk show of the BS RL. "What happened? Did they begin to steal more in Belarus?" asks the talk show's host. Says Jaraslaŭ Romančuk, one of the leaders of the United Civic Party of Belarus' standing in opposition to Łukašenka: "The authors justly call this index [TI's corruption index – G.I.] a perception index – this is how corruption is perceived by different personalities and institutions. Belarus' rating of 2.6 [on the 0–10 scale where 10 stands for the total lack of corruption – G.I.] was assigned on the basis of responses to five questions given by... the Economist Intelligence Unit, Freedom House, and UN. The presence of these organizations in Belarus is not wide enough to monitor all changes in our legislation and practical relationships between business and state. I met with T.I.'s experts and explained to them the methodological differences between corruption estimates in market and non-market countries. And two years of those discussions and explanations

Apparently, Łukašenka's management style and his charisma as a peasant-born upstart have been, and still are, to the liking of many Belarusians. According to Aleh Manajeū, IISEPS' boss, millions of Belarusians identify with Łukašenka culturally and psychologically. "Fifteen years ago, Prime Minister Viachaslau Kebič had real power in the country. But did anybody use to refer to him as 'our Slava?' [Slava is a diminutive of Viacheslav – G.I.] No. But 'our Sashka' [Sashka is a diminutive of Alaksandr – G.I.] they did say and keep on saying all the time. This is a regularity: people have a gut feeling that [Łukašenka] is their man."[28] Earlier I wrote about the peasant ferment of Belarus, a country of delayed urbanization, as the nourishing environment for Łukašenka-style leadership.[29] To Aleś Chobat, Łukašenka resembles Vasil Vaščylla, a legendary leader of the 1743–44 peasant uprising against Radziwiłł, a Polish magnate, whose people imposed too heavy taxes (in the form of expropriated wheat) on peasants in eastern Belarus. Sviatłana Aleksijevič says that with three-quarters of its residents being urbanites "Belarus is still a country with a patriarchal peasant culture", and that Łukašenka is a "peasant leader... I was asked why our own [Vaclav] Havel did not emerge in Belarus. I replied that we had Aleś Adamovič, but we chose a different man. The point is not that we have no Havels, we do, but that they are not called for by society".[30]

Three National Projects in the Mirror of the 2006 Presidential Elections

It is tempting to "assign" three major presidential candidates, Milinkievič, Kazulin, and Łukašenka to each of the three national projects – Projects One, Two, and Three respectively. Of those three personalities, perhaps only Kazulin does not come across as the mainstream representative of "his" alleged constituency. But as has been already mentioned, Project

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brought about the result which led to an essential methodological correction." http://www.svaboda.org/textarticlesprograms/pragueaccent/2005/10/27)

[28] A. Manajeū, *U Belarusi yosts satsialnaya baza dlia vertaniya v Yevropu*, Gosts na Svabodzie, a talk show of BS RL, 14 May 2006, www.svaboda.org

[29] G. Ioffe, *Understanding Belarus: Economy and the Political Landscape*, "Europe – Asia Studies", No. 1, 2004, 85–118.

[30] Interview with Sviatłana Aleksijevič, "Izvestia", 14 May 2004, www.izvestia.ru/person/article103553

Two is not a cohesive entity, and so, with some qualifications, Kazulin probably fits, while both Łukašenka and Milinkievič do epitomize their respective constituencies.

It is then equally tempting (though equally debatable) to interpret the showing of these three presidential hopefuls in the March 2006 elections as an indication of the relative influence of the national projects in Belarus. As for the measure of "showing", the results of two post-election surveys by the IISEPS[31] are more appropriate than the officially announced electoral outcome. Estimated by those polls, Łukašenka's support is in the vicinity of 60 percent or slightly more, Milinkievič's within 18 percent–20 percent range, and Kazulin's about 4 percent.

Out of a multitude of pre-election forecasts, perhaps the most accurate one had been issued by Alaksandr Potupa, Chairman of Belarus' Union of Entrepreneurs and a science fiction author. In his September 14, 2005 interview to the Latvian Russian-language newspaper *Telegraf*, Potupa, who cannot be suspected of being Łukašenka-friendly, said that "in 2006, Łukašenka's victory is as assured as it was in 2001. He will win no less than 80 percent of the vote. But one has to understand that he would win 2:1 (or about two-thirds of the vote) even without sneaky fiddling technologies".[32] "There is no indication at all", Potupa also said, "that the actual split of the electorate goes beyond 1:6 or even 1:7. But serious analyses have never been of any importance for the opposition activists".[33] Potupa's prediction has materialized impeccably. The opposition claims that the election was rigged, which is probably what happened. When, however, one scrutinizes the numerous pronouncements of the opposition, reflected by the media, it appears that almost none of them questions Łukašenka's victory, although in the commotion of the post-election street battles in Minsk some statements to that effect were indeed made.

Out of the multitude of the post-election analyses, I am particularly impressed by that of Vital Silicki. "The Łukašenka regime", writes Silicki, "has managed to achieve a certain equilibrium between itself and society by... *placing the outlook and political culture of the average Belarusian into its*

[31] It appears that I lied. I cannot stay away from the polls.

[32] S. Martovskaya, *Pochemu Belarus' golosuyet za Łukašenka*, "Telegraf", 14 September 2005, accessed at http://www.inosmi.ru/translation/222228.html

[33] Ibid.

(regime's) own foundation".[34] [Emphasis added – G.I.]. Moreover, "the events on the Kalinouski square [This is how the protesting youths 'renamed' the Kastrychnitskaya Square in downtown Minsk] reflected the mobilization potential of an illusion", as no action of the opposition could bring about political change in Belarus at this point in time. "The society objectively recognized the Łukašenka victory in 2006".[35] The entire March 19–25 protest, according to Silicki, was not so much political as it was dissident because it did not reflect willingness to accomplish a certain goal. Rather, it was an expression of the desire to preserve dignity by the representatives of the "democratic subculture". Whereas Valancin Akudovič once talked about an "archipelago Belarus", the notion reflecting multiple locations on the Belarusian-speaking promoters of the "correct" variety of national idea, Silicki claims that by now, this structure has been permeated by horizontal ties and has been "localized" by the regime. So now it looks more like a ghetto.

Already some opposition-minded analysts are debating whether *ghetto* is an apt metaphor.[36] But the consensus is emerging all across the debate that the regime has consolidated and broadened its social base, whereas the current opposition does not stand a chance.[37] In a talk show of the Belarusian Service of Radio Liberty, Silicki was asked by Yury Drakakchrust, how it is that, according to his analysis: no effort by the opposition would have led to a different electoral result, the regime has achieved equilibrium with society, the democratic community has become a ghetto, society recognized Łukašenka's victory, and there is no crisis of power in Belarus. Yet, despite all this the conclusion is drawn that one has to keep working to change the situation? Don't you see, insisted the talk show host, that your analysis actually boosts the standpoint taken by the people like Ms. Abramova [a Belarusian MP] who calls upon the opposition to cut back on acrimony and try to reach some degree of mutual understanding with the Łukašenka team? No, replied Silicki, "on that issue I am in fundamental disagreement with you".[38]

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[34] V. Silicki, *Pamiatats, shto dyktatury ruinuyutsa*, "Arche", No. 7, http://arche.bymedia.net/2006-7/silicki706.htm

[35] Ibid.

[36] V. Mackevič, *Zhdat serioznykh postupkov ot takoi oppozitsii ne prikhoditsia*, "Belorusskiye Novosti", 21 September 2006, www.naviny.by

[37] Ibid.

[38] *Pamiatats, shto dyktatyry ruinuyutsa*, Prague Accent, Talk Show of the Belarusian Service of Radio Liberty, 18 August 2006, www.svaboda.org

I would remain forever mystified by the "fundamental" nature of Silicki's disagreement with his interviewer had I not read an English-language article by the same author released just months prior to his Belarusian-language publication in *Arche*. As a Reagan-Fascell Fellow at the National Endowment for Democracy, Silicki wrote a piece about Łukašenka's tactics of preempting democracy, including the removal "from the political arena of even those opposition leaders that are still weak"[39] and a "combination of pressure, slender and sophisticated propaganda"[40] used to accomplish this goal. In that truly remarkable English-language piece, the rank-and-file Belarusians, if present at all, are *victims* of the regime, not by any means its *social base*, much less, willing collaborators. The political correctness of this picture fits the official American pronouncements on Belarus, but I am afraid it does not help those few in the West who are willing to understand Belarusian realities as they are (without slotting them into an ideological template of Western making).

In the meantime, Łukašenka's support seems to be growing among Belarusian youths, a demographic with which the regime has not been particularly successful. Vikta Martinovič, a journalist, has already called the growing ranks of Łukašenka's young admirers Generation L. Uladzimer Mackevič, a fierce critic of Łukašenka, observes that "Belarusian youths now beginning to support the regime are proud that Belarus did not receive respect and [favorable] attitude to it as a gift from somebody (as Stanislaw Šuškievič once did from Bill Clinton) but earned them, won them in a fight. It is this that makes this regime genuinely Belarusian in many people's eyes, a kind of leadership that nationalists [Read: the constituency of Project One – G.I.] dreamed about during their heyday in the early 1990s".[41]

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[39] V. Silicki, *Preempting democracy: The case of Belarus*, "Journal of Democracy", Vol. 16, No. 4, 2005, 83–97, http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_democracy/v016/16.4silitski.html

[40] Ibid.

[41] V. Mackevič, *Zhdat serioznykh postupkov ot takoi oppozitsii ne prikhoditsia*, "Belorusskiye Novosti", 21 September 2006, www.naviny.by

Conclusions

By all accounts, Creole nationalism, Belarusian style, is on the offensive. It is working, and this appears to be more important than critical remarks about the unsophisticated nature of Łukašenka's court ideologues. Yet those remarks have merit as Belarusian Creoles may (after all) lack ammunition to complete the process of nation building on their own. Unfinished nation building thus remains Belarus' biggest challenge. It would serve all three constituencies of nationally conscious Belarusians best if they recognized each others' fortes and promoted common ground, which is already revealed (though not necessarily accepted as such) in the socio-economic success of Belarus and the value of its statehood. It is easy to see that all three national projects in Belarus possess complementary features. Certainly Project Three is most popular, yet it cuts Belarusian history all too short and deprives itself of historical myths that appeal to an educated and inquisitive audience. Certainly Project One owns the "copyright" to such myths, but the group embracing them ought to renounce arrogance and the idea that only one version of Belarusianness can be accepted. Certainly Project Two offers a bridge among all three projects because the informal members of the Muscovite liberal constituency engage in a dialogue with the two remaining camps. Alaksandr Fiaduta's article "The Country of the Deaf: The Fatherland is in Peril",[42] published in Belarusian, is a fresh attempt at such a dialogue. But Fiaduta's message – let us support the national leader in case he turns to the West to stave off Belarus' incorporation by Russia – fell on nativists' deaf ears.

Occasionally, however, pragmatic nation-building ideas emanate from the most uncompromising camp. Such is, for example, Andrej Dyńko's suggestion to merge the "economic nationalism" of government officials (such as Šemaška and Chyż) with the spiritual nationalism of some Belarusian youths.[43] The belated recognition of the need to discuss economic issues, not just language and national symbols,[44] is also refreshingly realistic, yet it is too little too late and, besides, is not couched in practical terms. It is

[42] A. Fiaduta, *Kraina Glukhikh. Aichyna u Nebiazpetse*, "Nashe Mneniye", 17 June 2006 (reprinted from Nasha Niva), www.nmnby.org

[43] A. Dyńko, *Patrabuyu nemagchimaga – budzte realistami*, "Nashe Mneniye", 4 September 2006, www.nmnby.org

[44] Ibid.

certainly high time to recognize that genuine Belarusians are not endemic to the nativist community and that all or most of those who live in Belarus are Belarusians as well.

A definition of insanity routinely ascribed to Einstein is doing one and the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result. One need not be Einstein, however, to realize that Western policies in regard to Łukašenka's Belarus have been abysmally ineffective. In many ways, they have achieved results opposite to those intended. Because the intransigence of the most pro-Western group in Belarus risks driving it into irrelevance, Western policy-makers ought to promote national consolidation in Belarus, not preclude it by imposing ludicrous travel sanctions on the leaders of the Creole majority and refusing to talk to them.

Because once concocted political clichés live their own lives and are difficult to undo, it may still be hard for some to realize that Belarus' major predicament is not Łukašenka; it is unfinished nation building. In many ways Łukašenka is a product of the nation building impasse, not the other way around. Facilitating national consolidation in Belarus is more in the West's interest than *de facto* pitting one group of Belarusians against another. Only national consolidation will eventually unhook Belarus from Russia, not forceful democracy promotion or confrontational rhetoric. When one says, "Belarus is Europe's last dictatorship" and then repeats this statement one thousand times, what results, is a false sense of clarity – a cognitive obstacle that can be cleared only through a comprehensive understanding of that country. Such understanding, though, is only possible on Belarus' own terms, not on the basis of clichés rehashed by the international media.

Oleg Łatyszonek

MY RANKING OF EUROPEAN NATIONS IN THE EARLY 21ST CENTURY

Are there Belarusians in Belarus? Of course, there are. The question of Belarusian identity is only about what it means to be a Belarusian. The undertone of the question casts a shadow of doubt on the value of Belarusian identity; otherwise the question would not arise. Many answers are possible, but I do not want to analyze the various ways of being a Belarusian. Is there any sense in the expressions "a good Belarusian", "a true", "a sincere" or "a conscious Belarusian?" Every individual puts a different meaning on these labels.

For some people "a conscious Belarusian" is one who knows the history of his nation, and considers the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL) his or her own state, and regards the *Pahonia* [Pursuit] coat-of-arms and the white-red-white flag as national symbols and speaks Belarusian, of course. Others consider Slavic unity and brotherhood with the Russian people of greater importance. Their flag is usually a combination of green and red, and they consider Russian their second native language. Nevertheless, both consider themselves Belarusians and assessments of their views have nothing to do with scientific approaches. It should be taken for granted that every individual who declares himself or herself a Belarusian is a Belarusian. The use of the common name as proof of common roots smells of tribalism, but there is not a single ethnic group, not a single nation without a name.

From this viewpoint, the Belarusians are a young ethnos and even a younger nation. We even know the first Belarusian man's name – Salamon Rysinski, who declared himself a Belarusian in 1586 by

entering himself in the University of Altdorf register as *Solomo Pantherus Leucorussus*. Rysinski was a folklore scientist and Latin-language poet born near Vitebsk. His native Belarus (Leucorossia) was situated in the east of the current territory of Belarus. The first Belarusian was neither an Orthodox, nor a Catholic; he was a Calvinist. Speculations on what it meant to him to be a Belarusian would take too much space to explore here. We do know, however, that he described himself as a Belarusian in contrast to *Litsvin* (Lithuanian) and Russian, which assumedly means that he considered the Belarusians to be a separate nation as good as the other two. Rysinski's declaration was very personal, because if the Belarusian nation existed in the late sixteenth century, it existed in one person only. So it remained for quite a long time.

An understanding that the Belarusians are a separate nation with their own history, and therefore must have an independent policy, dates back to the second half of the nineteenth century. 1862 and 1863 saw the appearance of the first few issues of *Muzhytskaya Prawda*, an underground Belarusian-language newspaper printed by Kastus Kalinowski, leader of the 1863–1864 anti-Russian uprising. He urged the Belarusians and Poles to stand up together against the Russians. The first Belarusian reading book was published officially around the same time. Its unknown author looked at the history of Belarus and the Belarusian people from a modern perspective.

The Belarusian national idea took some definite shape in the Russian-language journal *Gomon*, which was published in the 1880s. Its publishers took a modern approach to the notions "a people" and "a nation" insisting that Belarus should be granted autonomy in a democratic Russian state. The journal introduced Belarusian nationalism by the slogan, "Foreign Hands off Belarus!" It should be noted that the "hands off" slogan did not apply to the Belarusian Jews, whom *Gomon* considered a nation closely related to the Belarusians.

At the end of the nineteenth century some rural residents already called themselves Belarusians, and the trend gained prominence in the early twentieth century. At that time Belarusian politicians were pressing for independence and the first Belarusian-language newspaper, *Nasha Niva*, started coming out on a regular basis. More people in the western and central parts of Belarus identified themselves as Belarusians. In 1911,

nearly all draftees from the Western Palesse region (an area claimed by the Ukrainian National Movement) called themselves Belarusians.

Vacłaŭ Lastoŭski was the first person to call for the establishment of an independent Belarusian state in 1917. The idea was put into practice in 1991, when the nation of 10 million declared its independence. About eight million people in Belarus were Belarusians at the time.

To an independent outside observer the Belarusian national movement's history seems a tremendous success. It took just 120 years from the moment a group of Belarusians declared themselves a separate nation and 74 years from the emergence of the pro-independence idea for independence to be gained. It all happened within one person's lifespan.

My grandparents were the first generation of my family members to consider themselves Belarusians. My grandmother lived the longest life among them – she was born under the Russian Emperor Nicholas II and could name all the royal family members, and she died when Alaksandr Łukašenka was in his second term as president of Belarus. My grandparents were considered subjects of seven countries, some of them made the transition from monarchies to republics and even to totalitarian empires. My grandparents lived through five wars and three revolutions and remained Belarusians.

So, why do Belarusians hear accusations of uncertain identity more often than voices of admiration?

Clearly, we are not the same as the French. But why should the French be considered a standard? Because the French are a generally-recognized model of a new nation? I have recently asked Miroslav Hroč, a prominent Czech sociologist, if he considered the French to be a model nation. He said he did. But to my view, designating the French a modern nation model has more to do with ideology than with science. Evidently, the French are an exception from European nations. The Americans are a similar nation born by a revolution, and the Soviet people would be another nation established this way. Unlike these peoples, nearly every other nation in Europe has ethnic roots.

Objective criteria and facts must be used to compare these nations and identify the Belarusians' place among them. The criteria should include the existence of one's own state and the use of a national language. The existence of a state is not the most conclusive argument for recognizing

one group or another to be a nation, but this is the highest level of self-organization of people, as all national activists agree.

Being a nation has nothing to do with values like freedom or forms of governance like democracy, although a nation usually seeks involvement in governance. However, even ruled in an undemocratic way, a nation does not stop being a nation, and will eventually stand up for its rights. This is why there is no point in pushing the current Belarusian regime for reconstructing national identity through the use of the Belarusian language and teaching a patriotic version of history.

The nation itself is perilously dangerous for this regime, as Belarusian writer Sakrat Yanovich has explained to me recently. Being a nation has nothing to do with history examined in terms of great achievements. It does not matter whether a nation did something great, for instance building an empire, or had a discreet history like Belarus. In other words, there are no "unhistoric" nations. Naturally, one cannot but admire the Britons, Spaniards, Portuguese, French and Russians who established transcontinental empires overseas. Nevertheless, at present this is nothing but part of the past, and sometimes even a problem. There is not a single argument to substantiate the claim, for instance, that the Portuguese are more successful in the contemporary world than the Finns, who did not have a state, let alone an empire, in the past.

Language is crucial to any nation's identity. Belarusian national identity emerged mainly through language identity, since the nation did not have a territory with clear-cut borders until almost 100 years ago. This is why any discussion of national identity usually centers on the use of the Belarusian language.

Based on the assumption that the objective criteria for a nation's success include the existence of a state of its own and the use of a national language (the richness of literature in this language does not matter), I have arranged the European nations of the early twenty-first century by classes.

The first group consists of nations that have a state of their own and speak their own language. I listed them in alphabetical order because there is no difference between them within the category: the Albanians, Austrians, Muslim Bosnians, Bulgarians, Czechs, Croatians, Danes, English, Estonians, Finns, Germans, Greeks, Hungarians, Icelanders,

Italians, Latvians, Lithuanians, Macedonians, Montenegrins, Poles, Portuguese, Romanians, Russians, Serbs, Slovaks, Slovenians, Spaniards and Swedes.

A few modernized "remnants of the Medieval Age" fall into a separate category: the Belgians, Luxemburgers and Swiss. This group could also include the Austrians and Montenegrins. These peoples speak several languages they share with other nations or have developed a literary version of their dialect. Despite the co-existence of several ethnic groups, some of them, the Swiss for instance, have a strong feeling of national unity. But this not a general rule, because the existence of the Belgian nation is a controversial issue. The Spaniards should also formally belong to this group since their nation includes the Spanish, Catalan, Basque and Galician peoples, but this is rather a manifestation of "wishful thinking" on the part of the Spanish constitution's authors than a reality. A similar construct are the Britons whose existence has been asserted persistently.

The third group is composed of nations that have a state of their own, but have some problems with the use of their language. This small group includes the Ukrainians, Belarusians, Norwegians and Irish. They are not listed in alphabetical order because their languages have different, sometimes opposite statuses. Most Ukrainians speak Ukrainian. Around 40 percent of Belarusians speak Belarusian, according to the most recent census. Even if this proportion is too optimistic, there is no doubt that a considerable part of the population speaks Belarusian. The Norwegians have two literary languages, Bokmal and Nynorsk. The former is a variety of Danish with Norwegianized grammar and phonetics. The same situation would exist in Belarus if a Belarusian-Russian mixed language (*trasianka*) were codified as a literary language. Less than 20 percent of the Norwegians use Nynorsk based on Norwegian dialects. The Gaelic language in independent Ireland is in a deplorable state with just about 100,000 people using it in their day-to-day life.

The next group comprises nations that do not have a state, but have certain territorial autonomy. Since almost all of these people do not regularly use their national languages, they are listed in alphabetical order: the Ossetians, Balkars, Basques, Bashkirs, Catalans, Chechens, Cherkes, Chuvashes, Galician, Ingush, Kabardins, Kalmyks, Karachays,

Komi, Mordvins, Maris, Scots, Tatars and Welsh. Peoples of Dagestan – Avars, Dargins, Lezgins, Kumyks etc. – may be included in this group.

The last group is formed of peoples, the Bretons for instance, that do not have a territorial autonomy and do not regularly use their language.

The number of nations is not constant as some nations die and others emerge. Much also depends on the classification of one ethnic group or another as a nation. Are Provencal speakers a separate people? Some of them would definitely say they are. More nations emerged than died in Europe lately. In Poland alone, the 2002 census found thee new nations – the Silesians, Kashubians and Lemkos, with Silesians being the largest ethnic minority in this country.

In Belarus in the 1990s a group of residents in Western Palesse formed a national movement named *Jacviahi* after a tribe that allegedly inhabited the area in the Middle Ages. But the group dissolved a few years later. The inhabitants of Western Palesse still do not have a name, although neighbors use *palyashuki* for residents of that area, but locals consider this word derisive. The lack of a name is the best argument to deny the existence of a nation or an ethnic group in a certain area, but it does not mean that it will not emerge one day in the future.

Close relations between nations appear to be the most difficult to assess objectively. As far as the Belarusians' identity is concerned, this is especially true for their relations with the Russians and Russia, and in a broader context with the so-called Slavic unity. Close association with other nations was characteristic of Belarusians for centuries. Salamon Rysinski, who called himself a Belarusian, also considered himself a Slav, and wondered at how he could travel from the Mediterranean to the Caspian Sea and talk to people using his language. He considered the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth to be his great motherland and sought to elevate the Polish language in Europe. That feeling of unity with the Polish people grew in the following centuries, but started to decline at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

As I have already mentioned, at first, Belarusian nationalists considered Belarusian Jews the closest nation. Presently, some Belarusians do not consider themselves Slavs, but rather Balts closely related to Lithuanians and Latvians but speaking a Slavonized language. Nevertheless, most Belarusians, led by Alaksandr Łukašenka, feel close to the Slavs, especially the Russians.

As a matter of fact, the feeling of closeness is a relative indicator that changes with time. I recall a quote Elżbieta Smułkowa, a researcher into the language and identity of Belarusians living in the border areas, once heard from a Belarusian collective farm worker. Asked if he considered Russians his brothers, the Belarusian farmer said, “Yes, it is true, the Russians are my brothers. But my brother is not me”.

David R. Marples

ARE THERE BELARUSIANS IN BELARUS?

I will respond to this question with four basic points that revolve around the issue of identity.

Historical Identity

Modern nations require myths of the past. In Belarus' case there have long been debates about the origins of Belarus and even the meaning of the word. Historians maintain, for example, that Belarusians descend from a Viking race, whereas others accept the former Soviet version of the common origin of the three East Slavic tribes from the principality of Kyivan Ruś. In the Łukašenka period – and one should not forget that the current president lists among his earlier careers that of history teacher – history as a form of state policy has been truncated and restricted to the Soviet period, omitting the important formative periods of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Polish rule. The symbolism of the Great Patriotic War and the persistence of the myth of Belarusian Partisans mean that the modern state is equated with the war effort against Nazi occupation. In this way, the influences on the republic are limited to Russian ones. Recently one can discern various examples of official policy from the designation of the national holiday (July 3, the date of the liberation of Minsk from Nazi occupation) to the renaming of the main streets of Minsk. In the latter case, both the Renaissance scholar, Francišak Skaryna, and the Communist leader of Partisan fame, Piotr Masherau, have been displaced, thus suggesting that even in the case of the war, it is inexpedient for the leadership to venerate individual heroes. Several scholars have posited

that in this fashion, Belarus has acquired a Soviet or post-Soviet identity, though the reality seems somewhat more complex.

Identity in a Negative Sense

This phrase is applied in the sense of identity as signifying: who we are not. In the thirteenth year of Łukašenka's presidency this issue has been largely clarified, as I will explain further in a moment. But first and foremost, the question of who are Belarusians has been answered partially by the matter of who they are not. They are not citizens of the USSR, for example, and despite some wistful remarks and nostalgia from the 'red house' there is no desire to restore it. Nor do Belarusians constitute part of Russia, despite the assertion of historical ties. Belarus is not part of the EU or European structures (despite the historical influences of Poland and Lithuania), but is rather between the EU and Russia, or between NATO and Russia, occupying a unique place on the border of two rival systems that to some extent are hangovers from the Cold War. It is to the regime's advantage in forming identity that Belarusians cannot come down on one side or the other but are fairly evenly divided on whether the path forward should be alongside Russia or as part of the EU.

The Issue of Language

Can one form a national identity without a national language? The question lacks a firm consensus but there is no question that language is a significant factor in distinguishing a nation from its neighbors. The Belarusian language developed – at least in nascent form – during the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and in the 1920s in different historical formations. Designated the state language in 1990, it suffered a setback in 1995 when Russian was advanced as the second state language through Łukašenka's first referendum. The regime linked the modern revival of the language exclusively with the opposition and specifically with a form of Russophobic nationalism spearheaded by the Belarusian Popular Front of Zianon Paźniak. The latter figure and his movement represented the principal

target of the Łukašenka regime in its first years, and at least until Paźniak was forced into exile in 1996. The closure of Belarusian-language schools has followed and, as in the Soviet period, the circulation of journals and magazines in Russian continues to outpace those in Belarusian. The pervasiveness of Russian culture is evident also through television and basic conversation, even among college students. Belarus in this sense is rather like Quebec on the North American continent, surrounded by English-speakers, but in this case willingly so.

The Dilution of Belarusian Identity

My fourth point, however, suggests a modification of the straightforward Russification that was evident in the Brezhnev era. I am suggesting that the regime has defined a new form of identity that marks a distinction between two other varieties: what can be termed 'authoritarian nationalism' of Paźniak and the early BNF; as well as a 'moderate nationalism' of Viačorka's Party of the BNF, or Liabiedźka's United Civic Party, or the various transformations and transitions of the Social Democratic Party. The new version, which is symbolized by the electoral slogan "For Belarus", indicates the new direction, which requires the assertion and maintenance of national sovereignty, the use of two languages, including the proposal to accept the bastardized version of the modern language (trasyanka or the version of the language officially sanctioned in the 1930s). It is to some extent a matter of political expediency by the regime and a desire to maintain the political status quo. At the same time it requires emphasis on an exclusive Belarusianness, economic growth or economic prosperity or the illusion of such, with some but not exclusive reliance on Russia, the development of trade with the EU but also other partners, and emphasis on external threats. This policy – I think it can be called such – seeks to modify the unipolar world and to create alternative sources of power in the world, in other words to propagate a Belarus that maintains its distance from both Europe and Russia. To some extent one could argue that such a position has been forced on Belarus, but I think that is going too far and negates the real efforts of the regime to redefine the concept of the Belarusian nation within the borders of the modern state.

Conclusions

In concluding I would raise a question and make three basic points. The question is: is Łukašenka nation building or simply enhancing his power? Presumably the one can enhance the other process. Further, Russian neo-imperialism and/or chauvinism has promoted a more parochial attitude in Minsk, which can lead directly or indirectly to the promotion of Belarusian distinctions, including modified forms of national culture and national language. I do not doubt that the regime is confronting a generational issue here and its position will be rendered difficult by the changing demographic picture over the next 25 years, when – barring a mass emigration – the present imbalance toward the over-50s age group (significant in elections) will be altered. However, there are several important signs that Belarus is indeed developing a new form of national identity that is somewhat more sophisticated than the crude distortions of history cited earlier. It will likely be defined further in the future, with the proviso that the country continues to go its separate path and that the Łukašenka regime remains in power or is followed by a government that continues its policies. This revised form of nation building was not delineated in the early years of the regime and certainly may to a large extent have been forced on the government through outside pressures. But I think it is discernible today and – crude as it is – constitutes an attempt to redefine from above what constitutes the modern, post-Soviet nation.

Yet these musings raise a further question, namely the link between this newly defined version of the state and the person and personality of President Łukašenka. If the regime is modeled on a single personality then it stands to reason that with the death or removal of that leader, then state formation and this particular form of nation building cannot continue. This factor is also the reason for the desperation exhibited by Łukašenka in recent talks over gas prices with Moscow, which have continued into mid-December 2006. Consistently, the Belarusian version of these talks emphasizes that Russia is not playing fairly, that it has contravened the principles of the Russia-Belarus Union, etc. In turn, Łukašenka must try to resist pressures for a takeover of Beltransgaz by Russia's Gazprom. The talks represent the equation of state policy with the person of the president and it is a dangerous path to follow because its chances for success are

very slim. Ultimately, Belarus must pay higher prices for its imports of gas, which will mean that Łukašenka's Belarus will enter a new period of economic struggle and austerity, one that will doubtless be blamed on Russian intransigence, but will nevertheless remove one key platform in the government's armory, namely the alleged economic successes and maintenance of an acceptable standard of living for the majority of the population.

Piotar Rudkoŭski

BETWEEN ŁUKAŠENKA'S IDEOLOGY AND NATIONALISM

This report will focus on national identity, one of the most topical and controversial problems that Belarus is facing today. The core of the problem can be outlined with the help of the following three questions – what axiology can potentially unite the Belarusian nation, what symbols can be used in such axiology and whether the country has a strong cultural matrix of language, history, traditions and rites that could serve as the basis for Belarusian national identity.

The political and intellectual elites of Belarus offer different answers to these questions. They give a plethora of responses, and I have no chance to provide an insight into answers to all representative samples in this brief report. My task is different. Taking for granted that national identity is not a given fact or a condition but a process, I assert that the question about national identity is ultimately a question about dialogue. In other words, it is not about what Belarusian identity is but about how to reach an agreement on what it is.

I do not know whether I will give a full answer on how to reach an agreement, but I will try to describe political and ideological strategies that hamper dialogue in Belarusian society and thus paralyze the formation of Belarusian identity. There are at least two such strategies – the conservative nationalism of Zianon Paźniak and the neo-Soviet authoritarianism of Łukašenka.

Down with the Soviet Union! Long Live the Grand Duchy of Lithuania! (The Strategy of the Christian Conservatives)

Many see Paźniak's Belarusian project as a criticism of Russian imperial policies and a program for the "Belarusification" of the country. The spread of the Belarusian language and criticism of its eastern neighbor are obviously a permanent part of Paźniak's ideology but are hardly its essence. The assertion that "we live on the very outskirts of Christianity" can be regarded as the basis of Paźniak's interpretation of Belarusian national identity.

To Paźniak, Belarus is *antemurale christianitatis* (a bulwark of Christianity). It is not only the "savior of European civilization" but also an internal guarantor that this civilization will survive in its "healthy form". Like other nations "on the outskirts", the Belarusians were, and are, doomed to struggle with alien elements, another hostile civilization. With whom in particular? A clear answer is given in his recent book, *Belarusian-Russian War*, which has an English-language annex, *Belarus is an Eastern Outpost*, from which the previous quotations originate.[1]

Someone may ask how one can call Belarus the savior of European civilization if the country has appeared on the European map only quite recently and seems to be more a disease than a salvation for Europe, judging from the current situation. Paźniak's Belarus has nothing in common with Łukašenka's Republic of Belarus, still less with the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic. To Paźniak, Belarus is the Grand Duchy of Lithuania above all. "The Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Vilnius, acted as a defender and "gatherer" of all eastern Slavic lands at the time. Lithuania became an armed political and cultural force in the east of Europe", Paźniak says in his *Belarusian-Russian War*.[2] Paźniak believes that he and nationally conscious intellectuals should fulfill the following tasks: "Bring historical consciousness back home to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and give back the state its official name, an important political step that should come next".[3]

In Paźniak's discourse, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania is a "lost paradise", the epoch of the Belarusian people's glory and might. Its language was

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[1] Беларускія ведамасьці, Варшава–Вільня: Таварыства Беларускай Культуры ў Летуве, 2005.

[2] Ibidem, s. 5.

[3] З. Пазьняк, *Прамаскоўскі рэжым*. – http://www.bielarus.net/archives/2005/11/09/392/#more-392.

Belarusian, while its people were forefathers of modern Belarusians. "Unlike many others, the Belarusians have a strong historical base – their great state which they lost at the end of the eighteenth century as a result of an international conspiracy and Russia's subsequent occupation", Paźniak writes in his book, *Pro-Moscow Regime*. This statement features three key elements in Paźniak's ideology, namely the myth about "the Belarusians' great state" – the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, an idea of an international conspiracy and belief that the Russian Empire is an element that has always been alien to the Belarusians. Paźniak believes that not only Russian imperial ambitions but also West Europe's liberalism pose a threat to his country. "Bad times for the world", he says in *Talks with Anton Šukialojc*. "Democracy is experiencing a pandemic spiritual and material crisis. The degradation of values is taking place. (Because liberalism is not democracy. It is like Rococo or, to be more precise, Mannerist art that Renaissance degenerated into)".[4]

Paźniak's axiology can be defined as democracy with a plus sign, liberalism with a minus sign and a perennial Moscow-Berlin conspiracy of almost a demonic nature, against the Belarusians. These three "icons" are the basis of Paźniak's methodology – all events and projects in Paźniak's discourse are defined as negative, positive or demonic depending on to what axiological construct mentioned above they belong. Paźniak's major moral and at the same time political message is that democracy should be without liberalism and Belarus should be beyond the influence of Moscow and Berlin.

His concept of social life resembles that of "old" (nineteenth century) Conservatives who steered clear of liberal ethos, seeing it as a threat to the human spirit. Paźniak supporters oppose liberal ethos with religion which they describe as the sole force capable of uniting people. "… only it [religion] can unite [a] spiritless, almost degraded population and turn [it] into an independent nation with a strong spirit, as for instance we see in Chechnya, a country firmly strengthened by Islam", writes philosopher Mykoła Krukowski whose ideas can be traced in Paźniak's ideology.[5]

The post-Conservative ideal of social organization is closely connected with an imperative to establish a nationalist country. Some Paźniak supporters interpret the imperative in a radical way. "State and nation should

[4] Беларускія ведамасьці, Варшава–Вільня: Таварыства Беларускай Культуры ў Летуве, 2005.

[5] М. Крукоўскі, *Запаліць святло ў душах*, „Літаратура і мастацтва", 7 лістапада, 1997,

harmonically fuse together", historian and culture expert Leanid Łyć says supporting Kavalewski's quotation that reads, "Any live and active country should be full of nationalism. It is its soul. It is its essence. It is its life. A cosmopolite country is an amorphous, formless mass".[6]

As far back as the early 1990s, Belarusian analysts said that Paźniak's ideology, which has become a symbol of struggle against Communist collectivism, was itself a new version of collectivism.[7] The above-mentioned quotations clearly show this.

Paźniak's ideology is a collectivist and organicist doctrine where an individual is seen as subordinate to the nation, a social being of the highest level. Belief in the might of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania that does not exist in reality and an uncompromising wish to resurrect it give utopian features to this concept. Paźniak's ideology is a retro utopia, a "utopia of the past", that offers a romantic vision of the "golden age" of the Belarusian nation. Paźniak's pro-nationalist doctrine is an ambivalent theory. On one hand, it has raised and is raising a number of nationally conscientious Belarusians who selflessly work for the cause of the revival of the Belarusian language, history and culture. On the other hand, Paźniak supporters often treat all other cultural and socio-political models with intolerance and suspicion, being inclined to believe in a "conspiratorial" plot against Belarus and to look for an outside enemy. They believe that they are a "chosen caste" on a mission to save "Belarusian truth", which will be handed over to future generations in an undistorted form. Such a stance by no means contributes to dialogue in Belarusian society and its consolidation.

Down with Paźniak! Long live Soviet Belarus! (The Strategy of Belarusian Official Ideologists)

During his first years in power, an image of Prometheus giving people some support beam amid a "lack of soil" (both moral and political) was enough for Łukašenka. He did not have a specific need to propagate a concrete synthetic ideology. Pragmatic, or even anti-ideological rhetoric,

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[6] Л. Лыч, *Нацыяналізм*, „Літаратура і мастацтва", 21 лістапада, 1997.

[7] See: А. Манаеў, Ю. Дракахруст, *Каким быть Белорусскому народному фронту*, „Согласие", 29 октября, 1990.

dominated. In the first days of his rule, Łukašenka became a regular feature on media broadcasts and did not neglect to deliver long didactic and menacing speeches. But his speeches were far from theoretical speculations at the time. They focused on specific everyday problems and seemed to contain healthy realism. Paznyak's idealistic belief that the language should be first and food should come second held many off and stood in bright contrast to Łukašenka's realism.

As the years went by, Łukašenka, known as Batska (Daddy), grew more and more concerned about a "national idea" and a "strong support beam", i.e. Belarusian national identity. We will leave aside an analysis of the factors behind this shift from "state realism" to "state ideology" – the essence of Łukašenka's ideology is interesting above all.

"Belarus probably has been chosen by history, chance and geography to play the prominent role of a spiritual leader of Eastern European civilization… The understanding of this mission can incite our people to great deeds. Many people in Russia, Ukraine and other countries see Belarus as an example of consistent and independent policy… Belarus should attract patriotic forces from across the post-Soviet region. Here will find these people a platform for expression, a platform free of neo-liberalism terror and suppression", the Belarusian president said when making a speech on ideology in March 2003.[8]

This statement contains at least two ideas that have something in common with the above-presented ideology of Paznyak, a key ideological and political opponent of Łukašenka. These ideas are: Belarusian national messianism and anti-liberalism. But these are accidental similarities only. In fact, the ideology of Łukašenka profoundly differs from that of Paźniak. A central point of Łukašenka's ideology is an assertion that "the Soviet era was the peak of our country's history"[9], which is an unforgivable blasphemy for Paźniak.

Łukašenka's ideologist, Anatol Rubinaw[10], suggests that the Soviet Union gave life to Belarus. In propagandistic movies, the break-up of the

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[8] Доклад Президента А. Г. Лукашенко на постоянно действующем семинаре руководящих работников республиканских и местных государственных органов по вопросам совершенствования идеологической работы, "Советская Белоруссия", 28 marca 2003.

[9] В. Мельник, *Государственная идеология Республики Беларусь: концептуальные основы*, Mińsk 2004, с. 195.

[10] Гл.: А. Рубинов, *Ещё раз об идеологии*, „Советская Белоруссия", 28 июля, 2006.

Soviet Union is often denounced as an act of barbarity and those involved in it – Yeltsin, Kravchuk and Šuškievič – as state criminals.[11]

The axiology offered by Belarusian state ideology is every bit as primitive as the then Communist doctrine. The line between good and evil runs precisely between the president and the opposition. An opponent is a parasite, a dangerous fascist and a puppet of the West/America. Belarus' historic white-red-white flag – banned since 1995 – is clearly a fascist symbol and those waving it are persistently compared to pro-Nazi collaborationists of World War II. The Belarusian president is in the center of the world of good and truth. For his strength and successes, he gives credit to "the people" – an anonymous impersonal mass. "The people and the president", and "the president and the people" are fused into one whole, a sacred symbiosis. A Belarusian may be a Conservative, a Marxist or even a Liberal, but he may not doubt this sacred unity: the president and the people. Belonging to this unity guarantees a Belarusian identity. The world of good and truth requires an gnoseological hierarchy where a leader knows the truth best while others' knowledge of truth depends on their obedience. In ideology textbooks, Łukašenka is never placed in alphabetical order but always comes first followed by, not only other authors, but also, the constitution of Belarus and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.[12]

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Belarusian official ideology conceals the absence of a national meta-political idea. What is being propagated by state ideologists satisfies part of the Belarusian population only. The present-day version of this "idea" above

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[11] See: serials *«Newest history»* by Yury Kaziyatka, Ryhor Kisyel, Viktar Shalalevich, Viktar Chamkouski and Alyaksandar Rydwan, which was broadcasted In Belarusian TV Channel ONT in the end of 2004 as well as *«The conspiracy theory»* by Yury Azaronak, Uladzislau Yarovich, Vadzim Hihantau and Nina Yaromina, which was presented in official TV Channel BT in Autumn of 2004, film *«The road leads no where»* by Ryhor Kozyrau, Alyaksandar Wyuhin, Viktar Nikolski, Uladzimyer Zhavaranak, Nadzeyja Byvalava, Ahafyja Krasachka and Syarhyej Usatau, which was broadcasted in official TV Channel BT 13 may 2004.

[12] The "canonic" Belarusian state ideology books are: *Основы идеологии белорусского государства*, Минск 2004; В. Мельник, *Государственная идеология Республики Беларусь: концептуальные основы*, Минск 2004; Я. Яскевич, *Основы идеологии белорусского государства: мировоззренческие ценности и стратегические приоритеты*, Минск 2003.

all suffices for Russian speaking people with a creole-spartan mentality who are for the most part indifferent to Belarusian culture. The affirmation of "Belarusness" that is often declared by official ideologists is not an issue of great importance – everybody understands that it is only a payoff. What is more paradoxical is that along with disregarding Belarusian culture, official ideology portrays Belarusian people as those with whom political power and the legitimization of concrete actions, including the harassment of political opponents originate. Many unpleasant and unsightly facets of the current course are easily justified by ideological assumptions, such as "people have clearly indicated…", "people have confirmed that the course is right", "people have entrusted…", "people have again showed that they are wise". At the same time, this ideology fortifies grounds for intolerance and a split in the society. Being of an authoritarian and collectivist nature in essence, it is directed against the freedom of individual human beings and poses a serious threat to the conscience of single Belarusians because it comes as a supreme truth, obedience to which is more of a value than loyalty to moral principles.

Down with Diabolizing Opponent! Long Live Dialogue! (The Strategy of Liberation from Monologic Culture)

Paźniak's pro-nationalist metaphysics and the neo-Soviet ideology of Łukašenka are two different versions of monologic culture. Monologic culture always presupposes these or those (severe or soft) mechanisms of elimination. Actions by someone from another camp are often seen as hostile *a priori* only due to the fact that he is "different". Domination of monologic culture and a weak ethos for dialogue is to blame for today's disunity in Belarusian society; for its being a group of single individuals deprived of any strong ties.

The formation of a common national identity is impossible without public dialogue that can take place in a form of discussion. But a constructive dialogue-discussion is impossible without changes in the mentality of the Belarusians. In what direction should their mentality change? The Belarusians should accept two fundamental principles. The first one is the principle of ethical asymmetry which means that the presumption that man has a good will is always stronger than the presumption that man

has an evil will. Ungrounded trust is always of a more ethical value than ungrounded mistrust. This is the essence of ethical asymmetry.

The other principle is the transcendentality of a national idea. A national idea in public discourse is akin to the truth in epistemology where everybody agrees that nobody has seen truth but at the same time acknowledges the value of truth as a regulatory idea. The concept of objective truth guides the intellectual quest for it and allows participants to adjust their procedures of establishing truth. A national idea can perform a similar function. We can assume that none of us has seen a national idea. But the existence of a national idea as a regulatory idea unites the nation. Attempts to articulate it ("become close" to it) will bring us closer to each other. This permanent process of becoming closer to each other in joint movement toward a transcendental national idea can take place by the means of conflict. But conflict ceases to be a menace when it is accompanied by a strong will to overcome it. It will be possible to overcome it only when there will be a transcendental idea above it (or before us) that will make our consensus meaningful.

The existence of a national idea that nobody has ever seen paves the way for an "intermediate", temporary consensus at a specific historic moment. Today we can have an X version of consensus over our national idea. Tomorrow it can be a different version. But an understanding that no consensus can be dogmatic and absolutistic also will give room for dissent, a critical assessment of this consensus, and make it possible for its new, probably better, version to emerge. A "national idea" is a kind of Omega point that attracts and consolidates opinions allowing them to remain different. We need to clear our discourse of words and phrases that directly or indirectly deprive representatives of other cultures or political opponents from the right to call themselves Belarusians.

There is space for dialogue and critical discussion between Łukašenka's ideology and nationalism. Perhaps the space is not big but it obviously can serve as the basis for the emergence of a new, free and pluralistic Belarus.

ARE THERE BELARUSIANS IN BELARUS? (THE QUESTION OF BELARUSIAN IDENTITY)[1]

Moderator: Theodore R. Weeks
Presenters: Grigory Ioffe, Mikoła Kacuk, Oleg Łatyszonek, David R. Marples, Piotar Rudkoŭski.
Discussants: Gleb Gobzem, Aliaksiei Pikulik, Andrej Kazakievič, Vital Silicki, Andrej Dyńko and Andrej Lachovič

Grigory Ioffe. It was mentioned during one of the presentations that there is not a single tram or a trolley bus in Minsk where you cannot come across a youth with some national symbols attached to his or her dress or whatever. The youths were won over by the opposition or the opposition-minded forces. At the same time, I know that one Belarusian journalist, Viktar Marcinovič, coined the term "Generation L" to identify the young supporters of President Łukašenka. I have also just read on the Web site www.naviny.by an interview with Uladzimer Mackievič who is a fierce critic of Łukašenka. He said that "Belarusian youths are now beginning to support the regime, because they are proud that Belarus did not receive respect and a favorable attitude to it as a gift from somebody, as Stanislau Šuškievič once did from Bill Clinton, but it earned respect in a fight. It is this that makes this regime genuinely Belarusian in the people's eyes – a kind of leadership that nationalists dreamed about in the early 1990s". How would you respond to that? Where is the truth?

Andrej Kazakievič. Actually, some participants in the discussion share that view to some extent. We can observe that part of the youth actually support Łukašenka because of reasons like career, national pride and so on.

Aliaksiei Pikulik. The tendency towards non-democratic youth is quite strong, but so is the tendency towards youth that do not want capitalism, that do not respect property rights, youth who support the state taking

[1] Authorized statements.

something from big companies and giving them, or selling the goods through confiscated item shops. It is another interesting survey to look at people who buy things at confiscated item shops. They do not associate this with selling something over theft. According to them, it is about a good state that takes goods from bad entrepreneurs, preferably Russians, and it is highly supported. So these institutions are quite important here.

Now the state is trying to interfere in informal institutions – the so-called book of complaints. In a normal capitalist system relations between the seller and the buyer would be regulated by normal market mechanisms – you don't buy something you don't like. However, in Belarus if you do not like somebody who sells, you go to the state, you write a complaint and the state deals with him. It is a complete lack of responsibility that the state promotes; this is completely embedded in the state. So, with "Generation L" we should also take into account the ant-capitalist trend, not only anti-democratic.

David Marples. What is the identity and ideology of Łukašenka's entourage?

Piotar Rudkoŭski. It is difficult to reply to your question because it is impossible to know the views of political elite in governmental institutions. Nevertheless, even with the lack of freedom, certain real views come to light. I once analyzed several ideology guidebooks, including one published by the Management Academy of the President. I found to my surprise, that it does not carry hard-line political beliefs. One book, written by 24 scientists from the Management Academy who, it seems, should be staunch supporters of Łukašenka, presents pro-Russian, pro-authoritarian, but also moderately liberal and even nationalistic ideals. Apart from that, there is a textbook by Jadviha Jackievič, which is almost free of any ideology and is actually about political philosophy based on moderate nationalistic and liberal ideas. Therefore, there is no full conformity of opinion among the state sector representatives. When certain ideological filters are removed, many of them may be constructive partners in the search for Belarusian identity

Mikoła Kacuk. To answer briefly, Łukašenka and his entourage have a corporate state ideology. It differs from traditional ideologies like imperialism etc. It does not offer any future perspective; it deals with the present only. The highest authority exists in the present and uses its ideology to address current problems. This way of building ideology seems

to be very efficient, because it allows for an opportunity to instantaneously add and remove content, if necessary. I think that the corporate state ideology will remain under all circumstances; the more so given that the state and the higher echelons of power are doing business. They trade with Russia, they trade with the population and they collect taxes. In short, this is an anti-ideology or an ideology free of values.

Grigory Ioffe. In Belarus, I believe, there is a well-consolidated elite. Łukašenka is not all by himself. And if he were gone, there is a well-disciplined and committed cadre of Belarusian bureaucrats, and people like Sidorski or Siemaška could be at the helm of power today. As for the state ideology of the Republic of Belarus, it is difficult to argue if it does or doesn't exist. Recently, Alaksandr Fiaduta wrote an article in which he reviewed seven books on Belarusian state ideology, so it definitely does exist if only in the form of those books. Obviously, this is some kind of national mythology, and referring to your question more directly, I think that what I try to couch in terms like "Creole nationalism" (and what can be couched in somewhat different terms) is the ideology of the ruling elite.

Yesterday I was talking to Mr. Danejka. This was a very fruitful conversation. He shared some eye-opening information with me, according to which the most recent surveys undermine this habitual image of who actually supports Łukašenka. Since recently, people in larger cities and with more than modest financial means are his supporters because they attribute part of their well-being to the regime and its policies. The percentage of those supporters in smaller towns is lower than in Minsk.

Vital Silicki, in one of his articles, stated adamantly that there is no crisis of power in Belarus. What does this mean? This means that there is a consolidated elite. It is another question what your attitude is to these elites and whether you share their values or not. Of course, they possess some kind of a besieged fortress mentality. They are aware of the fact that their major enemy is actually to the east. And they are involved in brinkmanship with the eastern friend-foe. I do believe that there are pretty well-consolidated elite and that Łukašenka can be easily succeeded by some of these people.

Vital Silicki. The real value and meaning of state ideology in Belarus is that it was proclaimed. That's it. It simply sent a signal. By the very fact of its proclamation, the state apparatus explained what they have to do and

what was expected from them. They remember all that ideological work in the Soviet Union and that it basically meant carving out all the alternatives and opinions. It does not even matter what is written in these textbooks; it is not the subject, not the substance. Substance is in that process of carving out and they understand this. Just as very few Soviet-era ideologues really read Marx and Lenin. Mr. Suslov, who was Brezhnev's number 2, was not that proficient at that. So, there are parallels.

I have a few reflections on what Prof. Ioffe said. First of all, can Mr. Łukašenka be replaced? Of course, he can. It is actually one of his myths that he is irreplaceable. He can, but we are not only talking about the leader, we are also talking about the regime, which is cemented by charisma, some sort of legitimacy (although a special one) his will and also the system of punishment (sticks and carrots) which are formulated directly. The problem is that if Łukašenka is out, the entire regime is out. It won't be the same regime. It is one of his constructions.

Secondly, his identity building strategy is based on beliefs and a self-understanding of his flock. He was saying that "for me independence is the same like it is for you – to defend this country so that capitalists won't come and make a paid entrance into it". But it is migrating and transforming itself more and more into this idea of the leader being the nation, the leader being the country, loyalty to the leader being loyalty to the country. You can see it all over starting with these songs "Slushaj Bat'ku" and all of his recent rhetoric. It is more complicated and in a way a profound process with implications, because if he builds identity like that, when Łukašenka falls there will be a real gap.

Andrej Dyńko. I have a question to Mr. Kacuk and Mr. Rudkoŭski. There is a consensus inside the Łukašenka government in understanding Belarus' economic interests. Does their economic nationalism influence national identity?

Mikoła Kacuk. I think it does. This is a trend that affects both camps. The mid 1990's were dominated by romantic ideologies – romantic conservatism and liberalism. It was essential to assert values and the rest will come by itself. Now I see a transition, some balance between values and economic interests. If a writer has nothing to eat, he or she goes to a market to sell books. If it is cold in his or her house, he or she will use books to build a fire. Both camps now understand that. As far as authorities are concerned, it is essential not to encroach on their economic interests.

Piotar Rudkoŭski. Thinking in terms of independence has become an integral part of the Łukašenka ideology, but it is also a tool. He needs to be sovereign in a certain territory to ensure the maximum absolutism of authority.

Grigory Ioffe. It seems to me that the crucial test of a message like this or any statement, and state ideology for that matter is not our professorial idea of verification, of what this message means or conveys and/or what it doesn't. The crucial test is acceptance by the masses. If certain people find it in themselves that they can accept the message, then it does not matter what we think about it or what Benedict Anderson or Ernest Gellner wrote about emerging communities. As long as the message is accepted, it is legitimate.

David Marples. Five years ago you could not observe a campaign like "For Belarus", this kind of improvised nationalism, or whatever you want to call it. It was not there. It was not necessary to do it five years ago. But suddenly it is. It may be something by default. There is no alternative; there is no way to go. Therefore, you have to come up with something. I do not think that there is the slightest plan here, or the slightest evidence that there is a really clear picture of what Belarus should be, or where Belarus is going. There has not been any form of conception in any election campaign: "What do we want to look like ten years down the road, what do we want to see as Belarus ten years down the road?" Not at all. So, in that sense, I do agree with those who said that for the moment what we have now is what it is going to be like.

The only permanent thing, in my view, is the president. He is the only thing that seems to have any permanence. I do not really think that the officials around him – Šejmans and Miaśnikovič – have a future outside him. One of the most dangerous things to do in Belarus' politics is to fall out of favor with the president, is to be in power and then get thrown out, because then you have real problems. I think that those who come to that are far more dangerous to the regime than the opposition in the major political parties, or Milinkievič, or whoever.

Piotar Rudkoŭski. I have a remark to add to the discussion of billboards featuring children writing "Minsk Is Our City" in Russian. In the context of Belarusian identity, the function of language is an essential and complicated issue. Is it an absolute or relative characteristic of Belarusian identity? Is a Russian-language Belarusian identity possible? The fact that the patriotic slogan is written in Russian does not rule out cultural content. It is only

when we look at it in a certain context, how it was written and in what atmosphere it was written, can we guess that the slogans "For Belarus", "Minsk Is Our City" promote Łukašenka i.e. the guarantor of that kind of Belarus. If the billboards featured children writing slogans in Belarusian, their meaning would be the same. On the other hand, there are many Russian-speaking Belarusians who are in favor of the cultural, political and civil emancipation of Belarus and its integration in the European community.

Oleg Łatyszonek. I would like to say a few words about national ideas and state ideas, because after Belarus gained independence Belarusians often use English terms, and this results in confusion. "National" in English is related to the concepts of nationalism and the state. The two words should not be confused. For me, as a Belarusian who was not born in Belarus, state ideology is not the same as a national Belarusian ideology. There is no reason to treat the Łukašenka ideology as a national one. This is state ideology devoid of the Belarusian nation. As a Belarusian, I absolutely do not care about the existence of the state because I do not benefit from it. To my mind, Łukašenka's state ideology is something convenient for him and his government. It does not say anything about the Belarusian nation and Belarusian life.

Andrej Lachovič. It was an interesting statement by Mr. Marples that there are two movements within the opposition – authoritarian nationalism and moderate nationalism. One should remember that the opposition includes groups that have nothing to do with nationalism. They take a very cautious position in talks with Moscow. Recall, for instance, Liabiedźka's talks with the former leader of Russia's Union of Right Forces, Boris Nemtsov, his promises of big concessions if Łukašenka were unseated; attacks by General Fraloŭ on Łukašenka after the latter criticized Putin's integration proposals; positions of various opposition groups in the 2004 gas row. Many voters consider some opposition groups of greater threat to Belarus' independence than Łukašenka who defends Belarus from Russian oligarchs and criminal businesses.

Barbara Skinner. This is a panel about Belarusian identity and most of the discussion has centered on politics and the political situation. I am very intrigued and I guess I'm directing my question mostly to Belarusian representatives on the panel. Is it that the political dynamic is such an overwhelming issue that it dominates everything else or is it just that right

now, here in the last few hours, we haven't had much of a chance to discuss ethnic, linguistic, cultural and other issues that really are central to identity? I am really intrigued because I believed that I would be hearing more than a discussion about politics, so I am curious if these other issues are very secondary to the political situation. Are you so absolutely sure of yourselves as Belarusians that you have no more issues about your language and ethnic identity? I would appreciate some comment about it from any of the Belarusians on the panel.

David Marples. The last question wasn't to me at all. I now understand what real discrimination is when the lone Canadian on the panel is clearly left out of your question. I have an opinion, but it does not matter.

I did want to make a quick comment on the issue of democracy, which was brought I think in two different questions and a comment from Prof. Kaminski as well. The comment that after Łukašenka there will not necessarily be democracy is absolutely small talk and I do not really see why there would be. What I also think is that somewhat mythical now is this period between the end of the Soviet regime and the presidential election in 1994, which is sometimes very erroneously called a period of democracy in Belarus. I can remember it quite clearly and one thing it wasn't a period of democracy. And I remember members of the Popular Front collecting signatures to have a referendum in the Parliament, and they did collect more than the required number of signatures, but there was no referendum. Because 85 percent of the people in the Parliament were Communists, they had no interest in the referendum. Shushkevich was virtually hounded out of power on some trumped up charges of corruption in January 1994. This was a very difficult time for Belarus. And I think it's the same really in this post-Soviet situation, for all the states.

I don't really think there are exact analogies to the situation after World War I. Because I do not think democracy was in place in any of these states, including Russia. What I think is quite interesting today is that in Ukraine, for all of its problems, they are trying to be more democratic. Finally, they had a fair election, but in what a mess they have ended up. No one can agree on anything in these situations; they are divided right down the middle. I do not think there is a tradition of democracy. This is one thing that will have to be developed, but I do not see why it would develop in this part of the world. It is a very pessimistic note. But we should return, of course to your question on ethnicity.

Mikoła Kacuk. While discussing Belarusian identity, we should take into account that Belarus emerged as a state quite recently compared to countries with statehood traditions. There is a competition of national projects in Belarus.

Another point I would like to make. When we say that Belarus has an authoritarian regime or that it is in transition to a totalitarian regime, it is clear that our discussion deals with politics. It is impossible to handle any matter in Belarus, in thoughts or in deeds, without coming under some political influences or encountering some political restrictions. This is a reality. We understand that this is abnormal, but this is the way it is.

IV.

GIEDROYC AND THE TRADITION OF CIVIC SOCIETY IN BELARUS

Andrej Chadanovič

GIEDROYC THINKING ABOUT BELARUS, OR SMUGGLER'S NOTES

In the fall of 1994, I, a student at Belarusian State University, came to Lublin in the company of several fellow students. The purpose of our visit was lofty. It was the first time we assumed the role of Kulturträgers, or, in simpler words, of book-carriers. A library based in Lublin decided to donate an enormous amount of Polish books, which were written off but were still quite readable, to our university's library. Each of us had to carry several huge parcels with books. But our altruism was rewarded as each was allowed to keep a few of the books – and we sifted through the piles with excitement. I'm not going to describe the pleasure of becoming an owner of books of verse by Leopold Staff, Julian Tuwim, Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz and Tadeusz Różewicz. I was particularly happy to get two volumes of Czesław Miłosz's poetry, which I have continued to read on regular occasions up to the present moment. There were also several issues of the Paris-published *Kultura*, one of which caused sincere admiration in me and strong envy in my colleagues.

The tiny issue could be easily held in the palm of one's hand, and there was still enough space to foretell the future through the study of its lines. The paper was extremely thin, nearly transparent. The small letters could be read only through a magnifying glass. I had known before that day about the existence of banned literature that could only be read after being smuggled across borders; now I was holding such a museum item. Or at least I thought so, as it was 1994 and I was living in an almost free country and was pretty sure that books would no longer need to be sneaked into the country illegally.

This was soon after I read for the first time *Exegi Munimentum*, an ironic poem by Adam Mickiewicz, which includes the following lines "*Stąd mimo carskich groźb, na złość strażnikom ceł//Przemyca w Litwę Żyd tomiki moich dzieł"*. I did not associate myself with this Jewish Kulturträger at that time. I thought much was poetic exaggeration in the poem, and simply relished the image of youths reading books by the "visionary" in Minsk and Navahrudak. I imagined present-day residents of Minsk and Navahrudak reading Mickiewicz in the original – or even a translation! – with a sad smile. But there was something charming in the poem, above all the image of a poetic dreamer who, while physically being in Paris, is building a Polish, Lithuanian and Belarusian "fortress", i.e. a "state". After reading the pocket issue of *Kultura* and other regular editions of the magazine, I came to create the image of another dreamer resident in Paris, who, if not built, then at least nurtured the idea of building his own Polish but also Belarusian, Ukrainian and Lithuanian *munimentum*. I am speaking about Jerzy Giedroyc, the eternal editor of all pocket and non-pocket editions of the Paris-published *Kultura*.

I will speak neither about Giedroyc's birthplace, nor about countless reasonable ideas that both Polish and Belarusian intellectuals borrowed from this "oracle" (let me use this somewhat obsolete word while characterizing Giedroyc). I will only say that like predictions by many other visionaries, his ideas have not materialized for years. I mean the ideas of tolerance and non-xenophobic patriotism, openness to dialogue and truly equal relations between Poland and its Eastern neighbors which emerged politically not long ago. I am mostly interested in the image of my own country, above all in the image of Belarusian culture in the eyes of both the Polish cultural elite and less refined Poles. While not claiming to be objective and not even trying to make any conclusions, I will try to share pieces of my own experience, as I simply have no other material for analysis.

I have had the honor of participating in Translatorium, an international school of literary translation. Young translators from Poland, Ukraine, Belarus, and, in the last few years, from Russia meet, to share and discuss their creative work. One of the fundamental rules of the school set by the prominent intellectuals Olya Hnatsyuk and Adam Pomorski, who run the project, is that each participant speaks his/her native language, while all others should understand him/her. Isn't it the materialization of Giedroyc's ideas! The school held its classes in the library of Warsaw University a few

years ago. I recall one beautiful morning when a loud group of Belarusian-speaking translators entered the library, and nothing promised nervous stress for them. Suddenly they were shocked by a remark by one of the librarians who thought she could not be understood or heard. "Oh, these Ukrainians! So many of them come here and books disappear afterward!" I still regret that I didn't explain the difference between Belarusians and Ukrainians, between tolerance and xenophobia to her. And then you think, "What's worse, anti-Ukrainian stereotypes or the almost complete absence of Belarusians in Poles' minds?"

I would not have referred to the incident if nearly the same thing had not occurred a couple of weeks ago. I and my colleague were strolling calmly in Krakow's Kazimierz, I was speaking Belarusian and he Polish. This was another materialization of Giedroyc-proposed dialogue. And suddenly a bunch of rowdy Polish kids, who seemed happy to be imitating us, started following us, saying "Dobryy den! Dobryy den!" and something about "horilka" and other goods. I was afraid at some point that they would hurl stones at us. They didn't. I even entered into a conversation and explained something to them jokingly. (If I live to old age, I may become a street preacher).

I recall another incident that reflects these like a mirror. In 1988 or 1989, when I was attending a sports training camp in Pinsk, a local market teemed with Poles who came to Belarus to deal in various things. One of my teammates developed a strong dislike for them for some unclear reason. He would come to the market and pick on the vendors, even attempt to steal some goods or cash from them. Once, caught in the act and punished by the coach, he did not lose his composure and, when told that people cannot be treated like this, replied, "They can. They are Yids!" The latter word was used obviously metaphorically, and it was hard to say what – anti-Semitism or anti-Polish sentiments – dominated this xenophobic cocktail. (I must say that I met the man some five or six years ago and spoke with him for a few minutes, which was quite enough for me. He told me that he was a prison guard at Valadarka and described the joy he had when he had the opportunity to use his fists against an inmate. And then suddenly he turned into a loving husband and father, speaking about his wife and small daughter who was seriously ill…)

But let's get back to Polish-Belarusian dialogue. It is obvious that Poland has grown increasingly more interested in Belarus in recent years. Days

of Belarusian culture are held in Warsaw, Krakow, and Wroclaw. The number of conferences and intellectual forums, concerts, art exhibitions and literature readings featuring Belarusians is on the rise. (At one such meeting, I met a prominent Polish writer who moved to Gdansk from Belarus in his childhood. "This is going to be an interesting talk", I said to myself. The writer was happy as well and, upon learning my first name, shouted in excellent Belarusian, "Andrej, don't be a fool, don't tear your shirt". So we had quite an intellectual conversation!) Works by Belarusian writers appear in Polish literary journals, and Belarusian poets are now invited to international poetry festivals. (However, Polish English-speaking moderators so far have not learned to say "Belarusan" or even "Belarussian" but continue saying "Whiterussian".) Belarusian authors now get literary scholarships that were once available only to German, Polish and Ukrainian writers. (An organizer of one such event, a very intellectual woman, once asked me whether Belarus borders on Poland. Well, at least she let in the possibility!)

This year, the Kolegium Europy Wschodniej publishing house in Wroclaw launched a series of books named "Literatura Białoruska", and I even had a book of my verse included in the series and had the honor of taking part in *targi książki* in Krakow. In the course of this book fair, the name of the series was changed to "literatura białowieska". By the way, when I was typing these words on my laptop recently bought in Poland, the phrase "literatura białoruska" was underlined by the spell checker as erroneous while "literatura białowieska" was found correct. So, maybe the organizers of the fair were right, and I should introduce myself as a "wisent of the Białowieża literature?"

What can Belarusian and Polish intellectuals change in this situation? What can writers do when it's getting pretty rough in Belarus where ethnic minorities are already persecuted – it was Jews yesterday and Poles today, and who is going to be next? Once, progressive Russian authors responded to the persecution of Jews by translating works by Jewish writers from Yiddish to Russian. Not so much has changed since then, and writers have the same weapons, making the boldest ideas by Paris dreamer Giedroyc closer to reality. What can each of us do? Say, I can prepare a collection of works by young Belarusian poets for Polish readers and arrange for their translation into Polish by really good translators. Or arrange for the publication of Belarusian translations of modern Polish books, both verse

and prose. I would even smuggle all this across the Belarusian border afterward, as I'm afraid that they will have to be printed in Poland.

Will all of this have any social consequences? Or am I just placating myself, trying to appease ghosts in my conscience? Anyway, let me cite several lines from Adam i Ewa, a poem by Czesław Miłosz, a Nobel prize winner and a regular contributor to the Paris-published *Kultura*, whose books I once had the luck to find in the piles of old books at the Lublin library.

Адам і Ева чыталі пра малпу ў лазенцы,
Якая скочыла ў ванну, за прыкладам гаспадыні.
І пачала круціць – ратунку! горача! – краны.
Гаспадыня прыбегла як была ў пэнюары:
Вялікія белыя грудзі з блакітнай жылкай трасуцца.
Малпку ратуе, сядае за туалетны столік
І пакаёўку гукае: час зьбірацца ў касьцёл.

І ня толькі пра гэта чыталі Адам і Ева,
Разгарнуўшы выгодна кніжку на голых каленях.
Тыя замкі! Палацы! Агромністыя гарады!
У атачэньні пагадаў плянэтарныя аэрапорты!..

Indeed, there are so many things that even visionaries with the wildest imagination could not dream of yesterday. Maybe, Belarusian authors will at least repeat the success of their Ukrainian counterparts tomorrow, or we will see a Belarusian intellectual magazine published in Paris and brought to Belarus illegally (or – let's dream some more – absolutely legally). Then the phrase "literatura białoruska" will not be pronounced by a Polish reader with surprise and will not be underlined by a Polish spell checker as incorrect.

Barbara Skinner

EIGHTEENTH – CENTURY SOCIAL VALUES OF THE UNIATE CHURCH

Ruthenian religious history in the eighteenth century would seem to have little to do with a discussion of civic society. According to most of the historical scholarship, this was a history not of positive civic experience, but of the deprivation of rights, of persecution, of victims and suffering. It was the history of conflict, of a struggle between defenders of Orthodoxy and proponents of union with Rome that shifted with the grand political narrative of the region: a dominant Uniate Church when the Ruthenian lands were part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and a renewed Orthodox predominance when these lands came under Russian rule after the partitions of Poland. The personal political stance of historians has all too often guided their presentation of which side was the hero, and which side the villain. Accordingly, Russophiles condemn the rise of the Uniate Church as an aspect of Polish-Catholic persecution of Orthodox Ruthenians; Polonophiles, in turn, condemn the subsequent imposed conversions of Uniates to Orthodoxy as an aspect of Russian imperial persecution. Existing sources can adequately defend either view. This tendentious approach to Ruthenian religious history, however, is not productive. It is, in fact, counterproductive to attaining an understanding of the impact and influence of the Uniate and Orthodox churches within the development of Ruthenian culture and values.

For Belarusian history, the undeniable fact is that the Uniate Church was the church of the vast majority of Ruthenians in the Belarusian provinces for more than two centuries. After 1596, the Uniate Church became dominant much more quickly here than in the Ukrainian lands and remained dominant until the Russian Empire imposed conversions to Orthodoxy in

1839. Regardless of the question of who was victim and who was persecutor, the Uniate Church was a long-term factor in the development of Belarusian cultural identity, and much more attention needs to be given to the basic characteristics of this church in order to determine its role in Belarusian social and cultural development. We must bear in mind that the Uniate Church of the eighteenth century had evolved since 1596 into a concrete confession combining Eastern and Western traditions that was solidified within the 1720 Synod of Zamość. We must also bear in mind that this was not the nationalistic Greek Catholic Church of the ninetenth century – indeed, national connotations did not yet exist. Political connotations did exist, however. Allegiance to the Uniate Church was associated with allegiance to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and as a result certain social and political values infiltrated into the teachings of the church. Looking to the teachings of the Uniate Church in the eighteenth century, then, provides a glimpse into the social and cultural values promoted within the Belarusian provinces. The teachings themselves reveal something of the historical civic space from which modern Belarusian society evolved.

A fruitful source for exploring the penetration of political and social values of the Commonwealth into the Uniate Church are the instructional handbooks of moral theology produced by Basilians for parish priests. These handbooks contained explanations of the components of Uniate confessional belief, the laws of God and the Church, and the ministry of the sacraments. The first such handbook was compiled by Basilian superior Leon Kiszka (who later became Metropolitan) in 1693, and others continued to be written and published throughout the eighteenth century. Drawing upon the moral theology in the Catholic Church that had been drafted as an extension of the penitentiary with practical guidelines for post-Tridentine priests to better fulfill their pastoral duties, the Uniate manuals also presented a practical approach to explanations of the components of the faith and of the rites in the manner of a supplement to the basic catechism. Visitations and parish reports indicate that these manuals were in wide circulation among Uniate parish priests by the late eighteenth century, and Uniate ordination records from this time indicate an expectation of all candidates for the priesthood to be familiar with the basic moral theology of the church.[1] Whether victims or persecutors, the

[1] For example, reports collected on orders of Paul I in 1797 on the remaining Uniate parishes located in the Belarusian, Minsk and Volhynian provinces of the Russian

Uniate Church absorbed through moral theology aspects of the legalistic and practical approach of the Catholic Church into its canon of instruction. In so doing, parish priests worked from a very different set of social values than those promoted within the Orthodox Church.

The most obvious aspect of Uniate moral theology handbooks that had a bearing on civic consciousness was their emphasis on law and legal constructs in society. The sections devoted to elaborating the laws of God introduced basic Western concepts of law as a natural development from the precepts of the Ten Commandments. Kiszka, for example, opened his section on the Ten Commandments with a summary of the forms of law (eternal, divine, human, and natural) and conditions necessary for making law, including that it be created for the good of society (*dla dobra pospolitego*), that it be just, and that it be properly promulgated, observed, and ratified.[2] Basic Western concepts of justice, common welfare, and transparency of law, then, were already incorporated into Uniate moral theology by the late seventeenth century.

This emphasis on law reflected the long history of applying Western legal tradition and legislative practices within the social and political structures of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. First expressed in Kiszka's manual, this emphasis was developed much more elaborately in later moral theologies. The popular moral theology by Father J. Narolski, first published in 1777, for example, stressed the Pope's role as the *legislative* head of the Catholic Church and also described the secular authorities in light of their *legislative* authority above all other powers. The same section discussed the difference between external law imposed by God, the Church, and the State, and the internal law of one's conscience.[3] Moreover, as this section confronts the reader in the first pages of the manual, priests consulting this manual encountered a description of the law and legal development of social precepts in the first order of importance.

Empire noted moral theology as a regular part of the parish priest's education. Russian State Historical Archive, St. Petersburg, fond 824, op. 2, d.113, 114, and 116.

[2] L. Kiszka, *Now Roźnych Przypadkow, z Pełni Doktorow Theologii Moralney ziawiony. To iest: Kazusy Ruskiemu Duchowieństwu*, Lublin 1693, 225–226. The source cited here is Bonaventura, "C. de Legibus".

[3] J. Narolski, *Teologia Moralna albo Do Obyczajow Sciągaiąca się przez Pewnego Bazyliana Kapłana Prowincyi Litewskij zebrana na dwie częsci podzielona*, Vilnius 1777, Part I, 1–9.

Uniate moral theologies also stressed the importance of honoring contracts as an important social precept that fell within the obligations of a Christian. As citizens of the Commonwealth and therefore loyal to its legal traditions, Uniate priests were instructed to promote respect for contractual obligations. Couched within Kiszka's discussion of the seven sacraments, in an extension of the discussion on marriage as a contract, was a definition and description of contracts in general to assist priests with their duties. "Since Marriage is a contract concluded between two persons, it is a necessary thing that in this particular section there be a discussion on contracts, about which it is obligatory for Priests to know for hearing confession, since a Contract is an arrangement among persons with the obligation to fulfill it... It must also be known that a contract made in error or in deception is not binding, and it cannot be made in fear, for fear removes the act of freedom in making a contract, as Aristotle teaches (Ethics 3)..".[4]

As in Roman Catholic moral theologies, the obligation of fulfilling a contract was a case of conscience and thereby an important topic for priest-confessors. Kiszka cites particular kinds of contracts, including purchase and sales (mentioning specific practices within the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth), loans, rents, work partnerships, guarantees, employment, promissory contracts, deeds of donation and wills and testaments.[5]

The most detailed presentation on this topic was compiled by Father Antoni Koronczewski, whose moral theology manual devoted 156 pages to a description of contracts.[6] (The only longer sections in this handbook were those discussing the fundamental components of the Uniate faith: 219 pages on the sacraments and 178 pages on the commandments of God and the Church.) Introducing the section on contracts, the Basilian priest explained: "Knowledge or the study of contracts is greatly necessary and

[4] L. Kiszka, *Now Roźnych*…, 158–159.

[5] The variety of contracts mentioned in Kiszka follows closely the information included, for example, in Hermann Busenbaum's Medulla theologiae moralis, which was popular in Western Europe, as well as in the moral theology of Rotarius, which was in use in Poland by Catholics of both Rites (Thomas Francisco Rotarius, Apparatus Universae Theologiae Moralis).

[6] A. Koronczewski, *Teologia Moralna dla sposobiących się do stanu kapłanskiego. Y owszem: dla wszystkich duchownych staranie dusz ludzkich maiących*, Cz. 1 i 2, Supraśl 1779. Father Koronczewski was both head priest (archiprezbyter) of the cathedral in Brest and the head deacon (archidyakon) of Volodymyr at the time this manual was published.

useful to Clergymen and particularly to the Parish Priest and Confessor, and all the more so as through subtlety and cleverness, sin in this form is increasing, entangling people of every Class and Condition; in order for the Confessor to be able to lead them from labyrinths and false endeavors, he must first know the roads, which in contracts one must walk without straining the conscience".[7]

Aware of an increasingly more complex world, Koronczewski advocated that the parish priest, in order to be an effective source of guidance to his parishioners, must remain informed on such matters. True to this goal, Koronczewski offered in the following pages virtually a portable course in contract law. Not only did Koronczewski provide the priest with a discussion of contracts in general as well as a lengthy description of particular types of contracts, the author also informed the priest of the necessary components of each kind of contract in such a way that the priest would have no problem drawing up the contracts himself. The types of contracts Koronczewski described were exhaustive, including the promissory and donation contracts, last wills and testaments, statements of borrowing and deposit, contracts of purchase and sale, loans, rents, investments, extension of credit, etc.[8] In the European tradition of honoring contractual obligations, Koronczewski wrote, "Each Contract has validity even of itself, when it gives no outlet to Law; it obligates the conscience, so that it [the contract] would be upheld in good Faith. Otherwise, Community and Society could not exist among people..".[9]

The contents of this chapter in Koronczewski reflected the increasingly sophisticated social-economic situation in Poland-Lithuania at this time. The author's conviction that this was important material for the parish priest to understand is of great interest. No longer were the fundamental tenets of the faith sufficient for effective clerical leadership. The priest had to understand and be part of the increasingly complex real world of his parish in order to maintain credibility as a confessor, whose ultimate role was that of a judge of the right or wrong behavior of his communicant. Knowing the law and the conventions of contractual obligations was a necessity.

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[7] A. Koronczewski, *Teologia Moralna…,* Vol. II, 254. The discussion on contracts has its own separate chapter, Rozdział I of volume II, "Traktat o kontraktach".

[8] A. Koronczewski, *Teologia Moralna…,* Vol. II, 290–410.

[9] A. Koronczewski, *Teologia Moralna…,* Vol. II, 285.

Several more examples of the centrality of law and legal concepts in the Uniate moral theologies are worth noting. In all of the handbooks consulted in here, discussion of the commandment "thou shalt not steal" included a legal description of restitution or compensation of property.[10] Additionally, most of the manuals addressed at length the system of justice. Narolski elaborated on the requirements for a just court system promoting "a proper and orderly process" with judges who acted ethically and humanely, always bearing in mind the sanctity of the law, "without assigning neither a lesser nor a greater punishment than that which the Law commands..".[11] Moreover, discussions of the commandment "thou shalt not bear false witness" also yielded ample descriptions of legal jurisdiction in matters of lying, slander, falsification, calumny and other means of defamation.[12]

These Uniate compendia of moral theology, which reflected the legal and contractual norms within Commonwealth society, represented increasingly distinct social values from those evident within the instructional materials available to the Orthodox community. The weakened Ruthenian Orthodox community inside the Commonwealth relied more and more on literature printed across the border in the Russian Empire, and after the partitions of Poland, they and all converted Uniates became members of the Russian Orthodox Church under the Holy Synod. The catechisms and instructional materials produced within the Russian Empire (written largely by clerical authors of Ukrainian origin and with Kiev Academy training), tended to promote allegiance to the absolutist monarchical authority as established with the reforms of Peter the Great.

The most noteworthy example is the catechism produced for the Russian Orthodox Church by Feofan Prokopovich in 1720. While Peter Mohyla's catechism had been sporadically published in Russia since 1649, the first catechism that had broad circulation was Prokopovich's, written at the time

[10] L. Kiszka, *Now Rożnych*…, 294–313; J. Narolski, *Teologia Moralna albo…,* 49–83; A. Koronczewski, *Teologia Moralna…,* part I, 314–344.

[11] J. Narolski, *Teologia Moralna albo…,* 100–101.

[12] While all authors mention the variety of crimes associated with this commandment, Koronczewski provides the most detailed legal description (Part I, 344–64). Additionally, under the auspices of this commandment, Kiszka describes the need for judges who can give justice in the court by listening quietly and respectfully to the arguments, and professionally attending to the case without playing favorites (L. Kiszka, *Now Rożnych*…, 316).

of the drafting of the *Dukhovnyi Reglament* (1721) that regulated church activities and replaced the patriarchate with the conciliar Holy Synod. Published editions of this catechism were continuously printed throughout the eighteenth century, and parish priests were expected to own it and to read to their parishioners from the manual.[13] By the late eighteenth century, the catechism was also known to the remaining Orthodox population in the Belarusian lands of the Commonwealth, as it was the first publication printed in the press set up by Belarusian Bishop Georgii Konisskii in Mohylev after he was appointed to this post in 1755.[14]

Even within the brevity of catechismal instruction, the different perceptions of civic society compared to those of the Uniate manuals are evident. The most striking example comes from Prokopovich's explanation of the implied meaning behind the commandment to "honor thy father and thy mother".[15] Prokopovich instructs the Orthodox believer to respect the tsar and other governing powers above all – with a notable emphasis on executive rather than legislative power. He ascribes under this commandment the duty "to honor all those who are as fathers and mothers to us", including not just natural parents, but "others who exercise paternal authority over us". According to Prokopovich, the hierarchy of authority proceeded from the tsar: "The first order of such persons are the supreme authorities instituted by God to rule the people, of whom the highest authority is the Tsar. It is the duty of kings to protect their subjects and to seek what is best for them, whether in religious matters or in the things of this world... This is, under God, the highest paternal dignity; and subjects, like good sons, must honor the Tsar". The second order of paternal authority were the "supreme rulers of the people who are subordinate to the Tsar, namely: the ecclesiastical pastors, the senators, the judges,

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[13] Pervoe uchenie otrokom. V nemzhe bukvy i slogi. Takzhe: Kratkoe tolkovanie zakonnago desiatosloviia, Molitvy Gospodni, Simvola very, i deviati blazhenstv, St. Petersburg 1720. With more than a dozen reprints of the catechism by 1725, about 16,000 were in circulation by Peter I's death. This catechism remained "the basic textbook of religious and moral instruction in Russia" through the eighteenth century. See J. Cracraft, *The Church Reform of Peter the Great*, Stanford 1971, 286, 290.

[14] *Georgii (v mire Grigorii Osipovich) Koniskii*, "Russkii biograficheskii slovar", Vol. 4–5, Moscow 1914, 433; Koialovich, 16.

[15] Note that the Western and Eastern churches enumerated the commandments differently. This was the fourth commandment in the Western tradition (and therefore for the Uniate Church) and the fifth commandment in the Eastern tradition of the Orthodox Church.

and all other civil and military authorities". Natural parents themselves came in the third order following these, which "have responsibility for the common good, and therefore greater dignity".[16] This interpretation of placing obedience to the state in the first order of importance was also repeated within other more simplified catechisms in circulation among Orthodox priests on both sides of the Russian-Polish border by the late eighteenth century.[17]

In comparison to the legislative emphasis of Uniate moral theologies, the Russian Orthodox literature of the same period presented legal concepts in vague terms, and rarely mentioned law as an external construct of society. A book of Christian readings published in 1787 with daily lessons for both clerical and lay heads of households contained a section with 27 lessons "on the law" that avoided discussing legal principles completely. Instead, the section dealt with general guidelines of Christian ethics: striving to do good, overcoming temptation, avoiding sin and weaknesses, the importance of good works for faith, etc.[18] Basically, these lessons focused on internal discipline in guiding one's actions; focused largely on religious concepts. There was no mention of the external controls of civil or customary law.[19]

In its predictable elaboration on the (Orthodox) fourth commandment that instructed obedience in the first place to those powers that are useful to society – namely the Sovereign and other superiors – the same book continued with a discussion of what comprised a "true citizen". This was "a person of good works... of guiltless and noble behavior [who] can always be in a state of uninterrupted harmony with the good will of all those around him..".[20] This description avoids mentioning the observance

[16] As translated in Cracraft, *The Church Reform*…, 284.

[17] Particularly, the *Sokrashchennyj Katikhizis,* Kiev 1786, which was the cause of much consternation among Poles in 1789. See the investigative documents on suspicions of treason among Ruthenians in 1789 in the archive of the Biblioteka Czartoryskich, Krakow, sygn. 949–956.

[18] *Kratkie poucheniia o glavneishikh spasitel'nykh dogmatakh very*, Moscow 1787, chapter 9. This emphasis on Christian principle is consistent with the abundant Scriptural references in Pufendorf's *On the Duties of Man and Citizen*.

[19] The only mention of external laws was in the introduction to the book, in which the author writes, "The well-being [of the Fatherland] comes from the preservation of its civil laws: but they are confirmed by God's law, and the civil laws cannot be fulfilled where the law of God is not fulfilled". There was no other comment on external laws.

[20] *Kratkie poucheniia,* chapter 14, Lesson for February 27.

of external legal constructs as a quality of the "true citizen". Instead, the classical goals of harmony, order, and peace were attributed to the guidance of one's inner conscience. Accordingly, the next lesson "On the duties of a citizen" instructs the good citizen to know his obligations, to choose what is good, control passions, oppose evil, avoid luxury and riches, and to search only for God's love through doing good deeds for other people and good works for the benefit of society.[21] The lessons eloquently motivate the reader to follow New Testament and classical virtues, merging spiritual and civil goals, but they are silent on the role of external laws or regulations.

In conclusion, a study of Uniate and Orthodox instructional materials in the eighteenth century reflect two very different foundations for civil society. The conceptual world of the Uniates recognized the need for civil law as critical to the well-being of society and followed the prescriptions of a transparent, explicit and increasingly complex legal tradition. Parish priests were expected to have an understanding of the basic legal and contractual norms of Commonwealth society and to promote among their parishioners a high respect for the law. In comparison, the social foundations of the Russian Orthodox world in the regulated absolutism of the post-Petrine Russian Empire rested on respect for the authority of a patriarchal sovereign and his officials. Eighteenth-century Russian Orthodox literature expounded heavily on the internal laws of morality and Christian ethics, but gave no recognition to the value of external legal constructs. Instead, executive power had the greatest emphasis.

The fundamentally different ideals promoted by the Uniate and Orthodox churches in their most basic instructional literature – even at the primary level of clerical instruction in the Ten Commandments – merits more attention in reconsidering the history of Ruthenian culture and society. These different ideals that became manifest over the eighteenth century meant that the conversion from the Uniate to the Russian Orthodox faith after the partitions of Poland involved a significant shift in social and political values. A study of the development of civic society in the region that is now independent Belarus – particularly concerning the adherence to rule of law – should bear this in mind.

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[21] *Kratkie poucheniia,* chapter 14, Lesson for February 28.

Petruška Šustrova

CORRUPTED BELARUS

A few days after this year's so-called March events in Minsk – that's to say the elections which led to the protests and the dispersal of the tent dwellers who had spontaneously set up camp in the main square in Minsk – several people sent me an e-mail in Russian. It was titled Adults' and Children's Road to Calvary, and it was one of the best descriptions of the internal rebirth of a society that I have read. The article was signed in the name of Olga Timochina, and within it there was a passage which brought to mind a phenomenon I would like to discuss. First of all, I would like to quote the relevant passage from Timochina's article.

"The wage myth. The regular payments and raises are in actual fact entirely subject to external circumstances – Putin's enforced "charity". Nevertheless – as a candidate for the opposition rightly stated during a pre-election televised appearance – we have Belarus wages and European prices. How many people in Minsk can afford to buy a flat when the cheapest one bedroom property costs 30,000 dollars and a "good" salary is 200 dollars? How many decades would they need for this – and that's only on the condition that they eat their own saliva as do Indian yogis? It is the same situation when it comes to food and consumer goods. And every attempt to earn "extra income" is punished by a criminally high tax (between 9 and 30 percent)". That is what Olga Timochina writes about the economic situation of the Belarusians.

However, regardless of these undoubtedly justified reservations, a large part, perhaps the majority, of Belarusians feel they are financially secure and that the state, represented primarily by President Łukašenka, ensures their security and stability.

Financial security was a factor which markedly affected stability in the 1970s and 1980s in the former Soviet Bloc. Let us recall several Polish uprisings, particularly in 1970, 1976 and 1980. Today we rightly view these as struggles for freedom, but the primary impetus for the uprisings in the streets was always the worsening of economic conditions. However, it makes sense that when there was a spontaneous gathering of a large number of dissatisfied citizens who were living under a restrictive Communist regime, there was also a cry for freedom.

At that time there was peace in Czechoslovakia. I do not believe that Czechs and Slovaks loved Communism, or that they had any more freedom than their Polish neighbors. However, part of the so called normalising process which began in Czechoslovakia in 1970 and which suppressed all the freedom that the Czechoslovakian people had gained in the Spring and Summer of 1968, also corrupted the people on a large scale. The silent offer, which the normalising Communist regime made to the Czechoslovakian people was this: we will guarantee decent wages, we will build motorways, and we will give you the opportunity to buy and build holiday homes in the country. In return you won't complain and will forget about any desire for freedom.

This strategy was successful. Cities which had been centers of unrest would be empty at weekends when people would head off to their country cottages and devote themselves to their families, friends, gardens, various hobbies and resting. There was also another side to this: in view of the fact that under Communist rule there was a constant and widespread shortage of all sorts of goods, the building of all these holiday cottages was connected not only to a constant search for necessary goods but also to all kinds of corruption. So almost everyone was drawn into not entirely honest dealings or minor pilfering from their workplace – basically there was no other way to obtain the necessary building materials and tools. Practically everyone was liable to blackmail; practically everyone knew that if he came forward with any kind of protest the powers that be could easily silence him by drawing attention to his own transgressions. I believe that there is a certain similarity between those Czechoslovaks and the situation the Belarusians find themselves in today. It's not for nothing that Timochina talks about a "neo-Soviet lifestyle". Even in Belarus, Łukašenka, after the start of an economic transformation in the early nineties, came up with a peculiar sort of normalisation. Part of this normalisation consisted of providing

benefits which average Belarusian citizens praise highly: regular salaries and even raises and pensions. In the post-Soviet nineties this was by no means common, and the Belarusian state propaganda did not hesitate to promote this constantly in the media.

I had several discussions with random elderly passers-by while I was in Minsk in 2003 just before the elections, and they said they would vote for Łukašenka. "Every month I get a pension of 50 dollars", one older man told me. And he asked me: "Do you know of any country where a pensioner could want anything more". Another old lady who was taking potatoes and carrots home from the market showed me her bag and said: "The President has made it possible for me to buy anything I want. How could I vote for the opposition?"

The constant repetition that in comparison to the unrest prevalent in neighbouring states Belarus is peaceful and stable bears its own fruit. It is, however, well known that the economy in the Soviet countries was unable to function in such a way that it could ensure the long term economic well being of its people. Just as the economy of neo-Soviet Belarus will also fail in this. The economy needs a free market; otherwise, it cannot fully develop. Although Belarusians are happy with relatively little, it still has to come from somewhere.

Łukašenka's post-Soviet paradise with its regular pensions and wages is not as secure as its leaders would like. Too large a portion of the country's revenue actually comes from Russia. Currently, the Kremlin sells gas and crude oil to Belarus at a considerably lower price than, for example, to the Baltic states or Ukraine. The crude oil is processed in Belarus, and the products are sold in the West at world prices.

This fairytale however does not have a happy ending. Gazprom – and instead of Gazprom we can easily substitue the "Russian state" – has announced that by 2007 it will have to raise the price of gas to Belarus to the same level at which it sells this raw material in Europe. That means about five times the price it is now. In the last quarter of 2006 Russian supplies of crude oil to Belarusian refineries decreased by almost a third. Additionally, Russia plans to lower its import of products from Belarus. Officially, this is depicted as a response to Minsk's restricting Russian exporters' access to the Belarus market. In fact, it has more to do with the protracted Russia-Belarus discussions over an energy cooperation initiative which Russia urgently requires. Łukašenka is therefore caught in a trap

– on the one hand he wants to have as good a relationship with the Russian state and its representatives as possible, but on the other he does not want to give in to pressure and do something that would put him and his country at an economic disadvantage. However, it is very difficult to tell how long he will be able to maintain the current highly stable financial level coupled with the low power level of his citizens if he were to lose the hugely significant support from Russia.

There are over a hundred prosperous large businesses in Belarus; the rest are subsidised from the state budget. Only about eight percent of small to middle sized businesses are privately owned and about half of the large ones are. This sort of restriction on human economic initiative cannot of course be profitable in the long term, but the state ownership of these busineness ensures the cooperation of its workers. Those who disagree can leave.

The possibility of finding work outside state owned businesses is severely restricted. Even a private businessperson, and there are relatively few of those in Belarus, will think twice about hiring someone known to hold opposition views. All that then remains is small scale trading by traveling abroad to buy goods to sell in local markets. But to do that a person must arrange and pay for a visa. This is particularly difficult as there are very stringent border controls and a list of "dubious" persons who, although not forbidden to travel abroad, are prevented from bringing anything back with them.

At the moment, most Belarusians are more concerned with getting their loaf of bread and salami in their hands than with an uncertain vision of freedom. But the moment when the state will no longer be able to subsidise unproductive businesses or non-competitive ones, when it can no longer offer its people financial and social security, then people will no longer have anything left to lose. Then maybe instead of the twenty thousand demonstrators that rose up after the spring elections there will be two hunded thousand. It is at that moment, as we have already witnessed in the past, that non democratic regimes collapse.

GIEDROYC AND THE TRADITION OF CIVIC SOCIETY IN BELARUS[1]

Moderator: Aleś Ancipienka
Presenters: Andrej Chadanovič, Andrej Dynko, Barbara Skinner, Petruška Šustrova, Paweł Kazanecki
Discussants: Jerzy Targalski, Paveł Danejka, Valer Bulhakau

Aleś Ancipienka. It seems to me that Prof. Kamiński raised a number of important issues for our discussion and these issues pertain also to the problems discussed in the previous panels. In a way, you proposed a kind of synthetic view on what has happened at this conference. You especially stressed the importance of being aware of a sense of the past. In this respect, I would like to underline one of the missions of Jerzy Giedroyc, who could not live in Poland after World War II, left the country and settled down in Paris. He was not only a missionary or a dreamer, he was also a peasant. He was working on continuity. He was promoting the continuity, which was broken by the Communist regime in Poland. That was his great mission. I agree with you Prof. Kamiński completely that we need real work in Belarus, which would give Belarusians a real sense of continuity starting from early centuries. Actually, I share your desire to understand what might be the present or the future in the light of historic events.

One thing that really struck me recently, when I co-edited a Slovak book entitled "Slovak Hope" on experiences from democratic transformations, is that in almost every article Slovak analysts, not necessarily historians, stressed the historic factor. They always tried to understand that this event, which happened in contemporary Slovakia, was possible only because of some background in Slovak history. It seems to me in our part of the world,

[1] Authorized statements.

and especially as regards Belarus, our historians do not underline this very important element in our real contemporary world in which we live.

Jerzy Targalski. Giedroyc's politics was contradictory because it was based on Mieroszewski's concept. Mieroszewski made two mistakes: first he believed that the revolution would come from Russia and he therefore argued secondly that: "We are obliged to normalize our relations with the Russians". The problem with Russia is not normalizing relations, but obtaining independence, and reducing Russian cultural and political influence. Giedroyc wanted to make impossible things – to normalize relations with Russia on the one hand and support Belarusian and Ukrainian independence on the other. It was impossible to normalize relations with Russia and have independence, because Russian society does not exist. We have only the Gazprom state, and nothing else. Even if Russian society existed, I am afraid it would be a very anti-independence society.

The key issue for the near future is not the collapse of the Łukašenka regime. The issue is what to do when direct control changes to indirect control. The Gazprom state currently controls Belarus in a direct way. With the establishment of democracy Russia will be able to control Belarus in an indirect way. For me, the main problem is to be prepared for this moment when Moscow decides to substitute Łukašenka for a so-called democratic leader to control Belarus in an indirect way. We are not prepared for this moment, because Belarusians are thinking only about the Łukašenka regime and nothing else.

Andrej Dyńko. When we talk about Russia, it seems to me important to stop demonizing Russia. We should not regard Russia as absolute evil, something one-dimensional and undivided. Russia has been and will be Belarus' largest neighbor and trading partner. This is something we will always have to deal with.

The example of Giedroyc is important for us because he suggested building relations with Russia so as to ensure the full independence of Poland. In this context, the Belarusians should look in the direction of Russia because the worst thing we can do now is to pretend that Russia does not exist and try to ignore it. In this case we will always be losers, as in a crucial moment it will turn out that Russia was always there and also did something that we failed to notice.

As for Russia's direct or indirect control of Belarus, this is a controversial subject. It would be too simplistic to assume that the current regime is

directly controlled by Moscow. Some political forces in Belarus portray Łukašenka as Moscow's puppet. In reality, relations are much more complicated. It is our great achievement that despite the great influence of Moscow, Belarus begins to view itself as a Central European country. At this point, the Łukašenka government considers joining projects for the transportation of Caspian oil to Europe. They openly discuss it, and I am not talking about secret plans. In the last few years, Belarusian society has come to view its role in the global context differently.

Going back to Giedroyc and Aleś's question about the authoritarian nature of politicians, I recall one of Giedroyc's ideas that impressed me immensely. Giedroyc considered traditions of lax governmental control characteristic of the Rzeczpospolita and Poland of later periods, to be a great threat to Poland's independence and democracy. In the 1990s he suggested expanding the powers of the executive at the expense of the legislature to prevent anarchy. In this sense, it is interesting that insufficient governmental control was one of the Belarusian masses' main phobias in the 1990s, which helped Łukašenka to win the 1994 election and expand his powers.

Barbara Skinner. On the issue of getting rid of Russian indirect control of Belarus. I would urge the historians of Belarus to throw away the history books that were written under the influence of the Russian imperial regime, because they always demonize the Polish influence in Belarus. I am surprised that there are reprints and that today reprints are coming out of histories written in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century. They are extremely tendentious. But they do reprint them in this century without comment on how it was presented in the framework of Russian imperialism. One path to think independently about Belarus is to return to the basic sources and free yourselves of the constricting interpretations that are there.

Paweł Kazanecki. I would like to compare Ukraine in 2004 and Belarus in 2006 and to draw some conclusions from this comparison. I will talk mainly about civic society mechanisms – the leadership and means of communication.

The leadership in Ukraine was very precise and concrete before the revolution. There were politicians who were ready to take responsibility for a revolution. They were ready to stay at the square, ready to be arrested and killed. This was also possible in Ukraine in the end of 2004. In Belarus civic society leaders were afraid to take responsibility for anything that

could happen after March 19. Leadership does not only imply individuals, who are ready to change power, but it also implies the organization of elite. The problem in Belarus is that we do not have enough understanding on the part of political party activists and civic society activists that if they want to change the situation in the country they should know what to do, they should have a plan and be ready to implement it.

The other mechanism I mentioned is communication. In Ukraine communication before the revolution, and today, is in a much better condition than in Belarus. Communication is also connected with the responsibility issue. Communication is about clearly and precisely defining the message that leaders want to send to society and it is also a question of distribution of this message. This is another weak point in Belarusian civic society.

Now, about the spirit of civic society... This is something which is difficult to compare. It strongly depends on the external situation and the conditions in Ukraine and Belarus in the last ten years. In Ukraine civic society was much more optimistic. It believed in changes, whereas in Belarus people were much more frustrated and passive. It was not a frustration that could motivate activity. It was rather passiveness and apathy.

Civic society in the two countries is similar and is at the same stage of development in a way, although conditions for civic society development were better in Ukraine. In both countries civic societies are marginalized at present. Civic society does not represent all citizens of both countries. We still have a division between people who are willing to take responsibility for power and for changes in the country, and those called the masses in Soviet ideology. I would say these are inhabitants of those countries who do not know how to become citizens.

A feeling of unity in society is also an important point to mention. I mean the spirit of solidarity in society. The Orange Revolution in Ukraine brought the feeling of solidarity, especially to those who were present at Maidan and who followed the developments on television. Though today there is frustration in Ukrainian society that the changes have not happened and that the authorities are nearly the same as Kuchma, this frustration means that society has its own opinion about what happened and is looking for a new leadership, which would present their opinions. There is also a kind of feeling of unity in Belarus after the March protests. However, this feeling of unity is limited to a very narrow group of people who were

together at the Ploshcha. But, at the same time, they feel isolated from the broad society. This constitutes a big difference between the civic societies in the two countries after the Orange Revolution and the post-election protests in Belarus. The space for freedom and solidarity in Belarus is limited mainly because of a lack of information space.

As for future developments in these countries, there is the very important question of fear. In Ukraine, society is free of fear, whereas in Belarus fear is one of the most important factors affecting morale. Conformism is at the same level in both countries, but conformism in Ukraine is much more pluralistic – different people are looking for their interests in diverse political and economic environments. Conformism is monopolized in Belarus. If you are a conformist you are passive and work for Łukašenka because you do not have a choice.

On the question of national identity... In Ukraine there are two identities. There is the thesis that there are 24 Ukraines, because there are 24 regions in that country. It is true, when you travel and speak to people in various regions, you can see a big difference and their national identity is completely different. Ukraine is a diverse country, a country with different ways of understanding what Ukraine is. If you take Lviv and Donetsk, and compare these two places with any place in Belarus, you will not find these kinds of identities in Belarus. You will not find Lviv, because Belarusian Lviv is Vilnius, which is out of today's Belarusian national discourse. At the same time we do not have Donetsk. We do not have in Belarus any clearly Russian place. Donetsk is a place without any Ukrainian identity. In Belarus there is no place without any Belarusian identity. In Ukraine there is a big difference between east and west, in Belarus we have a conflict between the Soviet masses and a small elite, which is trying to build national identity.

The last point is about an understanding of civic society by Europeans working with Belarus and Americans working with Belarus. There was a lot of criticism of how Americans are acting to democratize Belarus. I am on the other side, I would criticize Europeans. The biggest conflict here is in understanding democratization as institution building vs. community spirit building. When we speak with different European institutions and when we read different democratization projects from the EU and some European countries, they always focus on institution development. When you ask what the institutions are, they always talk about free elections and

a decentralized state. It is more thinking of building institutions through the state, not through civic society. When we take American projects in Europe, especially in Belarus and Ukraine, it is always about building civic society from the grassroots. In a way, there is a conflict between building institutions of the state and institutions of civic society.

What Ukraine did in 2004 – they built a new leadership of the state through building the leadership of civic society. But society in Ukraine has lost its leadership. Civic society in Ukraine is looking for identity and leaders who will work in the interests of citizens. Belarus needs a new leadership for society. It needs a very clear leadership that would be accepted by most citizens. When we hear all the quarrels between political party leaders about who is the leader or who stole money, their main problem is that they are trying to find someone else to blame for their defeats. The real leadership should discuss the question "how to" not the question "who is to blame".

Andrej Dyńko. The most controversial statement you made, Paweł, is that the opposition lost the 2006 election because of the lack of leaders and elite willing to take responsibility for bringing about changes. I would not agree with the statement that Ukraine in 2004 and Belarus in 2006 had much more in common than differences. Firstly, the economic situations were radically different. Ukraine saw just a small economic growth for the first time before 2000 and its economy was in bad shape in general. Belarus saw ten years of fast economic growth before 2006. GDP per capita, which was almost equal in the two countries in 1990, was twice as high in Belarus in 2006. National consciousness is stronger in Ukraine than in Belarus both in terms of numbers and quality. Also, I cannot agree with your statement about the extent of civic society.

I know that the number of NGOs per capita in Western Ukraine was close to the average European level, whereas there were much fewer NGOs in the Donetsk region at the time. You also exaggerate a contrast between the masses and elite in Belarus. Belarus' elite is new, young and timid. It is a question of growing up: Belarus' elite needs to have confidence in its ability to change the country's course.

When I was listening to your report, I recalled your phone conversation with a deputy campaign manager for presidential candidate Alaksandr Milinkievič broadcast by Belarusian television networks. Not all people present here know that Mr. Kazanecki was speaking with Mr. Karniajenka,

his friend or something. In that conversation he urged his friend to hold out at the square as long as possible, saying that help was on its way. But the thing is that you said take to the square, stay there, help is coming, but it was not coming from anywhere. A revolution is possible only if a majority of the voters want changes, but it is naïve and anti-democratic to think that a revolution can be done with support of just 20 percent for the alternative candidate. There is a saying, "Do not put your cart before the horse". There must be a horse; then the wheels will roll.

Paveł Danejka. Sorry, I will speak in Russian. I kept silent because I do not speak English and my Belarusian is not very good. I agree with what Andrej has said, but I absolutely support Paveł. I do not see any contradiction here. Will and activity can change the world. But we, elite, are responsible for all failures. If we do not have enough will to change ourselves, we will offer dozens of arguments to explain why changes have not taken place. The old opposition project has been exhausted. We need to work out new approaches and rules for action. This can be done by means of a dialogue.

Paweł Kazanecki. I believe there was not a chance to win in Belarus this year. Various factors influence the possibility of a victory, not only civic society. These include the situation in the country, the lack of free media and repression – factors that cannot be compared with what was happening in Ukraine.

On the other hand, I had the impression that protesters in Belarus were ready to go farther than their leaders. This may be just an impression from the outside. But I think people were waiting for a message, "let's do it", but there was no message. Most leaders were scared and did not want to stay in the square.

Ukraine had leaders, not new ones, but members of the old nomenklatura. These people were ready – for various reasons (money, power etc.) to take responsibility and stay in the square until the end, even if tanks were sent to disperse them. The atmosphere in the square was not jovial at all, especially in the first two days. They were simply ready to fight until the end, that's all.

It is also a question of pluralism of interests of the elite. There was pluralism in Ukraine. In Belarus there was a problem of leadership. A civic society leader emerged in March. In Ukraine leaders crystallized long before the revolution. That is the main difference. In Belarus, the

leadership should crystallize not only in the person of Milinkievič, but in many persons. There must be a new generation of leaders.

Valer Bulhakau. I would like us to use the opportunity at the end of today's session to reflect on one question that has annoyed us for a long time, "Why in March in Minsk were the so-called leaders more passive than the protesters that came to the Kastrychnitskaya Square?" It seems to me that this fact, or phenomenon, is fraught with very dangerous dynamics. Belarusian leaders' passivity, which we observed during this year's crucial events, has been explained more often than not by the fact that the political leaders and opposition political actors are political clients of the West. This question is taboo; nobody even wants to talk about it. But to my mind, we observed the result of this in the lack of initiative, dynamism and willingness to lead the masses. The *Arche* journal hosted a roundtable on the subject and many Belarusian intellectuals agreed that the leaders lacked initiative. This is a challenge that makes the Belarusian situation radically different from the situation in Ukraine.

Ukraine has certain conditions for the rotation of pro-democracy leaders. Conditions are much more severe in Belarus and opposition leaders are hard to come by. Opposition politicians face repression and criminal persecution. This is why the rotation of opposition and civic society leaders in Belarus is a great challenge. It is necessary to make it clear because this is an element of our reality.

A few remarks on parallels between Belarus and Ukraine… It is not a secret to political analysts and historians of nations and nationalism that modern Ukrainian nationalism emerged in the nineteenth century, 60 or 70 years earlier than Belarusian nationalism. The distance could be measured by several generations. Therefore the argument that Belarusian identity is evenly spread all over the country, while Ukraine has some vividly Russian regions does not take into account scientific facts. National identity is a product of national movements. It seems to me that Belarus' salvation is in the fact that the Western community has finally understood that Belarus is a country that stands out of the European context. In terms of national development, it is on the level with some Asian and African countries. The country's civic society does not need strict political leaders so much, but it needs to channel its activity in cultural projects. This focus on the development of civic society in the form of resource centers, which was successfully tested in Slovakia when Meciar was the prime minister, failed

to produce the desired effect in Belarus under Łukašenka. This is a serious challenge for people concerned about Belarus' future.

Aleś Ancipienka. To my mind the basic problem is not in initiatives and leadership, although they are problems here, but the basic problem is that of a message to civic society. A political leader in general is a person who has an efficient message. That also pertains to the situation where we, those who believe ourselves to be analysts or intellectuals, do not know our society quite well.

Valer Bulhakau

AFTERWORD

The conference "The Geopolitical Place of Belarus in Europe and the World" was an international forum on Belarus held in Warsaw on November 11 and 12 by the Institute of Civic Space and Public Policy affiliated with the Ryszard Lazarski School of Commerce and Law. The purpose of the conference was to provide an opportunity for Belarusian, American and European experts to present their knowledge of Belarus and compare various interpretations of subjects chosen for discussion. As Prof. Andrzej Sulima Kamiński said in his opening address, the organizers did not seek to develop a common position, instead they sought to clarify various interpretations of the current situation in Belarus.

Most participants were from Belarus – political analysts, social scientists, public and political figures, journalists and even renowned writer Andrej Chadanovič. The organizers did not target prominent figures only; invitations were sent to people who have just entered scientific and civic careers. More than 20 participants arrived from Britain, Canada, the Czech Republic, Germany, Slovakia and the United States. Ukraine was represented by Mykoła Ryabchuk, editor of the Kiev-based *Krytyka* magazine. This was one of the few events of this kind in Poland held in the English and Belarusian languages. Simultaneous translation was provided from Belarusian into English and from English into Belarusian. The lack of Russian in the choice of languages probably scared away Russian participants, who were invited but failed to attend. The conference included four workshops on the following themes: "Belarus as a Geopolitical Pariah", "Political Discourse: Belarusian Style", "Are There Belarusians in Belarus?" (the Question of Belarusian Identity), and "Giedroyc and the Tradition of Civic Society in Belarus".

It is up to the reader to assess the significance of the conference. It should be noted that it provoked an animated discussion immediately upon its conclusion. Among these many discussants, Ramjet (pseudonym) and Viktar Loŭhač were the most critical. Their criticisms, although stemming from different ideologies, were equally aggressive.

"Cranky Conference and Impractical Intellectuals"

"Cranky Conference and Impractical Intellectuals" was the first response to the conference posted the following day on www.tolblogs.org. Ramjet, in this response, described the event as strange, noting that the best presentation was made by David Marples, a professor of history at Alberta University in Canada and a leading Western expert on Belarus. Ramjet said he considered the conference a failure for several reasons. He claimed that the foreigners and Belarusians talked past each other and that there was an excessive focus on Łukašenka as a person and little focus on the future. He noted a divide between scientists and practitioners, both Belarusian and foreign. He contended that there were too many Belarusian political scientists, but few civic activists present and that many of those invited failed to show up, including older Belarusian academics.

Ramjet accused foreign participants of a lack of real knowledge or an understanding of Belarus, both past and present. He slammed Belarusian "think tankers" for "the unfortunate tendency … to be totally critical of the Belarusian reality, especially the opposition, and devoid of constructive ideas and suggestions for coping with the challenges posed by Łukašenka and Europe's last dictatorship". He argued that:

> Part of the problem lies with the fact that, unlike in the Soviet bloc dissident movements of the 70s and 80s, leading academics are not directly involved in the Belarusian democratic opposition (though Mr. Kazulin and Mr. Milinkievič both have academic credentials, they are not in the same league as Sakharov, Michnik, Kis or Kusy)… While a new generation of young academics from Belarus is now active in independent think tanks in and outside of the country, most are only commenting on the opposition rather than directly taking part in it. Where are the Belarusian academics like Geremek, Landsbergis and Butora who were both advisors and leaders of opposition movements? Perhaps it is because of the regime's tight control over educational institutes and the contract system, which forces many to choose job security over dissent. But the

conference program also showed that many of the Belarusian presenters have already been forced to teach, study or work outside of Belarus, for example at the European Humanities University now located in Vilnius. It is a shame that many of these are still not committed enough to be directly active in the opposition.

Ramjet's comments triggered a lively discussion. All of its Belarusian and Polish participants – all of whom with the exception of one person had attended the conference – acknowledged a divide between thinkers and practitioners in Belarus. There were other opinions as well:

"From my own experience, most opposition leaders simply need no ideas and serious analytical work. Their style is to have court analysts that would PR their personas in the media and do work like that…. We have party leaders who were not rotated for decades. We have party structures who like to think about their existence and position vis-a-vis one another, rather than fighting for anything. We have, perhaps, the only country in the world, where places in election headquarters are distributed on the basis of political quotas!
Yes, we also have the intellectuals who are equally self-centered and more interested in promoting themselves rather than helping anyone. Finally, when complaining about intellectuals being concentrated on the academic activities, I would counter-argue that most of the opposition is currently concentrated on internal squabbles and foreign campaigning. You will see the leaders in the meetings of radas and coalitions and abroad, not in Belarus working with people and doing anything specific. Sorry, but what can an academic do to help them in this? And shall he/she? Maybe, it is better to write a few papers than to help in these exercises of rather shameless nonchalance".

"The problem with both opposition and intellectuals is of the same order. Both depend upon what is going on abroad rather than what is going on in our own country…"

"At least a half of the Belarusian participants were present at such a conference for the first time. It is not their fault. We have almost no such events. It was instructive. We went out of this conference cleverer".

"Perhaps, it was not the most successful event because of its formula but, on the other hand, should we expect a conference to offer answers to all questions that may arise with regard to Belarus?"

Ramjet's November 15 reply was less censorious. He admitted that some opposition leaders lack professionalism. He said: "As an outside, but longtime observer, it seems to me that the opposition is not only

badly divided, but also is segregated. Think tankers aren't working with politicians, and politicians aren't working with think tankers. I don't blame one side or the other. I just think that it would be better for them to work together".

Opus by Loūhač

This was not the end of the discussion. The state-run news agency *BelTA* on December 1, 2006 ran a piece headlined "The Opposition's Expired Passports" by Viktar Loūhač on its official Web site. The publication suggested that a KGB spy infiltrated the conference.

Loūhač's article began with a dramatic passage:

> The so-called Belarusian opposition feverishly searches for a way out of the deadlock in which it was driven by citizens of the country as a result of the last large election campaigns. The position of continuous stagnation, in which 'fighters for democracy and freedom' have found themselves, is fraught with the most unpleasant outcome: the full termination of funding from abroad. Although, by all appearances, they are far from being well off now and enjoy only occasional small awards and grants specially designed to prop them up. So, to add certain importance to their effort, the officially unemployed citizens of Belarus, who consider themselves leaders of the opposition, time and time again come up with initiatives to hold roundtables and conferences, naturally, abroad. This is necessary so that they can receive per diem allowances. An event like this has taken place recently in the capital of Poland, a country that has recently been hostile toward Belarus. The conference had a resonant and ambitious title, 'The Geopolitical Place of Belarus in Europe and the World'. As if someone doubts that Belarus is in Europe.

Viktar Loūhač, former editor-in-chief of the newspaper *Sportivnaya Panorama* (its old name is *Fizkulturnik Belarusi*), also contributes to the newspapers *Minsky Kuryer*, *Respublika*, and even *Okhota i Rybolovstvo*, a magazine for fishers and hunters. He was a member of Belarus' official delegation to the 2002 Salt Lake City Olympics. He is known for his anti-Western, pro-Łukašenka rhetoric based on information supplied by the KGB. He routinely uses expressions like "Slavic brotherhood", "anti-Western", "pseudo-opposition", and "advantages of the Belarusian socioeconomic model". His articles are apparently designed to manipulate public opinion, demoralize and atomize the opposition, and create tensions

among various opposition groups. Loŭhač's comments on the details of the conference and its participants (he mentioned Andrej Dyńko and Paweł Kazanecki as the most powerful speakers) were intended to arouse mistrust and paranoia (the KGB knows everything) among members of the opposition, prompting participants to suspect each other of working for the secret service.

The article does not contain any useful information for an average reader and abounds in offensive labels. It reflects the current ideology of the Belarusian regime and serves as a guide for state media journalists as to how they should approach such events:

> It was the usual circle of participants – those who hang out in various non-governmental organizations and foundations (financed from abroad). Naturally, curators from Washington and teachers from London and Warsaw were also present.

Nevertheless, the piece includes one element worthy of attention – a sincere surprise at how intellectually liberated the conference participants were (something Loŭhač expressed in a sarcastic and insulting way) and at their willingness to discuss and criticize regardless of hierarchies and statuses:

> But there was something incongruent with the earlier developed script. Young participants who arrived from Belarus unexpectedly stood up to their older associates assessing their actions critically. Moreover, they have actually accused them of distancing themselves from the people and begging the West for money for dubious projects…. The discussion led to the conclusion: the current leaders of the Belarusian opposition lack ideas that they could sell to the public.

A liberated discussion was something difficult to fit in the mentality of Loŭhač and his KGB informers, educated on the principles of undivided authority and uniformity of thinking. The secret service's attention to the conference is indicative of the political climate in Belarus – any gathering of Belarusian and foreign experts is considered a threat to national security.

Loŭhač's opus did not go unnoticed and sparked a new discussion. 'Coming back to the "cranky conference"' was the headline of the last comment on the Warsaw conference posted on www.tolblogs.org. A Belarusian political activist wrote:

> The style of propaganda is typical, and there is nothing new. Just mix and match a few slogans (like: the opposition is bankrupt, it is a bunch of puppets financed by the West, all they fight is for the money etc.) in different combinations, and you can produce hundreds of such articles. On the other [opposition] side, it is often the same, though: criminal regime, freedom is near, etc.) … it is just amusing how he presents the criticism of the opposition as a huge thing and a sensation. I understand that state propagandists find things like debate and disagreement and criticism a bit odd. But once again, he communicates to the public that the "opposition" is actually… thinking and it is critical of itself. How congruent is this with the propaganda claims that all it [the opposition] does is take orders from Western patrons?

Conclusions

The conference was intended primarily to offer young Belarusian scientists the opportunity to establish contact with their Western counterparts who differ in their assessment of the situation in Belarus. Ramjet believes the idea is of little use for the development of grassroots democracy, while Viktar Loŭhač views the event as an attempt to reanimate the opposition, which is less and less viable.

Ramjet used the occasion to criticize both the Belarusian intellectuals and the transformation process within the Belarusian opposition, while the media representative of the Belarusian KGB (whose article was reprinted in Russia) awakened in the memory of his readers the Soviet-style propaganda language long forgotten outside Belarus. To a certain extent, this is indicative of both commentators' pretensions to the truth and political dominance.

Ramjet's accusation that participants were not familiar with Belarusian history implies that he knows history better. His conviction that political technologies alone, without significant investment in culture and humanities, can bring about a breakthrough in Belarusian politics, is not based on knowledge of history, but on an abstract idea of democratic transformations in the world. He ignores landmark developments in the new history of Belarus, the state of national identity, the quality and position of the country's cultural and intellectual elite, a lack of platforms for a dialogue among its representatives, the state of nation-building and other important things, without which knowledge of Belarus would be

fragmented and incomplete. Taking into account all these indications, Belarus is closer to a Latin American that a European country in its culture and mentality; the Belarusians have a long way to go to become a nation. Without this, according to political theorists, transition to a stable democracy is impossible.

In addition, Ramjet takes a merely utilitarian approach asserting that the Belarusian intellectuals' mission is to put an end to dictatorship rather than tackle the thriving cultural apartheid, language discrimination and intellectual provincialism – the three pillars of Łukašenka's dictatorship. He rejects the value of scientific and, in a broader sense, organic cultural activity under the conditions of dictatorship (which seeks to simulate and profane humanities), and equates intellectuals with political volunteers.

The intellectual's mission is to humanize society and open it for the rest of the world. Events that occurred in Belarus between 1991 and 1994 prove that even under relatively democratic conditions a dehumanized society obsessed with authoritarian, racist and colonial ideals is destined to embark on a path inconsistent with a pro-democratic pro-European choice. Clearly, political technologies can help overthrow any political regime, but only consistent cultural efforts to promote national identity and deconstruct the colonial one can bring about democracy. The idea of mobilizing all intellectual resources for one political goal and implanting national identity afterward would not work. Without serious changes in society's culture, political authoritarianism will replicate.

The book you are holding consists of two elements. One includes selected presentations made during the conference. Unfortunately, due to the limited space available, it does not include speeches by Jury Čavusaū, Aliaksiei Pikulik, Andrej Lachovič, Rafał Sadowski and Paveł Usau. The second element is an abridged transcript of the discussions.

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