

IISEPS News
JUNE 2002, ISSUE 2 (24)

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**STRENGTHENING ROLE OF INDEPENDENT SOCIAL
RESEARCH AND EXPERTS' NETWORKS IN BELARUS**

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OPEN FORUM:

Valery Frolov:

"Political extreme has never lead to positive results"

Dear readers!

The next, 24th issue of the analytical bulletin "IISEPS News" offers to your attention materials reflecting the most interesting results of the institute's work in the second quarter of 2002.

Within the framework of IISEPS's new project "Strengthening Role of Independent Social Research and Expert' Networks in Belarus" launched earlier this year, a national public opinion poll was conducted, which brought about sensational results: for the first time during A. Lukashenko's rule his rating (which leveled at 45% just six months ago) dropped to 30%. The "collapse" (using one of the president's favorite words) is explained first of all by social-economic reasons: non-fulfillment of election promises, backpay of wages and pensions, narrowing of life prospects for millions of Belarusians. At the same time, as the survey showed, a whole stratum of rather well-off ("rich" according to Belarusian standards) people appeared, who got used to the existing conditions and support the present course.

Many significant events took place on the foreign policy front. The opposition of Belarus and the West became even more strained (after the forced departure of its leading members, OSCE AMG's activity is in fact frozen). The "sluggish integration" with Russia after V. Putin's sensational statement, which he made soon after his meeting with the Belarusian head of state (caused, as many analysts say, by A. Lukashenko's falling rating and the scandal around the OSCE) faced the most serious challenge in its history. The above events are reflected in public opinion as well, which record new fundamental shifts.

As always, we offer our readers interesting information without comment in the light of major social-demographic groups and trends of the most important indicators of public opinion.

Aside from the survey results, the bulletin contains materials of the scientific-practical seminar "Social Research and Social Development in Belarus", which took place in the framework of the above mentioned project of IISEPS in Gomel in early June. Although the seminar was of a strictly scientific character (mostly researchers and analysts from Minsk, Warsaw and the Gomel region participated in it), local authorities were very frightened and even forced its participants out from a rented conference-hall. As a result, scientific debates continued in ... a private bar. Probably, while reading the seminar's materials, you would feel an unusual "atmosphere" of Gomel's hospitality. However, we cannot complain of the absence of attention from Belarus' authorities: there are reasons to assume that A. Lukashenko's stormy reaction at the April 29 session of the Cabinet of Ministers, as well as an unusual reaction by V. Putin at the "integration processes", relates to the results of activities of independent Belarusian analysts. The apotheosis of such attention from the Belarusian authorities to think tanks was the Resolution of the Cabinet #707 dated May 31, 2002, taking a total control of public opinion study, and finally of public opinion itself (See Appendixes).

This time our traditional rubric "Open Forum" is given to a non-traditional author – a representative of the unrecognized abroad Belarusian parliament. General Valery Frolov, who headed this spring a new group of deputies "Republic", revealed outstanding abilities to oppose authorities within the authorities and offers an alternative of his own. How and why "he is living such life", how he sees development of the public-political process in Belarus – see an interview with V. Dorokhov, a leading researcher of IISEPS.

We hope that the current issue of our bulletin would be interesting and helpful to you and your colleagues. We are awaiting your comments and requests!

IISEPS Board

STRENGTHENING ROLE OF INDEPENDENT SOCIAL RESEARCH AND EXPERTS' NETWORKS IN BELARUS

In April 2002 in the framework of the project "Strengthening Role of Independent Social Research and Expert' Networks in Belarus" IISEPS conducted a nation public opinion poll (those interviewed – 1464 persons aged 18 and over, margin of error does not exceed 0.03). The questionnaire, as usual, covered a wide range of problems related to the most pressing and most topical aspects of life in Belarus.

Below you will find commentaries on the most important findings of the poll made by IISEPS experts. "No answer" and "Find it difficult to answer" alternatives are not available in most points of the questionnaire. In several tables the total amount may be different for 100% as the interviewees could choose more than one alternative. Certain findings of the poll were traditionally represented with regard to the basic social-demographic groups and without commentaries. As before, we traditionally present the major trends of the public opinion's basic social parameters.

Collapse: for the first time during A. Lukashenko's ruling his rating has gone down to 30%

There was no avoiding of the anticipated. Just six months after the presidential election there happened a "collapse", as A. Lukashenko would say. However, it was not the Belarusian ruble or the international isolation of Belarus that fell down like a collapse, but the president's political rating. With reference to the IISEPS findings, in April this year only 30.9% of respondents said they backed A. Lukashenko, although on the very eve of the election around 45% of those interviewed would vote A. Lukashenko and around 57% actually gave their votes to him on the election day.

Table 1

Dynamics of electorate's attitude towards A. Lukashenko, %***

Indexes of attitude towards A. Lukashenko	Mentioned A. Lukashenko (option A)						Did not mention A. Lukashenko (option B)					
	11'97	09'98	06'99	04'00	08'01	04'02	11'97	09'98	06'99	04'00	08'01	04'02
Would have voted for A. Lukashenko at a new election **	44.3	52.2	46.0	38.4	44.4	30.9	55.7	47.8	54.0	61.6	55.6	69.1
Would have voted for A. Lukashenko at an B. election of Russia-Belarus president	35.2	44.7	32.8	22.3	27.8	14.0	64.8	55.3	67.2	77.7	72.2	86.0
Trust the President	45.0	48.0	41.0	39.2	43.8	32.4	22.5*	22.1*	28.8*	32.9*	37.1*	50.1*
Consider A. Lukashenko an ideal politician	50.4	51.5	45.7	37.0	39.4	26.0	49.6	48.5	54.3	63.0	60.6	74.0

* Do not trust the president.

** Answer to an open question (i.e. the respondents wrote down politician's name).

*** All table to be read vertically. Data of IISEPS's reports is given (in all cases 1.500 respondents aged 18 and up were questioned, margin of error did not exceed 0.03).

As one can see from Table 1, it was a total collapse, all parameters down. Over the past five years the number of those who would vote A. Lukashenko at the Belarus-Russia Union presidential election has gone down by 20%, almost a two-fold reduction of those who considers him an ideal politician, while the number of those who do not trust him outnumbered those who still have confidence in him, passing the 50% mark. Today A. Lukashenko's convinced opponents outnumber his adherents 4.5fold, although five years ago the number of his convinced supporters (i.e. those who chose him with regard to all the four parameters) was way above the number of his convinced opponents.

It is none the less important to note that since then the "floating number" (i.e. those who would prefer A. Lukashenko in one group of cases and wouldn't in the other) has in fact shrunk by more than 10%, in effect ceasing to be the majority. It is the first time that the convinced opponents of the president are in the majority (See Table 2).

Why was there no avoiding such a collapse? First, because the "grip" (of the deceitful and aggressive propaganda, tough pressure of the authorities on all non-state forms of life – political opposition, independent media, private business, non-government organisations) tightened on the society during the election campaign, has loosened slightly over the past six months. Second, new factors came into play.

The main cause of such a break-neck fall of the president's political rating is the economic situation and the people's well-being going worse: such was the reply of 71% of A. Lukashenko's opponents; over 60% repeatedly faced the problem of arrears in salaries and pensions, while 35.5% said there was not way one could bear it any more. Generously thrown

around on the election's eve, the promises of "economic liberalisation" and a host of others remained unfulfilled. It would be quite demonstrative to see the rows of A. Lukashenko's convinced opponents being replenished by individuals, who lent him their support just six months ago: today the number of these "fooled investors" has passed the 500.000 mark! For the time being, the share of the over-50s among A. Lukashenko's opponents is equal 21.8%, although 5 years ago it was 13.5%, three years ago – 18.4%. The trend is observed among residents of small towns and villages, too – 47.9%, 45.3%, and 34.2% respectively. The tendency is obvious: the president's most reliable electoral resource is running out steadily.

Table 2

Dynamics of electoral types regarding A. Lukashenko, %

Electoral types	11'97	09'98	06'99	04'00	08'01	04'02
Convinced supporters of A. Lukashenko (chose option A while answering all four questions)	26.0	29.3	21.8	15.5	21.8	10.4
Vacillatory majority	53.2	53.3	52.1	54.2	46.1	42.7
Convinced opponents of A. Lukashenko (chose option B while answering all four questions)	20.8	17.4	26.1	30.3	32.1	46.9

Another reason behind this is the loss of future prospects. Around 60% of the president's opponents believe it takes moving to a foreign country for young people to make a successful career. Just as many would wish to leave for a foreign country themselves and settle down. You just think of that: at the beginning of the 21st century over three million Belarusians are so dissatisfied with life in their home country that that would eagerly swap it for a foreign one! An overwhelming majority of the president's opponents believe that "life standards in Belarus are worse than in the western countries" and put the blame for that on "the poor state management". Such platitudinarian explanations as "we are constantly being interfered with by the domestic and foreign enemies" or "we do not have raw material resources" are not longer popular even with the convinced supporters of the president.

What is the forecast then? Relying on the findings of our recent public opinion poll, one may suppose that the president is in for serious trouble unless he changes something about his political guidelines. The traditional mechanisms to influence the authorities by means of elections are now frequently put to reasonable doubt by a great deal of A. Lukashenko's opponents. The government's tough grip on the electoral process not only invites negative comments from the world community (the condemnation which one could ignore but up to a point), but also causes people to lose faith in the freedom of will by means of elections. A third of A. Lukashenko's convinced opponents either did not take part in the latest presidential election at all, or voted against all candidates. More than one third are determined to not go to the polls at the local elections next year, "for no matter whom you back, it is candidates supported by the authorities who will become deputies" (basic motive). If the absolute majority of pro-presidential adherents are determined to vote for candidates supporting A. Lukashenko in the belief that most voters will do the same, however, the convinced opponents would vote for candidates opposed to A. Lukashenko, although the number of those who believes that the majority of voters will do the same – is twice as little. The "spiral of silence", of which we have said more than once, keeps strangling those who feel dissatisfied with the present policies of the government and the situation in the country in general: being in the apparent majority, they keep thinking they are in the minority.

The president's public relations policy makers probably consider this as their victory. However, it may turn out to be a Pyrrhic victory against the background of the collapse fall of the presidential rating: deprived of the legal mechanisms to influence the government by means of elections, millions of disillusioned Belarusians may finally take to the streets. Today only 21.1% of those polled would agree that "things are getting right" in Belarus, while 55.5% reckon "things go wrong". Six months ago, a fortnight after the presidential election, the replies were different: 36.7% and 38.1% respectively. Let's take a risk to suppose that the pending social explosion will look much different from peaceful street marches staged by the opposition. Chances are that the opposition will have nothing to do with that. Then the president would have a fairly limited choice: either to switch off from the political process not only "the displeased ones", but practically the whole society (by means of total control over any sort of elections and referendums, banning the freedom of speech and gatherings); or to change one's policies and hold real reforms. All our neighbours have chosen the second alternative (take a note that Putin's Russia tends to appeal to Belarusians more and more: it comes third on the list of countries after Germany and the United States where our compatriots would wish to go and settle down. Asked about their ideal politician, 68.1% point to Putin, while A. Lukashenko gained only 26%), which is why the first alternative is fraught with complete isolation for Belarus even in this particular region. So far the president still has time to make his choice, however, judging by how fast his rating is falling, it is running out.

Local elections – disillusioned interest

As you know, elections to the local councils will be held in Belarus in spring next year. So far not much is being said about these elections in order to attract social attention to them. Moreover, only half a year has passed since the presidential election, the significance and influence of which on the life on an average citizen is immeasurably higher. Nevertheless, as early as now almost 70% of those polled say they are ready to go the polls (See Table 3). Bearing in mind the fact that the electorate's intentions may change any minute, it would be unfair to say that no one has interest in the elections.

Table 3

Distribution of answers to the question: "It is known that the election to local Council is to take place in spring of 2003. Are you going to take part in voting?", %

Variants of answer	All respondents	Supporters of A. Lukashenko	Opponents of A. Lukashenko	Vacillatory
Would definitely vote	32.6	52.0	25.2	36.0
Most likely would vote	35.7	33.6	33.3	38.7
Most likely would not vote	15.1	5.9	21.1	10.7
Definitely would not vote	10.9	3.3	15.4	7.7

Let us remind us that one of the eve of the latest local elections in the spring of 1999, Belarusians appeared to more reluctant – 45% of respondents said at that time that they would go to the polls.

Matching these reports with the election turnout (60.2% came to the ballot boxes) and extrapolating them onto the forthcoming elections, we may suppose that next year will see a fairly high election turnout.

It is worth mentioning that A. Lukashenko's electorate again demonstrates a much higher political readiness in comparison with the democracy-oriented voters – twice as more A. Lukashenko's supporters said they would go to the polls.

What is the reason why some part of the electorate would not wish to take part in local elections? First comes the disbelief in the chance that the vote will bring victory to the really strongest candidate – around 15% of those polled (24.1% of A. Lukashenko's opponents) believe that the authorities' proteges will become deputies all the same. By adding to them the ones who do not believe in the free and fair character of the elections, we will see that almost half of those polled and more than one third of A. Lukashenko's opponents are ready to ignore the elections today, because they doubt whether it is going to be real elections, when the outcome actually depend on the will of the electorate alone.

Without speculating about how grounded such fears and doubts are, and what Belarusian democrats and the world community should do to dispel those fears, it is worth mentioning that an a-priori-sceptical attitude to the elections as a universal power replacement mechanism is a serious warning for all who wants changes in Belarus.

Without analyzing into who is to blame for the fact that the institution of election – this icon of democracy – is much discredited in Belarus, it is necessary to accentuate the point that this state of matter is not normal and needs changing. This applies to those local elections in the first place. If people do not bother to elect their nearest representatives, whose activities indeed influence their everyday life, it is hard to expect the same lot of people to be more responsible about elections of a higher level, when the link between your decision and its consequences is much less evident. We must admit that the situation here is far from being excellent – more than three thirds of interviewees find it hard to tell the name of the local council deputy, who presents their constituency. Of course, one may object saying that local councils have little power, so not much depends of the deputies. However, one will have to make a beginning all the same and it would be logical to start from the local level, where the link between the choice of each particular citizen and its immediate result in much more evident and clear.

Now a few ideas on the choice to be made by those as early as now decided to go to the polls, and what they think about the choice of the majority.

Here we again observe Noel-Noiman's spiral of silence phenomenon – just as many people are expected to vote both for pro-A. Lukashenko candidates and candidates opposed to the president. However, 3 times as many interviewees said the majority would vote for the first group of candidates in comparison with the second group (See Tables 4–5). Without taking into account the "floating voters" and adherents of the president, even one third of his opponents thinks the same.

Table 4

Distribution of answers to the question: "Which candidate would you prefer to vote for?", %

Variants of answer	All respondents	Supporters of A. Lukashenko	Opponents of A. Lukashenko	Vacillatory
For a candidate – supporter of A. Lukashenko	29.2	92.1	2.3	43.4
For a candidate – opponent of A. Lukashenko	28.3	-	49.6	11.8
For another candidate	15.2	0.7	19.7	13.9

Table 5

Distribution of answers to the question: "For whom, do you think, the majority of Belarusian voters would vote?", %

Variants of answer	All respondents	Supporters of À. Lukashenko	Opponents of À. Lukashenko	Vacillatory
For a candidate – supporter À. Lukashenko	49.5	86.8	32.8	58.7
For a candidate – opponent À. Lukashenko	16.5	0.7	27.7	8.0
For another candidate	6.6	0.7	8.7	5.8

It has been repeatedly observed that a considerable part of the electorate, which took part in the election, does not have sufficient information about the candidates or their election manifestos, so what they actually do is "a blind vote". On the one hand – it is a peculiar way to manifest one's indifference to the election process. But on the other, while making their choice, those voters have to rely on some other criteria than the personal qualities of the candidates and their manifestos. It is at this point that the attitude of this or that candidate to A. Lukashenko becomes perhaps the most important indicator, some sort of an identifying feature for the voters to classify candidates into "friends" and "enemies".

For the time being, the electorate's preferences as regards this criterion have split even. Around 30% of respondents said they would vote for a pro-A. Lukashenko candidate and just as many were ready to support an anti-presidential candidate (See Table 4). Besides, another 15% of those polled are in the mood to lend support to a different candidate, i.e. those opposed to the president have a certain advantage. Now one can observe the good old "here we go again" picture – A. Lukashenko's supporters still stand solid around their idol, while the opponents are not so homogenous about the positive choice, although they are unanimous in their aversion to those who is linked with the present-day leader of the country.

One should also pay attention to the fact that each 30% of both the "floating electorate" and those opposed to the president are uncertain about their choice they will make, which goes to prove that there is potential for democratic support to increase.

The idea is that it is not in the interests of democratic candidates to build their campaign on sweeping criticism of the state system (for this would affect the candidates' image) and its major ideologist. One should try, as a manner of saying, to displace the accents in the pre-election situation, which many would wish to reduce to arguments around the personality and policies of A. Lukashenko. The black-and-white perception of life in the country will play into the hands of the authorities. The arguments about democracy and dictatorship, liberalism and nationalism are absolutely inefficient here. It is in the interests of democratic forces, in particular in the local elections, to campaign by means of ideology-free specific programs aimed at improving people's life standards, whose efficiency or inefficiency would be intelligible to any voter.

Speculations about a comparatively higher value of this or that ideology will hardly be a productive tool in winning the liking of the electorate. A candidate's membership with a political party will also be of no particular help (See Table 6).

Table 6

Distribution of answers to the question: "If you are going to vote for a candidate of a certain party, which party in particular?"

Variants of answer	%
Liberal Democratic Party (S. Gaidukevich)	5.5
Women's Party "Nadzeya" (V. Polevikova)	4.3
Belarusian Social Democratic Gramada (S. Shushkevich)	3.8
United Civic Party (À. Lebedko)	3.8
Belarusian Party of Communists (S. Kalyakin)	2.7
Belarusian Social-Democratic Party Narodnaya Gramada (N. Statkevich)	2.6
Belarusian Popular Front Adradzhennye (V. Vecherko)	2.0
Conservative-Christian Party of BPF (Z. Poznyak)	1.9
Communist Party of Belarus (V. Zakharchenko)	1.7
Labor Party (À. Bukhvostov)	1.4
Other	6.2

The above holds true not only for some particular opposition political party, but for a bloc of parties, too. Yes, it is true that a greater number of those polled (36.5%) support the idea of establishing a bloc of democratic parties rather than any single party. However, even without mentioning that the bloc has just as many adherents as opponents, we will make an observation that it is far from being a panacea or a magic wand but an organised unity of democratic forces – a most important pre-requirement for success at any elections, especially in contemporary Belarus. However, this bloc should by no means carry ideological principles on its colours instead of being closely tied to regional programme. It takes different

moves to achieve success on the local level – do something to touch people’s hearts, arrange for running water supply or a new trolley-bus route or pave the sidewalks.

When it comes to evaluate the job done by electoral commissions, respondents are being fairly critical – around half of them believe the commissions are subjected to the authorities, a third believes that the commissions are guided by the law alone (See Table 7). Just like in all matters of this kind reactions of the adherents and opponents of the president are mirror-like. By way of comparison – evaluating voter turnout reports by the Central Electoral Commission at the previous local elections, just a quarter of respondents had faith in those data, while the majority of those interviewed (60%) had nothing to say on this matter, i.e. the level of confidence was fairly low.

Table 7

Distribution of answers to the question: "Which of the below listed statements do you agree with?", %

Variants of answer	All respondents	Supporters of A. Lukashenko	Opponents of A. Lukashenko	Vacillatory
Election commissions are bodies guided first of all by instructions of authorities	47.3	15.8	69.0	31.0
Election commissions – are unbiased bodies guided only by law	33.3	63.8	18.2	42.4

Table 8

Distribution of answers to the question: "Do you think all candidates for deputies of local Councils would enjoy equal conditions during the future election?", %

Variants of answer	All respondents	Supporters of A. Lukashenko	Opponents of A. Lukashenko	Vacillatory
No	57.4	15.1	80.2	42.6
Yes	24.4	64.5	7.4	33.3
DA/NA	18.2	20.4	12.1	24.1

Apparently, remembering the two recent election campaigns (presidential and parliamentary), the electorate does not have illusions about the terms of the next local elections. Just a quarter of those polled said all runners for local councils will have equal opportunities, while 57.4% were of the opposite opinion (See Table 8). And, as a matter of fact, the opponents and adherents of A. Lukashenko again demonstrated diametrically opposite views.

Who appeals more to the needy and who is the favourite to the rich?

It has become an established public opinion that the convinced supporters of A. Lukashenko are, as a rule, representatives of the poor social strata. It goes without saying that among his followers there are indeed a lot of people, who make use of the opportunities provided by the authorities in exchange for being loyal to them (corruption, monopoly, business backing and so on) and have no material problems. However, empirical observations prove that the core of A. Lukashenko’s electorate are fairly poor.

As one can see from the poll findings, this point of view is grounded enough. In particular, A. Lukashenko’s convinced supporters¹ earned on average \$44.7 per capita in March this year, which is slightly above the official poverty line (March’s minimum living wage totaled \$43.7 at the market exchange rate).

In Table 9 one can see respondents with different per capita incomes answer questions, which characterize their attitude to A. Lukashenko. As one can see, 50.3% of the poor voted A. Lukashenko at the previous presidential elections, while just 26.2% of the rich (per capita monthly income exceeds \$100) made the same choice. It was V. Goncharik who enjoyed the most popular support among the rich (34.4%). Confidence in the president, too, depends much of the level of incomes of the electorate. And, although A. Lukashenko does not enjoy large-scale support even among the poor, every sixth one of the rich (16.4%) said he had faith in him, while three quarters of the well-to-do respondents (73.8%) demonstrated distrust.

Today slightly more than one third of the needy (36.3%) are ready to vote A. Lukashenko at the next presidential elections, while only every seventh "rich man" (14.8%) said he would do the same.

It is quite interesting to observe that the overwhelming majority of the poor (69.2%) choose Putin as their ideal politician, while A. Lukashenko lags far behind with 30.6%. Therefore, it would not come as a surprise that if they now held union presidential elections, Putin could beat his Belarusian counterpart even among the poor. As far as the rich are con-

¹ *Convinced supporters of A. Lukashenko are those are ready simultaneously to vote for him at the Belarusian presidential election and the «union» presidential election, who trust him and see in him an ideal politician. Convinced opponents are those who think in the contrary on all the given issues.*

cerned, their preferences are basically the same, however their attitude to both of them is more cool and reserved.

Table 9

Attitude towards À. Lukashenko depending on the level of incomes per capita, %

Variant of answer	Incomes per capita		All population
	Above \$100	Below the living wage budget	
1. For whom did you vote at the 2001 presidential election?			
For À. Lukashenko	26.2	50.3	43.8
For V. Goncharik	34.4	15.6	19.4
For S. Gaidukevich	9.8	4.0	5.9
2. Do you trust the president?			
Trust	16.4	36.2	32.4
Do no trust	73.8	45.8	50.1
3. If tomorrow there were a new presidential election, for whom would you vote? (open question)			
For À. Lukashenko	14.8	36.2	30.9
For À. Goncharik	16.4	7.5	8.3
4. Who of the modern politicians of the highest rank you like most of all, consider an ideal politician?			
À. Lukashenko	14.8	30.6	26.0
V. Putin	52.5	69.2	68.1
5. If the post of Russia-Belarus President is introduced, for whom would you vote?			
For À. Lukashenko	9.8	15.9	14.0
For V. Putin	49.2	47.9	50.5

On the whole, the conclusion is that the overall majority of the poor support A. Lukashenko and vote for him. One of the underlying reasons for their attitude is that many of them failed to adapt themselves to new economic conditions and continue to hope for the help of the state. We must admit that A. Lukashenko understands the circumstances and tries to exploit them in full. He shamelessly equates himself with the state, demonstrates "paternalistic" attitude towards the poor and identifies all welfare policy of the state with his name. However, this can deprive him of the aura of the defender if he makes a mistake or gives promises that are impossible to fulfil, the way it happened last spring.

And what about the "rich"? Table 9 shows that their overall attitude towards A. Lukashenko is more negative than that of the poor. However, the attitude can change. Table 10 demonstrates that as times goes, part of the rich provide more support to A. Lukashenko.

Table 10

Dynamics of attitude of the "rich" towards À. Lukashenko, %

Index of attitude	04'01	04'02
Closed rating	15.6	26.2*
Open rating	12.4	14.8
Consider an ideal politician	12.4	14.8
Would elect the present of the Russia-Belarus Union State	0	9.8

* The answer to the question about the factual voting at the 2001 election.

As it has been said above, some people became "rich" by adjusting to the realities of the regime. They do not want to change the circumstances they are used to, study the qualities and wishes of new authorities and search for the ways to "please" them. There are not many of them, less than 1%, but they exist and their number is slowly growing, in spite of severe public repression of some former associates and supporters. It seems they hope that the president's anger will pass them by. The fate of most of the people who assisted him on the way to power demonstrates the opposite.

Lack of objective information undermines trust in mass media

Foreseeable enough, the easily accessible television remains the main source of public, political, social and economic information to most of Belarusians (81.3%). Printed mass media ranks second (62.5%) and is 1.5 times more popular than radio (42.7%). However, person-to-person contacts are not among important sources of information in the era of contemporary mass communications (4.5%) and the Internet has not become easy-to-access so far (2.0%). Belarusians trust the television (28.6%), the press (13.8%) and the radio (8.1%) most.

As far as TV channels are concerned, except for the noticeable slide in the popularity of the Belarusian BT channel (by 10%), the tendencies are steady, i.e. the rating of the ORT is on the rise, that of the NTV is declining (it has been ever

since the old NTV team left), and that of the RTR remains practically unchanged (See Table 11). Apart from the political calm noted above, changes in the face, although not in the top leadership of the BT channel, that official agitation and propaganda department, might also be a reason why fewer people have been watching it recently in the capital and the major cities of Belarus. Some of the programs broadcast on the eve of the presidential election were odious but attracted much attention; after the election, they were replaced with gray and dull programs that do not cause even a slightest curiosity.

Table 11

Distribution of answers to the question: "Which TV channels do you watch?", %
(more than one answer is possible)

Variants of answer	06'97*	08'00	08'01	04'02
ORT	90.7	89.8	93.1	95.1
RTR	58.1	77.1	80.7	77.0
Belarusian Television	66.4	71.9	77.1	67.7
NTV	27.7	56.1	54.9	50.5
Local television (regional, city)	-**	37.2	39.0	32.4
TV-6	4.8	-	-	12.3
Cable television	-	-	-	9.3
Satellite television	1.3	10.0	9.7	5.3
Other	-	7.6	7.4	4.9

**In the given opinion poll this question was put like follows - "Programs of which TV channels do you regularly watch?"*

***No data*

Table 12

Distribution of answers to the question: "Which radio stations do you listen to?", %
(more than one answer is possible)

Variants of answer	06'97*	07'00	08'01	04'02
Belarusian radio	55.0	53.8	49.0	43.3
Local radio	-**	34.2	37.9	32.4
FM-stations	-	33.1	35.6	42.3
Russian radio stations	-	30.2	31.0	22.5
Belarusian service of Radio Liberty	2.4	7.1	11.3	8.9
Other western radio stations	-	4.6	3.6	1.4
Russian service of Radio Liberty	-	4.2	6.9	4.4
Other radio stations	-	3.3	4.2	2.7

** In the given opinion poll this question was put like follows - "Which radio stations do you regularly listen to?"*

***No data*

Unlike the BT's one, the popularity of the Belarusian radio has long been declining and, judging by appearances, will continue to (See Table 12). FM radio stations are winning the audience over from both the Belarusian and the Russian radio stations, for they are becoming more and more numerous and are creating better and better programs yearly. Minimum of politics and maximum of useful information, entertainment and music, as well as modern approaches are the keys to the success of FM radio stations.

In the Belarusian printed mass media market, non-state editions have long competed with the state ones successfully. Yet, as compared to the previous survey held straight after the presidential election, the public has lost its interest towards independent mass media, the Komsomolskaya Pravda in Belarus being the only exception to the rule (See Table 13 displaying an enviably steady growth in its rating). That is quite normal; people usually read more during mass political campaigns and so they did last autumn, the circulation of practically all non-state newspapers surging in October as a result; however, as soon as the presidential election campaign was over, the political Olympus stopped causing that much interest and the demand for information went down.

Bearing in mind the difference between state and non-state mass media as far as the financial support, the contents and the working conditions are concerned, one is welcome to see the dynamics of trust towards both on the part of Belarusian nationals (See Table 14). The "credibility gap" (let us call it so) is evident. Twice as many people have come to distrust state mass media and almost twice as many people have lost their confidence in independent mass media over the past five years. At that, the level of confidence in state editions has remained almost unchanged all through the period, which means that the official press has gained no new supporters.

Table 13

Distribution of answers to the question: "Which newspapers do you read?", %
(more than one answer is possible)

Variants of answer	06'97*	07'00	10'01	04'02
Local newspaper (Vecherny Minsk, Brest Courier, etc.)	43.1	42.3	-**	48.8
Komsomolskaya Pravda in Belarus	4.1	21.0	35.6	39.4
Sovetskaya Belorussia	23.2	29.4	37.7	34.8
Argumenty i Facty in Belarus	22.0	25.6	40.5	31.5
Belorusskaya Delovaya Gazeta	2.5	7.4	12.1	11.7
Narodnaya Volya	5.5	9.8	12.8	10.5
Svobodnye Novosti	4.9	6.1	10.4	7.1
Izvetia in Belarus	-**	6.4	10.7	6.2
Belorusskaya Gazeta	2.5	4.4	8.4	5.3
Belorussky Rynok"	2.2	4.7	6.6	4.4
Nasha Svoboda	-	2.6	5.5	3.3
Belarusky Chas	-	-	5.2	2.6
Den	-	-	3.0	1.8
Rabochy	2.0	2.4	2.4	1.6
Belaruskaya Molodezhnaya	-	-	-	0.9
Belarus Today	-	-	-	0.5
Other	21.9	16.6	21.9	17.8

* In the given opinion poll this question was put like follows – "Which newspapers do you regularly read?"

**The given newspapers were not mentioned in these polls

As far as independent mass media are concerned, their readers and viewers are beginning to get more numerous after their confidence towards them was on the decline. On the whole, one can assert at a stretch that attitudes of Belarusians to the two different segments of the Belarusian press are practically the same.

Table 14

Dynamics of trust towards mass media, %

Variant of answer	11'97	09'98	06'99	04'00	10'01	04'02
State-run mass media						
– trust	43.7	41.8	39.8	38.5	40.4	38.7
– do not trust	21.0	26.0	31.0	31.6	42.4	43.1
Non-state mass media						
– trust	25.4	19.6	19.5	25.7	31.7	32.2
– do not trust	24.1	32.6	34.9	31.9	42.1	43.9

Why has this happened? Why, so to speak, such a disappointment in the press? As far as state mass media are concerned, the situation is more or less clear. Being part of the agitation and propaganda machine, they keep telling the news about the country as the authorities demand and not as the things are. No more than 11.5% of respondents believe the official information completely in line with the real state of affairs; 66.7% of those questioned say, the official information is only partially true and 16.1% say, it is totally untrue.

The economy is decaying, President's rating is falling, the number of his convinced opponents is growing, yet no increase in the trust towards independent mass media is visible. Why? Has it not been the Prometheus of an alternative viewpoint recently? It is a well-known fact that the positions of convinced opponents and supporters of A. Lukashenko are diametrically opposite with regard to crucial issues. So are their attitudes towards the press but for a small and extremely important exception.

As many as 82.2% of A. Lukashenko's supporters trust state mass media and as many as 11.2% trust non-state mass media (6.6% and 70.4% respectively do not). As many as 11.3% of A. Lukashenko's opponents trust state mass media and as many as 42.9% trust non-state mass media, while 72.8% and 40% (!) respectively do not. The latter indicator not only destroys the "mirror-like" picture of supporters and opponents' positions, but also points at the fact that, strangely enough, the democratic-minded voters distrust the democratic-minded press.

It will not be out of place to remark here that among independent newspapers, it is those that deliberately cover no or little politics (like The Argumenty i Facty in Belarus, The Komsomolskaya Pravda in Belarus) that are popular. This does not mean that the opposition newspapers should avoid covering politics – in that case they will lose their traditional readers – yet, in selecting political information for the issue, they should remember the well-known but never outdated criteria such as objectiveness, timeliness and comprehensiveness. Namely, the viewpoints of all the parties involved ought to be covered, which unfortunately the Belarusian independent press may seldom be proud of. That is exactly what today's

readers want: not just political or economic information, which is not insufficient at present, but objective and truthful information. One fourth of those questioned said so. He who is fastest to meet that demand shall reap laurels.

Searching for the lost alternative

It is hardly a secret that the situation in Belarus is tottering, President's rating falling down to as low as 30%, the social-economic crisis deepening, the resentment against the present policies surging. Who can be a source of changes, who can Belarusians lay hopes on? That question is asked in the East and in the West and in Belarus itself more and more often. Theoretically, A. Lukashenko himself might trigger changes. In that case, he would have to stop blaming the "remiss officials", the opposition or the "outer enemies" and change his own outlook radically instead. However, there is little hope of such possibility; A. Lukashenko himself is stating regularly that he does not intend to change the present course.

The majority of those alarmed at the "Belarusian issue" are looking for an alternative leader but the area of search is very narrow restricted to the opposition leaders and the surroundings of A. Lukashenko. We think this useless and fruitless. It is clear that an alternative political leader cannot possibly spring up from nowhere. It is only on some social or professional background that a real alternative leader with a real alternative team and program has to stand. In 1994, during Belarus' first presidential election, each of the contenders (V. Kebich, S. Shushkevich, Z. Pozniak, A. Lukashenko, V. Novikov and N. Dubko) was a truly alternative runner for presidency exactly because each of them had particular structures and the interests of a particular social layer behind their backs. However, those alternatives are no longer available. Are there any others or any chances of finding others? In the social survey the question sounds as follows: which social groups enjoy the most authority today? Let us see Table 15 for the results of IISEPS's latest national survey.

Table 15

Attitude of the population towards leading social-professional groups of Belarusian society, %

Social-professional groups	Presidential vertical	Deputies of the National Assembly	Law enforcers	Chiefs of state-run enterprises, collective farms	Businessmen	Opposition politicians	Journalists	Military
How do you assess material status of the following population groups of Belarus?								
Bad	1.1	0.8	2.3	8.4	4.5	11.1	13.6	26.6
Average	10.8	17.8	33.9	31.6	39.1	35.2	58.1	49.7
Good	87.0	80.0	62.9	59.2	55.5	51.9	27.3	22.7
Rank	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Does life of the following groups correspond to their merits before the society?								
Live worse, than deserve	2.1	2.1	6.8	12.0	12.2	10.5	22.5	45.8
Live the life that they deserve	25.3	31.1	44.0	40.0	58.4	45.4	63.3	43.0
Live better, than deserve	71.0	65.5	48.6	47.3	28.9	42.5	13.3	10.0
Rank	1	2	3	4	6	5	7	8
Do the following groups enjoy respect in society?								
They are not respects	15.7	35.9	42.9	20.4	20.2	44.7	17.6	15.7
Enjoy some respect	62.2	53.6	45.8	64.7	70.0	48.4	67.3	62.2
They are highly respected	21.1	9.3	10.3	14.2	9.2	5.6	14.1	21.1
Rank	5	6	7	4	3	8	2	1
How do the following groups influence Belarusians' life?								
No influence	19.5	30.3	18.5	22.0	26.9	43.9	19.2	37.2
Average influence	30.7	43.2	45.6	46.8	50.2	41.5	54.8	44.1
Considerable influence	48.5	25.3	35.0	30.3	22.2	12.6	24.9	17.7
Rank	1	6	2	3	5	8	4	7

**Read vertically*

The position of the leading social and professional layers of Belarusian society was analyzed in accordance with four basic criteria, such as: financial well-being, the correspondence of well-being to the social merits, to the moral authority and to the real power. The results are completely amazing.

The groups that represent the three branches of power – the executive power in the face of the presidential vertical, the legislative power in the persons of MPs and the juridical power, i.e. lawyers and law enforcers – are believed to be prospering but for no merit and having much real power (except for MPs) but little moral authority.

The groups that do not represent the power – journalists, entrepreneurs and the opposition politicians – are considered to be low-income groups, which corresponds to or is worse than their merits, and are attached much moral (except for the opposition) but little real authority. The majority of respondents place military men lowest among social layers and believe directors the neutral layer in between the top and the bottom. Comparing those results to the 1996 survey, one can see that the power groups have got better off over the six years (the presidential vertical by 9% and law enforcers by 10%), yet respondents see even less merit behind that prosperity (by 5% with the presidential vertical and by 8% with the law enforcers). The moral authority has slid (5% more people say, law enforcers enjoy no respect), budget the real power in their hands has grown (by 10% with the presidential vertical and by 13% with law enforcers).

Meanwhile the positions of non-power groups (journalists, businessmen) have got worse; businessmen's affluence is believed to have decreased by 29% and their real power by 6% (that of journalists by 5%).

No doubt, there are many well-educated, hard-working and upright officials among hundreds of them working for the Belarusian state machinery. However unfair the above-stated evaluations might seem to them, that is the logic of the politics which would not have been possible without their active involvement. We refer you to the article Executive Vertical: President's Support or Hostage? published in 1996 to the following fragment: *"The executive vertical proves to be a hostage rather than the support of president's policies. Now that the crisis is deepening, president is likely to start acting as an aeronaut whose balloon is dipping – he will be getting rid of the heaviest ballast, which the executive branch or at least part of it will most probably turn out to be. Really, isn't it an effective move: president admits "certain mistakes and serious lapses" and "gives in" his vertical as the most irritating and the "least trustworthy" structure of the state machinery. Thus he satisfies the expectations of the people and demonstrates to the whole world that he is not only irreconcilable with the enemies, but is hard on the "next of kin", too. Nevertheless, that move is only seemingly effective; in reality, it is of little help as far as the perfection of the state governance and the satisfaction of people's true interests and expectations is concerned. Those sacrificed will be replaced with new leaders just as dependent on the one who appointed them and not on the ones who elect them as their predecessors were".* Time has proved that prophecy right; let us remind you of the recent "purge" done by president at the April 29 sitting of the Cabinet of Ministers. State officials will continue becoming even more estranged from society and even more dependent on president is the continue pursuing the present policies. Therefore those who hope that representatives of the authorities ("Their Majesty Nomenclature" as an opposition politician said once) will whip up changes hope in vain, to our mind. Changes are hardly possible without an alliance with nomenclature, yet nomenclature may back up the initiatives of other social and professional groups in case if those initiatives are backed up by society first.

Table 16

Distribution of answers to the question: "If you are going to vote for candidate of a certain party, which party in particular?", %

Political party	11'97	10'98	11'99	10'00**	04'01***	04'02
Belarusian Social-Democratic Gramada (S. Shushkevich)	-*	-	6.1	-	2.6	3.8
Belarusian Social-Democratic Party Narodnaya Gramada (N. Statkevich)	0.6	0.1	1.6	4.2	2.1	2.6
Belarusian Popular Front Adradzhennye (V. Vecherko)	5.0	3.0	4.4	-	3.8	2.0
Conservative-Christian Party of the BPF (Z. Poznyak)	-	-	-	-	-	1.9
Women's Party Nadzeya (V. Polevikova)	-	-	8.4	-	5.5	4.3
Liberal Democratic Party (S. Gaidukevich)	-	0.7	1.5	4.0	1.8	5.5
United Civic Party (À. Lebedko)	1.8	1.4	3.0	-	2.3	3.8
Belarusian Party of Communists (S. Kalyakin)	1.2	0.6	2.4	2.6	1.2	2.7
Labor Party (À. Bukhvostov)	-	-	1.4	3.3	2.5	1.4

*No data

**Answers to the question: "For candidate of which party did you vote at the recent parliamentary election?"

*** Answers to the question: "Which political party do you support?"

Who then? If Belarus were a Latin-American country, military men might be thought of as a source of changes, for

military men enjoy high and stable respect in Latin-American societies. But Belarus is a Slavic country, its traditions are totally different and the social position of military men is different. A "Belarusian military junta" is even more improbable than a "rebellion of the nomenclature": the army will not initiate political changes independently. However, bearing in mind their low social position, one may count on their latent support, such as non-participation in repression.

The opposition naturally seems to be the one to prompt changes. Unfortunately, today's opposition enjoys no authority or influence in Belarusian society. The ratings of the opposition political parties are extremely low (in April, four parties exceeded the error margin only), and that has been so for the past six years since the opposition was ousted from the state machinery (See Table 16).

Relentless pressure upon the opposition on the part of the authorities and aggressive propaganda in state mass media aimed at discrediting the opposition parties and blocking up their contacts with society are definitely one of the crucial reasons for that. There are also other reasons, on the other hand: the tactics and the strategies of the opposition itself have not always been correct; until recently, it has been trying to have society conform to its programs rather than bring its programs in conformity with the needs of society. For instance, having boycotted the 1999–2000 local and parliamentary elections, the opposition harmed its image a lot, in our opinion. Be that as it may, today's image of the opposition in public opinion leaves no room for society to regard it as a real source of changes.

Public opinion polls show, journalists and businessmen are the most promising groups; they might form an alliance and directors might support it (see data above). Journalists, however much we respect them, will hardly head the movement for changes, for their job and their functions are different. But they certainly might play an important role in the formation of the public opinion and drumming up support for such an alliance.

We believe, it is a many-component alternative that might gain the support of society and cause changes. A coalition of regional civil structures that are of real influence, such as Businessmen's Union, the Belarusian Helsinki Committee, the Belarusian Association of Journalists, the Chernobyl Children Foundation, the Belarusian Language Society, part of the Writers' Union and of the Belarusian Labor Union Federation (the latter one is likely to split in a democratic and a pro-governmental organisations soon) should be a most important component. The political opposition represented by the Coordination Council of Democratic Forces and the Consultative Council of the Opposition Parties should be another important component. Also, the part of the political establishment that may enlist the support of the unhappy nomenclature (such as the Republic MP group formed at the Lower Chamber not long ago, for example) should join and be a crucial component, too. Members of that group have repeatedly displayed their willingness to restore the parliamentary mode of power and quite specific social and professional groups stand behind each member. Directors might support that alliance, too, as was noted above. An efficient interaction between each components of the alliance is the key to the success of the alternative.

Apart from the downslide of president's rating, there is another factor that creates favourable conditions for the formation of the political alternative. The matter concerns the changes in Russia's policies, such as deeper reforms, rapprochement with the West, which has fundamentally told on the Belarusian public opinion: many opponents of Belarusian president look at Russia with hope and sympathy. The conditions are such that their Russian party cooperation partners will evidently be with them (B. Nemtsov's recent visit to Minsk upon the invitation of the United Civic Party is a good example), and there are also chances that they will have the support of V. Putin's administration. In order not to lose those chances, one should elaborate a strategy that would consider the interests of Russia, which A. Lukashenko has guaranteed all the way. The Foundation For A New Belarus set up in Moscow some time ago might become the necessary link between the new Belarusian alternative and Russia.

"What are the guarantees that the above-mentioned groups will manage to find consensus and cooperate efficiently?", a skeptic might ask. Frankly speaking, they are none. But the formation of the civil coalition on the eve of the recent presidential election campaign is a good experience to use in preparing for the local election and a possible referendum. It is clear that no alternative will appear without persistent and purposeful searches and efforts. The results of the surveys are a good base for the new alternative not to get lost for another eight years.

Voters and economy

As was expected, the economic situation in the country after the presidential elections again took a visible turn for the worse. This can be persuasively confirmed by the figures in Table 17. A certain improvement that had been mentioned by our respondents throughout 2001 was displaced again with more pessimistic views. This shows again that we were right assuming that the economic improvement was associated with the realization of A. Lukashenko's electoral strategy, the core idea of which was forcing enterprises to push up their social expenses by the voting day and to build a mirage of economic progress for the electorate. And naturally, the economy turned to its habitual state after the elections, which was reflected in the results of the opinion poll.

The same can be seen in Table 18 – as one may see, six months after the elections people grew much less optimistic.

As Table 19 shows, today a huge part of Belarusians are worried about wage and pension delays. Earlier, the authorities regarded payments in due time as their merit and scared the population with the pitiful situation in Russia, and now, 83.7% of Belarusians have already faced this problem during the last 12 months, and 55.2% of them repeatedly.

Table 17**Change of economic situation in Belarus over the last year, %***

Variant of answer	06'96	11'99	04'00	10'00	08'01	10'01	04'02
– has improved	8.3	8.5	7.0	7.5	16.9	17.8	7.7
– has not changed	28.8	23.9	27.9	33.8	40.7	47.4	33.2
– has deteriorated	61.9	67.4	64.8	57.5	35.9	29.2	55.5

Table 18**Dynamics of distribution of answers to the question: "How do you assess your material status?", %**

Variant of answer	08'01	10'01	04'02
Everything is not so bad, it is possible to live	25.3	22.7	17.2
It is hard to live, but could be endured	54.2	58.7	57.0
Impossible to endure	18.5	17.0	24.0

Table 19**Distribution of answers to the question: "How many times over the last 12 months have you faced backpays?", %**

Variant of answer	04'02
Once	28.5
Several times	37.6
Face backpay monthly	17.6

Table 20**Distribution of answers to the question: "Do you think everything is developing in the right or wrong direction in Belarus?", %**

Variant of answer	10'01	04'02
In a wrong direction	38.1	55.5
In the right direction	36.7	21.4

The number of citizens living below the poverty line increased again after the elections – today eight out of ten our nationals can hardly survive under the "socially oriented market economy" that is being built under the direction of A. Lukashenko. Maybe that is why 55.5% of voters guess that the country is going in the wrong direction (See Table 20). Only 38.1% of the interrogated gave this answer right after the voting. Today, however, only every fifth is of another point of view.

More than one half (55.3%) of voters are convinced that A. Lukashenko hasn't kept his pre-electoral promises to liberalize the Belarusian economy. Only 16% of adults hold the opposite opinion. Almost two thirds (64.3%) are sure that our people live worse than they do in the Western countries because of poor state management. According to the majority of respondents, other reasons of bad living are insignificant.

It can be seen from Table 21 that the number of planned economy adherents is reducing, and more than 40% would prefer the liberal alternative of market economy. This tendency is systematic and has a long history.

Table 21**Choice of economy type, %**

Variant of answer	06'97	11'97	09'98	10'01	04'02
Market economy with insignificant state control	30.4	32.8	35.2	34.5	40.5
Market economy with significant state control	35.0	36.2	39.4	21.4	21.3
Planned economy	30.3	25.7	22.8	19.1	18.3

The comparative analysis of Belarusians' economy preferences shows that the number of those who consider private property to be more efficient has grown by more than 10% (today they are 54%) during A. Lukashenko's government, and of those who prefer to work at private enterprises – by almost 20% (they are 47.5%, while only 41.2% would like to work at a state enterprise).

And people wish to run their own private businesses, too. During the last three years the number of entrepreneurs or entrepreneurs-to-be has increased in 22.2%. Almost identical (22.9%) is the decrease in the number of people who hadn't performed such activities and were not going to do so in the future.

Thus, the results of the opinion poll let us certify that the population's economic views are dynamically changing for adhering to normal market relations. Consequently, the authorities' attempts to put obstacles before the normal development of market economy result in directly the opposite: the harder private initiatives are suppressed and the more active the state's interruption is, the more people prefer normal market relations.

Recently the auctioning of state property has become a topical problem. This is caused by A. Lukashenko's statements and the expiring of "Imushchestvo" vouchers that give the right to buy stocks of Belarusian enterprises. As the questioning indicates, most voters (37.3%) would rather see the privatization with the help of the vouchers. 15.5% are convinced that the priority should be given to enterprises' staff. This means that more than one half of our citizens (52.8%) choose the most inefficient way of privatization. Meanwhile every seventh of the questioned thinks that we don't need privatization at all. It should be mentioned that almost 45% of the respondents would like to use their share to invest in productive enterprises, while 32.7% would use it for consuming. 22.7% more still do not know how to use their certificates and thus they would hand them over to their children. Up to now, our society is not unanimous about foreign investments. Even if they come from our "Slavonic brothers", from Russia, which is agreed upon by only 43.9% of the respondents. But 35% do not want it at all. This indicates that our people do not have objective information about privatization and are guided by ideological stamps the authorities cram them with.

A picture of Belarusian poverty

Statistics shows that the level of individual income over the country during the last three months of 2001 was about \$56 a month (in market exchange rate). As is seen from Table 22, almost 60% of population have income lower than this level. Moreover, approximately 32% of our nationals earn less than the living wage (\$38). Consequently, almost one third of Belarusians stay below the official poverty line. Let's study the social-demographic characteristics of this group. We will compare it to those who have individual monthly income of more than \$100, considering them "rich" according to Belarusian standards, though such income level is estimated as beggarly Europe.

Table 22

Distribution of the population by the level of monthly incomes per capita, %

Interval	Ministry of statistics (4th quarter of 2001)
Below the living wage budget (~\$38)	31.6
From the living wage budget to the minimum consumer budget (~\$62)	36.6
From the minimum consumer budget to \$100	23.2
From \$100 and up	8.6

As is seen from Table 23, the majority of the poor are women (55.6%), while almost two thirds of the "rich" are men (65.6%). The youngest and the oldest age groups representatives prevail among the poor (18–29 years – 24.3%, 60 years and older – 27.2%). Age distribution of the rich is distinctly skewed towards the young. However, people aged 40–49 prevail in this group (42.6%). On the whole, the average age of the poor is about 45 years, of the rich – 37 years.

As one could expect, people without or with low qualifications prevail among the poor, while three fourths of the rich (77%) are people with a University or college education. Meanwhile every eighth-ninth among the poor has a higher education and every fourth has specialized (two-year college) education. Therefore, not everybody with a good education managed to obtain a high-income level. One can assume that these are first of all elderly people who could not adapt to the new life conditions. Furthermore, if we consider the fact that more than 40% of adult Belarusians would like to emigrate to another country, an assumption about a certain "peculiarity" of Belarus in terms of life and carrier possibilities suggests itself.

It is useful to indicate in this connection that state sector employees (45.5%) and retired people (32.2%) prevail among the poor, while 55% of the rich are employed in the non-state sector. On the whole more than 90% of the poor are people whose income considerably (and sometimes fully) depends on the state. The share of the rich who rely first of all on the state in their income does not exceed 45%. Thus, a reasonable conclusion suggests itself: the main cause of poverty in Belarus is the Belarusian state. The more the state interferes with the economic life of the people, the more paupers the country has!

Let us consider regional distribution of the population considering the level of per capita income (See Table 24). One can see, the biggest number of the poor is in Minsk and Gomel regions, while more rich live in the city of Minsk and in

Brest region. The city of Minsk and Brest region count the smallest number of the poor, while the rich are the fewest in Grodno (!) and Mogilev regions. In order to consider the population numbers in every region we calculated the number of the poor and the rich per 1000 people. Now Grodno and Minsk regions "lead" in the number of the poor while most of the rich again turn out to live and work in the city of Minsk and in Brest region, leaving other regions far behind. These territories also boast the lowest specific poverty level.

Table 23

Social-demographic characteristics of the population depending on the level of incomes, %

Characteristics	Incomes per capita		The whole population
	Below the living wage budget	Above \$100	
Gender:			
Male	44.4	65.6	48.5
Female	55.6	34.4	51.5
Age:			
18-29	24.3	27.9	24.0
30-39	16.3	23.0	18.3
40-49	18.4	42.6	21.0
50-59	13.8	3.3	14.4
60 and up	27.2	3.2	22.3
Education:			
Elementary and incomplete secondary	27.1	–	20.2
Secondary	36.4	23.0	35.1
Secondary vocational	24.8	32.8	26.5
Higher, (including incomplete higher)	11.7	44.2	18.2
Social status:			
State enterprise employee	45.5	35.1	48.9
Private enterprise employee	3.9	48.3	9.6
Individual entrepreneur	1.4	6.7	3.2
Student	9.1	6.7	7.1
Pensioner	32.2	1.6	25.9
Housewife	2.2	1.6	1.7
Unemployed	5.7	–	3.6

Table 24

Administrative-territorial distribution of the population depending on the level of incomes per capita

Place of living	Incomes per capita			
	Below the living wage budget		above \$100	
	Percentage to the country's population	People per 1.000 of inhabitants	Percentage to the country's population	People per 1.000 of inhabitants
Region:				
Minsk	8.3	223	45.9	104
Minsk region	19.2	632	8.2	23
Brest and region	10.4	361	19.7	58
Grodno region	16.3	682	1.6	6
Vitebsk and region	13.3	542	9.8	34
Mogilev and region	11.8	494	6.6	23
Gomel and region	20.7	612	8.2	20
Type of settlement:				
Capital	8.3	223	45.9	104
Regional center	13.1	396	21.3	54
City (50,000 inhabitants and more)	10.5	404	19.7	64
Town (less than 50.000 inhabitants)	23.7	548	8.2	16
Village	44.4	705	4.9	7

The data show, poverty is spread mostly in the rural areas and in small towns – more than two thirds of the Belarusian poor live here (68.1%). The rich, correspondingly, are abundant in the capital and in large cities – almost 87%. Specific data do not differ greatly.

Frankly speaking, this information only gives a quantitative proof of well-known facts. However, it lets us outline average social-demographic portraits of rich and poor Belarusians. Thus, a poor Belarusian is a retired woman or a young woman working at a collective farm with specialized education who lives in the rural area or in a small town in Grodno or Minsk region. A rich Belarusian is a man of 40–50 with a higher education employed at the non-state sector who lives in Minsk or Brest.

Fear of poverty and backpays don't force Belarusians to barricades yet

Last year's presidential elections affected a substantial part of the society of the republic in an ill manner. There was a long pause during which realization of the events as well as creation of a new strategy and giving new answers to old questions were expected to take place.

However, as the latest events show, after the winter time-out the democrats started repeating what they can do and had been doing before. We again witnessed another "hot spring" that showed us the dissociation of the opposition, forgotten during the presidential campaign, and the society's indifference to its activities. And this is no wonder – why should the society react to the democratic leaders' approaches in a different way when they do not change?

Even the authorities themselves confess that the country is experiencing a serious economic crisis that has affected various strata of the society. Thus, the vast majority of Belarusians apprehend mostly the things that can menace their existence – social and economic troubles (inaccessibility of food and vital consumer goods, impossibility to pay for communal services) and ecological disasters (the questionnaire took place right on the eve of another Chernobyl anniversary) (See Table 25).

Table 25

Distribution of answers to the question: "What are you afraid of in the near future?", % (more than one answer is possible)

Variants of answer	%
Rocketing prices for food products and staples	54.1
Ecological catastrophes	43.1
Impossibility to pay for communal services because of growing rates	42.4
To become a victim of growing crime	33.9
Establishment of dictatorship	30.3
Wars with other countries	29.8
Civil war	19.9
International isolation of Belarus	19.6
Loss of savings	18.8
Interethnic conflicts in Belarus	12.1
Russia would buy up all of Belarus' property	8.9
West would buy up all of Belarus' property	7.7
Other	3.8

Political changes are at the background. Maybe because of the fact that political needs are acute, political problems are treated much more calmly – less than one third apprehend the foundation of a dictatorship, less than 20% are afraid of civil war and 12.2% – of internal conflicts.

The same is true for external dangers – about 70% of voters are afraid of war with a foreign state and only 20% fear international isolation. While the problem of "Motherland for sail", i.e. the privatization of the biggest companies, is being actively discussed in the media and among the elite common citizens treat it more indifferently – less than 10% of the questioned apprehend that our property could be bought in bulk by Russian and Western tycoons.

Table 26

Distribution of answers to the question: "Are you personally ready to express your political views?", %

Variants of answer	All respondents	Supporters of À. Lukashenko	Opponents of À. Lukashenko	Vacillatory
Never afraid of openly expressing my views	32.0	40.8	29.8	32.3
Sometimes afraid of openly expressing my vies	26.1	15.1	30.3	24.2
Often afraid of openly expressing my views	14.1	4.6	17.0	13.1
Never openly express my vies	20.2	25.7	17.2	22.2

Previous polls showed that about 70% of citizens are in some way afraid to express their political opinions and that this figure is stable. However, when the question was transformed and addressed to every concrete respondent, the result was different. One fifth never express their political opinions openly (it is interesting that the most cautious were Luka-

shenko's adherents who seem not to have anything to fear), almost one third never conceal their opinions (the most brave are president's adherents, too) and about 40% can be characterized by a varying degree of moderation in expressing their political views (See Table 26). In other words every individual thinks that the nation on the whole is less brave than it actually is.

The number of those who think that it is possible to criticize authorities in public is much smaller than of their opponents. As it often happens, the response of the sides turned out to be diametrically opposite.

We have already found out that the Belarusians are most afraid of material trouble. Are these fears well grounded or are they, so to say, in order "to be on the safe side"? It appears that there are reasons – almost 80% of the respondents stated that they face wage and pension arrears with various regularity while more than 17% of the questioned (22.3% among president's adherents) face this problem almost every month. And only 6% had never seen wage or pension delays!

Timely pensions and wages for budget sphere employees have for a long time been the authorities' trump card for a long time. They constantly pointed out that salaries and pensions were not huge but were always on time, unlike in Russia and Ukraine. Now we have grounds to say that the authorities do not have this trump anymore. A. Lukashenko himself mentioned in his annual appeal to the government that that the state's fulfillment of its commitments roused censure. Being aware of the special importance of this problem he bullied the government with all kinds of sanctions. Considering the fact that present Russian officials did not only declare timely and full wages as their priority but are also constantly raising salary figures, the Belarusian economic model looks less appealing. Another powerful argument for its critics on the eve of the elections.

Table 27

Distribution of answers to the question: "Do you think it is acceptable that people who disagree with authorities' actions publicly criticize the president and the government?", %

Variants of answer	All respondents	Supporters of À. Lukashenko	Opponents of À. Lukashenko	Vacillatory
Acceptable	62.6	25.7	78.3	54.4
Unacceptable	26.2	62.5	13.1	31.8

Table 28

Distribution of answers to the question: "What is your attitude towards mass actions of the opposition?", %

Variants of answer	March of Freedom I (11'99)	March of Freedom II (04'00)	March of Freedom III (11'00)	"Day of Will" (03'01)	"Day of Will" (04'02)
Heard nothing about it	—*	28.9**	40.6	49.6	50.8
Indifferent	24.6	19.7	23.4	20.3	21.9
Negative	56.0	31.1	21.5	17.9	12.0
Positive	16.9	18.4	13.6	12.1	14.5

*-This variant of answer was omitted in the given poll

**- in the given poll the following answer was used offered –"Find it difficult to answer"

Table 29

Distribution of answers to the question: "What is your attitude towards participating in public actions to express one's opinion?", %

Variants of answer	Took part	Ready to take part	Not going to take part	DA/NA
Meetings, demonstrations, pickets	8.1	16.9	68.3	6.7
Strikes	2.6	14.8	75.5	7.1
Hunger strikes	0.3	5.0	88.8	5.9
Armed struggle	0.8	5.9	86.3	7.0

Can social tension caused by wage and pension arrears make people take to the streets and join protest actions? First we should say that the voters' attitude to such events is still reserved (See Table 28). Despite all the efforts of Freedom Day organizers one half of the people still know nothing of it. One fifth remained indifferent to it in spite of the rude actions of law enforcers, and the numbers of non-indifferent people (with positive or negative attitude) are small and almost equal. Without too much sympathy for street democracy adherents, Belarusians themselves are not very eager to express their opinions actively. Without mentioning the most extreme forms we should say that even meetings and marches would be joined by only 17% of the respondent (See Table 29). Let us bear in mind that 17.6% do not get their salaries in time almost every month and that readiness does not always mean participation. We can only repeat that any kind of public

disagreement is regarded by the silent majority as radicalism and Belarusians have never been very fond of radicals.

OSCE AMG in Belarus: mission impossible?

Belarus is in the center of another international scandal: four months after the departure of first head of the OSCE Advisory and Monitoring Group in Belarus, experienced German diplomat H.G. Wieck, Acting AMG Head and French diplomat M. Rivollier was also forced to leave the country. It is highly possible that the remaining "officer-in-charge", British diplomat Andrew Carpenter will follow suffer the same fate: his visa might also not be extended. Wieck's official successor former German Ambassador to Ukraine E. Heyken has been trying to receive the consent of the Belarusian side for several months already, but in vain. The country's authorities, including Foreign Minister of Belarus Mikhail Khvastov and the president himself openly declare: the OSCE mission as it used to be is no longer possible in Belarus. The AMG, they claim, started interfering with interior affairs, supporting opposition, therefore, its mandate should be amended. The OSCE management and many European leaders do not agree with this requirement and express their full support for the AMG. The scandal is flaring up.

Table 30

Confidence in the most important state and public institutions, %

State and public institutions	Trust	distrust	DA/NA	Index of trust
Educational establishments (schools, colleges, institutions and universities)	56.9	23.0	20.1	+0.344
Church	51.9	27.4	20.7	+0.247
Army	47.4	31.6	21.0	+0.159
Independent research centers	40.4	24.9	34.7	+0.158
State-run research centers	33.3	32.4	34.3	+0.009
OSCE AMG in Minsk	28.8	31.4	39.8	-0.027
State-run mass media	38.7	43.1	18.2	-0.044
Constitutional court	35.5	40.2	24.3	-0.048
Non-state mass media	32.2	43.9	23.9	-0.119
Unions of entrepreneurs	25.0	38.3	36.7	-0.135
Free and independent labor unions	27.6	41.0	31.4	-0.136
President	32.4	50.1	17.5	-0.179
Central Election Commission	29.6	47.7	22.7	-0.183
KGB	27.7	46.9	25.4	-0.194
Labor Unions forming the Federation of Labor Unions	23.4	42.9	33.7	-0.198
Courts	28.6	50.6	20.8	-0.222
Government	26.1	52.3	21.6	-0.266
National Assembly	19.6	52.0	28.4	-0.328
Political parties support the present authorities	19.8	52.9	27.3	-0.335
13 th Supreme Council	15.7	51.0	33.3	-0.359
Opposition political parties	15.2	54.4	30.4	-0.397
Police	20.8	61.7	17.5	-0.413
Local authorities	20.4	61.3	18.3	-0.414

Since we are neither politicians nor diplomats, we will not try to estimate the developments around the OSCE AMG from the point of view of international political and diplomatic standards. The attitude of the Belarusian society to the events is more important for us as for professional sociological researchers. As a rule, A. Lukashenko justifies all his crucial decisions by "the interests of the nation", and till recently the nation's support was the major source of his power. How far does the attitude of the authorities towards the OSCE AMG match that of the society?

In order to find the answer let us look at the results of the opinion poll held by the IISEPS in April. For many years we have been asking Belarusians about the trust to the most influential state and social institutions, since trust is the basis for stable power.

Table 30 shows, our fellow citizens trust the OSCE AMG more than they trust the majority of state and social institutions, including the government, the parliament, law enforcing structures and the president himself. Over just three years the society's attitude towards this institution – which is in fact not even of Belarusian origin – has changed considerably (See Table 31).

The most noticeable and important change is the fact that the number of people who do not know anything about the activities of the OSCE AMG in Belarus and therefore cannot judge the situation has gone down 23%. Today more than 60% of the respondents express their attitude: half of them trust this organisation, the other half – do not. The reason why the number of people who do not trust the OSCE has grown is understandable: mass aggressive anti-AMG propaganda through state mass media and regular statements from the top-ranking officials cannot but influence mass consciousness.

Table 31**Dynamics of public attitude towards the OSCE AMG in Belarus, %**

Confidence in the OSCE AMG in Belarus	11'99	04'00	11'00	04'01	11'01	04'02
Trust	16.5	20.6	20.2	21.9	29.5	28.8
Distrust	20.7	20.5	22.4	23.4	28.8	31.4
DA/NA	62.8	58.9	57.4	54.7	41.7	39.8

Why then in spite of all this the number of people who trust the AMG has grown even more? It is important to stress that we are not talking about those few who have personal experience of cooperating with the AMG (political parties leaders, social organisations activists, relatives of political prisoners, etc). We are talking about common ("simple" as the president likes to stress) people, who learned about the AMG's activities from mass media, or even heard about it during the interview for the first time. The most important thing for people is to know where the activities of the organisation are directed and what means it uses.

One of the most famous steps of the OSCE AMG in Belarus is putting forward four requirements for the Belarusian authorities, aimed at guaranteeing free and fair elections (parliamentary, presidential, local). These requirements were formulated during the talks of Belarusian opposition leaders and the OSCE management in the summer of 1999 and have since then been invariably repeated in the documents and statements of all international organizations as they fully correspond to the AMG mandate. How are they perceived by the society?

First of all it is evident that the majority of our citizens support every requirement of the OSCE with no exceptions, and they absolutely do not think that these statements reflect the interests of only a narrow group of political "block-heads". Secondly, in three years the number of those who support these requirements has grown by 25% while the number of people who find difficulty in evaluating them has dropped almost 2-fold (See Table 32).

Table 32**Dynamics of public support for the demands of the OSCE and other international structures to Belarus' authorities, %**

OSCE demands	Support	Do not support	DA/NA
To provide the opposition with access to state-run mass media, including television	<u>50.7*</u> 44.6	<u>30.2</u> 22.4	<u>19.1</u> 33.0
To change powers of the parliament so that the laws adopted are obligatory for all authorities	<u>71.8</u> 55.5	<u>9.4</u> 8.5	<u>18.8</u> 36.0
To stop persecution of those who disagree with the present political course	<u>73.3</u> 59.1	<u>11.3</u> 11.1	<u>15.4</u> 29.8
To introduce amendments into the Electoral Code which would guarantee a free and fair election	<u>77.1</u> 62.0	<u>7.7</u> 9.1	<u>15.2</u> 28.9
Weight-average on all demands	<u>68.2</u> 55.3	<u>14.5</u> 12.8	<u>17.3</u> 31.9

* Numerator – results of the April 2002 survey conducted by IISEPS, denominator – the November 1999 survey.

Another important step of the OSCE AMG in Belarus was the endeavor to organize talks between the opposition and official power representatives. As we know, these talks were started in the autumn of 1999 and turned out to be quite successful, but were torpedoed on the initiative of the president. The achieved agreements, in particular, the protocol on the access to state mass media were disavowed. Instead of these talks Belarusian authorities initiated "a comprehensive political dialog without any international mediators", which ended in a complete failure in the summer of 2000, since only presidential social organizations were allowed to take part in the "dialog" and there was no need whatsoever to "negotiate" with them.

Table 33**Dynamics of public attitude towards negotiations between the Belarusian authorities and the opposition, %**

Attitude towards negotiations	11'99	04'00	04'02
Negotiations are necessary, since only by means of negotiations it is possible to come to common grounds and consider different interests in our society	45.3	50.8	48.2
Negotiations are not necessary, because authorities violate law and human rights, it is necessary to force them observe laws, rather than maintaining a dialog	15.5	14.8	19.9
Negotiations are not necessary, because the opposition represents no one, and there is no need for authorities to talk to it	7.9	8.2	15.0
DA/NA	31.3	26.2	16.9

As Table 33 shows, almost half of our fellow citizens still support the AMG's idea of holding talks between the authorities and the opposition. In this respect the campaign on discrediting the AMG and its initiatives (accusations in "the interference with the interior affairs", etc.) did not bring the expected effect. Moreover, the number of people without any definite attitude towards this initiative has dropped almost 2-fold during the last three years. One cannot but point out, however, that the number of the opponents of the talks – guided by diametrically opposite motives – has also grown considerably: about 35% of the respondents think so today. This means that the split of the society in its attitude to the present political line is growing. When the number of talks opponents exceeds the number of adherents, the possibility to find agreement by calm and peaceful means might be lost forever. Will president benefit from this? More and more severe mass sanctions will have to be used for "pacifying" those who do not agree with his line, and who knows how long these measures will be effective?

The research results show, the more our people know about the OSCE AMG activities, the more they support the group. It means that the mission is not only possible in Belarus, moreover, it is gravely needed for political stabilization. It is very likely that the AMG mission is even more necessary for the ruling party, which is afraid "to lose face" if it starts negotiations with the opposition, then for the latter itself. It will be immeasurably more difficult to "negotiate" with huge crowds of infuriated "common folk" when they take to the streets.

Fears and sympathies of Belarusians: are the West and democracy as dreadful as they appear

The attitude of the dwellers of a country towards emigration is an important indicator of its well-being or trouble, and of the citizens' evaluation of their prospects in the home country. Talking about Belarus in this respect, we first of all have to point out a high emigration potential of the country. Only half of the respondents answered that they do not want to move anywhere, while more than 41% are ready to go to another country (See Table 34). At the same time we need to point out that the number of such people dropped by 11% during the last 2.5 years. One can understand the mood of the voters, especially of those with democratic views in October, right after the elections, when the hope for any change was destroyed. But half a year after, when September disappointments have already been forgotten, the ranks of those who are not going to look for a better lot in a foreign land have grown again. This gives evidence of the fact that the post-election line of the authorities is causing more and more disappointment to the voters.

It is curious that people manifest their readiness to leave the country which does not have any standard emigration causing reasons, namely, ethnic and religious conflicts, military actions, etc. This fact points out the existence of hidden social tension in the Belarusian society and clearly contradicts the authorities' statements about harmony and stability in the country. The stability, which is constantly named one of the most important achievements of the existing regime.

Table 34

Distribution of answers to the question: "Would you like to emigrate to another country?", %

Variants of answer	11'99	04'00	10'01	04'02
Would not like moving anywhere	61.4	57.5	52.0	50.3
Germany	15.2	16.0	18.5	16.5
United States	11.5	10.1	6.1	9.4
Russia	1.4	2.3	3.6	4.9
Poland	3.9	3.7	5.8	4.6
Other country	3.8	6.8	6.3	4.2
Baltic States	1.8	1.5	1.8	1.8

Certain changes can be noticed in the list of countries our compatriots chose for emigration. Germany and the USA are still in the lead leaving other countries far behind. The third place, however, is for the first time occupied by Russia, that has taken the lead over Poland and the Baltic states. This indicator confirms the conclusion we made in our previous issues: the number of the adherents of the integration with Russia is not only growing, but also changing in quality. There are more "advanced" people in this group and less Lukashenko followers who logically do not need to emigrate. Earlier we observed a curious paradox – the Belarusians wanted to integrate with Russia and to emigrate to the West. Nowadays this contradiction is no longer so sharp.

An indirect indicator of the attitude to a country is sympathy towards its leader. Table 35 shows, in this respect the Russian leader is beyond comparison. Furthermore, his popularity continues to grow – more than two thirds of the questioned named the Kremlin master as the most corresponding to their ideal of a politician. On the one hand president Putin with his tough statements and decisive actions cannot but appeal to strong-arm adherents, who have always been abundant in Belarus. On the other hand many respect him for his foreign policies aimed at closer cooperation with the West and for his aspiration to liberalize the economy.

Table 35

Distribution of answers to the question: "Whom of the modern politicians of the top rank do you like most, who of them corresponds to your ideal of politician?", %
(more than one answer is possible)

Variants of answer	11'99	04'00	10'01	04'02
V. Putin	-*	55.5	65.2	68.1
À. Lukashenko	44.9	37.0	36.8	26.0
G. Schroeder	16.0	10.2	12.6	14.3
T. Blair	6.7	5.1	8.0	10.2
J. Chirac	-*	11.4	8.6	9.3
G. W. Bush Jr.	-*	-*	7.7	8.5
F. Castro	14.7	7.7	9.4	7.9
A. Kwasnewski	7.9	5.9	4.6	7.4
V. Havel	8.0	5.7	4.3	5.3
V. Adamkus	7.2	2.6	2.5	4.6
V. Kostunica	-*	-*	3.1	2.0
S. Hussein	6.0	3.4	3.2	1.5
L. Kuchma	5.6	2.5	2.4	1.3
B. Clinton	29.6	24.3	-*	-*
S. Milosevic	2.8	2.0	-*	-*
B. Yeltsin	2.7	-*	-*	-*

* The names of these politicians were omitted in the given poll

Table 36

Distribution of answers to the question: "Below is the list of possible assistance to Belarusian non-state public organizations from the side of foreign countries and world community. Which forms of it you think acceptable from the moral, political and other points of view?", %

Variants of answer	Acceptable		Unacceptable		DA/NA	
	10'00	04'02	10'00	04'02	10'00	04'02
Educational support (by means of seminars, conferences in Belarus and abroad)	64.7	77.3	7.0	10.5	28.2	12.2
Technical support (PCs, copiers, faxes, printers and other equipment)	62.7	76.8	10.9	11.9	26.4	11.3
Humanitarian aid (food products, medicines, clothes, etc.)	58.7	74.3	13.8	13.5	27.4	12.2
Financial support	55.1	67.3	14.9	18.6	30.0	14.1
Moral-political support (official statements, discussions at meetings with official representatives of Belarus, campaigns in mass media)	44.9	64.1	11.8	15.9	43.3	20.0
Informational support (providing newspapers, journals, bulletins, etc.)	50.8	63.7	15.1	18.2	34.2	18.1
Weight-average index	56.1	70.6	12.3	14.8	31.6	14.7

Parallel to the growth of Putin's popularity the Belarusians are more and more reserved towards their own president who used to be an unconditional leader among all modern politicians only 2.5 years ago. The same is true for the ratings of other authoritarian leaders (S. Hussein, F. Castro), while the popularity of Western leaders is rather high and stable as is the case with German chancellor Gerhard Schroeder or is gradually increasing (T. Blaire, J. Chirac, A. Kwasniewski) and returning to the level where it was before the NATO's mission in Yugoslavia.

Earlier, before the above-mentioned mission, the NATO's eastward expansion was negatively evaluated by almost half of the population of the country. In autumn five more Central and Eastern Europe states are to join the NATO. Russia, going on with its formal protests against the mechanic (using its leaders' terms) expansion of the Alliance, is in fact establishing absolutely different, much more closer relations with this organization. It is followed by other CIS states which have allowed the allocation of NATO forces on their territory. The standpoint of the Belarusian leader, however, remains unchanged. At first A. Lukashenko quite harshly reacted to the behavior of his Middle Asian counterparts on the Tashkent Treaty. Later in Moscow after signing the documents on the creation of the Tashkent Treaty Organization he was the only president from those who had signed the Treaty to characterize the new body as a military and strategic answer to the NATO.

Lukashenko's fears concerning the bases of "the aggressive monster" in Middle Asia are shared by 37% of the respondents, while almost 39% are of another point of view. The explanations, to our mind, are numerous – first of all, the remoteness of the events has its effect. Besides, the 3 years of Polish membership in the NATO did not have any effect on the character of the bilateral relations. Moreover, after September 11 many people were assured that there are more

dreadful and real hazards.

The fact that the attitude of Belarusians towards the West is becoming more positive can also be proved by the data from Table 36. We know how the official Minsk regards foreign assistance to our NGOs. The position of the government, however, is in sharp contrast to the opinion of common citizens – the overwhelming majority of the questioned thinks quite acceptable various kinds of help from educational and technical to moral and financial. It is especially evident if we consider the dynamics of a the average indicator. In 1.5 years there has been a considerable (more than 2-fold) drop in the number of those who do not have any opinion on the issue. Thus, when these people determined their standpoint, the number of those who accept foreign assistance to NGOs increased almost 15%, while the ranks of their opponents grew very insignificantly. It is curious that since the last opinion poll the growth is most evident among the adherents of humanitarian aid. One cannot rule out that here we see the effect of the notorious president's decree and of the experience of socializing with the officials from the corresponding Ministry.

Sluggish integration can turn into an inconvertible process

The questionnaire indicates, public opinion about the integration of Russia and Belarus is changing. As is seen from Table 37, today the ratio of people who stand for any kind of independence for Belarus and those who want to unite with Russia is 1.9 to 1, while three years ago it was 3 to 1. The number of integration adherents has gone up especially during the last year. The same tendency is shown in Table 38: today the number of people who would vote pro union with Russia is 2.3 times bigger than the number of those who would vote contra, if they had a possibility. Three years ago these parties were approximately equal.

Table 37

Dynamics of distribution of answers to the question: "Which variant of Russia-Belarus relations do you consider the best?", %

Variant of answer	03'99	04'00	04'01	04'02
Good neighborly relations of two independent states	43.2	41.0	38.4	29.6
Union of independent states	30.5	31.6	33.7	32.0
Unification into one state	24.1	25.3	26.5	31.9

Table 38

Dynamics of distribution of answers to the question: "If today there were a referendum on unification of Belarus and Russia, how would you vote?", %

Variant of answer	03'99	04'00	04'01	04'02
For unification	41.8	55.7	56.6	53.8
Against unification	40.4	27.6	28.4	23.0
Would not take part in voting	14.7	15.6	14.6	11.6

The summary of this tendency is given in Table 39. During the past three years the number of convinced adherents of integration grew 20%, and the number of their opponents reduced 42%. Today the ratio between them is 1.7 to 1 and three years ago it was 1 to 0.8.

Recent years have revealed a certain cooling of Belarusian authorities' desire to integrate (Russian officials have always been somewhat condescending to the unavailing attempts of "Pan-Slavic Unitifier", realizing that they were caused not by the urge to unite the two nations but by a simple need to get political and material advantages to support the regime). Though "historic" summits and various "union" actions still take place and the official Belarusian media praise the integration achievements and the visibility of joint bodies' usefulness (there is almost nothing of this kind in the Russian media), one cannot get rid of a feeling that all performed in this field is surreal, declining and downcast.

And the population feels it too. Table 37 shows that the "union" popularity isn't growing while the idea of one state is attracting new followers.

You may be sure that A. Lukashenko does use the integration idea to get financial aid from our Eastern neighbor. And he is doing this more professionally than V. Kebich, S. Shushkevich and M. Grib all together. But he is not going to leave state independence (read: uncontrolled power in a small but separate state). It is better to be the first cowboy on a ranch than the last millionaire in Vegas.

Any game, however, may result in a defeat. Especially when you play against professionals. And today's Russian management is obviously professional when the we talk about relationships with Belarus. "The Chief Integrator" is being slowly, silently and purposefully taken the initiative from. Material aid comes alongside with strict regulations on economic reforms. The festive visits to Russian provinces are stopped. Only close in spirit Russian governors sometimes appear at Belarusian court, but these visits take place more and more seldom, because it is understood that receiving minor

officials is humiliating as for president and for the country, especially as these visits have very little effect.

But the main danger for independence (read: uncontrolled power...) came from an unexpected side. It was located inside the country! Long preparations have at last started the integration machine whose movement can break any obstacles. One can assume that daily propaganda had the effect and the integration started. But it would be more right to say that our nationals watching the dominant Russian TV channels are getting transparent confirmations of social and economic progress in the neighboring state with against the stagnation of the Belarusian economy and permanently low living standards for the majority in the background. It is this but not the illusory "Slavic unity" that is, in our opinion, the engine of today's amplification of integration moods. It can be regarded as a desperate deed because people just do not see any other outlet.

Table 39

Dynamics of the number of convinced supporters and opponents of unification with Russia, %				
Social types*	03'99	04'00	04'01	04'02
Convinced supporters	23.5	24.0	25.8	28.3
Convinced opponents	28.3	21.7	21.8	16.3

** Convinced supporters are those who at a referendum would vote for the unification of Belarus and Russia and consider the unification into one state the best variant of bilateral relations. Convinced opponents are those who at a referendum would vote against the unification and consider good neighborly relations of two independent states the best variant of bilateral relations.*

Table 40

Dynamics of distribution of answers to the question: "If the post of the president of Belarus and Russia is introduced, for whom would you vote at a union presidential election?", %				
Variant of answer	03'99	04'00	04'01	04'02
V. Putin	—*	31.1	40.3	50.5
À. Lukashenko	32.8	22.3	24.4	14.0

** V. Putin's name wasn't mentioned*

Table 41

Dynamics of distribution of answers to the question: "Whom of the modern politicians do you like most of all, who corresponds to your ideal of politician?", %				
Variant of answer	03'99	04'00	04'01	04'02
V. Putin	—*	55.5	59.8	68.1
À. Lukashenko	45.7	37.0	34.3	26.0

** V. Putin's name was not offered in the given poll*

Table 42

Dynamics of attitude towards independence of Belarus depending on attitude towards À. Lukashenko, %*		
Attitude towards independence of Belarus	Attitude towards À. Lukashenko **	
	Convinced opponents	Convinced supporters
	46.9 (28.2)	10.4 (22.3)
Convinced opponents – 28.3 (20.1)***	32.8 (9.7)	18.6 (40.7)
Convinced supporters of – 16.4 (26.1)	73.3 (53.7)	2.9 (7.5)

** Read horizontally.*

*** Typology of convinced supporters and opponents of A. Lukashenko was carried out using the same method applied for supporters-opponents of independence and is based on four questions of the questionnaire.*

**** In parenthesis – data for November of 1999*

It is not the end yet. Many former integration opponents were antagonized by the so-called "Asian" (i.e. anti-western) way of Russian development. But after September 11th, 2001 when our Eastern friends turned out to be allied with the whole Western coalition, this argument was of no use anymore and the integration moods were stimulated anew. One more reason for speeding up integration popped up at the beginning of 2000, when the "bossy" Boris Yeltsin who was

growing lazy and decrepit was displaced by mobile and European-looking Vladimir Putin who casually left no chance for A. Luka-shenko to occupy the Kremlin throne. Today Vladimir Putin who has shown his electorate the way to the long-awaited progress and helped to raise the living standards for the Russians is much more appealing to Belarusians than the gloomy A. Lukashenko who still, as five years ago promises "a shot and a steak" for his people and prison plank beds for his own clerks (See Tables 40 and 41). As a result, the tally of integration opponents lost its members again.

Previously many researchers admitted repeatedly that integration adherents were A. Lukashenko's adherents at the same time. Thus, a conclusion was drawn that the independence of the country will not be endangered in the future, as A. Lukashenko's followers were mostly elderly and old people who would be deceased with the course of time and the problem would be solved with no effort.

But it wasn't! This is shown by the data in Table 42.

One can see, over the past 2.5 years the number of A. Lukashenko's convinced opponents grew sharply – from 28.2% to 46.9% while the number of his convinced supporters dropped from 22.3% to 10.4%. Today, however, almost one third of his opponents (32.8%) side with the union with Russia, while in 1999 they were only 9.7%. Therefore, considerable growth of integration intentions (3.4-fold!) among A. Lukashenko's convinced opponents, consisting mostly of young and educated people is evident. If the tendency is preserved and other conditions being equal, in a few years the country will not have independence supporters whatsoever.

It is quite interesting, that the number of those siding with the unification with Russia among A. Lukashenko's convinced supporters has dropped significantly. They are only 18.6% at present while in 1999 their ranks counted 40.7%. Now there are 73.3% ardent Lukashenko's opponents among those who want integration against 53.7% in 1999, which actually was to be expected.

Table 43

Dynamics of distribution of answers to the question about the Russia-Belarus Union, %

Variant of answer	04'01	04'02
Unions remains a hollow declaration of intentions, which has not affected the life of Belarusians and Russians	35.1	49.0
Union has improved life only of officials working in its governing bodies	27.9	30.9
Union is a really functioning structure that has improved the life of common Belarusians and Russians	9.8	6.1

Table 44

Distribution of answers to the question: "What shall be the essence of real integration of Belarus and Russia?", %
(*more than one answer is possible*)

Absence of boundaries between the two countries	48.2
Single currency	44.9
Unified laws	30.6
Common border guarded jointly	23.7
Single president	20.8
Single government	11.5
Single army	10.9
Single parliament	8.1
Other	4.8

As for the union, Table 43 shows, the majority of the population regards it as a declaration of intentions that had no effect whatsoever on the life of the two nations. In a year the number of people who share this opinion grew 1.4-fold, while the share of those who believe in the reality of this body and in its positive effect on the life of people went down from 9.8% to 6.1%. One can say, the present variant of the union is gradually discrediting itself in the eyes of the voters.

What should, according to the people, the real integration include? Some answers can be found in Table 44.

One can see, about half of the population want only the absence of borders between our countries and single currency from the integration. Other issues interest only a very insignificant share of our fellow citizens. This kind of integration is almost present. We are only to introduce single currency as in Europe.

Table 45

Dynamics of distribution of answers to the question: "What is your attitude towards restoration of the USSR?", %

Variant of answer	11'93	11'97	11'99	04'02
For	55.1	49.9	38.0	38.8
Against	22.3	25.5	30.1	42.6

In conclusion let us consider the population' opinion on reviving the USSR (See Table 45). Nowadays for the first time the number of the followers of the revival dropped below the number of opponents, while 8.5 years ago the former exceeded the latter 2.5-fold. One can expect that in a few years the majority of the population will be against the idea. We begin to understand that the past, however we estimate it, is irreversible.

Results of the nation opinion poll, conducted by ISEPS in April of 2002, %

1. Distribution of answers to the question: "Is it acceptable or unacceptable, in your opinion, if Russia's capital takes part in privatization of Belarusian enterprises?"

Table 1.1. Depending on age

Variant of answer	All respondents	Age, year old						
		18-19	20-24	25-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+up
Yes	43.9	37.1	39.6	53.3	47.4	46.9	42.9	38.0
No	35.0	44.3	41.6	29.9	34.0	35.2	37.3	31.3
DA/NA	21.1	18.6	18.8	16.8	18.6	17.9	19.8	30.7

Table 1.2. Depending on education

Variant of answer	Education				
	Elementary	Incomplete secondary	Secondary	Secondary vocational	Higher (incomplete higher)
Yes	27.8	38.2	41.3	46.1	54.7
No	35.4	28.6	37.8	36.9	31.8
DA/NA	36.8	33.2	20.9	17.0	13.5

Table 1.3. Depending on status

Variant of answer	Status				
	Employees of the private sector	Employees of the public sector	Students	Pensioners	Unemployed, housewives
Yes	49.2	45.2	42.3	37.4	53.2
No	34.8	36.2	45.2	31.8	24.7
DA/NA	16.0	18.6	12.5	30.8	22.1

Table 1.4. Depending on place of living

Variant of answer	Area						
	Minsk	Minsk region	Brest and region	Grodno and region	Vitebsk and region	Mogilev and region	Gomel and region
Yes	42.4	34.5	49.0	37.6	53.2	50.0	42.9
No	29.7	34.1	38.0	40.4	29.9	37.8	36.7
DA/NA	27.9	31.4	13.0	22.0	16.9	12.2	20.4

Table 1.5. Depending on type of settlement

Variant of answer	Type of settlement				
	Capital	Regional centers	Cities	Towns	Village
Yes	42.4	55.4	37.2	42.9	42.0
No	29.7	37.1	39.4	34.9	35.2
DA/NA	27.9	7.5	23.4	22.2	22.8

2. Distribution of answers to the question: "Do you think a liberalization of the economy promised by A. Lukashenko before the presidential election is being carried out?"

Table 2.1. Depending on age

Variant of answer	All respondents	Age, years old						
		18-19	20-24	25-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+up
Yes	16.0	12.9	5.6	8.8	8.2	13.7	24.5	27.3
No	55.3	68.6	67.4	68.6	69.8	60.9	46.7	30.1
DA/NA	27.7	18.5	27.0	22.6	22.0	25.4	28.8	42.6

Table 2.2. Depending on education

Variant of answer	Education				
	Elementary	Incomplete secondary	Secondary	Secondary vocational	Higher (incomplete higher)
Yes	30.4	23.5	13.6	13.1	14.2
No	24.1	30.4	57.5	63.9	68.2
DA/NA	45.5	46.1	28.9	23.0	17.6

Table 2.3. Depending on status

Variant of answer	Status				
	Employees of the private sector	Employees of the public sector	Students	Pensioners	Unemployed, housewives
Yes	6.5	14.4	11.5	26.8	6.5
No	75.9	59.0	68.3	31.6	68.8
DA/NA	17.6	26.6	20.2	41.6	24.7

Table 2.4. Depending on place of living

Variant of answer	Area						
	Minsk	Minsk region	Brest and region	Grodno and region	Vitebsk and region	Mogilev and region	Gomel and region
Yes	17.1	10.0	17.3	8.7	11.9	29.7	17.6
No	51.7	50.5	62.5	66.5	55.9	48.3	54.3
DA/NA	31.2	39.5	20.2	24.8	32.2	22.0	28.1

Table 2.5. Depending on type of settlement

Variant of answer	Type of settlement				
	Capital	Regional centers	Cities	Towns	Village
Yes	17.1	14.6	8.5	11.9	22.0
No	51.7	65.8	63.3	95.4	48.6
DA/NA	31.2	19.6	28.2	32.7	29.4

3. Distribution of answers to the question: "How many times over the last 12 months have you faced backpayment of wage or pension?"

Table 3.1. Depending on age

Variant of answer	All respondents	Age, years old						
		18-19	20-24	25-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+up
Once	28.5	15.7	29.5	24.1	22.8	24.1	29.2	41.4
Several times	37.6	42.9	35.4	39.4	39.9	38.1	37.3	34.7
Almost monthly	17.6	17.1	22.9	19.7	19.4	19.9	21.2	8.3
Never	5.9	5.7	4.2	5.1	5.2	7.5	6.6	5.8
DA/NA	10.4	18.6	9.0	11.7	12.7	10.4	5.7	9.8

Table 3.2. Depending on education

Variant of answer	Education				
	Elementary	Incomplete secondary	Secondary	Secondary vocational	Higher (incomplete higher)
Once	51.9	34.6	25.7	24.0	28.5
Several times	31.6	40.6	37.8	37.6	36.7
Almost monthly	7.6	9.7	20.7	20.9	16.1
Never	2.5	5.5	5.1	7.7	6.4
DA/NA	6.4	9.6	10.7	9.8	12.3

Table 3.3. Depending on status

Variant of answer	Status				
	Employees of the private sector	Employees of the public sector	Students	Pensioners	Unemployed, housewives
Once	33.7	22.4	23.1	41.6	14.3
Several times	23.0	42.8	37.5	35.0	40.3
Almost monthly	13.4	23.6	19.2	8.2	13.0
Never	10.2	4.6	6.7	5.8	7.8
DA/NA	19.7	6.6	13.5	9.4	24.6

Table 3.4. Depending on place of living

Variant of answer	Area						
	Minsk	Minsk region	Brest and region	Grodno and region	Vitebsk and region	Mogilev and region	Gomel and region
Once	29.0	25.5	37.5	24.3	26.0	32.6	24.9
Several times	18.2	40.0	38.5	48.6	45.2	29.7	48.6
Almost monthly	6.7	15.0	13.9	19.7	23.7	26.7	22.4
Never	19.0	4.5	2.4	4.6	1.1	2.3	2.9
DA/NA	27.1	15.0	7.7	2.8	4.0	8.7	1.2

Table 3.5. Depending on type of settlement

Variant of answer	Type of settlement				
	Capital	Regional centers	Cities	Towns	Village
Once	29.0	33.3	30.3	19.2	31.2
Several times	18.2	41.3	41.5	47.1	39.1
Almost monthly	6.7	17.5	16.0	20.2	22.9
Never	19.0	4.6	4.2	4.2	0.9
DA/NA	27.1	3.3	8.0	9.3	5.9

4. Distribution of answers to the question: "What are you afraid of in the near future?"*(no more than 5 answers)***Table 4.1. Depending on age**

Variant of answer	All respondents	Age, years old						
		18-19	20-24	25-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+up
Rocketing prices for food products and staples	54.1	44.3	43.8	46.7	59.0	54.4	53.8	59.8
Ecological catastrophe	43.1	42.9	43.8	43.8	42.2	53.1	42.9	34.0
Impossibility to pay for communal services because of growing rates	42.4	34.3	38.9	41.6	41.4	42.7	44.8	45.1
To become a victim of growing crime	33.9	34.3	31.9	34.3	32.8	35.8	34.4	33.4
Establishment of dictatorship	30.3	35.7	38.2	41.6	38.8	35.5	73.6	88.3
Wars with other countries	29.8	34.3	36.1	21.1	23.1	26.7	26.4	40.5
Civil war	19.9	18.6	20.1	18.2	16.0	19.2	23.1	22.4
International isolation of Belarus	19.6	32.9	23.6	29.2	19.4	22.5	19.3	8.6
Loss of savings	18.8	12.9	16.7	17.5	18.3	21.2	16.5	21.2
Interethnic conflicts in Belarus	12.1	8.6	13.9	7.3	13.1	12.4	14.2	11.7
Russia would buy up all of Belarus' property	8.9	17.1	6.3	9.5	6.7	14.0	9.0	4.9
West would buy up all of Belarus' property	7.7	7.1	5.6	5.1	6.0	6.5	11.3	9.8

Table 4.2. Depending on education

Variant of answer	Education				
	Elementary	Incomplete secondary	Secondary	Secondary vocational	Higher (incompl. higher)
Rocketing prices for food products and staples	51.9	58.5	54.2	52.6	53.2
Ecological catastrophe	25.3	34.1	42.7	46.4	51.7
Impossibility to pay for communal services because of growing rates	34.2	44.7	45.0	41.8	39.0

To become a victim of growing crime	31.6	32.7	34.1	33.5	36.0
Establishment of dictatorship	5.1	8.8	28.1	37.4	49.4
Wars with other countries	53.2	37.3	30.6	27.3	19.1
Civil war	27.8	21.2	17.9	22.7	16.1
International isolation of Belarus	5.1	7.8	18.9	21.4	32.2
Loss of savings	24.1	18.4	17.0	19.1	20.6
Interethnic conflicts in Belarus	12.7	12.9	12.5	10.8	12.4
Russia would buy up all of Belarus' property	5.1	3.7	10.7	8.5	11.2
West would buy up all of Belarus' property	6.3	12.0	9.0	6.4	3.7

Table 4.3. Depending on status

Variant of answer	Status				
	Employees of the private sector	Employees of the public sector	Students	Pensioners	Unemployed, housewives
Rocketing prices for food products and staples	39.0	55.0	48.1	58.4	68.8
Ecological catastrophe	44.4	46.6	41.3	35.8	45.5
Impossibility to pay for communal services because of growing rates	34.8	42.5	41.3	44.6	51.9
To become a victim of growing crime	39.0	34.1	31.7	32.6	28.6
Establishment of dictatorship	48.7	33.7	39.4	11.7	33.8
Wars with other countries	23.5	27.4	32.7	39.0	19.5
Civil war	13.4	21.5	18.3	23.3	5.2
International isolation of Belarus	33.7	20.3	27.9	10.1	14.3
Loss of savings	29.9	16.1	17.3	19.1	15.6
Interethnic conflicts in Belarus	11.2	13.1	9.6	12.5	6.5
Russia would buy up all of Belarus' property	10.7	9.1	14.4	5.8	10.4
West would buy up all of Belarus' property	4.3	7.4	4.8	11.1	5.2

Table 4.4. Depending on place of living

Variant of answer	Area						
	Minsk	Minsk region	Brest and region	Grodno and region	Vitebsk and region	Mogilev and region	Gomel and region
Rocketing prices for food products and staples	43.5	61.8	45.7	61.3	57.6	57.0	56.3
Ecological catastrophe	41.6	34.1	44.2	39.9	53.1	36.6	51.4
Impossibility to pay for communal services because of growing rates	38.3	43.6	41.3	49.0	41.2	47.1	39.6
To become a victim of growing crime	43.1	39.1	23.1	24.3	33.3	27.3	40.4
Establishment of dictatorship	27.5	38.6	35.1	29.5	25.4	28.5	27.3
Wars with other countries	14.5	22.3	38.5	35.3	34.5	33.1	36.7
Civil war	11.5	20.0	27.4	19.1	22.6	15.7	24.1
International isolation of Belarus	22.3	14.1	17.8	24.9	19.2	22.1	18.0
Loss of savings	17.5	20.5	13.9	8.1	23.7	22.7	24.5
Interethnic conflicts in Belarus	10.0	13.2	16.8	17.3	10.7	9.3	8.6
Russia would buy up all of Belarus' property	6.7	5.0	11.1	16.8	9.6	9.9	6.1
West would buy up all of Belarus' property	7.1	4.1	5.3	12.1	10.7	9.9	6.5

Table 4.5. Depending on type of settlement

Variant of answer	Type of settlement				
	Capital	Regional centers	Cities	Towns	Village
Rocketing prices for food products and staples	43.5	48.8	58.8	58.0	58.7
Ecological catastrophe	41.6	48.8	41.0	44.9	40.7
Impossibility to pay for communal services because of growing rates	38.3	40.8	50.0	46.2	40.0
To become a victim of growing crime	43.1	32.1	30.3	40.1	26.8
Establishment of dictatorship	27.5	42.1	39.9	33.0	20.0
Wars with other countries	14.5	37.5	30.9	25.3	37.6
Civil war	11.5	19.2	13.3	24.7	24.6
International isolation of Belarus	22.3	27.1	27.7	14.1	14.5
Loss of savings	17.5	25.8	15.4	23.4	14.1
Interethnic conflicts in Belarus	10.0	10.4	14.9	12.5	12.7
Russia would buy up all of Belarus' property	6.7	10.4	14.4	8.7	7.3
West would buy up all of Belarus' property	7.1	7.1	6.4	5.8	10.1

5. Distribution of answers to the question: "Do you think young people could make a successful career in Belarus?"**Table 5.1. Depending on age**

Variant of answer	All respondents	Age, years old						
		18-19	20-24	25-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+up
Yes	43.2	41.4	34.0	34.3	35.5	40.1	51.4	55.5
No	39.4	50.0	31.4	50.4	46.6	44.6	30.7	22.1
DA/NA	17.4	8.6	14.6	15.3	17.9	15.3	17.9	22.4

Table 5.2. Depending on education

Variant of answer	Education				
	Elementary	Incomplete secondary	Secondary	Secondary vocational	Higher (incomplete higher)
Yes	54.4	52.1	44.6	39.7	35.2
No	24.1	24.9	37.6	46.1	49.4
DA/NA	21.5	23.0	17.8	14.2	15.4

Table 5.3. Depending on status

Variant of answer	Status				
	Employees of the private sector	Employees of the public sector	Students	Pensioners	Unemployed, housewives
Yes	34.2	40.7	38.5	55.7	35.0
No	54.0	41.7	51.9	23.6	45.5
DA/NA	11.8	17.6	9.6	20.7	19.5

Table 5.4. Depending on place of living

Variant of answer	Area						
	Minsk	Minsk region	Brest and region	Grodno and region	Vitebsk and region	Mogilev and region	Gomel and region
Yes	46.1	34.1	51.4	42.2	30.5	41.3	52.7
No	34.2	38.6	40.9	46.2	44.1	46.5	31.4
DA/NA	19.7	27.3	7.7	11.6	25.4	12.2	15.9

Table 5.5. Depending on type of settlement

Variant of answer	Type of settlement				
	Capital	Regional centers	Cities	Towns	Village
Yes	46.1	28.8	37.8	51.9	45.5
No	34.2	54.6	37.8	32.7	39.8
DA/NA	19.7	16.6	24.4	15.4	14.7

6. Distribution of answers to the question: "Do you think the situation in Belarus is developing in the right or a wrong direction?"

Table 6.1. Depending on age

Variant of answer	All respondents	Age, years old						
		18-19	20-24	25-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+up
Right direction	21.4	8.6	10.4	13.9	10.1	20.2	25.5	40.2
Wrong direction	55.5	71.4	70.8	68.6	68.7	59.9	46.7	30.4
DA/NA	23.1	20.0	18.8	17.5	21.3	19.9	27.8	29.4

Table 6.2. Depending on education

Variant of answer	Education				
	Elementary	Incomplete secondary	Secondary	Secondary vocational	Higher (incomplete higher)
Right direction	43.0	35.0	16.2	19.8	16.5
Wrong direction	30.4	29.5	60.6	60.3	67.0
DA/NA	26.6	35.5	23.2	19.9	16.5

Table 6.3. Depending on status

Variant of answer	Status				
	Employees of the private sector	Employees of the public sector	Students	Pensioners	Unemployed, housewives
Right direction	11.2	18.6	9.6	37.9	7.8
Wrong direction	73.3	59.3	70.2	31.6	75.3
DA/NA	15.5	22.1	20.2	30.5	16.9

Table 6.4. Depending on place of living

Variant of answer	Area						
	Minsk	Minsk region	Brest and region	Grodno and region	Vitebsk and region	Mogilev and region	Gomel and region
Right direction	26.0	12.7	28.4	16.2	10.7	29.1	24.5
Wrong direction	49.8	54.1	59.1	66.5	58.8	50.6	53.1
DA/NA	24.2	33.2	12.5	17.3	30.5	20.3	22.4

Table 6.5. Depending on type of settlement

Variant of answer	Type of settlement				
	Capital	Regional centers	Cities	Towns	Village
Right direction	26.0	20.6	10.6	14.1	28.8
Wrong direction	49.8	63.8	66.0	58.0	48.4
DA/NA	24.2	15.6	23.4	27.9	22.8

7. Distribution of answers to the question: "Some people believe that the best variant of ruling is a "strong arm," others prefer democracy. What do you prefer?"

Table 7.1. Depending on age

Variant of answer	All respondents	Age, years old						
		18-19	20-24	25-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+up
"Strong arm"	30.2	21.4	14.6	21.2	24.3	29.0	33.5	46.6
Democracy	46.7	52.9	58.3	57.7	52.6	49.8	46.2	28.2
DA/NA	23.1	25.7	27.1	21.1	23.1	21.2	20.3	25.2

Table 7.2. Depending on education

Variant of answer	Education				
	Elementary	Incomplete secondary	Secondary	Secondary vocational	Higher (incomplete higher)
"Strong arm"	55.7	42.9	29.2	23.7	23.6
Democracy	15.2	30.4	47.2	53.1	59.7
DA/NA	29.1	26.7	22.6	23.2	16.7

Table 7.3. Depending on status

Variant of answer	Status				
	Employees of the private sector	Employees of the public sector	Students	Pensioners	Unemployed, housewives
"Strong arm"	20.9	28.1	15.4	44.8	20.8
Democracy	51.5	49.1	61.5	30.0	50.6
DA/NA	17.6	22.8	23.1	24.2	28.6

Table 7.4. Depending on place of living

Variant of answer	Area						
	Minsk	Minsk region	Brest and region	Grodno and region	Vitebsk and region	Mogilev and region	Gomel and region
"Strong arm"	29.4	34.1	25.5	34.7	29.4	33.1	26.9
Democracy	50.6	31.4	56.7	42.8	49.7	44.8	49.8
DA/NA	20.0	34.5	17.8	22.5	20.9	22.1	23.3

Table 7.5. Depending on type of settlement

Variant of answer	Type of settlement				
	Capital	Regional centers	Cities	Towns	Village
"Strong arm"	29.4	28.8	25.0	27.9	35.2
Democracy	50.6	55.8	49.5	44.6	40.0
DA/NA	20.0	15.4	25.5	27.5	24.8

8. Distribution of answers to the question: "Are you personally ready to express your political views?"

Table 8.1. Depending on age

Variant of answer	All respondents	Age, years old						
		18-19	20-24	25-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+up
Never afraid	32.0	24.3	36.1	32.1	25.7	29.3	34.4	38.0
Sometimes is afraid	26.1	34.3	25.0	29.9	32.8	29.0	26.4	14.7
Often is afraid	14.1	18.6	10.4	13.1	16.8	15.0	14.6	11.7
Never openly express my views	20.2	15.7	20.1	17.5	17.9	19.9	18.4	25.8
DA/NA	7.6	7.1	8.4	7.4	6.8	6.8	6.2	9.8

Table 8.2. Depending on education

Variant of answer	Education				
	Elementary	Incomplete secondary	Secondary	Secondary vocational	Higher (incomplete higher)
Never afraid	39.2	35.9	30.4	28.4	35.2
Sometimes is afraid	13.9	14.7	30.8	27.6	27.7
Often is afraid	12.7	9.2	12.5	16.0	18.7
Never openly express my views	20.3	31.8	17.9	20.9	14.2
DA/NA	13.9	8.4	8.4	7.1	4.2

Table 8.3. Depending on status

Variant of answer	Status				
	Employees of the private sector	Employees of the public sector	Students	Pensioners	Unemployed, housewives
Never afraid	23.0	31.3	27.9	39.3	31.2
Sometimes is afraid	31.6	29.2	35.6	15.1	24.7
Often is afraid	17.6	13.7	16.3	11.4	19.5
Never openly express my views	20.3	19.4	12.5	24.1	16.9
DA/NA	7.5	6.4	7.7	10.1	7.7

Table 8.4. Depending on place of living

Variant of answer	Area						
	Minsk	Minsk region	Brest and region	Grodno and region	Vitebsk and region	Mogilev and region	Gomel and region
Never afraid	39.4	23.6	52.9	20.2	27.1	31.4	26.1
Sometimes is afraid	24.9	19.1	24.0	28.9	22.6	29.1	33.9
Often is afraid	9.7	19.5	8.7	17.9	19.2	14.5	11.8
Never openly express my views	17.8	25.5	11.5	27.2	24.3	20.9	17.1
DA/NA	8.2	12.3	2.9	5.8	6.8	4.1	11.1

Table 8.5. Depending on type of settlement

Variant of answer	Type of settlement				
	Capital	Regional centers	Cities	Towns	Village
Never afraid	39.4	27.5	29.8	28.5	33.4
Sometimes is afraid	24.9	27.9	24.5	34.9	20.4
Often is afraid	9.7	22.1	13.3	14.7	12.4
Never openly express my views	17.8	17.9	22.3	14.4	25.9
DA/NA	8.5	4.6	10.1	7.5	7.9

9. Distribution of answers to the question: "What is your attitude towards restoration of the USSR?"**Table 9.1. Depending on age**

Variant of answer	All respondents	Age, years old						
		18-19	20-24	25-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+up
For	38.8	22.9	24.3	18.2	32.1	36.2	43.4	62.3
Against	42.6	52.9	58.3	63.5	47.8	45.0	39.2	20.2
DA/NA	18.6	24.2	17.4	18.3	20.1	18.8	17.4	17.5

Table 9.2. Depending on education

Variant of answer	Education				
	Elementary	Incomplete secondary	Secondary	Secondary vocational	Higher (incomplete higher)
For	60.8	52.1	40.9	32.7	26.2
Against	22.8	23.0	43.7	46.9	55.8
DA/NA	16.4	24.9	15.4	20.4	18.0

Table 9.3. Depending on status

Variant of answer	Status				
	Employees of the private sector	Employees of the public sector	Students	Pensioners	Unemployed, housewives
For	22.5	35.8	17.3	61.5	22.1
Against	59.4	46.0	58.7	21.2	53.2
DA/NA	18.1	18.2	24.1	17.3	24.7

Table 9.4. Depending on place of living

Variant of answer	Area						
	Minsk	Minsk region	Brest and region	Grodno and region	Vitebsk and region	Mogilev and region	Gomel and region
For	34.9	40.5	36.5	30.6	38.4	36.6	51.0
Against	48.0	34.1	44.7	43.4	42.9	51.2	35.5
DA/NA	17.1	25.4	18.7	26.0	18.6	12.2	13.5

Table 9.5. Depending on type of settlement

Variant of answer	Type of settlement				
	Capital	Regional centers	Cities	Towns	Village
For	34.9	34.6	26.6	48.1	42.0
Against	48.0	52.9	48.4	32.1	38.7
DA/NA	17.1	12.5	25.0	19.8	19.3

10. Distribution of answers to the question: "It is known that the next election of deputies of local Councils is to take place in spring of 2003. Are you going to take part in voting?"

Table 10.1. Depending on age

Variant of answer	All respondents	Age, years old						
		18-19	20-24	25-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+up
Definitely would participate	32.6	34.3	21.5	27.0	28.0	29.0	42.5	40.2
Most likely would participate	35.7	32.9	29.2	35.8	34.7	41.7	33.5	35.6
Most likely would not participate	15.1	12.9	21.5	16.8	18.3	15.6	11.3	11.3
Definitely would not participate	10.9	18.6	21.5	13.1	11.6	7.2	10.4	6.7
DA/NA	5.7	1.3	6.3	7.3	7.4	15.5	2.3	6.1

Table 10.2. Depending on education

Variant of answer	Education				
	Elementary	Incomplete secondary	Secondary	Secondary vocational	Higher (incomplete higher)
Definitely would participate	43.0	36.9	26.9	32.0	37.8
Most likely would participate	34.2	33.2	38.2	34.8	34.5
Most likely would not participate	7.6	11.5	17.7	16.2	13.5
Definitely would not participate	11.4	10.1	10.3	11.9	10.9
DA/NA	3.8	8.3	7.9	5.1	3.3

Table 10.3. Depending on status

Variant of answer	Status				
	Employees of the private sector	Employees of the public sector	Students	Pensioners	Unemployed, housewives
Definitely would participate	22.5	30.9	34.6	41.9	22.1
Most likely would participate	36.9	37.2	31.7	34.5	31.2
Most likely would not participate	23.5	15.0	15.4	10.1	19.5
Definitely would not participate	10.2	10.8	16.4	8.0	20.8
DA/NA	6.9	6.1	1.9	5.5	6.4

Table 10.4. Depending on place of living

Variant of answer	Area						
	Minsk	Minsk region	Brest and region	Grodno and region	Vitebsk and region	Mogilev and region	Gomel and region
Definitely would participate	29.7	27.7	35.1	37.6	24.9	32.6	40.0
Most likely would participate	32.7	35.9	35.6	35.8	36.7	37.2	36.7
Most likely would not participate	16.0	13.6	13.9	13.3	19.8	16.9	13.1
Definitely would not participate	14.1	15.9	10.1	8.7	11.9	9.3	5.3
DA/NA	7.5	6.9	5.3	4.6	6.7	4.0	4.9

Table 10.5. Depending on type of settlement

Variant of answer	Type of settlement				
	Capital	Regional centers	Cities	Towns	Village
Definitely would participate	29.7	36.7	28.7	28.8	36.3
Most likely would participate	32.7	38.3	37.2	37.8	33.8
Most likely would not participate	16.0	14.2	18.1	16.0	13.2
Definitely would not participate	14.1	7.5	7.4	12.2	11.2
DA/NA	7.5	3.3	8.6	5.2	5.5

11. Distribution of answers to the question: "What candidate would you prefer to vote for?"

Table 11.1. Depending on age

Variant of answer	All respondents	Age, years old						
		18-19	20-24	25-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+up
For A. Lukashenko's supporter	29.2	15.7	15.3	13.9	14.2	21.5	34.9	60.4
For A. Lukashenko's opponent	28.3	45.7	34.0	36.5	31.7	33.9	26.9	11.7
For another candidate	15.2	15.7	18.7	16.1	19.8	18.6	11.8	8.6
DA/NA	27.3	22.9	32.0	33.5	34.3	26.0	26.4	19.3

Table 11.2. Depending on education

Variant of answer	Education				
	Elementary	Incomplete secondary	Secondary	Secondary vocational	Higher (incomplete higher)
For A. Lukashenko's supporter	65.8	51.6	26.1	21.6	16.9
For A. Lukashenko's opponent	15.2	16.1	29.2	32.0	35.0
For another candidate	3.8	7.8	14.6	17.8	22.3
DA/NA	15.2	24.5	30.1	28.6	25.8

Table 11.3. Depending on status

Variant of answer	Status				
	Employees of the private sector	Employees of the public sector	Students	Pensioners	Unemployed housewives
For A. Lukashenko's supporter	8.0	23.8	12.5	57.3	15.6
For A. Lukashenko's opponent	42.2	29.2	44.2	14.1	35.1
For another candidate	19.3	16.9	23.1	7.4	16.9
DA/NA	30.5	30.1	20.2	21.2	32.4

Table 11.4. Depending on place of living

Variant of answer	Area						
	Minsk	Minsk region	Brest and region	Grodno and region	Vitebsk and region	Mogilev and region	Gomel and region
For A. Lukashenko's supporter	26.8	33.2	30.3	22.0	21.5	38.4	31.4
For A. Lukashenko's opponent	26.4	21.8	35.1	37.6	35.6	23.3	22.4
For another candidate	16.4	9.5	14.9	15.0	13.0	14.5	21.8
DA/NA	30.4	35.5	19.7	25.4	29.9	23.8	24.4

Table 11.5. Depending on type of settlement

Variant of answer	Type of settlement				
	Capital	Regional centers	Cities	Towns	Village
For A. Lukashenko's supporter	26.8	22.9	20.7	26.9	38.9
For A. Lukashenko's opponent	26.4	35.8	27.1	25.6	27.9
For another candidate	16.4	23.3	22.9	8.3	11.9
DA/NA	30.4	18.0	29.3	39.2	21.3

12. Distribution of answers to the question: "How many times over the last 12 months have you visited foreign countries?"

Table 12.1. Depending on age

Variant of answer	All respondents	Age, years old						
		18-19	20-24	25-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+up
Never	65.6	55.7	57.6	58.4	53.4	58.6	68.9	88.7
Once	17.3	25.7	23.6	16.1	21.3	21.5	14.7	7.7
Several times	12.0	14.3	14.6	20.4	19.0	11.4	10.8	2.5
More than 10 times	3.9	1.4	2.8	5.1	4.9	7.8	3.3	0.3
NA	1.2	2.9	1.4	0	1.4	0.7	2.3	0.8

Table 12.2. Depending on education

Variant of answer	Education				
	Elementary	Incomplete secondary	Secondary	Secondary vocational	Higher (incomplete higher)
Never	96.2	84.3	69.6	56.7	46.4
Once	1.3	9.7	17.7	19.8	23.6
Several times	2.5	4.6	9.0	14.4	23.2
More than 10 times	0	0.9	2.7	7.5	4.5
NA	0	0.5	0.3	1.6	2.3

Table 12.3. Depending on status

Variant of answer	Status				
	Employees of the private sector	Employees of the public sector	Students	Pensioners	Unemployed, housewives
Never	33.2	64.3	59.6	87.0	57.1
Once	23.0	19.2	25.0	8.2	20.8
Several times	28.3	12.9	11.6	3.4	7.8
More than 10 times	15.0	2.4	1.9	0.1	13.0
NA	0.5	1.2	1.9	1.3	1.3

Table 12.4. Depending on place of living

Variant of answer	Area						
	Minsk	Minsk region	Brest and region	Grodno and region	Vitebsk and region	Mogilev and region	Gomel and region
Never	56.9	65.0	57.2	67.6	70.6	66.9	76.7
Once	23.4	18.2	16.3	11.6	14.1	20.9	14.3
Several times	14.9	10.9	15.9	13.9	13.0	9.9	6.1
More than 10 times	4.1	3.2	9.6	5.8	1.7	1.7	1.2
NA	0.7	2.7	1.0	1.1	0.6	0.6	1.5

Table 12.5. Depending on type of settlement

Variant of answer	Type of settlement				
	Capital	Regional centers	Cities	Towns	Village
Never	56.9	57.1	67.6	65.4	74.5
Once	23.4	21.3	17.0	18.6	10.8
Several times	14.9	14.2	13.8	11.5	8.8
More than 10 times	4.1	4.6	1.6	3.5	4.6
DA/NA	0.7	2.8	0	1.0	1.3

**Trends of change in Belarusian public opinion about some socio-economic and political problems
(based on results of IISEPS's national opinion polls, %)**

Table 1. Confidence in mass media

Variant of answer	11'97	09'98	06'99	08'00	08'01	04'02
State-run mass media						
– trust	43.7	41.8	39.8	34.4	40.9	38.7
– distrust	21.0	26.0	31.0	34.7	40.1	43.1
Non-state mass media						
– trust	25.4	19.6	19.5	28.0	29.0	32.2
– distrust	24.1	32.6	34.9	34.1	44.7	43.9

Table 2. The most attractive, corresponding to an ideal politicians

Politician ¹	11'97	09'98	06'99	08'00	08'01	04'02
V. Putin	- ²	- ²	- ²	56.9	60.9	68.1
A. Lukashenko	50.4	51.5	47.2	31.3	39.4	26.0
G. Schroeder	- ²	- ²	10.8	10.9	9.1	14.3
T. Blair	- ²	2.3	4.1	7.9	6.2	10.2
J. Chirac	9.5	9.9	15.7	9.4	10.7	9.3
G. W. Bush Jr.	- ²	- ²	- ²	- ²	8.9	8.5
F. Castro	8.3	10.8	11.3	9.5	12.2	7.9
A. Kwasneiwski	2.9	5.3	6.1	4.7	3.8	7.4
V. Havel	3.6	4.7	7.3	4.2	3.4	5.3
V. Adamkus	- ²	1.2	6.0	3.5	2.7	4.6

¹ Other politicians received less than 3% of votes

² Names of the given politicians were not offered in the polls indicated

Table 3. The best variant of Russia-Belarus relations

Variant of answer	06'97	11'97	09'98	11'99	08'00	08'01	04'02
Union of independent states	24.5	26.2	28.1	33.4	37.2	41.2	32.0
Good neighborly relations of independent states	41.4	34.5	50.8	42.4	37.7	35.9	29.6
Unification into one state	16.3	27.5	20.1	21.8	22.5	21.2	31.9

Table 4. Voting at a hypothetical referendum on unification of Belarus and Russia

Variant of answer	03'99	11'99	08'00	02'01*	08'01	04'02
For unification	41.8	47.0	52.9	58.8	57.3	53.8
Against unification	40.4	34.1	29.4	26.0	20.9	23.0
Would not take part in voting	14.7	15.6	16.4	12.5	12.5	11.6

Table 5. Readiness to take part in public actions

Actions	03'99	11'99	04'00	11'00	08'01	10'01	04'02
Meetings, demonstrations, pickets:							
– ready to take part	18.7	11.4	19.8	17.9	16.7	15.5	16.9
– not going to take part	54.7	53.6	57.4	60.2	71.4	74.4	68.3
Strikes:							
– ready to take part	12.9	14.5	13.4	13.5	12.9	14.5	14.8
– not going to take part	61.1	61.4	64.0	67.1	78.0	78.8	75.5
Armed struggle:							
– ready to take part	7.7	7.0	6.4	5.6	4.0	4.8	5.9
– not going to take part	69.2	70.4	73.0	77.6	86.1	86.2	86.3

* The given option was not offered

Table 6. Attitude towards negotiations of Belarus' authorities and the opposition

Variant of answer	06'99	11'99	04'00	04'02
Negotiations are necessary, since only by means of negotiations it is possible to come to common grounds and consider different interests in our society	38.3	45.3	50.8	48.2
Negotiations are not necessary, because authorities violate law and human rights, it is necessary to force them observe laws, rather than maintaining a dialog	13.8	7.9	8.2	15.0
Negotiations are not necessary, because the opposition represents no one, and there is no need for authorities to talk to it	16.9	15.5	14.8	19.9

Table 7. Attitude towards restoration of the USSR

Variant of answer	11'93	11'97	11'99	04'02
Positive	55.1	49.9	38.0	38.8
Negative	22.3	25.5	30.1	42.6

Table 8. Please, state average income (including wages, pensions and other incomes) for one family member last month

Variant of answer	04'00	06'00*	07'00*	08'00	10'00	11'00	02'01*	04'01	06'01*	08'01	10'01	04'02
Below living wage budget	68.2	64.1	58.3	50.4	69.0	65.8	57.9	54.2	52.0	50.5	44.9	49.9
From living wage budget to minimum living	20.6	23.7	28.9	30.5	19.6	22.1	25.7	32.3	33.0	32.4	34.7	31.1
From living wage budget to \$100	7.4	8.1	9.7	15.9	8.3	9.3	10.8	10.8	11.2	11.9	14.0	14.8
More than \$100	1.8	1.7	1.2	2.2	2.2	1.6	2.5	1.8	2.0	4.6	5.8	4.2

Table 9. Choice of economy time

Chose the following type of economy	11'94	06'95	06'96	06'97	11'97	09'98	06'99	04'00	11'00	08'01	04'02
Market economy	51.0	52.1	53.8	65.4	69.0	74.6	72.1	74.1	73.5	56.6	61.8
Including: With insignificant state control	– ¹	– ¹	– ¹	30.4	32.8	35.2	36.8	41.7	41.4	33.3	40.5
With significant state control	– ¹	– ¹	– ¹	35.0	36.2	39.4	35.3	32.4	32.1	24.3	21.3
Planned economy	46.2	45.1	44.2	30.3	25.7	22.8	24.7	22.7	21.5	18.2	18.3

¹Types of market economy were not offered in the given opinion polls.

Table 10. Choice of type of ownership

Consider the most efficient type of ownership:	12'93	11'94	06'95	06'96	06'97	11'97	06'99	04'00	11'00	08'01	04'02
– private	52.8	45.9	41.8	42.5	48.3	41.4	50.7	53.1	53.1	44.7	54.1
– state	29.0	39.7	47.1	44.8	44.0	45.5	40.5	39.6	39.7	40.8	33.4
– other	13.6	12.0	9.3	11.2	5.7	11.3	7.5	5.7	5.0	2.2	3.7

Table 11. Change of economic situation over the last year

Consider that over the last year the situation ¹ :	06'96	06'97	11'97	09'98	11'99	04'00	11'00	08'01	04'02
– has improved	8.3	18.7	32.7	22.9	8.5	7.0	9.7	16.9	7.7
– has not changed	28.8	30.2	25.6	30.5	23.9	27.9	38.9	40.7	33.2
– has deteriorated	61.9	51.0	38.1	46.0	67.4	64.8	50.9	35.9	55.5

¹In questionnaires of November of 1997, September of 1997, and September of 1998 lines "has improved" and "has deteriorated" also include answers "has rather improved" and "has rather deteriorated" respectively.

Table 12. What company would you prefer to work for?

Variant of answer	06'97	11'97	03'99	11'99	08'00	11'00	04'01	10'01	04'02
For a state-run company	62.9	53.5	58.7	49.1	48.9	47.1	46.3	42.3	41.2
For a private company	28.1	35.7	30.0	43.9	44.0	46.0	41.5	42.6	47.5

Table 13. Participation in private enterprise

Variant of answer	11'97	03'99	06'99	08'00	08'01	04'02
Has taken part and is going to proceed	29.2	12.9	11.6	14.8	14.0	17.8
Has taken part, but not going to proceed	– ¹	7.5	9.4	10.0	10.6	8.9
Hasn't taken part, but would like to try	– ¹	30.7	27.6	30.2	33.0	35.5
Has never taken part and no going to	69.7	48.9	50.5	43.5	42.3	37.7

¹In the questionnaire of 1997 the respondents were offered variant "Yes" and "No".

Table 14. What language do you mostly speak in everyday communication?

Variant of answer	06'95	11'97	09'98	06'99	08'00	02'01*	10'01	04'02
Belarusian	4.5	5.7	2.9	2.5	4.0	4.0	1.7	2.6
Russian	37.3	40.6	39.2	39.8	40.9	42.4	46.3	46.3
Both Russian and Belarusian	7.8	20.3	22.7	29.0	21.8	18.7	20.9	19.9
Mixed	50.0	32.5	33.6	27.8	33.1	34.7	30.0	31.1
Other	0.4	0.8	0.5	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1

Table 15. Would you like to emigrate to a different country?

Variant of answer	11'99	04'00	08'00	11'00	10'01	04'02
Would not like moving anywhere	61.2	57.4	58.1	60.1	52.0	50.3
Germany	15.2	16.0	15.9	14.1	18.5	16.5
United States	11.5	10.1	9.5	11.1	6.1	9.4
Poland	3.9	3.7	3.7	3.1	5.8	4.6
Russia	1.3	2.3	2.4	3.2	3.6	4.9
Baltic States	1.8	1.5	1.4	1.3	1.8	1.8
Other country	4.7	5.9	3.3	7.1	6.3	4.2

* The survey was conducted jointly with the Center for Social and Ecological Studies

The section was prepared by Prof. Manaev, A. Sasnow, V. Dorokhov, I. Burina

Within the framework of the project "Strengthening role of independent social research and experts' networks in Belarus" a practical research seminar on the subject of "Social Research and Social Development in Belarus" organized by IISEPS took place on June 7–8 in Gomel.

Reports were given by Prof. Oleg Manaev, IISEPS Director, Prof. Dr. Stanislav Bogdankevich, honorary chairman of the United Civic Party, Dr. Peter Kozarzewski of the Center of Social-Economic Studies (CASE, Warsaw), Dr. Alyksandr Sasnow, employee of IISEPS, Anatoly Kasyanenko, president of the Gomel-based Center for Social Resources Development "Oracle", and others.

Representatives of different public organizations, political parties, labor unions, foreign representations, international organizations, mass media and business-associations took part in the seminar.

We offer to your attention fragments of the most interesting reports given at the seminar.

INDEPENDENT RESEARCH AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN BELARUS: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

Prof. O. Manaev, IISEPS director

Independent research and analytical centers – think tanks – have become one of the modern social institutes that appeared in Belarus after 1991. The key difference of these organizations from traditional scientific centers of university, academic or departmental profile is that their activities are aimed not only at studying different problems of social development, but also at solving them by means of working out well-founded prognoses, scenarios and recommendations. Therefore many employees of think tanks find an application for their knowledge in power structures, whereas representatives of power structures – for their experience in these centers. The most prominent examples: K. Rice, advisor on national security for President George W. Bush, who used to be the vice-president at Stanford University, and G. Pavlovsky, aide to President V. Putin on political issues, who founded and heads the Russian Foundation of Efficient Politics. Both of them are commonly known to have a considerable influence over their bosses. Such a "circulation of knowledge and influence" resulted in an increased role of such centers in formation of public opinion and public policy in the West, and they are even called the fifth power, after the press which is known as the fourth power.

The first think tanks appeared in Belarus in 1992, and in 1997 the most prominent of them joined into the Belarusian Think Tanks uniting 18 organizations from Minsk and most of the country's regions. The major motive for the creation of such centers was the aspiration of scientists-sociologists, economists, politologists, lawyers, psychologists, representatives of other social sciences – to promote the progress of social development of the country and its regions, because a gap between social science and practice characteristic of the Soviet times has not narrowed during the years of independence, but, on the contrary, widened.

IISEPS has repeatedly published data of numerous national opinion polls, which proves that the rating of public trust to think tanks surpasses the rating of trust to many other state and public institutions (including government, parliament, local authorities, political parties, labor unions, etc.). A direct question on this topic clearly reveals people's attitude towards their activity (See Table 1).

As one could see, within four years Belarusians' attitude towards the new social institutions has changed considerably: in 1998 almost 60% knew nothing about them, today almost two thirds of the respondents know about them, and the overwhelming majority thinks positive of them. The number of those who find it difficult to answer this question dropped more than twofold!

The main reason for such an unusual respect of think tanks with the Belarusian public is the quality of information and analyses they offer on the most important problems of social development, which is considered insufficient regardless of the huge information-propagandistic apparatus of the state. So, according to the latest opinion poll conducted by IISEPS, only 11.5% of the respondents said information received from official sources "fully corresponds to their real life", two thirds said – "partially corresponds", and more than 16% – "does not correspond at all".

Another reasons, which is also of certain importance, is availability of information and analysis offered by think tanks. Unlike traditional structures of social sciences (what does a wide public know about results of researches by academic institutions and universities?), independent centers offer to public most of their results, estimations and recommendations on a regular basis via publication in press (during 10 years of its existence IISEPS has published about 1.900 materials in Belarusian and foreign press, i.e. about two publications per week), different bulletins and books, conferences and seminars, direct mailing of analytical materials (IISEPS's mailing list includes about 200 leading public and private structures, as well as all libraries of higher education establishments), thereby promoting the formation of an objective public opinion, its influence upon public policy.

Unlike their colleagues in other countries, however, independent researchers and analysts of Belarus have faced serious and unexpected problems. At the first stage of development (before 1997) Belarus' authorities cooperated – although not so actively and openly as in neighboring countries – with think tanks: took part in their conferences and seminars,

published materials in their periodicals, referred to their results while substantiating importance managerial decisions, independent analysts worked in various expert groups and councils at legislative, executive and judicial bodies, whereas representatives of authorities often made part of constituent or advisory boards of many independent centers.

Table 1

Dynamics of the population's confidence in the most important state and public institutions of Belarus, %*

State and public institutions	04'02				10'98			
	Trust	Distrust	DA/NA	Index of trust**	Trust	Distrust	DA/NA	Index of trust
Church	51.9	27.4	20.7	+0.247	48.6	15.6	35.8	+0.329
Army	47.4	31.6	21.0	+0.159	36.8	23.2	40.0	+0.135
Independent research centers	40.4	24.9	34.7	+0.158	25.7	15.9	58.4	+0.098
State-run research centers	33.3	32.4	34.3	+0.009	-****	-	-	-
OSCE AMG in Belarus	28.8	31.4	39.8	-0.027	-	-	-	-
State-run mass media	38.7	43.1	18.2	-0.044	41.8	26.0	32.2	+0.159
Constitutional court	35.5	40.2	24.3	-0.048	-	-	-	-
Non-state mass media	32.2	43.9	23.9	-0.119	19.6	32.6	47.8	-0.130
Associations of entrepreneurs	25.0	38.3	36.7	-0.135	10.8	40.0	49.2	-0.292
Free and independent labor unions	27.6	41.0	31.4	-0.136	14.5	27.1	58.4	-0.126
President	32.4	50.1	17.5	-0.179	48.0	22.1	29.9	+0.258
Central Election Commission	29.6	47.7	22.7	-0.183	-	-	-	-
KGB	27.7	46.9	25.4	-0.194	-	-	-	-
Labor Unions forming the Federation of Labor Unions	23.4	42.9	33.7	-0.198	14.9	29.2	55.9	-0.143
Courts	28.6	50.6	21.6	-0.266	22.4	38.8	38.8	-0.164
Governments	26.1	52.3	21.6	-0.266	29.9	26.1	44.0	+0.038
National Assembly	19.6	52.0	28.4	-0.328	18.9	26.6	54.5	-0.007
Political parties supporting authorities	19.8	52.9	27.3	-0.335	5.4**	37.4	57.2	-0.320
Opposition political parties	15.2	54.4	30.4	-0.397	*			
13 th Supreme Soviet	15.7	51.0	33.3	-0.359	10.8	27.3	61.9	-0.165
Police	20.8	61.7	17.5	-0.413	20.9	43.8	35.3	-0.229
Local authorities	20.4	61.3	18.3	-0.414	24.3	37.4	39.3	-0.131

* Here and below results of national public opinion polls conducted by IISEPS are given (in all cases about 1.500 respondents were questioned using the face-to-face method, margin of error did not exceed 0.03).

** Index of trust could vary from +1 to -1 and is calculated as a quotient of the sum of positive ("trust") and negative ("distrust") answers to the number of all the respondents who answered the question.

*** Parties were not divided in the given poll.

**** The questionnaire did not included the given institution.

Over the last five years the situation has changed dramatically: from a cautious cooperation with think tanks the authorities have turned to an open confrontation with them. I would remind only of the most known examples, which caused an international resonance: from the "claims" to the Belarusian Soros Foundation, the Independent Sociological Institute "Vostok-Zapad" ("East-West") and the Charitable Foundation "Children of Chernobyl" in 1997 (as a result of which some of these structures ceased their activities) to a new initiative by the Belarusian authorities (the resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers # 707, dated May 31, 2002) to put under a strict control activities of independent research centers, not to publicize data of sociological surveys, since they allegedly "fulfil the order by those who sponsor them" (the list varies from the "crafty West" to "shadow capital"). Accusations of bias, commercial dependence, political engagement, and even espionage – have become a permanent refrain in speeches of many representatives of Belarus' authorities related to activities of Belarusian think tanks. Today, however, the public demonstrates support not in favor of authorities, but independent research centers: according to the same survey by IISEPS, almost 63% of the respondents believe that "sociological researches shall be conducted and their results shall be published without any permissions", only 14.8% agree that "a permission by authorities is necessary to conduct sociological surveys and to publish their data".

The reason for such an aggressive attitude of authorities towards think tanks is, probably, explained by their striving to be independent and to exert influence upon the process of social development, and not using a habitual "corridor" method (by means of writing analytical notes and reports mostly for the "top"), but instead appealing directly to society.

The more independent research centers become, the higher their authority with society, the heavier pressure authorities exert on them. And this is not just a matter of ideological-political views (quite different, in fact) of independent analysts. The striving for an independent position and influence on the process of social development, as we have already mentioned, is the mission of think tanks – that is what they were created for (most of their employees used to work for

state-run research institutes and universities).

Speaking objectively, the striving for independence and influence does not run counter to state interests. Thanks to their unique character, think tanks act on principle of complementarity, rather than confrontation with the state. Even in the present complex circumstances there are examples of an efficient cooperation. In early 1999 the leadership of the Belarusian Think Tanks offered the Belarusian Foreign Ministry their assistance in defrosting of TACIS programs (in the fall of 1996 the European Union allotted about \$6m for the projects of civic society development, but Belarus' authorities did not accept the chosen projects and offered their own variants, which Brussels did not like)/ as a result of joint efforts the program was defrosted, and the projects are being carried out.

Another, and the most recent example – the publication of the results of IISEPS's April national opinion poll (See the article entitled "Collapse" in *Narodnaya Volya* of May 4, 2002), according to which A. Lukashenko's rating dropped to record low of 30.9%. A rough reaction by the president at the April 29 session of the Cabinet of Ministers is an evidence of the fact that the disturbing [for authorities] tendencies of social development, revealed by independent centers, are, in fact, being taken into account. *During the ten years of its existence Belarusian think tanks have created a unique "early social warning system", which allows authorities, civic society structures and wide public to recognize (or even take respective measures) problems, tensions and conflicts that are becoming mature in the Belarusian socium.* The principle of complementarity is also displayed in the following: activities of independent Belarusian research centers (as well as their colleagues in Central and Eastern Europe), as a rule, are supported – in terms of financial, technical and informational assistance – by different international and foreign structures or private business, i.e. penniless for the state. Thus, the aggressive reaction of Belarus' authorities at their activity (including the notorious presidential decree #8, which put up serious obstacles for the whole third sector in receiving assistance from abroad) seems absolutely inadequate. Unlike the authorities, "which are afraid of their own shadow", Belarusians are quite loyal to such assistance (See Table 2).

Table 2

Distribution of answers to the question: "Below is the list of possible assistance to Belarusian non-state public organizations from the side of foreign countries and world community. Which forms of it you think acceptable from the moral, political and other points of view?", %

Variants of answer	Acceptable		Unacceptable		DA/NA	
	10'98	04'02	10'98	04'02	10'98	04'02
Educational support (by means of seminars, conferences in Belarus and abroad)	61.2	77.3	7.9	10.5	31.0	12.2
Technical support (PCs, copiers, faxes, printers and other equipment)	65.6	76.8	8.3	11.9	26.1	11.3
Humanitarian aid (food products, medicines, clothes, etc.)	54.1	74.3	16.6	13.5	29.4	12.2
Financial support	60.9	67.3	12.6	18.6	26.5	14.1
Moral-political support (official statements, discussions at meetings with official representatives of Belarus, campaigns in mass media)	46.9	63.7	14.1	18.2	39.0	18.1
Informational support (providing newspapers, journals, bulletins, etc.)	43.3	64.1	15.1	15.9	41.6	20.0
Weight-average index	55.3	70.6	10.0	14.8	32.3	14.7

As we see, the majority of the respondents consider various assistance from international organizations to the Belarusian third sector quite acceptable, and during the last four years the number of those who are in favor of such assistance has increased by 25%, while the number of those who find it difficult to give an answer – has fallen twofold!

Due to a cautious or hostile attitude of the authorities towards activities of independent research centers, their influence upon social development has taken rather specific shapes, distinguishing Belarus from other countries: civic society structures rather than the state have become their major partner, and wide public – their major consumer. According to the data of a special survey in the third sector, recently conducted by the Gomel Center for Development of Social Resources "Oracle", Belarus' think tanks together with related NGO's and mass media have become the most efficient partners of Belarusian non-governmental organizations.

Interest in data of independent researchers and trust to them from the side of the society are turning into a powerful factor of their influence upon public opinion and through it on different processes of social development. The results of such influence are seen from Table 3.

As we see, the audience of think tanks – are people sharing democratic and market values, supporters of Belarus' independence, respecting international structures and standards. Those who know nothing about activities of such centers are of different, sometimes diametrically opposite, opinions.

Independent press has become the most important and efficient – we could say strategic – partner of Belarusian think tanks. According to the results of IISEPS's latest national opinion poll (conducted in April of 2002), about 73% of those who trust independent mass media, simultaneously trust think tanks (compare: opposition political parties – only 21.2%, labor unions – 17.1%, government – 17.0%, Supreme Council – 19.3%, National Assembly – 11.3%). Within the last four years the crossing of audiences of independent mass media and think tanks has jumped by almost 30% (See Table 4).

Table 3

A comparative social-political portrait of those who trust figures and analysis by independent research centers and those who know nothing about them, %*

Social-political features	Attitude towards figures and analysis by independent research centers	
	Trust (37.5)	Know nothing about such centers (16.9)
Satisfied with A. Lukashenko's seven-year rule:		
• Rather yes	23.7	35.7
• Partially yes, partially no	40.4	43.1
• Rather no	34.9	20.4
Want A. Lukashenko to be the president of Belarus for another term:		
• Yes		
• No	35.5	53.5
	44.1	16.6
Believe that if A. Lukashenko is elected for a new term, his policy:		
• Might become more progressive	24.1	25.4
• Might become more reactionary	20.9	7.5
• Would remain unchanged	46.8	39.6
The most important aspects of candidates for presidency while voting:		
• Continuation of A. Lukashenko's present policy		
• Changing A. Lukashenko's policy cardinally	30.6	52.6
	66.7	39.9
• Strengthening of Belarus' independence	48.0	31.5
• Further integration of Belarus and Russia	51.5	65.2
• Carrying out market reforms	74.8	48.0
• Continuation of the present economic course	23.0	42.0
• Strengthening law and order by means of perfecting legislation, society's control over power structures	85.3	68.2
• Strengthening law and order by means of widening power structures and their functions	14.0	26.0
• Increasing role of state in politics and economy	29.2	43.7
• Increasing role of citizens in politics and economy	68.4	46.8
If tomorrow a new presidential election takes place, would you vote for (open question):		
• A. Lukashenko	37.3	57.4
• An alternative candidate	15.7	2.4
The 2001 presidential election in Belarus was free and fair:		
• Yes	35.4	49.3
• No	36.1	13.0
• D/A	28.4	37.7
Belarusians' readiness to express their political views:		
• No one is afraid	22.2	17.1
• Some people are afraid	33.9	34.3
• Many people are afraid	34.1	17.4
• All are afraid	7.9	3.3
• D/A	2.0	28.0
Attitude towards the meeting of labor union on February 14, 2001:		
• Positive	62.4	40.6
• Indifferent	9.4	6.7
• Negative	7.9	5.5
• Heard nothing about it	15.0	40.0
Consider the best variant of relations between Russia and Belarus:		
• Good neighborly relations of two independent states	35.9	17.4
• Union of independent states	33.4	26.5
• Unification into one state	29.0	53.8

Attitude towards OCSE AMG's training of 14.000 observers to monitor the presidential election:

• Positive	65.4	19.9
• Negative	13.5	8.5
• Heard nothing about it	12.0	47.4

Believe that OSCE AMG violates Belarusian laws:

• Yes, violates	14.9	7.0
• No, does not violate	47.1	11.5
• Heard nothing about the AMG	10.8	45.7

Believe that:

• It is necessary to get a permission from authorities to publish data of sociological surveys	8.8	5.2
• Data of such surveys shall be publicized to the maximum without any permissions	83.6	25.7
• D/A	7.6	69.2

* Based on IISEPS's poll conducted in February of 2001.

Table 4

Dynamics of audience of non-state mass media, simultaneously trusting independent research centers, %

Time of opinion poll	Those who trust non-state mass media and simultaneously trust independent research centers
09'98	44.4
11'99	51.4
11'00	56.9
10'01	65.2
04'02	72.7

Table 5

Distribution of answers to the question: "Recently mass media have frequently published materials of independent research centers. Publications of which centers are you familiar with?", %

Independent research center	National public opinion poll	Elite survey*		
		All respondents	Employees of the private sector	Employees of the public sector
IISEPS	20.2	96.2	100.0	90.9
Novak Laboratory	5.0	84.9	83.9	86.4
Center of Social and Ecological Studies	5.0	3.8	6.5	-
International Institute of Political Studies	3.1	13.2	9.7	18.2
Lev Sapega Foundation	2.6	26.4	22.6	31.8
Strategia (Strategy) Analytical Center	1.7	64.2	61.3	68.2
Belorusskaya Perspektiva (Belarusian Prospect) scientific-analytical center	1.4	22.6	25.8	18.2
Center for Support of Associations and Foundations SCAF	0.8	9.4	12.9	4.5
Belarusian Center of Constitutionalism and Comparative and Legal Studies	0.5	18.9	25.8	9.1
Other	3.3	-	-	-
DA/NA	66.3	1.9	-	4.5

* IISEPS's national public opinion poll was conducted in April of 2002, the elite survey (60 policymaker, businessmen, scientists and journalists almost equally representing the private and public sectors were interviewed, interviewees could give several answers) was conducted in November of 2000.

Today, almost three fourths of those who trust independent mass media and think tanks – are basically the same people! The reasons for such a close correlation of their audiences are evident: both institutions combine (of course, in different proportion) two major types of activities – perception of society and influence upon it. Inner mechanisms of their activities differ considerably, but the outcomes look alike – information and analysis addressed to the society. Moreover, the alliance of the two civic society institutions is mutually beneficial: infor-

mation and analysis offered by non-state mass media on the basis of materials provided by think tanks become more reasoned and persuasive, obtaining, in turn, a direct access to society, think tanks become more prominent and respected. Since the scope of activity and influence of independent mass media (the permanent audience of which is fourfold smaller than that of the Belarusian television) and think tanks (which employ less people than a single state-run academic institution) cannot be compared with the state, their alliance strengthens the positions of both sides and their influence upon the society also increases. Aside from that, today there is a number of such centers functioning in Belarus and well-known to Belarus' elite and wide public (See Table 5).

While the opposition circles are debating to what extent mass media and research centers should be supported (though they constantly oppose the attempts of these circles to control them), the Belarusian authorities, understanding well the potential role of the alliance of independent mass media think tanks, are creating new limits for their activity. Undoubtedly, a growing role of this unique alliance in the public-political process objectively increases the role of other society forces interested in changes, reveals new prospects for democratic development of Belarus, strengthening of its independence and returning to the European community. Just in the alliance with independent press, civic society and wide public, in my opinion, are the prospects for a further development of independent social research in Belarus and their influence upon the country's social development.

ROLE OF DEMOCRATIC FORCES IN SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF BELARUS: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

Prof. S. Bogdankevich, IISEPS Advisory Board Chairman

By the moment when Belarus obtained political independence there was neither mature democratic society in the country nor structured democratic forces. The most important feature of the post-Soviet society was its primary adherence to social fairness values as interpreted by Bolsheviks' ideology. Most Belarusians put these values above political and economic freedoms and civil rights, which resulted in a long-time conservation of traditional communist myths and stereotypes in public consciousness, coming to power of populist neo-Soviet political forces that correspond to such public moods and, in fact, public support of the authoritarian regime.

During the past years of independent development some changes have taken place in public consciousness in terms of value perception with respect of understanding importance of civil rights and freedoms, ideological, political and economic pluralism, structuring society by ideological, political and economic opinions and preferences. Mostly it affected the most educated part of the society and relates to the formation of different non-governmental organizations as well as independent mass media. First of all, under their influence public consciousness changes towards democracy and pluralism, civic society is being formed and it declares to the state its claims, exerts certain influence on the country's social-political and economic course, respect of civil rights and freedoms. As a result, according to the survey of Belarusian society development index conducted by the international organization CIVICUS with the assistance of UN, our civic society, regardless of a complex political environment, is relatively "healthy" and promotes progressive values, is enough structured and influential. Among the mishaps pinpointed in the survey are: the problem of irregular distribution of public organizations in the regions, limited resources and their complete dependence on international donors, underdeveloped specialized resource centers. There are no alternative channels for support of non-governmental organizations from the side of the state and business in the country.

Unlike other European countries, including Russia, the state does not stimulate the development of civic society, does not use the system of state orders or sponsorship to realize the programs aimed at satisfying social requirements of the population which would have been carried out by non-governmental organizations. Both central and local state bodies insufficiently use research and other data offered by public organizations. Moreover, the state limits the activity of civic society, puts forward a complex procedure for registration of its organizations, an unfavorable tax legislation, a bureaucratic system of control over donor assistance and charity.

The influence of civic society upon public consciousness in the sphere of culture, business, ecology, education, social security, protection of citizens' rights, international politics, etc., seems rather strong. The dynamics of public opinion polls conducted by IISEPS proves it. However, the influence on real politics of the state is minimal. The activity of civic society, as a rule, is covered by state-run mass media rather negatively. The state basically ignores organizations of civic society and they play no significant role in the process of elaboration and realization of state policy.

For example, for years unions of entrepreneurs, research centers, sociological laboratories, political parties put a well-reasoned question before the authorities about a considerable decrease in licensed activities, inadmissibility of extortions from entrepreneurs, including "voluntarily" upon decisions of local authorities. In his election campaign statements A. Lukashenko took obligation to solve the problem of conditions for small and medium business, including the issue of licensing. But the things are tight were they started. On the contrary, if A. Lukashenko promised to limit the list of licensed activities to 13, in fact, diametrically opposite decisions are being taken. In April of 2002 the government adopted the resolution "About measure to perfect the regulation of exports and imports" in line with which the list of goods, ex-

ports and imports of which should be approved by the Ministry of Agriculture and licensed by the Ministry of Trade (a license and a registration certificate cost 430.000 rubles), was widened.

Not only independent mass media, but even the pro-presidential Sovetskaya Belorussia, are abundant in information about arbitrariness of local authorities towards entrepreneurs, their public insults when applying for registration and licensing, about examples when license to private trucking was denied and which might have stimulated competition and brought prices down, about using financial check-ups to extort bribes, etc. According to the estimates of the union of entrepreneurs, last year such a forced "charity" cost Belarusian entrepreneurs about \$5.5m.

Non-governmental organizations are created by the society and are working for its benefit. It would have been in the national interests, in the interests of the state to form legal and political conditions for an efficient functioning of civic society organizations, for a wide usage of results of their activity.

Along with the activity of non-governmental organizations, the development of civic society resulted in the appearance of political parties and ideologically related public associations, free labor unions and an increasing independence of traditional ones, revival of traditional churches and development of new churches, first of all protestant denominations. Undoubtedly, even in the present difficult political and economic conditions, their activity for democracy development, spiritual revival of society, protection of rights and freedoms of citizens, for perfection of legislation and economic relations is extremely useful.

A multipolar political community is gradually being formed in the political sphere. Political institutions, based on different ideologies and opinions, have been created in the country to assist in revealing and expressing political will of citizens.

Political parties are still not numerous and do not enjoy the necessary support with the society. But one shall not be disappointed, because everything could change. The experience of post-Soviet states, first of all Russia, shows that only after a transition to formation of representative authorities on majority-proportional principle a real political structuring of the society takes place, which reveals electorate's attitude towards one or another ideology, political program and their carriers. In the conditions of the totalitarian regime it would be better to speak about two existing parties: the "party of power" and the "party of opposition", because until the country returns to democracy a real structuring of the society is almost impossible.

The creation of the civic coalition before the election was based on the above understanding of the problem. After the presidential election opinion polls demonstrate that the "party of power" loses public support, and the electorate of the "opposition party" grows in number. At the same time, as the April 2002 survey showed, 54% of the respondents believe that opposition politicians known to the society enjoy certain respect and they influence people's life.

After the defeat of democratic forces at the parliamentary and presidential elections, some prominent public figures of the country claim there is a public necessity in appearance on the political arena of moderate, centrist forces, about extremism of existing political parties and exhausted "political pensioners". In their opinion, the whole opposition movement in Belarus is in a deep crisis and only a third political force, which would be based on widely accepted liberal-democratic values, might be able to solve the problem of gaining public support and to ensure the country is retaking the path of democracy and prosperity. Such estimation has been recently voiced, in particular, by L. Zaiko, the president of Strategia (Strategy) Analytical Center, L. Zlotnikov, a prominent propagandist of liberal values, S. Dubovets, a figure of Belarusian culture, A. Arkush, the editor-in-chief of Kalosye journal, and other people.

Such and similar statements ignore the real environment in which the existing political parties and public organizations are functioning. Under the rule of authoritarian regime, legal arbitrariness, absence of independent parliament, independent judicial system, monopoly on electronic mass media at any moment the head of state could announce and the state propaganda widely publicize that economist L. Zaiko, liberal L. Zlotnikov and the structures they head are extremists or anti-national formations. And the electorate would consider them that way.

But that does not mean that white has in reality become black. Realistically, A. Lukashenko is the true extremist, publicly insulting and labeling democratic politicians, prominent figures of Belarusian culture and other opposition and not only public figures, publicly alleging that decent citizens of our country are sinful unless they take a lackey position towards his regime and policy, constantly violating any rules and laws.

It would have been naive at least to follow A. Lukashenko's example and to consider Belarusian public figures, who have a rich experience of state activities for the benefit of the country and who used to cooperate with A. Lukashenko until he turned into the sole dictator causing damage to the country, the extremist irreconcilable opposition, accepting no compromises, having no desire to talk and cooperate with the real authorities. None of the prominent ex-statesmen, who form or used to form the core of democratic opposition – including G. Karpenko, M. Chigir, M. Grib, M. Marinich, A. Lebedko, V. Leonov, A. Dobrovolsky, P. Kozlovsky, V. Shlyndikov, V. Goncharik, Y. Khodyko, S. Domash, S. Kalyakin, A. Bukhvostov and many others – has ever been nationalist, anti-Russian or pro-NATO figures, or extremists. As well as the well-known cultural figures – V. Bykov, N. Gilevich, G. Buravkin. The list of prominent Belarusians staying in the opposition and alleged to be traitors, nationalists, swindlers, extremists, is rather long.

Of course, there are extremist exceptions in democratic opposition. At a stretch, only Z. Poznyak's party of the Belarusian Popular Front, which he head from abroad, could be considered such an exception. At dawn of Belarus' independence the BPF headed by Z. Poznyak was the widely recognized leader of democratic forces based on the idea of Belarusian

statehood and total sovereignty.

Today programs of the major opposition parties include protection of Belarusian statehood and sovereignty as one of their priorities and is no longer the prerogative of the BPF. At the same time Z. Poznyak's party expresses views and interests of the most nationalist-minded strata of our society. It advocates the idea of maximalism, formation of Belarusian liberation movement. Contrary to moods of the majority, the party rejects the idea of a close cooperation with Russia, demand an immediate and complete de-russification, is against talks between the opposition and the ruling regime, against cooperation with the OSCE AMG.

As for the "Adradzhenne" (Revival) Party of the BPF, its program is not of an extremist nature and corresponds to European standards. To a great extent its activity is of a cultural-enlightenment character aimed at revival of the national culture and the Belarusian language, protection of Belarusian statehood and total sovereignty. However, in the eyes of wide public this party is seen archinationalistic and extremist.

Appeals by S. Dubovets and A. Arkush to the political opposition to change its course, to get over to one field with the authorities and play according to one and the same rules and offer A. Lukashenko and his regime "the pipe of peace", stepping over even moral aspects related to the disappearance of the opposition politicians, to support A. Lukashenko in his secret opposition to democratic Russia are based on a wrong assessment of successes of totalitarian regime and democracy's defeats. From the one hand it is known that the political opposition has for a long time been open for talks, compromises and has always claimed about it. The opposition has never spoken against Russia's capital inflow on a competitive basis or privatization with participation of foreign capital. The opposition is struggling not against A. Lukashenko, but for elimination of the authoritarian regime, separation of power, rule of law, independence of judicial power and freedom of mass media, freedom of voters' will at elections without falsifications. What of this could be considered as extremist demands? It is not true that the present opposition is putting spokes in the country's wheels. It struggles against dictatorship for a prospering Belarus. It tries to help Belarus' authorities not to allow an economic collapse, offering its own concepts, programs and projects, dialog and cooperation. The opposition sees the real weakness of the regime, its "Pyrrhic" victories. This is not the opposition, but the regime is in political and economic doldrums. Its forces are dying away. A. Lukashenko's positions are not unshakable, there are enough people able to replace him. Separate defeat moods are unlikely to force, as the regime hopes, the opposition to give up the struggle for democracy and reforming the country.

Undoubtedly, political parties have to get rid of the past mistakes and mishaps as soon as possible, mistakes such as the election boycott and dissemination of illusions about the possibility to remove the regime with the help of street [actions]. They have to stay united to solve common democratic and economic tasks, to be the leader of the wide civic coalition (the "opposition party"), consisting of all the major structures of civic society, to nominate new leaders from democratic ranks. At the same time, there is no need for new parties to appear – guided by an incorrect assessment of political situation or for the sake of some individual ambitions. Moderate centrist forces are widely represented in the functioning liberal, social-democratic and other parties labeled by official propaganda as extremist and nationalist. However, L. Zlotnikov, for example, claims that a new liberal party might change the country's development vector, since this ideological niche in Belarus' political space is vacant.

In fact, the niche is not vacant. There is a moderate centrist party keeping to a liberal-democratic ideology – the United Civic Party. The UCP is the most elite party in terms of its staff. As we know, this party was claimed for by democratic public – in the 13th Supreme Council it had a faction of 18–22 deputies. The party was headed by widely known statesmen and public figures – G. Karpenko, deputy of the 12th and 13th Supreme Council, Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Council (died under unknown circumstances), V. Gonchar – vice premier of A. Lukashenko's government, the Central Election Commission Chairman, later – Deputy Chairman of the 13th Supreme Council (disappeared in 1999), Y. Zakharenko – minister of interior of A. Lukashenko's government (disappeared in 1999).

Over the last several years the party has made a number of tactical mistakes what weakened its influence in the society. However, after the April 2002 4th Congress it actively restores its image of a moderate centrist party, its influence widens. The party has unambiguously claimed it is going to take part in all subsequent election campaigns, worked out a new Program, a new Strategy and tactics of its activity, set the course at maintaining dialog and cooperation with democratic forces in authorities, including the House of Representatives. It responded at a declarative appeal of authorities to cooperate for the benefit of the country, sending to the government a Program of social-democratic reforms for Belarus elaborated by prominent economists, Programs of budget and tax reforms, a Concept of pension reform as well as more than 20 law drafts. Unfortunately, regardless of its own appeal to cooperate, the government declines to discuss the projects submitted by the party. Facing a factual collapse of the current economic policy, Belarus' authorities turned out not ready for a sweep change of its doomed economic course and even to discuss the submitted economic proposals. At the same time, a dialog between the authorities and the opposition seems inevitable.

In order to strengthen its centrist image, the UCP widened its ranks with prominent public figures and statesmen. Among its new members are: M. Chigir – the first premier of A. Lukashenko's government, A. Pavlov – the former rector of the Belarusian State University, the leader of the Minsk education and science labor union, A. Petrovsky – the former deputy education minister, V. Starovoitov – a hero of Socialist labor, and a number of other Belarusians known for their liberal-democratic views.

L. Zlotnikov's statements that the party allegedly simplifies the reasons for the opposition's defeat, boils them down to

the lack of proper conditions for a free will and falsifications, that the party denies the ruling regime has a social base are absolutely groundless and run counter to an official estimation of the reasons for the defeat. Also he groundlessly alleges that the party is solidary with the BPF's position regarding the issues of integration with Russia, usage of the Russian language, that the UCP rejected a fundamental principle of liberalism – priority of human rights over the interests of nation and state. In reality, it is quite the contrary. The UCP unconditionally speaks in favor of Belarus remaining a sovereign state, it is for a close integration with Russia, welcomes an inflow of Russia's capital in the process of privatization and selling stocks – on a competitive basis, for a free usage of Belarusian and Russian, against jointing NATO, etc.

In its political activity the opposition must consider negative tendencies that appear in the economy. The ruling authoritarian regime remains in captivity of its own myths and illusions. A. Lukashenko's annual address to the parliamentarians reads: "The country's economy is steadily developing. Belarus is on the rise". It has been repeatedly stated, including in Russia, that thanks to a special development model, contrary to recommendations of doctors-professors, Belarus is the only post-Soviet state which has managed to exceed the 1990 level of production.

This is mere bluffing. In terms of production of the most important types of industrial goods as compared to 1990 – the figures are between 23% (tractors) to 49% (chemical fiber). There is only a 14% rise in the production of refrigerators. The cattle is only 53% of the 1990 level, cows – 70%, pigs – 57%; the grain production – 73%, milk – 52%, cattle and poultry – 44%.

Constant delays in solving the ripe problems, rejection of reforms, misuse of administrative levers, self-isolation of foreign investments resulted in a complete exhaustion of reserves to support the current production and people's incomes. As of early 2002, on average basic assets are 80% worn-out, the level of wear annually goes up by 3% because of the lack of investments, half of Belarus' enterprises has totally "ate through" their working capital, another third has only 15–20% of the minimum need, 4.002 enterprises registered as loss-making, or 34% of their total number (against 22.3% on January 1, 2001), and after the first quarter of 2002 – half of all functioning Belarusian enterprises; the level of profitability of the leading sector dropped more than twofold within the second half of 2001 and the first quarter of 2002 and on average is less than 6% (against 13.1% of 2000).

From the second half of 2001 the foreign trade balance became negative, and the deficit of payment balance reached 10% of the GDP. Within the first quarter of 2002 the volume of exports decreased by 10% as compared to the planned figures. There is a foreign trade deficit of \$120m. And considering inflation in 16% of such enterprises – more than 75%. With the 2001 GDP of 14.9 trillion rubles, accounts payable equaled 8.8 trillion rubles, of which half are officially overdue. The total amount of debts to the budget exceeded 208 billion rubles. In April Belarus' debt for natural gas increased by \$22m, and the total debt amounts to \$292m, including \$260m – to Gazprom. As of May 13, regardless of loans given by commercial banks to pay out wages, the total amount of backpay totaled 29 billion rubles. Pensions are paid in time only in every tenth district. Real incomes of the population dropped in the first quarter of 2002 almost by 25% as compared to the fourth quarter of 2001.

The following data is an evident of the situation at A. Lukashenko's motherland. During the first four months Moguilev region's industrial enterprises reduced production by 5%, in April the production volume amounted to 88% of April last year. Foreign trade shrunk by 6.2% as compared to 2001. The budget arrears exceeded 26 billion rubles.

On May 28 the Belarusian government summed up the economy's development in the current year. Formally, during the four months of 2002 only 7 out of 16 social-economic prognosis parameters were met. Including a 4.1% growth of the GDP, in reality this growth replenished stocks of unsold goods, which reached 73.8% of monthly production.

Regardless of the above data, Belarus' authorities still speak about correctness and invariability of the Belarusian development model and the current economic course. Setting all authorities' hopes upon the administrative resource, rejecting long ripening reforms, inability to recognize that the current policy is wrong, political and investment self-isolation cost the Belarusian people dear. Still there is no middle class in Belarus, the state has not ensured accumulation of national capital even for small business.

Today, having led the economy into a deadlock, the authorities are ready to sell out the country's property to foreigners, Russian oligarchs, first of all, the leading Belarusian petrochemical enterprises. Privatization of industrial enterprises, worn-out and almost unprofitable, would be carried under conditions while over the last several years the strategic branch western capital, which would have secured new technologies and new markets, settled in other countries with economy in transition, which created favorable conditions for outside investments in good time.

Many Belarusian enterprises turned into junk, lost their value and are unattractive for a civilized branch investor. In such conditions Russian oligarchs, Russian capital, very often of a questionable nature, become the only alternative for Belarus' industry.

In industrialized Europe small and medium business amounts to 60% of the GDP, in Belarus – less than 10%. Only by means of developing small and medium business it is possible to avert rocketing unemployment caused by the necessity to liquidate loss-making jobs, to increase people's incomes.

In estimation of independent Belarusian experts, this year Belarus' economy is doomed to stagnation. The lack of working capital, price and other non-competitiveness of goods, loss-making or low profitability, a deepening tax and budget crisis and crisis of non-payment, would force to increase the ruble's monetary expansion. Unless the country receives some \$300-500m in outside investments (through privatization, etc.), directive parameters envisioned by the Pro-

gram of Social-Economic Development of Belarus most likely would fail. Instead of 20–27%, the year's inflation would amount to 70-100%, the dollar exchange rate might fall to 2.700–3.000 rubles for \$1. The population's real incomes would drop by 3–5%, instead of a 8% rise. Unfortunately, this is only the beginning of the requital for the current ignorant policy

INFLUENCE OF THINK TANKS ON POLICY OF REFORMS: CASE EXPERIENCE

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1. Necessity of establishing think tanks in the process of postsocialist transformations

Postsocialist transformation is a complex process demanding an efficient intellectual support. One of its specific features is a certain constructivism, i.e. the necessity of a purposeful establishing of institutions and public relations, which couldn't ripen in the conditions of socialist order. That is the major difference of our countries from countries with developed market economy and democratic political order (the so-called countries of developed capitalism), where the development, as a rule, was of a organic, evolutionary character, and major state institutions were established and improved when socially required. This difference predetermines a significant role, which researchers and experts should assume in the process of postsocialist transformations, since novelty and complexity of the processes do not allow copying prepared decisions from the countries where capitalism was under creation several centuries ago, and mistakes while modeling a new reality might be too costly.

However, the problem was that the potential of institutions of socialist times, which are engaged in research and expert activities, did not meet the requirements of postsocialist transformations. For example, in the late 80's and early 90's leading specialists and directors of respective institutions of the USSR Academy of Sciences, as a rule, still thought in the categories of socialist economic and political relations, their mentality and skills did not allow to efficiently support market reforms. Unfortunately, that relates even to those institutions which in Soviet times were considered as oases of free-thinking – for example the Institute of World Social System Economy, where studies devoted to socialism's crisis first appeared in early 80's. The same scientists, who were able to take part in elaboration and support of reforms, could not do it in ossified institutional frameworks of (post) Soviet science.

The situation in other countries of the "socialist camp" was different, even where there was no restrictions on freedom of scientific studies, contacts with western scientists and possibilities to publish, as in the USSR. In Poland, for example, although the concept of reforms was worked out by Polish economists who processed the experience of western economic thought and struggle against economic crisis, it soon turned out that existing by that time state scientific-research centers (academic institutions and higher education establishments) were not able to ensure an intellectual support to reforms. Reforms were supported only by some scientists who entered the government and governmental advisory bodies, but not organizations as such. An illustration of such paradox is the 1989 inflow of most employees of the Economy Functioning Sector of the Institute of Economic Studies at the Polish Academy of Sciences into governmental and related structures. Its employees, in particular, took the positions of the National Bank Chairman and Deputy Finance Minister. The role of the institute is still very modest.

In such situation there was an objective necessity to establish independent private institutions which would study the field of reforms and be able to efficiently support transformations. In Poland several such organizations were created, the largest of which are the Institute of Market Economy Studies in Gdansk and the Center of Social-Economic Studies (CASE) in Warsaw.

2. CASE: goals, activity, problems, prospects

CASE is an independent and fully private organization having a legal status of foundation. It was established in September of 1991 by a group of Polish economists who in 1989–1991 actively participated in preparation and fulfillment of reforms. In particular, B. Blaszczyk, who contributed to the privatization policy elaboration, became the Center Board Chairperson, L. Balczerovich became the Council Chairman, and its members, in particular, M. Dombrowski (former finance vice-minister and chairman of the Privatization Council of the Prime Minister), A. Fornalczyk (former Antimonopoly Committee Chairman) and other people.

The CASE mission is to support economic, social and political reforms in Poland, other countries of Central and Eastern Europe, as well former Soviet republics.

The major directions of CASE's activity are as follows:

- conducting economic research jointly with scientists and organizations from Poland and other countries;
- distribution of research results and popularization of the most important discoveries in economy theory;
- education activity – organizing seminars, courses, conferences, etc.;

- expert services to governmental and non-governmental organizations in Poland and abroad;
- cooperation with Polish and foreign research centers;
- support of the NGO sector development in the former USSR states, in particular, by means of establishing branch institutions.

The major themes of research and expert activity are:

- macroeconomic policy;
- social policy;
- privatization and restructuring;
- corporate management.

The major consumers of our research and services are:

- governments of Poland and other postsocialist countries (in particular, CASE is carrying out or carried out such projects in Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, Tajikistan, Mongolia, Romania and Bulgaria);
- scientific circles and public of Poland and other postsocialist countries, including Belarus;
- Poland's private sector.

Most of CASE's activities are financed from outside sources: as a rule, grants for concrete projects, to a smaller degree, institutional grants. The major outside financial sources in 2000 were:

- foreign private organizations (G. Soros Open Society Institute, Ford Foundation, etc.) – 44.2%;
- foreign governmental organizations (for example, USAID) – 32.2%;
- international organizations and programs (World Bank, UNDP, EU programs) – 12.1%;
- private domestic organizations (first of all banks) – 12.1%;
- domestic sources of public means – 2.8%.

In 2001 the amount of outside financial assistance totaled about 2 million euro.

As we see, the Center's sponsor structure is typical for think tanks in postsocialist countries: the lion's share goes from abroad. The situation has its advantages and shortages.

One of the shortages is that foreign financial sources are gradually running short because of the total diminution of transformation programs financing by foreign private, governmental and international donors, as well as the transfer of financing from Poland (and the central European region) to other regions (for example, the USAID ceased its activities in Poland). Certain hopes on a rise in outside financing could be set upon the EU programs.

On the other hand, the advantage of foreign financing is that it, as a rule, gives researchers more freedom and is aimed at rendering efficient assistance to postsocialist countries, and consequently the Center experiences no political or ideological pressure. In other words, in practice outside financing gives the Center a real independence.

Financing from domestic private sources could not be so simple and clear. However, the reality of Polish political culture, where the lobby's struggle of a more moderate and civilized character, than, for example, in Russia or Ukraine, as well as the character of CASE activities create prerequisites for a high demand for independent estimations by the Center, rather than assistance in lobbying particular interests. Our major partners from the private sector are banks, which value high our macroeconomic analysis and prognosis, and its independent character. We hope to expand private sector services.

Aside from that, Poland's specific feature is that there is a weak cooperation between independent think tanks with governmental and parliamentary structures, especially at the central level. Of course, part of the blame is on NGO's, which has not managed to establish a long-term cooperation with authorities. On the other side, the Polish legislation does not promote budget financing of projects carried out by independent organizations, since it could easily be used against officials taking decisions on distribution of resources. The procedure of distribution (only tenders) does not facilitate establishing a long-term cooperation.

Moreover, governmental structures acquired their own research institutions and expert groups, and authorities prefer "pulling out" specialists from NGO's to ordering a survey. Also the Polish government even established a special research fund the tasks of which overlap CASE's activity in the field of distributing reform experience in other postsocialist countries. The activity of the fund seems inefficient. The major reason, in my mind, is the budget financing, because the issue of spending taxpayers' money – an instrument of political struggle – is an object of rapt attention of politicians.

That creates nervous conditions, when the Fund is more concerned over possible embezzlement charges, rather than efficient activities.

Another reason for such a weak cooperation between think tanks and authorities is "politicizing" of taking decisions by the government (in the interests of the ruling coalition), as a result of which experts divide into more or less politically "friendly". In such conditions closer contacts with the government might result in politicizing of NGO's activity, its turning from an independent research center into an organization protecting group interests.

That would lead not only to a loss of the organization's independence, but would also undermine confidence of other customers, since governmental coalitions of Poland change once in several years, and benefits from such cooperation could be short-term, and consequent losses – long-term.

Thus, Polish think tanks, including CASE, have almost no direct influence on policy carried out by Polish authorities. As a result, our expert activity for governments is much more developed in other postsocialist countries than Poland.

But that does not mean that in Poland CASE has absolutely no influence on politics. Mostly this is an indirect influence. Firstly, some experts linked to CASE work as advisors in governmental structures (sometimes they even became members of the government). Secondly, governmental structures consider results of our expertise, experts' estimations. Governmental officials and experts receive our materials; they frequently participate in seminars and conferences that we organize. Thirdly, our independent research create an "atmosphere of reforms", since they contain an estimation of governmental activities, an analysis and economic prognoses. That enables interested companies and social strata to better understand and take optimal decisions. Aside from that, such our activity performs the role of a reform "watchdog", helps struggling against with their distortions for the same of particular political interests.

Probably, the future of CASE would be related, first of all, to research studies for "wide popular strata" and experts for the private business, rather than direct assistance to authorities not only in Poland, but also abroad where such activity of the center is widely spread. The matter is that the direct assistance to governments of postsocialist countries in the institutional-legal sphere, as a rule, is of little efficiency. Ten years of transformations showed that reforms cannot be limited to this sphere, because for these institutions and law to work it is necessary to involve most of the society and political circles into transformations, and such involvement should contribute to establishing market relations and civic society. The process is hampered by cultural factors (national traditions and habits developed under socialism), and often an opportunist position of local elites, for which announcing a course of reforms means, first of all, receiving foreign aid. Unfortunately, these factors can neither be overcome quickly, nor automatically. A painstaking work of developing market and democratic mentality and behavior is necessary for that. It is necessary to support the development of local reform-minded political elites and strengthen local research and expert potential. It is necessary to support the development of private sector and private initiative in general, teach people to understand the situation correctly and ability to make the right choice. Only then reforms could be based on domestic resources. As J. Stiglitz, a Nobel Prize's winner, wrote, reforms should be introduced not from outside, but by means of a creative learning by local "carriers of reforms". According to him, "the country should be at the helm itself".²

In my opinion, such a widely understood educational activity – is one of the most important tasks of think tanks of our kind for the coming years, if not decades. We should mention that from the very beginning CASE attached a great importance to distribution of the results of its activity among the widest possible circle of individuals and organizations.

That is what the Center's publishing activity serves to. From the moment of its establishing, the Center has published (independently and jointly with other organizations) more than 400 publications, including 24 books. The Center issues 6 series of publications, including the series *working papers* – "Research and Analysis", 250 issues of which has come out. In order to make our works available to a wide international audience, many publications come out in English and in Russian.

In turn, the establishment in three former Soviet republics – Kyrgyzstan, Georgia and Ukraine – of CASE branch centers, which are successfully functioning and prepare, above everything, a periodic analysis of economic situation in the their countries, should contribute to strengthening of local research and expert potential.

Quarterly information-analytical publications devoted to the economy of Kyrgyzstan, Georgia and Ukraine serve to increase the quality of information about economic conditions of the former Soviet republics and its dissemination among scientists and representatives of authorities. They are prepared in CASE branch centers with the participation of local specialists. From 2002 such bulletin comes out in Belarus as a result of CASE's cooperation with the Institute of Privatization and Management ("Economy of Belarus: Tendencies, Estimations, Prognoses").

The cooperation between CASE and Belarusian scientists and independent research institutions, such as the Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies, the National Center of Strategic Initiatives, the Institute of Privatization and Management, started in the early 90's. By the way, B. Blaszczyk, CASE's Board Chairperson, is also a member of the Advisory Board of IISEPS.

For understandable reasons, cooperation with Belarus' authorities was not possible, and the Center's experts focused on the projects to study the social-economic and political situation in Belarus and organizing assistance to Belarusian researchers in the form of seminars, acquaintance trips, etc. CASE's employees often visit Belarus to take part in conferences, seminars and other meetings with their Belarusian colleagues.

Last year a large research project fulfilled jointly with the Institute of Privatization and Management and devoted to a complex analysis of the Belarusian economy was completed. It encompassed the problems of macroeconomics (monetary policy, money demand, the problem of inflation, money flows, payment balance, foreign trade, etc.), development of small and medium business, privatization, corporate management and social policy. Certain attention was paid to economic consequences of a possible integration with Russia and the system of power in Belarus.³ Recently two projects aimed at

² J. Stiglitz, *Scan Globally, Reinvent Locally: Knowledge Infrastructure and the Localization of Knowledge*, First Global Development Network Conference, Bonn, December 1999.

³ *The results of the projects are published in the two-volume edition Belarusian Economy: from market to plan 1995-2002 by R. Antchak, M. Guzhinski and P. Kozarzhevski, Warsaw: CASE, 2001-2002. At present the second volume has come out. It is devoted to small and medium business, privatization, industry restructuring and corporate management. So far the first volume is available only on www.case.com.pl. The English edition is being prepared.*

raising the level of qualification of Belarusian researchers and spreading Poland's reform experience have been carried out.

Privatization is one of the directions of CASE research and expert work.

The CASE Center carried out a whole series of research projects devoted to estimation of the privatization process and its results in Poland and a number of other postsocialist countries, in particular, Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Georgia, Mongolia, Bulgaria, Romania. Also the center took part in international comparative studies on privatization in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovenia and the former German Democratic Republic. In the middle 90's by the order of the Polish Ministry of Privatization the Center created a database on privatization legislation of former socialist countries and literature on privatization. Many CASE's publications devoted to privatization, including the two-volume edition "Privatization in Postsocialist Countries" (In English).⁴ As for recent projects, we should mention the research on privatization of monopoly branches of the national economy, as well as the so-called sensitive branches, privatization of which is difficult, first of all, for political and social reasons. CASE's experts also focused on the processes that are underway at the enterprises after their privatization: further redistribution of property, corporate management system formation, economic consequences of privatization. A number of emperic studies were conducted on the enterprises of Poland, Belarus, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan.

Besides, CASE's experts actively participated in the programs of rendering technical assistance to the governments of a number of postsocialist countries in the field of economy privatization (in Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Georgia, Mongolia, Bulgaria and Romania). Among the most significant achievements of CASE in this sphere we should mention the elaboration of the privatization legislation and privatization procedures in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

3. Chances and dangers of privatization in Belarus

The topic of privatization is still actual even in those postsocialist countries where the process has already taken place. In fact, postprivatization processes need some improvement, especially in the field of restructuring and corporate management. The issue even more actual for the countries where the progress in the field of reforms considered modest.

In this respect, the situation in Belarus is special. On the one hand, there is still a large sector of state-owned enterprises, and the property of these enterprises, unlike in many other former republics of the USSR, in most cases was not plundered (in the course of the so-called spontaneous privatization). On the other hand, Belarus' state property might be in great demand among Russian buyers in the near future. In order to correctly assess chances and dangers facing the Belarusian state enterprises (and the country's economy as a whole), it is necessary to have a clear idea of privatization, what could be expected from it and what not, and under what circumstances. Shortly, the following should be mentioned.

First, privatization does not exist on its own, but an essential part of market reforms. Even a wisely projected privatization is likely to fail, resulting neither in an improvement of functioning of certain enterprises, nor in a general economic rise, unless its is accompanys by an economy stabilization and liberalization, formation of market infrastructure in the form of a proper legislation and institutions. Therefore, unless there is no radical change of the whole economic policy in Belarus, we could hardly expect any tangible privatization results.

Second, it is necessary to clearly understand what could be achieved by means of privatization, and what not. Frequently, objects set on privatization are unreal and even dangerous, able to cause harm both to enterprises and the whole economy. It is necessary to be cautious about maximizing revenues from privatization into state budget, since a too high price reduces future investments into enterprises: an owner possesses a certain amount, and the more he gives to the state, the less would be invested into the enterprise itself. Aside from that, privatization is a strategic instrument and none of tactical tasks should be accomplished with its help, for example, patching up holes in budget. That might result in a dominance of momentary privatization tasks over long-term ones and would weaken its positive results.

Even more caution should be taken regarding attempts to solve some social problems by means of privatization. Achieving social justice with the help of privatization on the level of the whole society is impossible, especially if justice is understood in a simplified-equalizing manner. Similar attempts are most likely to cause a rise of discontent of the whole population and its separate groups felt deceived, "abandoned". At the level of enterprises it is necessary to take caution while considering the possibility of imposing social responsibilities on customers of state-owned enterprises (on the level of employment, wages, supporting social sphere, etc.), because they could radically decrease attractiveness of privatized entities and reduce investments into development of the enterprise. What may turn disastrous to the enterprise, and as a result, employees' social status would deteriorate, but not improve (right to the enterprise closure.)

Real objectives that should be set for privatization in Belarus – are as follows: passing enterprises to real, efficient owners which consider its owning for a long-term period, are able to manage it and invest into its further development. Only in this case functioning of the enterprises would be well based and contribute to the development of the whole national economy.

That means that, third, it is very important to ensure high quality of the privatization process, where selecting investors for the largest and the most significant enterprises for the economy is one of its components.

⁴ *Privatization in Post-communist Countries*, ed. by B. Błaszczuk and R. Woodward, Warsaw: CASE, 1996.

An optimal owner of the enterprise is a strategic investor holding the bulk of its shares, and not any investor, but the one with long-term interests regarding the enterprise. There are few such potential buyers in Belarus which, aside from the desire to buy property, have enough sources to purchase it and make further investments, and also have modern knowledge in the field of management, production organizing, marketing, etc. Potential investors from abroad – first of all from developed industrialized countries – meet such requirements. By the way, studies of privatization aftermath in many countries show that the most favorable and acceptable variant is to sell the enterprise to a foreign investor, bringing investments and also a new culture of production and management, "know-how", new markets and distribution networks, etc.

The problem is that in the near future investors from Russia rather than from western countries could be such potential buyers. Unfortunately, Russia's privatization proved that private domestic owners showed themselves not from the best side. Property is constantly divided and redistributed between oligarchic groups applying any legal and illegal means for that.

Mostly they consider property as a short-term source of revenues, and instead of investing and multiplying it, private owners, especially of the most significant and profitable entities, in fact plunder it and move capital abroad. There are no reasons to assume that Russian oligarchs, acting this way in their country, would act differently in Belarus, observe law and ethic norms of private enterprise, and what is the most important thing – to care about long-term development of enterprises. Most of Belarus' enterprises might soon be bought up (including those owned by Belarusian private owners), after that their drainage would be carried out. Only a few number of enterprises, in particular, those dealing with transit of energy resources, would be able to survive in such conditions. Aside from that, a mass inflow of Russian investors is unlikely to contribute to the formation of normal market relations in Belarus' economy, when there are no semimafioso oligarchic groups dividing spheres of their influence with a total absence of ethic business norms. It is worth reminding, that Russia's economic order seems more progressive (i.e. market) only if compared with the economy of Belarus and does not stand up to comparison with economies of the most reformed former socialist countries, not to speak about developed western countries.

Thus, it is necessary to take a great caution with regard to the prospect of selling out Belarusian enterprises to Russian investors, instead it would be better to attract investors from other countries. An unequal access to privatized property is not a violation of principles of economic reforms, especially when it comes to large enterprises which are of significant importance for the economy. Moreover, the state ought to take care about selling the property to "a good owner". From the technical point of view, the task seems achievable, since privatization of such enterprises is carried out not by means of open auctions, but tenders and talks with potential customers.

INDEPENDENT RESEARCH AND SOCIAL-LABOR RELATIONS

A. Sasnow, Ph.D., ISEPS Deputy Director

1. Independent research and public

Recently we could have noticed a growing public interest in publicized results of activities of different non-state scientific research organizations. So, in November of 2000 only 30.2% of the respondents were familiar with publications of independent research centers, but in April of 2002 33.7% of the respondents answered in the affirmative.⁵ A growing interest is also seen from the dynamics of the respondents' trust to research centers (See Table 1). Today, in terms of confidence they surpass mass media, the president, government, parliament, labor unions, law enforcement agencies and political parties, going after educational establishments, church and army.

Table 1

Dynamics of the population's confidence in research centers, %

Research centers	09'98	03'99	04'00	04'01	04'02
Independent:					
– trust	25.7	28.6	31.6	31.4	40.4
– distrust	15.9	12.9	13.4	16.2	24.9
State-run:					
– trust	–*	25.2	22.4	25.4	33.3
– distrust	–*	18.4	22.1	24.0	32.4

** no data*

⁵ Here and below data of ISEPS's national public opinion polls is used (about 1.500 respondents, margin of error does not exceed 0.03)

What caused such a growth? In our opinion, there are enough reasons for that. First, speeding up of the natural historic development of socium resulted in a deficit of time while reacting to life challenges. In order to understand what is going on and make the right choice, an analysis of different points of view is necessary. Today, unfortunately, Belarus' mass and available sources of information, first of all electronic, tend to cover a single, official point of view. Thus a thinking part of the population has reasonably paid attention to alternative positions and opinions covered by independent mass media on the basis of independent research materials.

Second, Russian TV channels enjoying the largest audience in Belarus regularly invite representatives of different research centers to take part in popular programs as experts. Today many of them are well known to the Belarusian TV audience and the interest in them is projected on research centers in general and their Belarusian colleagues in particular.

Third, an average citizen is unlikely and is unable to collect and process a considerable amount of primary information. Only skilled specialists are able to do that, what causes an interest in materials offered by analytical centers.

And finally, we could assert that the interest in independent, as well as state-run research centers is stirred up by official mass media which sometimes try to denounce unfavorable for authorities results of independent research, thereby once again reminding of their existence.

What is independent research and how Belarus' socium perceives it? Let's consider it on the example of payment of labor, the sphere close to the author.

2. Legislation in the sphere of payment of labor

Payment of labor is regulated by Article 42 of the Constitution, which is the corner stone of labor legislation. It stipulated the responsibilities of the state in this sphere and also legal framework for regulation of payment of labor. The current version of the Article envisions that "employees are guaranteed a fair share of remuneration in economic results of labor according to its quantity, quality and social significance, but not below the level ensuring them and their family members with a free and decent life".⁶

As one might notice, from the economic point of view the given version is obviously unsound, since it contains vague notions distorting the essence of wage and using characteristics having no quantitative forms. So the word "remuneration" has no sense in the phrase "a fair share of remuneration in economic results of labor". It is unclear what is meant: whether labor results shall necessarily contain a remuneration, or the remuneration is a share in economic results of labor, or the worker is guaranteed a share of this remuneration, or the share should be fair.

It is unclear from the Article how the state is going to guarantee the share of compensation, what is considered a fair remuneration, what methods would be used to compare the fairness of the remuneration share with quantity, quality and social significance of labor. It is also unclear how to compare the share of results with the wage, since the latter is an element of costs and regardless of the fact whether the employer "has economic results of labor" or has no such results, it has to be paid out to the hired worker. According to the same version, if there are no economic results, the wage could not be paid at all. In other words, any arbitrary action from the side of the state regarding the wage is possible.

It is noteworthy that the phrase "not below the level ensuring them and their family members with a free and decent life" lacks clear criteria because of what the level of compensation could be the subject of court suits. It seems at least that in line with such statement the worker has the right to demand a compensation not below the living wage budget for each family member.

If we compare the current text of the Article 42 with the 1994 version, it is clear that the-then variant was more professional, clear and understandable. It read: "Employees shall have the right to remuneration for fulfilled work in accordance with its quantity, quality and social significance, but the pay shall not be below the government-indicated minimum".⁷ Thus, the Article did not set unclear and impracticable state guarantees regarding the wage, no source for remuneration was indicated – that is the employer's business, who was obliged to compensate any fulfilled work not be below the government-indicated minimum regardless of the fact whether there are certain results or not.

The new variant of the norm was introduced (almost unchanged) to Clause 5 of Article 11 of the Belarusian Labor Code adopted in 2000. However, the authors of the Code realized the nonsense of the Constitutional wording and corrected it, introducing the following phrase "...a fair share of remuneration for work..."⁸ Now the law runs counter to the Constitution, but meets real economic relations.

In general, there are a lot of claims to the Labor Code. In fact, it excludes the possibility of setting a higher level of wage in the collective agreement for budget workers (Article 59), thereby decreasing the authority of local laws. All employers are obliged to use the state tariff grid as a minimal guarantee of payment for work (Article 60). All economic entities were forced to tariff works and employees in accordance with the state tariff-qualification norms and the possibility to apply non-tariff systems of payment was excluded (Article 61). The latter resulted in appearance of a great number of forced violators, since it is almost impossible to exclude non-tariff payment systems. That is just an example of the failed

⁶ *The Constitution of the Republic of Belarus, Minsk: Belarus, 1997, p. 58.*

⁷ *The Constitution of the Republic of Belarus, Minsk, 1994, p. 28.*

⁸ *The Labor Code of the Republic of Belarus, Minsk, 1999, p. 11.*

regulation of labor relations of the new Code. In general, its adoption severely deteriorated legal regulation in the sphere of labor relations as compared with the previous edition of the Labor Code.

The above and other notes by independent experts regarding the introduced labor law have repeatedly been published in 1998–2000 in open press. Unfortunately, neither the Belarusian legislators, nor the proper bodies having the right to legislation initiative, did not bother to consider the given problem.

3. Social-labor norms

The minimum wage and payment tariffs are the most important social-labor norms. Today they are set by the government and are obligatory for all employers, regardless of forms of ownership, what could hardly be considered well grounded in market relations.

In line with the legislation, the minimum wage shall be defined on the basis of the minimum living budget. Since the law gives no correlation, in practice the government tries to set the minimum wage at the lowest possible level. In particular, today it is equal to only 17.000 rubles (less than \$10).⁹ The reasons for the given level of the minimum wage have not been explained for public.

It is worth mentioning that in February of 2002 the minimum wage was even lower – 10.000 rubles, i.e. less than 9% of the living wage budget. At the period the minimum wage was used as a financial norm, to which all tariffs of taxation, fines, different payments were tied. Such load almost exhausted the essence of the minimum wage as a norm of payment for work and hampered its growth. Independent experts have repeatedly written about it, urging authorities to improve the situation. In particular, in the middle of 1998 the author published a series of articles in which, aside from everything, the necessity to relieve the minimum wage of the functions of a financial norm.¹⁰ It took about four years for Belarus' authorities to realize how harmful the existing practice is and take a halved decision. The minimum wage was relieved of non-characteristic functions, but its amount was raised only by 70%, what is not enough.

The formal logic says that the minimum wage cannot be below the living wage budget, i.e. the level of income that ensures physical survival with the existing prices. As of April of 2002, the living wage budget equaled 76.603 rubles (\$44). Taking into account the wage reproductive function the minimum wage shall correspond at least to the minimum living wage, what should be a priority objective of the state policy.

In practice, however, today the minimum wage amounts only to 22.2% of the living wage budget and 13.8% of the minimum living wage. Such correlation the authorities explain by the financially weak budget. In turn, the budget directly depends on the level of the country's economy development. Clearly, in many respects this level is determined by substance, directions and pace of the current economic reforms. The leadership's intention to curb "unreasonable" stratification of the population by the level of incomes also plays here certain role. In neighboring countries the situation is quite different. For example, in Estonia back in 1997 the minimum wage was 1.8fold higher than the living wage budget.

As for payment tariffs, the legislation envisions no criteria to set them. It is said that they are "determined in accordance with coefficients of the Single Tariff Grid for employees of the Republic of Belarus and the government-determined first grade tariff rate jointly with labor unions" (Article 60 of the Labor Code). What is "jointly with labor unions" – is on the conscience of the legislator. Beginning December 1, 2001, the first grade tariff rate is equal to 19.500 rubles (about \$11), i.e. less than 16% of the minimum living wage. This is how unskilled labor (janitor, cloakroom attendant, etc.) is tariffed.

Table 2

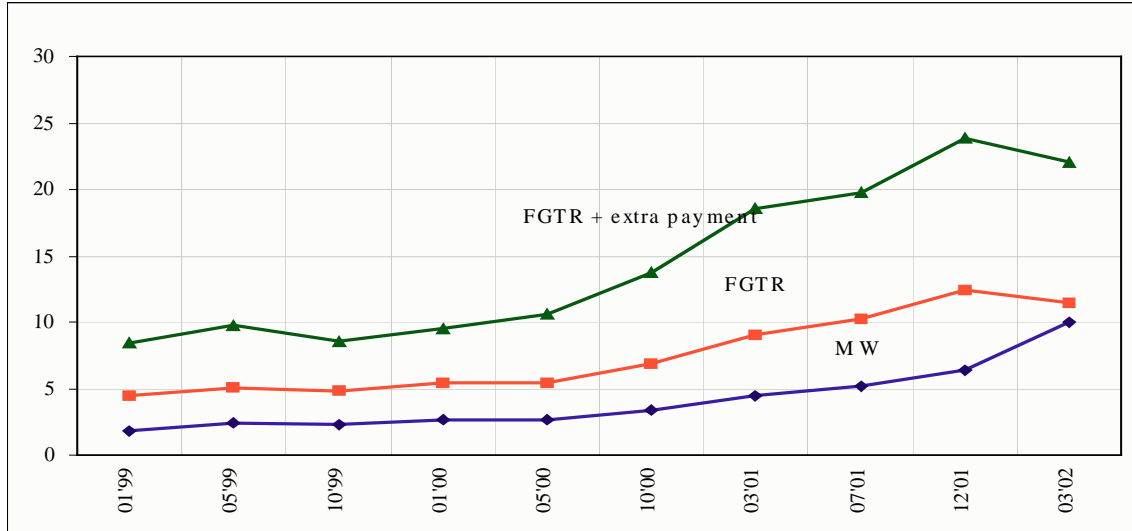
The living wage budget (LWB), the minimum living wage (MLW), the minimum wage (MW) and the first grade tariff rate (FGTR) in 1999-2002.							
Date of introduction	LWB, rubles	MW, rubles	MW to living wage %	MLW, rubles	FGTR, rubles	FGTR to MLW, %	
						Without extra payments	With extra payments
01'99	4874192	500000	10.3	8123653	1200000	14.8	28.3
05'99	9128046	1000000	11.0	13306919	2150000	16.2	30.5
10'99	14717382	1450000	9.9	22828854	3000000	13.1	23.2
01'00	20642	2200	10.7	31724	4500	14.2	25.1
05'00	26020	2600	10.0	39876	5200	13.0	25.6
10'00	37325	3600	9.6	57470	7200	12.5	25.1
12'00	37996	3600	9.5	63933	7200	11.3	33.0
03'01	43636	5700	13.1	72857	11500	15.8	32.5
07'01	52777	7500	14.2	85466	14500	17.0	32.7
12'01	62568	10000	16.0	103464	19500	18.8	36.2
03'02	119354	17000	14.2	119354	19500	16.3	31.4

⁹ Here and below the exchange rate of the "black" market is used as the market rate

¹⁰ A. Sasnow, *Legal and organizational aspects of work payment. – Belorusskaya Gazeta, 1998, issues 27, 29, 31, 33.*

No doubt, it is not enough. That is why there are additional payments to the first 11 grades of the Single Tariff Grid which also are determined by the government or on its behalf. So, the extra pay for a first grade worker is 18.000 rubles, and thus the tariff part of the wage is 37.500 rubles. As of today, it is about \$21.4 or 30.5% of the minimum living wage, i.e. the level of simple reproduction. And less than half of the living wage budget – the level of physiological survival or poverty line. It should be noticed that the given amount is also taxed.

The same formal logic proves that the first grade tariff rate cannot be below the minimum living wage in order to secure employee's simple reproduction. And considering family burden the first grade tariff rate could not be less than 1.5–2.0fold of the minimum living wage or 200.000–250.000 rubles (as of April of 2002).



Picture 1. Dynamics norms of remuneration of labor (in US dollars)

Clearly, no one receives a "bare" tariff, as a rule. There are different bonuses, extra payments and benefits, which significantly increase the wage even in the budget sphere. Since different extra payments amount to 70–75% of tariff, considering the current level of economic development, we could agree that the minimum wage shall be set on the level of the living wage budget, and the first grade tariff rate – on the level of the minimum living wage. In fact, it is necessary to equalize the minimum wage and the first grade tariff rate so that they would reach the level of the minimum wage budget. If the production efficiency increases, the minimum wage and the first grade tariff rate might exceed the minimum living wage.

Independent experts have repeatedly written about it, but things are right where they were. The current level of the minimum wage and the first grade tariff rate does not correspond to the above theoretic discussion (See Table 2). So, during the given period the minimum wage with respect to the living wage budget varied from 9.5% to 16.0%, and first grade tariff rate with respect to the minimum wage budget – from 11.3% to 18.8% (considering extra payments – from 23.1% to 36.2%). In other words, the minimum wage and the first grade tariff rate do not provide for an elementary physical survival and their level cannot be accepted as reasonable.

Although they have been repeatedly raised, it only has partially compensated inflation losses and has not changed the whole system.

Thus, today the major social norms are set by the government ad arbitrium, without taking into account public opinion though civic society structures. They do not meet social requirements, and the setting procedure is not democratic. We assume that budget limits is the only determinative factor for setting the minimum wage and the first grade tariff rate. Picture 1 displays the dynamics of payment norms starting 1999 (introduction of new norms are highlighted). One might see that by the present time the situation with the norms has improved, though their absolute rates are insufficient.

It is also noteworthy that in most developed countries the minimum wage and tariff rates are set by means of negotiations between labor unions and entrepreneurs, interests of which respective national associations express. The role of state is boiled down to settling disputes between the side and validating adopted decisions.

4. Tariff system

The Single Tariff Grid is used to tariff work of all employees, and employers of all forms of ownership are obliged today to use it. At the same time non-state economic entities have the right to set higher tariff rates.

At present the 27 grade Single Tariff Grid with a nominal rate is used – correlation of extreme grades is 7.84:1 (See Table 3).

Having so many grades, an average difference between them is less than 8%. It is known that the level of "sensitive-ness" stimulating additional labor efforts is the inter-grade difference of 10–15%, which is observed only for the first six grades. Then the difference is fading, depriving labor activity of impetuses. In other words, to make a department deputy chief agree to become chief of department other impetuses are necessary than those provided by the tariff grid. The differ-

ence for other grades does not exceed 7%, but there is a certain progress, because previously the difference was even smaller. For example, the tariff grid which existed from January through May of 1999 the inter-grade difference from 18 to 23 grades was a mere 5%, from 24 to 28 – 4%.

Table 3

The Single Tariff Grid and tariff rates, introduced on December 1, 2001.

Grade	Nominal tariff coefficient	Nominal intergrade ratio	Tariff, rubles	Extra, rubles	Tariff + extra, rubles	Factual tariff coefficient	Factual intergrade ratio
1	1.00	–	19500	18000	37500	1.00	–
2	1.16	1.16	22620	18000	40620	1.08	1.08
3	1.35	1.16	26325	16500	42825	1.14	1.05
4	1.57	1.16	30615	13500	44115	1.18	1.03
5	1.73	1.10	33735	12000	45735	1.22	1.04
6	1.90	1.10	37050	9000	46050	1.23	1.01
7	2.03	1.07	39585	8000	47585	1.27	1.03
8	2.17	1.07	42315	7000	49315	1.32	1.04
9	2.32	1.07	45240	5000	50240	1.34	1.02
10	2.48	1.07	48360	4000	52360	1.40	1.04
11	2.65	1.07	51675	2000	53675	1.43	1.03
12	2.84	1.07	55380	–	55380	1.48	1.03
13	3.04	1.07	59280	–	59280	1.58	1.07
14	3.25	1.07	63375	–	63375	1.69	1.07
15	3.48	1.07	67860	–	67860	1.81	1.07
16	3.72	1.07	72540	–	72540	1.93	1.07
17	3.98	1.07	77610	–	77610	2.07	1.07
18	4.26	1.07	83070	–	83070	2.22	1.07
19	4.56	1.07	88920	–	88920	2.37	1.07
20	4.88	1.07	95160	–	95160	2.54	1.07
21	5.22	1.07	101790	–	101790	2.71	1.07
22	5.59	1.07	109005	–	109005	2.91	1.07
23	5.98	1.07	116610	–	116610	3.11	1.07
24	6.40	1.07	124800	–	124800	3.33	1.07
25	6.85	1.07	133575	–	133575	3.56	1.07
26	7.33	1.07	142935	–	142935	3.81	1.07
27	7.84	1.07	152880	–	152880	4.08	1.07

However, as we have already mentioned, there are extra payments of 18.000 – 20.000 rubles for the first 11 grades, which "tighten" the Single Tariff Grid and, therefore, the correlation is only 4.08: 1. As a result, an average inter-grade difference is 5.3% what diminishes the stimulating function of the tariff system. The most insignificant difference is set for workers of 1–8 grades and mass professions of the budget sphere (9–12 grades). There are no explanations for this phenomenon as well as for the senseless differentiation of the inter-grade difference from 1% to 8%.

Table 4

Range of the Single Tariff Grid

Data of introduction	Full grid range		Workers grid range	
	nominal	factual	Nominal	Factual
01'99	6.48	3.38	2.17	1.35
05'99	6.48	3.43	2.17	1.27
10'99	6.48	3.67	2.17	1.32
01'00	8.39	4.75	2.17	1.30
05'00	7.63	4.27	1.97	1.21
10'00	7.63	4.19	1.97	1.22
12'00	7.63	2.86	1.97	1.15
03'01	7.13	3.81	1.97	1.22
07'01	7.13	4.07	1.97	1.28
12'01	7.84	4.08	2.17	1.32

The more the grid is tightened, the stronger payment equalizing. Table 4 shows that over the last three years the largest nominal and factual range of the Single Tariff Grid. The lowest factual range (2.86:1) – January and May of 2000. Fortunately, it was used only for three months.

As for tariffs for workers, over the last several years the grid range has always been narrow for them. The worst grid was that of December of 2000. As we see from Table 4, its range for workers equaled to 1.15: 1. It is worth reminding that in Soviet times the range of the 6 grade grid for engineering workers, for example, was 1.43: 1. Thus, the present 32% of difference between the first eight grades could hardly be considered optimal.

Russia's tariff grid introduced in December of 2001 seems more favorable than the Belarusian Single Tariff Grid. Al-

though Russia's grid also is not perfect, its range of 18 grades is 4.5: 1, with the inter-grade difference for the first 11 grades of 10–11%, for the rest – 7–8%. And naturally, there are no extra payments.

If the government sets the first grade tariff rate at 37.500 rubles, without extra payments of course, the tariff for the 27th grade would have been 294.000 rubles, which is two times higher than the present one (152880 rubles). Probably, it seemed unacceptable for political reasons, since it runs counter to equalizing moods of Belarus' authorities.

Looking at Table 4, a reasonable question arises: why does the Single Tariff Grade change so often? Why couldn't it be adopted once and applied for several years? The reason for frequent revisions of the Single Tariff Grid is the indexing of incomes, in accordance with which compensation of inflation losses is applied only to part of wage (no more than 60% of the living wage budget, 44.666 rubles as of March of 2002). Today only wages for the 1-4th grades are indexed completely. Higher wages are indexed partially, as a result of which indexing tightens the grid thereby weakening its invalid stimulating function. To avoid it, it is necessary to partially index the whole wage instead of completely indexing part of wage. Back in 1996 the author managed to submit the proposal to the parliament, however the deputies refused to consider it because of vague prospects of the upcoming referendum.

It is noteworthy that a regular introduction of new variants of the Single Tariff Grid changes little in real tariffs, but each time forces economic entities to do useful job of tariffing their employees.

In our opinion, a Single Tariff Grid with the inter-grade difference of not less than 10% would have been optimal and progressive. Such a grid shall not have more than 18–19 grades. The number seems sufficient if management of economic entities is given more rights to set wages for concrete employees.

As for the grid range, exceeding the limits of 6–7: 1 seems undesirable, because a payment gap becomes excessive since workers of higher tariffs, as a rule, receive higher extra payments.

The above considerations have repeatedly been published, including by the author, in press¹¹ and reported at different conferences and meetings. We could state that at a certain moment Belarus' authorities heed to the public voice and the Single Tariff Grade changes for the better. However, it is usually done too slowly, by means of tests and mistakes, inviting no public and independent expertise.

The associations of entrepreneurs and labor union pay little attention to the given problem. Although their national associations take part in the work of the National Council on Labor and Social Problems of the government, the council takes all decisions regarding the Single tariff Grid on its own, ignoring opinion of its social partners. But there is no special reaction by them – not in mass media, or among employees. As for political parties, only recently some of them (the UCP, the SDPB, the Labor Party, the Women's Party "Nadzeya", etc.) have started actively include in their rhetoric the problems of economic conditions of the population, also regarding payment for fulfilled work.

5. Payment rates

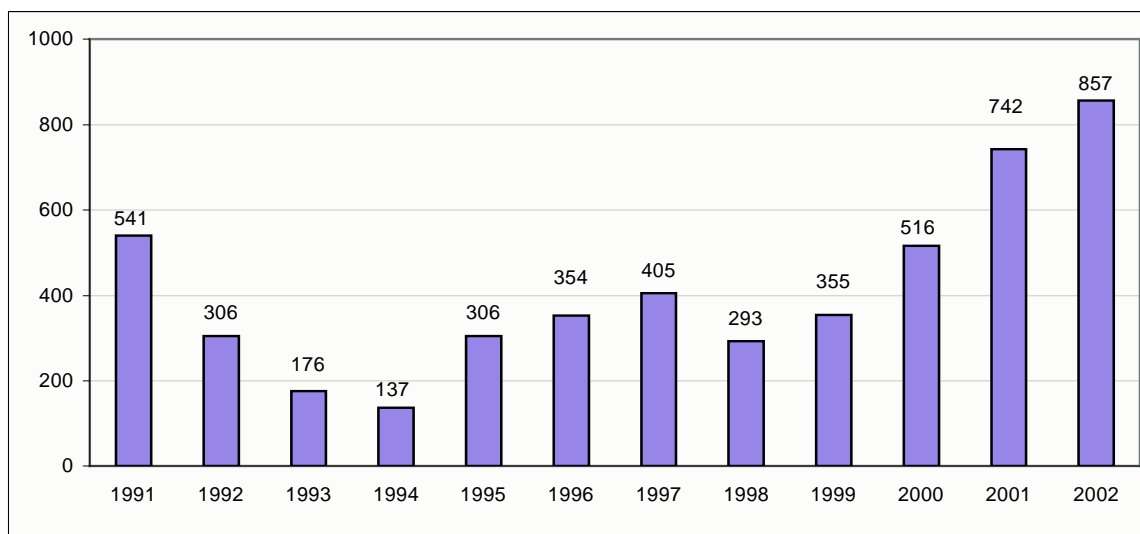
For a clearer picture of the current wages in the country and its recent dynamics let's consider some statistical characteristics. Table 5 presents data about average monthly nominal wage over the last 11 years. Inflation makes figures in rubles almost useless for any comparison. To avoid influence of inflation, as a deflator we would use the index of consumer prices, the minimum living wage and the dollar rate.

Table 5

Nominal average monthly wage in the economy in general						
Year	In fact, rubles**	With regard for consumer prices index, rubles **	To MLW	At official rate	\$	At market rate
1991	541	541	–*	310.9	–*	–*
1992	5072	306	2.50	49.9	–*	–*
1993	61208	176	1.91	22.4		8.0
1994	98203	137	1.11	24.4		18.8
1995	755129	306	1.07	65.5		65.5
1996	1212157	354	1.10	90.3		82.5
1997	2262351	405	1.23	84.6		70.4
1998	4618877	293	1.28	99.4		49.8
1999	19677300	355	1.17	78.1		42.2
2000	59406000	516	1.27	83.3		60.2
2001	124944000	742	1.50	89.5		88.8
2002***	167482000	857	1.44	100.3		99.1

* No data
 ** In rubles, 1991.
 *** For four months

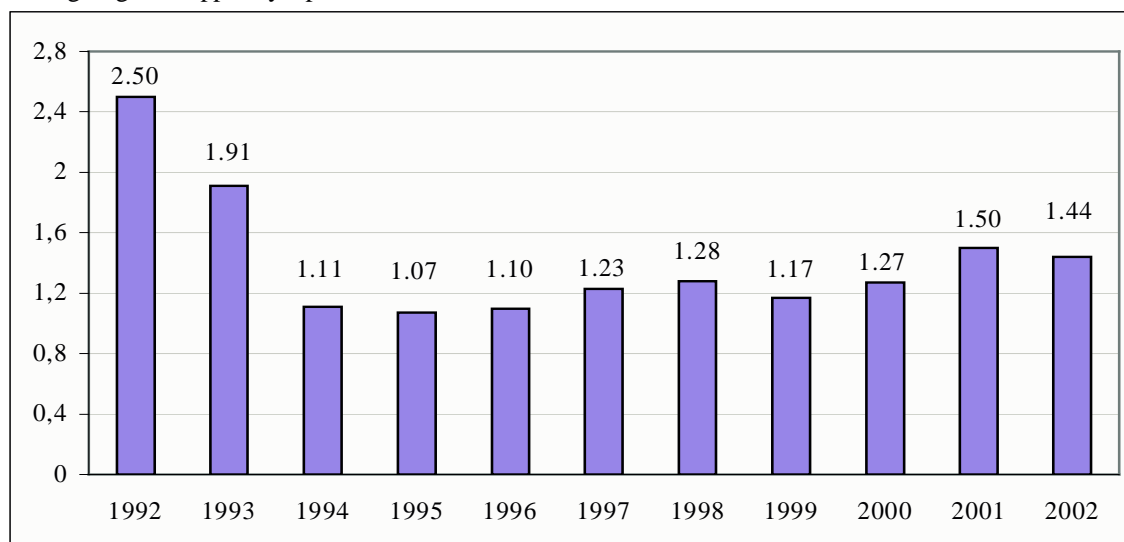
¹¹ See, for example, A. Sasnow, *Legal and organizational aspects of work payment*. – *Belorusskaya Gazeta*, 1998, issues 27, 29, 31, 33.



Picture 2. Average monthly wage with regard for consumer prices index, rubles

Avoiding influence of inflation with the help of the index of consumer prices allows to compare wages of different years with respect to the index of consumer prices that is considered as 1. In our case we apply the year of 1999. The dynamics received is pictured in the form of a histogram. See Picture 2. As we could see, a slump in average wage between 1991 and 1994 (it dropped almost 4fold) turned into its growth. Then in 1998 it fell again down to the level of 1992, cause by the financial collapse in Russia, since due to constant efforts of Belarusian authorities the country is closely tied to Russia's economy. Then figures began to grow again, thereby encouraging official propaganda and reanimated rosy hopes in the ruling circles. Meanwhile, we shall remind that the figures began "improving" only after the authorities decided to reconsider methods of calculating the index of consumer prices.

Today the official index of consumer prices adopted by the Ministry of Statistics and Analysis is calculated for the whole range of consumer goods purchased by the population within a month. The volumes of consumption and average prices for goods used in calculations are not for public discussions. However, using other deflators cast doubts on reliability of the official index of consumer prices. So, for example, according to official data, within the first four months of 2002 the average monthly wage, taking into account the index of consumer prices, increased by 15.5%, but in terms of the minimum living wage it dropped by 6 points.

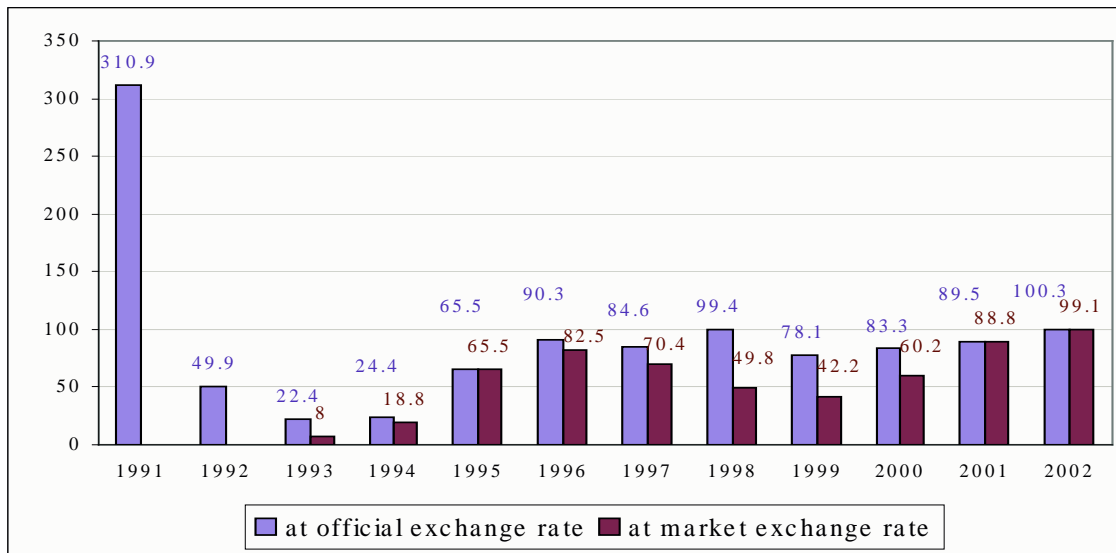


Picture 3. Average monthly wage to the minimum living wage

In this respect using other deflators for assessments seems necessary. Especially regarding the minimum living wage as a norm determining the level of simple reproduction. This index takes into account the ruble purchasing power, and that is why it has to more adequately reflect factual changes of the real level of wages. The histogram (See Picture 3) clearly shows that falling down to the level of 1.07–1.11 of the minimum living wage in 1994–1996, only in 2001 the average monthly wage reached the level when two working parents are able to provide for a child. In 2002 even this insufficient level turned out a too heavy burden for our economy. It is also necessary to keep in mind that in early 1999 Belarus' authorities decided to reduce the consumer basket.

Almost the same tendencies are demonstrated by the dynamics of the level of wage¹² in dollars at the official exchange rate. The histogram of Picture 4 reveals that regardless of repeated official statements the average monthly wage has so far not reached the level of 1991. Today it is less than one third of the pre-reform wage. Although growth tendencies cause no doubt, the pace of such growth is insignificant and in the year to come it could hardly achieve the pre-reform level.

Calculations of the dollar equivalent of the wage at market exchange rate reflect the level of the average monthly wage more correctly, since the official course was repeatedly artificially changed and very often did not reflect a real correlation of currencies, especially between 1996 and 2000.



Picture 4. Average monthly wage in US dollars

The given data shows that at present the nominal wage increased as compared to its minimum rate, and if calculated with respect to the index of consumer prices it exceeded the 1991 level. However, reliability of state statistics figures is doubtful. First of all because from 1996 the official dollar exchange rate was set administratively and did not reflect real economic relations.

The same problems are characteristic while using the index of consumer prices and the minimum living wage: over the recent years the methods for their calculation have repeatedly changed and figures were underestimated. At the same time, using all the indexes together allows to correctly define tendencies and their possible development in the near future.

In general, the authorities' policy regarding the organization and level of payment received by employees cannot be considered efficient. Instead of supporting people's desire to earn more, Belarus' authorities, on the contrary, try to curb a rise in incomes regardless of labor efficiency, to promote the principle of equalizing. Systematically widening state regulation in this sphere, depriving economic entities, first of all non-state ones, of right to settle issues of payment on their own, the authorities suppress initiative and enterprise, weaken impetuses for the economy development and restrain economic progress.

For a real rise in payment for fulfilled work, increase of its stimulating role and reproduction function it is necessary to significantly change the state policy in this sphere. First of all, it is necessary to relieve economic entities of excessive administrative control and give them previous (before 1995) powers in the sphere of payment. It is expedient to regulate the upper level of wage using fiscal methods, increasing the role (but not rates!) of the tax on incomes though the mechanism of declaring incomes and at the same time decreasing tax burdens for economic entities. It is necessary to exempt the minimum living wage for each family member from taxation, and the tax free minimum shall be raised to the minimum living wage. In order to guarantee the reproduction function and to play the role of the minimum pay for unskilled work, the first grade tariff rate shall be raised to the level of the minimum living wage, and the minimum wage – to the level of the living wage budget. It is necessary to modernize the Single Tariff Grid by reducing the number of grades to 18-20 and introduce an inter-grade difference of at least 10-15%, and oblige only budget organizations to use it.

The above proposals have long been publicly debated, but only when objective circumstances leave no chance to keep the status quo proper state bodies heed to them.

At the same time it is noteworthy that problems of social-labor relations do not fall out from attention of public opinion. Many of the issues considered above, by-passing power and management bodies, have been directly submitted to the socium via independent mass media, different seminars, conferences, party and public events. Consequently, there is a growing interest of a wide public in the results of activity of independent experts and independent research as a whole.

¹² Without taking into account the parity of purchasing power of currencies.

OPEN FORUM

VALERY FROLOV: "POLITICAL EXTREME HAS NEVER LEAD TO POSITIVE RESULTS"

Vladimir Dorokhov, Head of Center for Documentation of IISEPS, interviews Valery Frolov, Chairman of the deputy group "Republic" of the Chamber of Representatives of the National Assembly.

You had already reached certain heights before you took up politics. What made you start your political career?

Well, eight months before my military career was over, I realized that I couldn't solve all the problems I faced as a military man. And I thought – I have ideas how to change it all if work in the Parliament. Besides, I was proposed for the post of Deputy Defense Minister. Instead, I went to hospital after cardiac infarction and lost the post. So, that was God's will, I said.

What is your political stand? Are you an oppositionist, a constructive oppositionist or, let's say, a politician not opposing the authorities formally but introducing reforms from the inside?

I'm more a constructive oppositionist led by common sense, law and the experience of the other world countries.

Regarding your political views, are you a conservative, a liberal or a centrist?

When I went to the Joint Staff Academy (the years 1998—1991) – it was time of the USSR further development being actively discussed – I used to be an ardent democrat. People suggested lots of ways on what to do and where to go. We even fell to loggerheads at times. Later on, when I was appointed divisional commander to Vilnius I used to talk to some officers that were even more fervent. This very communication experience and also raging democracy flattened my political views at that time. Imagine, I bore responsibility for particular people – for about 7 000 – and for particular actions. Besides, I was mightily influenced by V. Lansbergis and A. Paulaskas, current of Chairman the Lithuanian Sejm. Now, I cannot place myself among either the Right or the Left. I'm more a centrist for political extreme has never given positive results.

Have your political views changed since your working in the Parliament?

I wouldn't say so. I consider myself a democrat. I say, there's nothing better than democracy. Despite all its drawbacks. You know, while in the Parliament, I had my views flattened. Not that radically as, let say, being Bolshevik turned to socialist-revolutionary. Just the environment I've being working in put certain restrictions on me preventing my playing radical democrat. Consider my suggestions on the army reforms to V. Sheiman, then State Security Council Secretary, that I prepared before going to hospital.

Would you, please, tell more about this?

In its style, it was similar to A. Solzhenitsyn's article "How we can build the army". Thirty-five years of the army, three higher military educations and the high positions I've being taking were the necessary foundation to correctly evaluate situation and choose a direction for the armed forces to follow. And I should say many of the directions I mentioned in my article were followed during the army reforms carried by Defense Minister L. Maltsev.

But the reaction then was quite negative, wasn't it?

That might have been wrong time for this kind of suggestions or, may be, they came from a wrong man. I wrote not only to V. Sheiman but also to the Prime Minister. And when the president or someone else in the Government heard about all that they said something like: "Look at this know-all! We better kick him out". So they kicked, thank God.

How does your high-rank-military-man experience influences your political career?

Indirectly. Dealing with politicians I, first of all, look for the personal traits I always appreciated in officers – ambition, decency, self-discipline and boldness.

I believe these very qualities made you the head of the deputy group "Republic". What are the initial aims of the group and how did government and then the opposition reacted to your entering the political arena?

There hasn't been any pressure on the part of the government so far – we are a recent organization. Neither opposition shows any interest in our group. Although, there might be inside jealousy or suspicion towards the group. What I want to stress is that the group is formed by, first of all, human factors.

And not by ideological, political or professional?

Any human relations reveal political views. And I believe, in the course of our discussions and joint situation analysis

we'll take a certain ideological and political stand.

Now, about what we've already done. Our group's activity prevented the amendments to the law on mass actions and to the odious law on information safety to pass. We're not boasting for this is not a positive outcome. But I think we'll have about 6—8 draft bills by the fall. They will probably be approved at the adoption stage but there might arise real difficulties when they are given to the president for confirmation.

I sympathize with many people in the parliament. There are quite many professionals among them. But in view of certain circumstances they haven't yet sized up their roles as the parliamentarians – that they not just can but should influence the situations. Many of the deputies are only grasping the idea.

The Chamber of Representatives is known not to be acknowledged by international organizations. This seems to be an obstacle for the deputies. Do you plan some steps in this direction, I mean international acknowledgement of the Parliament?

Frankly speaking, I don't see any problem here. Many of those building great future for Belarus are too much concerned about what Russia or the West could think. I believe, the mostly important thing is to work inside the country. And if we are successful, this will be appreciated outside our borders.

I would still like to talk about the international acknowledgement of the Parliament. There are certain OSCE demands to the Government, and especially to the Parliament, to be satisfied if the country claims to be introduced to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and to PACE.

The Parliament alone cannot satisfy these demands right now. But the very process of the changes will demonstrate that there are people in the Parliament to cooperate. The recent hearings with EC participation were very demonstrative in this respect. I can't say how far sincere were the comments of its members but I believe they understood that the Belarusian Parliament is not a puppet. Our deputies time and again expressed the opinions opposing the president's stand.

Many of the oppositionists have admitted that the parliamentary elections boycott was a pure mistake. But they hardly change their attitude to the Chamber of Representatives. Doesn't this hinder your contacts with the democrats? Have you faced a kind of prejudices during such contacts?

I've never had problems while dealing with this kind of people. The Parliament is truly restricted in its powers. But it is possible to reach a lot even within these frameworks.

On the other hand, if the opposition doesn't consider the Parliament legitimate, neither I consider its activity effective. They sometimes engage in the activity not at all respected by the common people. V. Lenin said that an idea is to be introduced so as to seize on the masses. They seem not to understand this.

Then, what do you think are the ideas that could if not seize then win people over to your side?

These should be not just abstract slogans but more down-to-earth and pragmatic ideas. Some like, for example N. Statkevich, start seeing the necessity of helping people solve their social problems. Most of the oppositionists, however, just make statements for the press. We, the deputies, have all the resources to solve actual problems.

Despite your critics of the opposition, are you looking for any cooperation with the opposition?

Sure. I believe that the best thing for us, parliamentarians looking for the situation improvement in the country, and for the opposition is not to tear each other to pieces but to join our efforts. And we are doing steps in this direction. I think there are many clever and sound professionals among the oppositionists. There is cooperation. They see ways to implement their views through our activity. And we are looking forward to consulting and mutual discussions of the very different issues.

How would you comment on the social economic situation in Belarus?

I wouldn't like to repeat myself. Only the lazy keep silent of the backpay, low production efficiency and overstocking. There are plenty of examples that the situation is not very safe. Minsk directors can at least for some time forget about their problems when at home but it's different with the provinces. I use to know many directors, of the small or big enterprises. Not long ago I met one of them. He showed me his check-pass and said he just couldn't work like that. The reports of the Belarusian economic model are not very favorable.

You say that nomenclature in the regions is quite pessimistic. Do you judge by the Grodno region or you have information on the other regions as well? And how is the "Republic" group represented at the regional level?

All members of our group have close contacts in the regions. And they all receive signals making clear that our country is going into nowhere.

Besides local factors, Belarus is much influenced by the external factors, especially by Russia. That's all clear. Belarusian political parties look forward to getting into contacts with the similar organizations in Russia. What about the "Re-

public"?

We are planning this kind of contacts. Many of the people I've been studying with at the USSR Joint Staff Academy are taking high positions in the Russian government. And officers' unity is a serious thing. We marked our 10 years after graduating the Academy recently. And I should say we keep the relationships ideal. I haven't yet met civil politicians. But we do have plans to establish contacts and with whom to establish.

Who are your potential partners in Russia?

"Edinaya Rossiya" (United Russia), more likely. Of all the political leaders I like their leader the best and then D. Rogosin, Chairman of the Duma foreign affairs committee. There are also serious people in the Union of the Right.

Let's get back to your work in the Parliament. Does the Parliament perform its duties?

Very poorly. Some in the Parliament have connections (in the power structures), some are occupied with personal perspectives, some – with their future after the second presidential term expires. Then, suspicion prevents the Parliament of performing its functions. During the years of Alexander Lukashenko the president, all got used to the pressing of the executive power – decrees on mass actions, on political parties, a new regulation of the Council of Ministers on making opinion polls, draft law on the religion freedoms. All these acts are aimed to line up. That's why people are just frightened.

What was the reaction to forming of your group within the Parliament?

Regular. They didn't make an event out of this. There are four fractions in the Parliament already. We submitted application for group formation before the president delivered his annual State of the Union address but he somehow didn't notice it. And when the statement was over he read out our application.

You said the deputies were cautious and even frightened. Would the deputy corps change its attitude?

We're moving in this direction. And I think when we take a victory of some sort many will spread their wings. The current circumstances make some of the parliamentarians act against their conscience so far.

OK. Now, I would like to talk about your group's program. There's a clause in it on the extension of Parliament authorities. Which authorities does the Parliament need?

First, monitoring function. For instance, when the Government comes to us and we ask them questions. Second, the right of the interpellation for each deputy. Right now we don't participate in the forming of the government. We just vote for it, thus, pretending that this is well-thought and many times discussed process. The very Constitution says: "The Parliament considers". So this might be not the deficiency of the Parliament authorities but the excess of the presidential authorities.

In other words, we don't need to extend Parliament powers but need to cut down President's powers?

This would make sense. The powers we have would be sufficient enough. The law field would be wide enough while now it is narrowed by presidential decrees. The law field is so narrow now, and he still interferes with his decrees. It's not that simple to reject a decree. Deputies haven't yet matured for this.

Another clause of your program is to ensure your candidates being slated at the local board elections. How are you going to achieve this – just you alone or privately united with someone else, without making a coalition or preparing an electoral platform?

The priority task nowadays is to unite all democratic forces. It is important for political forces to understand that this is our first stage and we all should be united. Later on, democrats could probably permit such luxury as fighting with each other.

Still, the political field of Belarus is quite well structured. And there are two democratic blocs supposedly to participate in the elections to the local board. One will unite organizations of the Coordination Council of Democratic Forces, the other – members of the Confederation "Za Sotsialnye Peremeny" (For Social Changes). Which of them is your possible partner?

I think it will be easier to reach understanding with the Confederation members. But again, the two blocs are better to unite. This is difficult but it's the best variant.

Does the Republic group have longer-term plans than just local board elections? Let's say, to create a movement or a new political party or, may be, to become a member of a party...

We'll come to one of these of vital necessity. We won't be able to work without analytical structures and specialists that work within these parties and movements. We won't function without them as well as they without us. And if going in one direction we'll finally merge and unite. There will be many obstacles on the part of the government on this way. The

problem will be to not to lose our ground, to stand all this.

As an opposition politician, are you ready to face not very parliamentary methods of resistance on the part of Government if your group will, for example, take part in the local board elections?

Yes, I am ready. I will probably have to be more careful in my everyday life. But with the aim I'll be able to solve these issues as well. During the Soviet times I did whatever considered right. All the more now, I do everything in good conscience. And I am proud of this.

Has the attitude towards you changed since you were introduced opposition politician?

Sure. Those who claim to be government faithful became distinctly separated. Some of my friends I consider smart, responsible, honest and conscientious people became cautious. On the other hand, I made friends with a lot of new people.

Not long ago the Chamber of Representatives has voted to send your deputy interpellation concerning the government statement on forming a commission that would monitor the order of the opinion polls to the Council of Ministers. Is it your first interpellation?

Unfortunately, the first. I'm very sorry I haven't send an interpellation concerning the regulation on the new order of trade-union dues. From now on the practice of deputy interpellation will be more often applied and more skillfully.

Why the instrument of deputy interpellation is used so poorly? Does the deputies lack resources or desire?

The desire. You know, just an address is not necessarily answered. As for the deputy interpellation, it is an official document to be necessarily answered within 20 days. And according to the law, it can be published in the media.

What was the first reaction to your deputy interpellation and why have you chosen this very field to appeal?

My Chamber of Representatives colleagues were quite reserved – they do understand everything. I am strongly convinced that, as far as this government regulation is concerned, it is a typical constitutional tort.

Appendixes

**Regulation
of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus
№ 707 of May 31, 2002**

**On the Opinion Poll Commission
at the National Academy of Sciences**

In order to regulate sociological polling on a republic referendum, presidential election of the Republic of Belarus, election of the deputies to the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus, polling on social and political situation in the country and in order to increase scientific reliability and objective appraisal of the polling results as well as ensure their publishing, Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus DECREES:

1. to form Opinion Poll Commission at the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Belarus.
2. to confirm the enclosed Regulation on the Opinion Poll Commission at the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Belarus.
3. to establish that:

Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus upon presentation of the presidium of the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Belarus designates and dismisses chairman of the Opinion Poll Commission at the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Belarus;

financing of the activity of the Commission is carried out of the country exchequer.

4. to the Ministry of Finance:

in the year 2002 to assign to the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Belarus a sum of 39.654.000 rubles out of the assets for other costs of the country exchequer to finance the costs for the formation and activity of the Opinion Poll Commission at the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Belarus;

since the year 2003 ensure annual financing of the Commission activity.

**Prime Minister
of the Republic of Belarus**

CONFIRMED
Regulation of the
Council of Ministers of the
Republic of Belarus
№707 of May 31, 2002

REGULATION

On the Opinion Poll Commission at the National Academy of Sciences

1. Opinion Poll Commission at the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Belarus (hereafter – Commission) is formed to improve carrying out and publishing procedure of the opinion polls on social and political situation in the country, on country referenda and election.

2. In order to ensure quality of sociological studies, objective data analysis and validity of the published predictions, the Commission keeps records of the polling specified in art.1 of the current Statement on polling and, if there is a necessity, gives evaluation of the scientific reliability of the results.

3. The Commission is formed of 15 leading specialists in the sphere of sociology and of the representatives from Central Election Committee of the Republic of Belarus, Ministry of Information, Ministry of Justice, and Belarusian Society of Sociologists. Constitution of the Commission is affirmed by the presidium of the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Belarus upon presentation of the chairman of the Commission according to recommendations of sociological associations and the governmental bodies listed.

Activity of the Commission is carried out according to the legislation and international agreements of the Republic of Belarus.

4. An association carrying public opinion poll on social and political situation in the country, on referenda or election in the country is to send to the Commission a written notice and commitment to observe during polling the legislation and the procedure of sociological studies, of processing and analysis of the sociological information. The commitment should also contain information about the association carrying the opinion poll and its client, sources of financing the opinion poll, time and conditions of its carrying out. Information requirements are determined by the Commission.

5. If the opinion poll data is published, the association that carried the opinion poll is to present additional information into the Commission on the polling subject, methods of information gathering, criteria of respondents selection, full list of the posed questions with the number of the respondents on each not answered question, copies of the information quality assurance protocols if quality assurance was carried and also published poll based material.

6. The Commission has the right to carry comparative analysis of the published opinion poll results and the results received from the association that carried the opinion poll to check their correspondence as well as legislation compliance during polling and at publishing its results.

To perform the activity mentioned above, the Commission may on a contractual basis enlist the services of the corresponding specialists. Both the Commission members and the specialists recruited are to observe statutory confidentiality of data.

7. If any infringements of the law or data falsification are revealed the Commission has the right to demand the association that published the opinion poll results to publish more accurate information within two weeks term. In case of non-compliance with the regulations the Commission publishes the more accurate information in the republican press sui juris.

The persons guilty of violation of law and order while carrying out an opinion poll or publishing polling results on social and political situation in the country, country referenda or election are liable according to the legislation of the Republic of Belarus.

8. The Commission takes decisions by a simple majority vote. The decisions are registered in the Journals. Sitting of the Commission is considered legal if not less than two thirds of its members are involved.

9. Organization expenses and material security of Commission's activity are effected by the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Belarus on a special expense item out of the republican exchequer assets.

STATEMENT

of the Coordination Council of the Republican Public Association "Belarusian Think Tanks"

On May 31, 2002 the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus adopted regulation N 707 "On the Opinion Poll Commission at the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Belarus" that has marked the end of the last year government initiative to take independent sociological studies under their control. On February 1, 2002 the Coordination Council of the Republican Public Association "Belarusian Think Tanks" delivered a statement stressing that *"the regulation will prejudice not only the scientific association but millions of the Belarusians that will deny their right on reliable and timely information"*. Representatives of the international organizations showed their concern by stating that *"each attempt of the government to take control over independent public opinion in Belarus will be a significant step backward on the way of creating conditions for efficient work of the independent media and for transparency of the mechanism of political discussions in this country"*. This April the board of the Belarusian public association Sociological Society uniting sociologists of the leading state institutions sent a letter to the National center of bill activity under the President of the Republic of Belarus that regarded the bill of the Republic of Belarus "On changes and amendments into the Electoral Code of the Republic of Belarus of the order of opinion poll studies and publishing procedure of opinion poll results" as *"absurd attempts to take control over sociological studies and over public opinion polls in particular"*.

The Belarusian authorities, however, gave "a decent answer to the challenge of the time": not to pass the decision through the Parliament – for many of the deputies using information of the independent analytical centers would most likely reject the bill – but in the favorite manner of the government, i.e. as the executive power regulation. The attempt to introduce the decision as "the will of the scientific community" failed and the authorities had to operate out in the open.

Three provisions of the regulation are to be given special attention. First, higher demands to the requirements. Concerning not just opinion polls on a referendum or an election (as it was in the bill) but "social and political situation in the country". In other words, from now on all questions on public attitude to politics – President, backpays, EU expansion, opposition statements, integration with Russia, etc. – are to be first confirmed by a special commission approved by the Council of Ministers. Second, 40 m rubles will be annually provided from the state budget for the activity of this Commission. And third, "the persons guilty of violation of law and order while carrying out an opinion poll or publishing polling results ... are liable according to the legislation of the Republic of Belarus". Motives of the government are quite evident – while the institution of the government is losing public confidence, independent research centers are gaining (according to the last opinion poll, more than 40 percent of population give them their confidence, less than 25 percent distrust the research centers, almost two thirds says that "it is necessary to carry out opinion polls and publish their results without any permissions" and only 14.8 percent have an opposite opinion.

Thus, authorities are eager to take total control (at the expense of the very nationals!) over an independent source of information and analysis that provides the Belarusians as well as the international community with information on the actual state of affairs in the country.

Authorities seem to treat public opinion based on objective information and professional analysis not as a support but as a threat to their course.

The Community of independent researchers and analysts enters its protest against the actions of the Belarusian authorities and claims to continue its mission, i.e. carry professional surveys of the Belarusian society and deliver survey results to the very society.

Minsk, June 5, 2002

O U R A U T H O R S

- **Dr. Oleg Manaev** – Director of IISEPS, Professor of the Department of Social Communication at the Belarusian State University. Chairman of Coordinating Board of the Belarusian Association of Think Tanks. He was one of founders of United Democratic Party of Belarus and Chairman of Board of Belarusian Soros Foundation
- **Dr. Alexander Sasnow** – Deputy Director of IISEPS, member of the Political Council of the United Civic Party and President of the "Open Society" Foundation. He was a member of Presidium of the XII Supreme Soviet and Minister of Labor of the Republic of Belarus.
- **Vladimir Dorokhov** – Head of Center for Documentation of IISEPS and reporter for "Deutsche Welle"
- **Prof. Stanislav Bogdankevich** – IISEPS Advisory Board Chairman, Honorable Chairman of the United Civic Party
- **Peter Kozarszewski** – Doctor of Political Science, Senior expert and member of Council of the Center for Social and Economic Research Foundation (CASE, Warsaw)
- **Valery Frolov** – retired Major-General, leader of faction "Republic" of Belarusian Parliament.