

Economic and Social Change in Belarus. Lukashenko's Election Victory

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Global Research, December 24, 2010
24 December 2010

Region: [Russia and FSU](#)
Theme: [History](#)

On the 19th of December Alexander Lukashenko secured a fourth term as president of Belarus with an overwhelming majority of the votes. Decried as 'Europe's last dictator' by the international corporate media, the last 16 years of Lukashenko's presidency have seen rising salaries, full employment and rising living standards. Lukashenko's popularity in Belarus is beyond question.

After the Belarus election, TNS Global Market Research, the world's second largest research company, whose headquarters are in London, published its statistics on the Belarusian exit polls.

Dr. Nicolai Churilov, a social scientist from TNS told the ONT TV channel in Belarus:

"We have interviewed more than 11 thousand people, and now we are ready to provide the final data. At first, Alexander Lukashenko - 74,2%, the second - and Nyaklyaeu Sannikov (5,8%), the third - Romanchuk (3, 1%). More significantly behind are Tereshchenko, Rymashevsky, Statkevich, Kostusev and Mikhalevich and Uss "- according to Dr. Churilov 5.6% of the population voted against all candidates." [1]

TNS Global Research has clients all over the world including the United States and Europe and it is highly unlikely that they would risk their reputation by publishing inaccurate information in order to prop up the democratic image of a country shunned by the 'international community'.

The Belarusian elections were observed by representatives from the Commonwealth of Independent States(CIS)as well as the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). The CIS delegates gave the election a clean bill of health stating that there was no evidence of rigging or fraudulent vote-counting.

This positive assessment of the elections was also echoed by some OSCE observers as well as many independent observers from around the world.

The chief adviser of the Association of Turkish businessmen and manufacturers, former vice-president of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly and former Minister of Trade and Industry in Turkey Tahir Kessy told Belarusian reporters : "I hope that the OSCE recognizes (as well as I do now) that these elections fully comply with its standards...what I saw on the sites - a free vote and a fair election. Elections in Belarus are just fine." [2]

This view was shared by an independent German observer Frank Musser who said:

"early voting in Belarus was held at a high level in an open and friendly atmosphere. I

visited 22 polling stations, as a former police chief I can say that they were all thoroughly checked”[3]

Other observers who approved of the electoral conduct were Italian member of parliament Andrea Rigoni and OSCE/ODIHR (Office for Democratic Institutions and Human rights)observer David Byrne Heysel who said “Among those polling stations we visited, many are in rural areas. We liked the fact that no matter where the voting booths were, and despite the snowfall, there was free access with cleared motorways, including in the villages. There was a very friendly atmosphere at the sites themselves with many welcoming and smiling people” [4]

Former Lithuanian Prime minister Casimir Prunskiene told Belarusian reporters :

“It’s important for people that the economy of Belarus is stable right now, despite the economic crisis. Now they have not only preserved the achievements of Belarus, but also magnified them. This encourages people to make the appropriate choice for the preservation of stability” [5]

Indeed, by Sunday evening everything seemed to be going in Lukashenko’s favour. He had won another landslide victory. For once, the CIS and the OSCE seemed to agree that the elections were fair by international standards.

The head of the OSCE mission in Belarus, German ambassador Geert Ahrens told Belarusian media that significant progress had been made but that a positive assessment of the elections would depend on the OSCE judgement of vote counting procedure. [6]

Ahrens’s statements were rather ambiguous. On the one hand, progress had been made while on the other, the OSCE was not yet prepared to approve the result.

However, some irregularities were registered by the Electoral Commission during the voting. One of the presidential candidates tried to bribe the chairman of the electoral commission with 50,000 US dollars. Intimidation and harassment of women by opposition voters was also noted. [7]

Matters came to a head, however, when minibuses of rioters arrived on the streets of Minsk to contest the election results.

Riots by ‘human rights’ protesters and ‘civil society’ activists

Immediately after the elections on Sunday evening December 19th around three thousand protestors stormed the October Square in the Belarusian capital, waving the flags of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

These flags are particularly offensive to most people in Belarus as they were the flags used by the Nazi collaborators during the Second World War. Belarus suffered more atrocities committed by the Nazis than any other country during World War II.

When law enforcement officers stopped a minibus of protesters, thugs attacked the police leaving one officer with serious head injuries. At least three police officers were hospitalised. Police found gas cylinders, metal fittings and stun grenades. [8]

Led by some of the defeated opposition candidates, hooligans attacked government

buildings, breaking windows and doors. What the Western press would present as a 'heavy-handed crackdown' by the Belarusian police on 'peaceful' protestors, was in fact an attack on Belarusian democracy by a gang of violent putschists, mobilised by opposition candidates.

Dr. Edmund Lengfelder is a German specialist in radiation medicine from the Otto Hug Strahleninstitut in Munich, who has been working in Belarus since the Chernobyl disaster in 1985. Lengfelder was among the OSCE delegation observing the elections. This is what he had to say about the 'peaceful' protestors lauded by the international media.

"Young people armed with rods and shovels were trying to break into an administrative building. Any reasonable person would understand that it was just an attempt to start a row and challenge the election results."

Lengfelder strongly defended the conduct of the elections stating that he had visited 25 polling stations and had not noticed any violations. "I noticed nothing that runs counter to the law. And I am guided only by criteria and recommendations from the ODIHR/OSCE mission while monitoring the election process," he said .[9]

Instead of showing the video footage of the opposition thugs attacking the police and the parliament buildings, the international press focused on the attempts by the police to restrain them. But proof of the protesters violent behaviour was shown on the Russian television station Russia Today.

Many journalists were injured in the riots, including Victor Tolochko, a photojournalist for the Belarusian First National Channel.

The rioting on Sunday evening [December 19th 2010], led to the arrest of over 600 people, who were detained according to article 293 of the Belarusian Criminal Code. Vladimir Nyaklyaeu, one of the defeated presidential candidates suffered severe head injuries after leading the rioters to the parliamentary buildings.

Article 35 of the Belarusian constitution states:

'The freedom to hold assemblies, rallies, street marches, demonstrations and pickets that do not disturb law and order or violate the rights of other citizens of the Republic of Belarus, shall be guaranteed by the State. The procedure for conducting the above events shall be determined by the law.' [10]

The rules and regulations surrounding demonstrations and rallies are no different in Belarus to other European countries. Demonstrations and rallies must be sanctioned by the authorities according to standard legal procedures. The OSCE, in backing unsanctioned rallies are effectively supporting criminal activities. Such behaviour makes a mockery of their pretensions to being the paragons of 'international standards' of civil society and democracy.

The OSCE press release and 'international standards'

Shortly after the riots, the office of the OSCE published a press release in which they claimed that the election results were flawed and failed to live up to 'international standards'. Paragraph two refers to the arrest of hundreds of 'civil society' and 'human rights' activists as well as the detention of opposition presidential candidates. There is no

condemnation in the press release of the violence against the police and parliament buildings. [11]

The OSCE press release mentions voting 'irregularities' but does not specify what exactly those irregularities were. In a private telephone conversation with this author, OSCE spokesman Hans Eschenbaecher, was asked if he was aware of the allegations of bribing made by the electoral commission against one of the presidential candidates. He replied "we are not prepared to comment on allegations made by the Belarusian government."

Mr Eschenbaecher was also asked if he was aware of the statements made on the riots by OSCE observer Dr. Edmund Lengfelder. "I was not aware of these statements but I will check with my colleagues" he said. [12]

According to CIS Executive Secretary Sergei Lebedev, the majority of OSCE observers present during the Belarusian election said they were free and democratic.[13]

After the 2001 election the head of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Gerard Stoudmann told reporters that the elections had been 'free and open in compliance with universal democratic institutions'. [14]

Mr Stoudmann's comments were ignored in the official OSCE denunciation of the 2001 Belarusian election results, just as Dr. Lengfelder's comments were ignored on the 20th of December 2010.

In 2006, the OSCE once again condemned the election of Lukashenko as unfair and unfree, yet they could not possibly have known whether or not it was fair or free as they had refused to observe it! The violence that ensued after the 2006 elections bears an uncanny resemblance to the riotous behaviour seen on the 19th December 2010.

After the 2006 election, the defeated opposition took to the streets in an effort to storm the parliament. One opposition candidate even called for the violent overthrow of the government and the death of President Lukashenko. The OSCE blamed the police for arresting these hooligans and the mainstream media did their utmost to blame the Belarusian authorities for their 'crackdown' of the 'democratic' opposition. [15]

For the international corporate press agencies, unpopular opposition movements funded by the National Endowment for Democracy in the United States and the European Union are perfectly entitled to throw bottles and stones while calling for the death of a democratically elected leader. This is the European Union's interpretation of 'human rights' in countries that refuse to obey economic directives from Brussels and Washington.

The riots that followed President Lukashenko's landslide victory on Sunday 19th December followed a similar pattern. Ten candidates ran for the election. The campaigns of each candidate were financed by the state according to the Belarusian constitution, each candidate receiving equal funds from the state to finance his electoral campaign.

One of the opposition websites European Radio for Belarus laments the fact Belarusian candidates cannot be bought by rich businessmen as in Poland, Lithuania and Russia. The article says much about the opposition's interpretation of 'democracy'[16]

Notwithstanding the equal funding of all the presidential candidates and the generous air time they received throughout the Belarusian media they all lost miserably. This is because none of the presidential candidates had anything substantial to offer. Instead of debating concrete policies, the opposition candidates spent most of their time insulting the president. None of them were able to convince the Belarusian people that free market capitalism is the greatest of all possible worlds.

The OSCE press release also deplores the absence of 'independent' media in Belarus. Yet of all the CIS countries Belarus has the highest access to the internet. The government only blocks sex trafficking and extreme pornography sites as well as racist websites such as Stormfront. There is nothing unusual about such controls.

Access to international media is free and open to all citizens.

In 2005, there were 776 newspapers in Belarus. 555 of them were independent. Independent media outweighs state broadcasting in all media domains including TV and radio.

Millions of US tax-payer dollars go to funding anti-Lukashenko propaganda in Belarus, through the National Endowment for Democracy, a CIA front organisation that funds pro-American fifth columns all around the world.

Many of the anti-Lukashenko publications have moved outside Belarus so as to avoid paying libel fees. Most opposition media papers have to resort to personal insults and defamation in order to demonise Lukashenko.

Reporters Without Borders, a US backed media watchdog who are routinely hostile to governments Washington dislikes, have listed some of the opposition newspapers available in Belarus: Narodnaya Volya, Delovaya Gazeta, Zhoda, Regionalnaya Gazeta, Nasha Niva, Vetbskiy Kurier, Brestskiy Kruier, Inter-Press, Gazeta Slonimskaya, Borisovski Novosti, Dlya Vas, Volnay Hlybokaye et Myastsoviy Chas and Solidarnost. [17]

When one adds to these the countless anti-Lukashenko websites and radio stations and their US and EU financed journalists, it is simply absurd to claim that the Belarusian people are not capable of making an informed choice due to the hegemony of state propaganda. There is more independent media in Belarus than any other country in Europe. If dissident media in the European Union or the United States received similar amounts of funding, there would be a veritable revolution in the West!

The problem with the 'independent' media in Belarus is that it is not 'independent'. The Belarusian people know who's paying the piper. The problem for the West, therefore, is the intellectual superiority of the Belarusian people. The Belarusians are simply not taking the Western bait!

The violent riots on Sunday 19th provided the perfect pretext for the OSCE to condemn the election results. With a little help from the international media, they were able to manipulate world public opinion by implying that the actions of the Belarusian government after the elections somehow infringed on the oppositionists 'human rights'. It was a brilliantly co-ordinated intelligence operation. It was, in fact, a repeat of the attempted coup of 2006, the so-called 'denim revolution', one is a grand series of colour revolutions that swept through Eastern Europe and Central Asia, planned and paid for by the Central

Intelligence Agency and its Western partners.

'Human rights' in Belarus and the OSCE

Mandated with observing elections, human rights issues, arms control and collective security, the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe was set up during the Cold War to co-ordinate policies among the countries of the Northern Hemisphere. Since the election of Lukashenko in Belarus in 1994, the OSCE has taken a key interest in human rights and democracy in 'Europe's last dictatorship'.

After the landslide victory of Alexander Lukashenko in 2001, the OSCE denounced the election as 'neither free nor fair' in spite of the fact that they had refused to observe it! In a speech to the European parliament one month after the disputed elections French politician Paul-Marie Coûteaux said:

"At the legislative elections which took place in Belarus on October 15, a delegation of seven MEPs visited Minsk from 13 to 17 to observe "the correct conduct of the poll". The observation noted the progress of democracy in this country because in all polling stations visited, the ballot appeared regular (voting booths, the presence of an opposition member in each office, election posters in entrances, etc ...). Alas! The United States, who dream of overthrowing the regime of Lukashenko, deemed favourable to Russian interests, had announced 15 days ago that these elections were not democratic, in order to devise a plan that would authorize the installation of NATO bases to a few hundred kilometres from Moscow.

That which MEPs had seen was of no importance, their delegation being incorporated into an OSCE mission headed by German Ambassador, Mr. Wieck, a former intelligence chief of the Federal Republic between 1985 and 1989, who had decided to follow in the footsteps of the virtuous American denunciations ... In a press conference, Mr. Wieck had a difficult time containing the anger of various international observers who had all noted the progress of democracy in Belarus, which received the backing of the author of these lines, showing that The OSCE report had been prepared in advance. Nevertheless, the Western press only retained the condemnation of the OSCE. Note that this is the same organization that once ruled as 'regular' elections in Georgia where the vast majority of opposition leaders were jailed PRIOR to those elections! But this time the OSCE had decided to support Mr. Chevarnadze '..."[18]

The OSCE officials sent to observe the elections in Belarus are nominated by Western governments. The president of the Parliament of the OSCE is currently US Congressman Alcee Hastings. In 1989 Mr. Hastings, a US federal court judge, was convicted of corruption and perjury in the United States. In the House of Representatives' Hastings was accused of acts of corruption that 'strike at the heart of our democracy'[19]

Mr Hastings was one of congressmen who voted against the re-count of the 2000 US presidential elections. He did not have any concern about the obvious irregularities and voting fraud of the Republican campaign.

When the Obama administration was attempting to garner support for the health reform bill earlier in 2010 Mr. Hastings made the following comment " When the deal goes down, all this talk about rules, we make them up as we go along." So, this is the man who is

overseeing democratic standards, rules and regulations in Belarus! From this man's record, we can learn all we need to know about the OSCE's 'international democratic standards', they simply make them up as they go along!

On the possibility that the OSCE might be allowed to monitor the US elections the American neo-conservative writer Daniel Pipes comments:

"This is a significant step toward the erosion of American sovereignty, not so much operationally (what harm can some election monitors do?) but conceptually (placing the OSCE and perhaps later other institutions over domestic safeguards). That a Republican administration is acquiescing to such a step makes it doubly worrisome."

Pipes goes on to point out that it is simply absurd that a convicted criminal like Alcee Hastings should be Co-Chairman of the OSCE. Pipes is outraged by the prospect of such corrupt officials monitoring American elections. He quotes the president of the American Policy Centre Tom De Weese, who writes:

"The outrage just got more outrageous. Not only has the State Department invited a team of unaccountable, foreign bureaucrats to meddle in our free elections, but these meddlers are headed by one of the most corrupt individuals in the U.S. Congress. While they're at it, why doesn't the State Department invite O.J. Simpson to head up the FBI crime lab?" [20]

The problem for Pipes is that such people could become observers of elections in America. But, of course, it is perfectly acceptable for convicted criminals to be put in charge of observing 'democracy' in Belarus. It is difficult to imagine the pent-up frustration of Belarusian officials who are forced to listen to lectures by criminals on 'international standards' of democracy.

As mentioned above, the current head of the human rights section of the OSCE, the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OIDHR) is the distinguished German diplomat Geert Ahrens.

Ahrens previously served as German ambassador in Yugoslavia during the 1990s.

His mission there was to head a working group on the problem of minorities and ethnic conflict. Whether he knew it or not, his own Government was one of the chief agitators of ethnic conflict in the country when the *Bundesnachrichtendienst* (German Federal Intelligence agency) joined forces with the CIA to arm, train and finance Islamic narco-terrorists with links to Osama Bin Laden in the form of the Kosovo Liberation Army. [21]

The purpose of the covert German backing of narco-terrorists was to finish the job Hitler had begun in 1941, namely the formation of a client-regimes in Croatia, Greater Albania and Bosnia. During the Second World War, the Nazis armed and trained the SS Skanderbeg divisions in Kosovo and Albania and the SS Handschar divisions in Bosnia and Croatia. These Islamo-fascists were used by the Third Reich as proxy forces to fight the communists and Yugoslavian partisans. Similar methods were used during the NATO destruction of Yugoslavia. Islamic terrorists were useful to the Nazis then and are useful to NATO now. Clichés about history are painfully true.

German Nazis, Belarusian fascists and the CIA

The connections between German intelligence and the CIA go back a long time. Reinhold Gehlen, one of Hitler's top intelligence officers, was selected by the CIA to head the post war German intelligence apparatus where he served until 1968. There are many examples of Nazis who served in the post-war West German state and intelligence apparatus agitating for 'democracy', 'freedom' and 'human rights' in countries where they had committed unspeakable crimes against humanity.

The 'human rights' and 'civil society' activists are mainly composed of right-wing Russian-hating nationalists who intimidate the Belarusian people with the odious flag of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the banner used by Belarusian Nazi collaborators during World War II.

The United States, through its CIA front organisation, the National Endowment for Democracy, allocates million of dollars every year to fund capitalist propaganda in Belarus. There are countless US funded websites in Belarus such as the anti-Lukashenko website Chapter 97, a 'human rights' website which supports the war in Iraq, while Radio Liberty beams pro-US propaganda into the country every day. [22]

Many people in Belarus recall the pro-nationalist broadcasts of Radio Liberty during the Cold War. Many of Radio Liberty's broadcasts extolled Ukrainian and Belarussian war criminals who had collaborated with the Nazi occupation of Belarus; such as Dmitri Kasmovic, leader of the Belorussian Liberation Movement, who was responsible for the murder of thousands of communists and Jews during Operation Barbarossa. Kasmovic worked for US intelligence during the Cold War and had close links to Republican party circles in the United States.

It is a great credit to President Lukashenko and the Belarusian authorities that they have treated these people with such tolerance and respect. Were these 'civic activists' to find themselves on the wrong side of governments the EU and the USA support such as Colombia, Rwanda, or Kosovo, they would face death squads.

The CIA's nefarious methodologies have not changed and most people in Belarus detest their anti-human ideology of greed and war. The Belarusian people fought heroically against the fascist onslaught financed by those same international financial institutions who now pretend to speak for 'human rights' and 'democracy'. [23]

Belarus has been an independent democratic state for over 16 years. What the Western intelligence agencies do not understand is that this is a country which lost millions of lives due to the savage rapacity of international capitalism in the form of the Third Reich.

The Belarusian working class and the veterans of the Great Patriotic War vote for Lukashenko because he has refused to succumb to the hegemony of financial capitalism under the authority of the European Union. They vote for Lukashenko because salaries are rising every year, pensions are secure, there is free universal healthcare, full employment and free education. These are the concrete freedoms millions of Soviet citizens died for. They did not give in to the fascists in the past and they will not give in now.

Notes

[1] <http://www.bpc.by/Search/NewsDoc.asp>

[2] <http://www.bpc.by/Search/NewsDoc.asp>

[3] <http://www.bpc.by/Search/NewsDoc.asp>

- [4] <http://www.bpc.by/Search/NewsDoc.asp>
- [5] <http://news.belta.by/en/news/politics?id=602192>
- [6] <http://www.bpc.by/Search/NewsDoc.asp>
- [7] <http://news.belta.by/en/news/politics?id=602192>
- [8] <http://www.bpc.by/Search/NewsDoc.asp>
- [9] <http://news.belta.by/en/news/politics?id=602192>
- [10]<http://www.law.by/work/EnglPortal.nsf/6e1a652fbefce34ac2256d910056d559/d93bc51590cf7f49c2256dc0004601db?OpenDocument>
- [11] <http://www.osce.org/item/48242.html>
- [12]private telephone conversation with the author Monday 20th December 2010.
- [13] <http://en.rian.ru/world/20101220/161854376.html>
- [14] <http://spiked-online.com/Articles/00000002D26F.htm>
- [15] <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,189104,00.html>
- [16] <http://vibary.euroradio.fm/en/how/1352>
- [17] http://www.rsf.org/article.php3?id_article=15187
- [18] <http://www.pmcouteaux.org/cabris/cabris9.html>
- [19] <http://freedommag.org/english/vol2716/page28a.htm>
- [20] <http://www.danielpipes.org/blog/2004/08/foreigners-monitor-us-elections>
- [21] <http://www.globalresearch.ca/articles/BEH502A.html>
- [22] <http://www.ned.org/where-we-work/eurasia/belarus>
- [23]*Wall Street and the Rise of Hitler* by Anthony Sutton. Available online at http://www.reformed-theology.org/html/books/wall_street/

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