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In the Trap of Post-Socialist Stagnation: on Political Development of the Belarusian Society in the Years 1986-2006

Introduction

The territory of Belarus, throughout most of its history, belonged to the Great Duchy of Lithuania. As a result of the partitions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth at the end of the 13th century, these lands were incorporated to the Russian Empire. At the beginning of the 20th century the Belarusian national movement withstood the Polish and Russian cultural domination. The political postulates of independence emerged at the end of the World War I. On March 25, 1918 the ephemeral Council of the Belarusian People Republic proclaimed its independence. However, this institution, devoid of any real force, was not able to impact on the course of events. The treaty of Riga of 1921 divided the territory of Belarus between Poland and the Soviet Union. Renewed unification of Belarus took place as a result of the Soviet aggression on Poland, on September 17, 1939. Nowadays, Belarus covers the area of 207. 600 square kilometres and its population amounts to 10.3 million consisting of Belarusians 78%, Russians 13%, Poles 4.1%, Ukrainians 2.9%, Jews 1.1% and other nationalities 0.9%. This land-locked state borders with Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Ukraine and Russia.

The aim of this paper is to analyze the political development of the Belarusian society in the years 1986–2006 in order to answer the following questions:

- (i) what was the impact of support the nomenclature of the Belarusian Communist Party gave to the Belarusian independence after August 1991 on the process of decrease in power regulation (or in other words – democratization);
- (ii) why initial period of decrease in power regulation was replaced by its growth;
- (iii) why this growth of power regulation did not encounter efficient civil reaction like in the neighbouring republics (ex. Ukraine).

Finally, I would like to consider further political development in Belarus, especially the perspective of civil revolutions. Presented analysis will not be a chronicler's presentation of facts from the current history of this country but will be based on a social theory – non-Marxian historical materialism, which will serve as a basis for answering these questions and considering posed problems.¹ In the first chapter, I present the part of this theory and in the second chapter, I will extend this approach by analysis of mutual relations between the type of secession, the type of class structure and democracy. In the third chapter, I interpret the current political history of the Belarusian society in the light of this theory. The paper ends with a conclusions.

1. The Legacy of Soviet Socialism

Belarus in the period from 1918 to 1991 was a part of the Soviet Union. Therefore, the legacy of real socialism in the Soviet version has been a crucial factor influencing political development of the Belarusian society after gaining independence in 1991. The Soviet version of real socialism may be characterised by three basic features. Firstly, it was a social system where one social class, having at its disposal

¹ Full presentation of this theory is in: Nowak 1983, 1991.

means of coercion, production and indoctrination, controlled politics, economy and culture. Secondly, the main interest of this class of triple-lords consisted in the maximisation of power regulation. Thirdly, this social system built up an empire consisting of the Russian metropolis and the external provinces, inhabited by non-Russian speaking citizens. Let us briefly characterise the three above-mentioned aspects of real socialism in the Soviet version.

1.1. On Three Class Divisions

Class divisions, in accordance with a non-Marxian historical materialism, exist not only in economy, but also emerge spontaneously in other spheres of human activity, such as politics and culture. In each sphere of social life it is possible to distinguish material level consisting of means of coercion, production and indoctrination. Relation to means of coercion in politics determines a division of a society into two social categories: the class of rulers, which controls the use of means of coercion, and the class of citizens, deprived of such possibilities. In economy, material level is made up of means of production, which determines a division into the class of owners and the class of direct producers. In cultural domain, material level consists of means of spiritual production – for example printing presses, radio and television.

Thus control over the material means provides the basis for a typology of societies in a non-Marxian historical materialism (Brzechczyn 2007b: 244-252). Applying this criterion it is possible to distinguish class societies, where existing classes are separated, and supra-class societies, where the class divisions are overlapped. For example, one social class, keen on increasing the range of its social influence, may seize control over means of coercion and production and mass communication.

A society with a triple class of rulers-owners-priests, monopolising control over politics, economy and culture, exemplifies one type of supra-class systems. This social system refers to the structure of real socialism. The apparatus of the Communist Party,

which controlled not only political life, but also economy and culture was counterpart of the class of triple-lords.

1.2. Political Nature of Socialism

Real socialism was the system of triple-rule in a political version because possession of the means of production and indoctrination by the class of rulers-owners-priests was subordinated to the enlargement of power regulation. This social system evolved according to developmental mechanisms of a purely political society, which constituted the second feature of Soviet socialism.

It is supposed that every citizen has a set of preferences, which direct his or her actions. Among citizens' actions it is possible to distinguish those that are autonomous and regulated. Regulated actions are undertaken under threat of repression from the ruler, but autonomous actions are not restricted by similar sanctions taken by those controlling means of coercion. The ratio of the sum of regulated actions to the sum of actions undertaken by citizens (universe of action) is called civil alienation. It is assumed that intensity of civil resistance depends on the level of civil alienation. When the number of regulated actions is low (and thus civil alienation is also low), social peace prevails as citizens have no reason to resist. When the level of civil alienation is high, the level of resistance is low as declassified and atomised citizens are unable to resist. A political revolution breaks out when civil alienation is moderately high; which means it is painful enough to evoke political reaction, yet not so painful as to paralyse citizenry;

There are two basic methods to subordinate social life: bureaucratisation and terror. Bureaucratisation replaces autonomous social relations (citizen – citizen type) by etatised ones (citizen – ruler – citizen type). This way, power gradually permeates into the structure of social life making it impossible to undertake any social action without its permission. Resorting to terror, rulers physically “eliminate” from social life (death, long-term prison or isolation, etc.) those from the class of citizens who are centres of independent social

relations. However, the state of declassation does not last forever. It is assumed that when bureaucratisation of social life passes a certain threshold, there appears a tendency for revitalisation of autonomous social bonds among citizens. It means that etatised social bonds are replaced by autonomous ones, social relations controlled by authorities shrink and the sphere of autonomous social life enlarges;

In the dynamic model of purely political society it is possible to distinguish, roughly speaking two stadia: the stadium of the growth of political regulation and the stadium of the gradual decrease of power regulation. In the first stadium the mechanism of political competition led to steady rise of power regulation. Those from the class of rulers, who do not compete, are eliminated from the political structure of power or, by process of trials and errors, learn to enlarge their sphere of control. In consequence, social autonomy shrinks and the sphere of power regulation enlarges. According to the static assumptions, the growth of civil alienation provoked outbreak of civil revolution. Its failure opened road to the total enslavement of citizenry by the class of rulers.

Since the state of enslavement, there appears a tendency towards a gradual revitalisation of independent social bonds, which increases citizens' ability to resist. This leads to a civil revolution, which is crushed, but rulers – in order to avoid a follow-up, reduce the scope of their control. Yet, mechanisms of political competition lead once more to the growth of power regulation, triggering an outbreak of the next revolution on a greater scale. This forces rulers to make larger concession and makes it more difficult for them to repress rebels. Thus a political society evolves according to the following scheme: civil revolution – repression – concessions – growth of political regulation – next political revolution with a wider social base. Finally, mass protests erupt and their scale is so widespread that authorities instead of starting off with repression, have no choice but allow sweeping concessions, which reduces control of the rulers to the level acceptable by the class of citizens.

1.3. Imperial Structure of the Soviet Version Socialism

Imperial structure forms the third basic feature of the Soviet society. The Soviet Union consisted of the Russian metropolis and non-Russian republics, annexed during two waves of aggressiveness. The Caucasus countries: Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, eastern Belarus and Ukraine as well as societies of Central Asia were incorporated in the years 1918–1921, whereas Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Moldova, western Belarus and Ukraine were incorporated in the years 1939–1941.

The fact of possessing external provinces prolonged the process of liberalisation of the whole imperial society. The class of triple-lords could exploit national divisions among citizenry through maintaining different national groups of the class of citizens at different levels of enslavement. As a result, the class of triple-lords, instead of quelling protests of the whole class of citizens, dealt with isolated citizen protests, occurring at different time and in different parts of the empire.

2. Secession, Democracy and the Type of Class Structure Theoretical Considerations on Mutual Relation

The collapse of real socialism in the Soviet Union was a coincidence of two independent processes: the collapse of the system of triple rule and the collapse of the political empire. The collapse of triple-lordship led to a rise – at a different rate and with different scope in particular provinces – of civil autonomy in economy (free market reforms), culture (free press and politics (parliamentary democracy). The decline of the empire, in turn, caused the emergence of the independent states which seceded from the Soviet Union.

In the light of the conceptual apparatus of non-Marxian historical materialism it is possible to distinguish three parties having own political interest in the process of secession: class of citizens (i), provincial faction of the class of rulers (ii) and the metropolitan class of rulers (iii) (more on this: K. Brzechczyn 2003: 146–158; 2007c: 540–543). The social advantage of each side over the other from this

“triangle of secession” shapes the way the empire disintegrates. For provincial citizens, obtaining independence and breaking links with the empire leads to the enlargement of civil autonomy. Therefore, the postulate of independence appeared in the sufficiently mature civil movement in provinces of the empire. If a civil movement is able to enforce concession from provincial authorities, the secession assumes a shape of victorious independent civil revolution.

For the metropolitan faction of the class of rulers secessions of its provinces reduces the sphere of regulation and weakens this class position inside the society and abroad. Therefore, metropolitan authorities always object to the disintegration of the empire.

The mediate position is taken by the local class of rulers which is interested in the preservation of own sphere of regulation. If independence safeguards maintaining the sphere of regulation, provincial authorities support secession from the metropolis. Independent existence of a given society generates in it a set of new domains of social life such as military, internal safety, diplomacy, etc. which can be regulated by the class of rulers. In order to ensure support of own citizens, which is needed to confront the authorities of the empire, the provincial class of rulers makes political concession to own citizens. However, the number of these concessions depends on the strength of civil movement. One may distinguish two kinds of secessions: progressive and regressive. In a regressive secession, the level of power regulation decreases, but it does not introduce social peace in rulers-citizens relations. In a progressive secessions, the level of reduction of power regulation is so high that it leads to social peace in rulers-citizens relations. At the institutional level, the democratic system is introduced allowing official control of the authorities by citizens.

However, the stabilisation of democracy depends on two kinds of factors. One of them is relationship between rulers and citizens, the second is the type of class structure emerging after the collapse of socialism (triple-lordship system). Firstly, the maintenance of the democratic system depends on the balance of forces between rulers and citizens. The interest of the class of rulers is to maximize the range of regulation. The interest of the class of citizens is to maximize the range of autonomy. The force of a given class, may be defined, as

its ability to actualize its own interest in a given state of mutual relations with oppositional class against its interests. The balance of forces between political classes appeared under conditions of social peace: the rulers hold power and citizens are satisfied with large civil autonomy. Under these political circumstances, democracy is the most effective system for the authorities and civil society. Recurrent electoral procedures help to eliminate inefficient rulers and replace them with more efficient ones. This political system is also optimal for the class of citizens because it ensures institutional tools of control over authorities and strengthens autonomous social relations independent of the authority.

Secondly, the stabilisation of democracy depends on the class structure of a given society (more on this: Brzechczyn 2004: 109–113). The more this structure approximates the balanced class society, the more stable democracy is and the more effective its procedure becomes. The more a given society is distant from the model of the balanced class society – or, in other words, the more the supra-class social structure emerges in a given society, the more eroded is the democratic system or it may even vanish altogether.

Although these two factors are logically independent, they influence each other. It is possible to imagine the triple class of rulers democratically controlled by citizenry as well as single class of rulers maintaining dictatorship. However, presuming that continuous political mobilization of citizen is impossible, besides the short periods of social revolutions, the kind of class structure of a society becomes a key factor determining durability of democracy. The owners and the priests are the most powerful citizens among the class of citizens. Due to this fact, citizenry has access to material resources which enable efficient resistance against the growth of power regulation. In a society with a balanced class structure there exist strong social partners for the authorities who counteract the excessive growth of power regulation.

3. Political Evolution of the Belarusian Society

3.1. The Beginnings of National Revival

The reformist policy launched by Gorbachev might be interpreted as a decrease in power regulation which stimulated civil revival across the Soviet Union. The situation in Belarus was shaped by political developments in the neighbouring republics (Lithuania, Ukraine) where the process of civil liberalisation was more advanced.² The demonstration “awakening of spring” organized by young people in March 1986 marked the first sign of independent activity. The participants were brutally persecuted by the police forces. Independent activity in the first years of perestroika consisted in writing public letters in defence of the Belarusian language and culture. Naturally, those participating in independent movements represented young people and intelligentsia. In the second half of 1987 there were several hundreds of youth organizations; over 60% of students in Minsk belonged to some independent associations. Two events accelerated the rise of an autonomous civil movement. First of them was the catastrophe of Chernobyl, in April 1986. Although this reactor was located in Ukraine, about 70% of its fallout landed in Belarus and as a result 30% of republic’s territory was contaminated. The second event was the discovery of mass graves in Kuropaty Forest near Minsk in 1988. It is estimated that about 200.000 Belarusians were executed there in the period from 1937 to 1941. The first article on this event co-written by Zyanon Paznyak was disseminated in several hundred thousand copies. In October 1988 several hundred people took part in demonstrations commemorating victims of Stalin’s terror and demanding punishment of the guilty.

The Belarusian Popular Front *Adradzhenne* (Revival), main civil organisation, was established in October in 1988, but it was legalised three years later (June 1991). In the years 1989–1991 there were, apart

² This subsection is based on empirical research conducted by: Foligowski 1999; Kazanecki 1993: 79–84; Lenzi 2002: 401–424; Marples 2004: 31–42; Mihalisko 1997: 223–282; Mironowicz 1998: 87–94; 1999; Potocki 2002: 143–156; Sadowski 2007; Silitski 2005: 83–97; Szybieka 2001; Wiaczorka 1993: 85–98.

from the Front, many other parties and political groups, acting mainly in the Western part of Belarus. They usually associated from several hundred to one thousand and a half members. The Confederation of the Belarusian Youth, founded in January 1989 by delegates from 66 Belarusian youth organizations, was one of the most active groups.

Local authorities of the Belarusian republic had been mainly persecuting activists of the Front. Participants of independent demonstrations were beaten and dissipated with lachrymatory gas. Members of the Popular Front were arrested for abuse of national symbols. The police confiscated literature, press and leaflets published by independent organisations. In spite of political repression, thousands of people joined manifestations and other forms of activity organized by the Front. The first constituent congress of the Popular Front was organised outside Belarus, in Vilnius, because the authorities of Minsk forbade the meeting. Zyanon Paznyak was chosen President of the Popular Front, his deputies were two university professors: Michaił Tkachov and Yuriy Hadyka.

Multicandidate elections to the republican Supreme Council were held in March 1990. The Belarusian Popular Front set up wider coalition of independent organizations, named the Democratic Bloc. In Belarus, unlike in other republics, a certain number of seats (50 out of 360) was reserved for "war veterans" and other organisations controlled by the BCP. One month before elections the Election Committee refused to register BPF's candidates. But in the wake of mass protests and demonstrations the Election Committee was forced to change its mind. During the election campaigns the Popular Front was able to mobilize one hundred thousand people who participated in rallies and meetings. In result of elections, the Democratic Bloc gained 67 seats (members of the Front gained 26) out of 360 seats. It was not enough to control the republican structures of power. The Belarusian Communist Party could, without any obstacles, appoint its members to most important posts. Mikalai Dzemyantsei, an apparatchik from the BCP, was elected Chairman of the Supreme Council and Vyacheslav Kebich, a member of Polit-Biuro of the BCP, became the Prime Minister of the Belarusian government.

3.2. Secession: Ideals and Interests

The first initiative of the Popular Front put on the agenda of the Supreme Council consisted in the ratification of the state sovereignty declaration. The republican authorities rejected this proposal, but following consultations with Moscow, when it turned out that the central authorities would not object, they changed their mind. On July 27, 1990, the Supreme Council declared sovereignty of the republic. Earlier, such declaration was proclaimed by Russia. However, the support of the Belarusian population for the state independence remained very low. In all Soviet Union March referendum, held in 1991, 83% of voters supported remaining within the borders of the Soviet Union. The Supreme Council was able to proclaim independence of Belarus following an unsuccessful coup d'état in Moscow, on August 24, 1991. The leaders of the BCP belonged to the hardliners of the Communist Party because they supported the coup d'état. This attitude provoked a mass demonstration in Minsk against the republic authorities. After coup's failure during the session the Supreme Council decided to proclaim independence of the republics. The act of independence was supported by Alyaksandr Lukashenka and Anatoly Malofeyev, the first Secretary of BCP.

The leadership of the Belarusian nomenclature changed its mind and supported independence because secession from the Soviet Union safeguarded its social position. Due to this fact, they could control the whole process of decrease in power regulation.

3.3. Limited Decrease in Power Regulation

The period ranging from 1991 to 1994 can be interpreted as a decrease in power regulation. On August 29, 1991 the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was dismissed, but this fact did not change relations in the Belarusian power structure. One month later during the session of the Supreme Council, its Chairman, M. Dzemyantsei, was replaced by Stanisław Shushkevich, one of the moderate leaders of the Popular Front. However, Kebich, previous member of the Polit-

Bureau of the BCP was still Prime Minister of the Belarusian government. Over 20 independent political parties in Belarus were formed. However, the opposition was unable to appoint its candidates to executive posts of power structure. The divisions between Zianon Paznyak, a leader of the Popular Front who gathered conservative-nationalist wing of the opposition and Stanislav Shushkevich, who had support of the liberal and social democratic circles of independent society as well as trade unions, were decisive. Moderate Shushkevich sought agreement with the pragmatic parts of the nomenclature instead of agreeing with more radical Paznyak who just wanted to devoid the nomenclature of the whole power.

In January 1991, five biggest opposition parties claimed to hold a referendum on the pre-term elections. The formal condition was to collect 350 thousand signatures under petitions calling for a referendum. In spite of legal barriers posed by the authorities, the initiators collected 420 thousand signatures at the end of July of 1992. The Supreme Council controlled by the Communists simply ignored this petition. Firstly, the parliament postponed discussion over referendum because of the lack of quorum. Then, in October 1992, the Supreme Council accusing initiators of forgery, declined the petition. In confrontation with the parliament, moderate Shushkevich who sought agreement with the reformist part of the communist nomenclature did not back that initiative. The parliamentary elections were held in a constitutional term in 1995 and Belarus became the last country, among the post-Soviet republics, where parliamentary and presidential elections were organized.

On March 15, 1994 a new constitution of Belarus was passed introducing presidential system. The constitution bestowed the President with total control over executive- administration, police, army, and foreign policy. It introduced new segments of State administration: the Secretary of the Security Council and Presidential Administration directly subordinated to the President. These institutions were superior to the government, whose Minister was also appointed by the President. A one-chambered 260-seat- Parliament and the Constitutional Court constituted the most important organizations counterbalancing the power of President. If the

Parliament ascertained that the presidential activity was contradictory to the constitution, it could impeach him. The Constitutional Court could invalidate presidential decrees contradictory to the law.

The political development of the Belarusian society in the years 1991–1994 could be interpreted as a decrease in power regulation that lead to social peace in ruler-citizen relations. The enactment of a new constitution warranting civil liberties as well as democratic elections may be interpreted this way. However, the period of social peace in the Belarusian society was too short in order to stabilise new democratic institutions and shape social interests around them. The class of citizens was not taught to defend democratic institutions if emergency arose. Therefore, the first democratic elections in Belarus were the last ones.

3.4. The Restoration of Triple-Lordship System

3.4.1. Deterioration of Democracy

The symbiosis between communists and moderate opposition epitomized by Kebich (Prime Minister) and Shushkevich (Chairman of the Supreme Council) ceased to exist on January 1994 when Lukashenka, the Head of the Supreme Council's Anti-Corruption Committee, accused Shushkevich of defalcating 100\$. The Supreme Council dismissed Shushkevich, who was replaced by the former communist activist and general of the Belarusian police, Nikolay Grib.

In the presidential elections in 1994 opposition had two candidates: radical Paznyak and moderate Shushkevich. The first gained 13% of votes, the second 10%. In result of such brokage Lukashenka (45%) and Kebich (17%) got to the runoff. Other candidates gained 15% of votes. On July 10, 1994 there was a runoff of presidential elections in which Lukashenka gained 80% of votes.

The results of presidential elections opened up vistas for the marginalisation of the opposition and initiated deterioration of democratic system. It was conditioned by the destruction of two main

independent centres of power, namely: the Parliament and Constitutional Court. The first confrontation with the Parliament took place in 1995 during parliamentary elections, the second one – in the second half of 1996 during the organization of a referendum on constitutional amendments.

The first round of parliamentary elections to the Supreme Council of the 13th term was organized on May 14, 1995. The authorities imposed information blockade on the activity of the opposition which was presented in the state media as descendants of Nazi collaborators. On the same day, the authorities staged a presidential referendum. The voters were to answer four questions:

- (i) Should Russian be an official language?
- (ii) Do you accept the change of Belarusian national symbols?
- (iii) Do you support presidential policy aiming at the integration with Russia?
- (iv) Do you agree with the dismissal of the Parliament by president in case the Parliament infracts the constitution?

The referendum proved to be a great success of the President: 83% of electorate voted for granting the Russian language the official status, 75% of voters accepted the change of national symbols, 82% favoured integration with Russia, and 78% supported strengthening of presidential power.

On the day of the referendum only 18 candidates gained the seat because election law (64% turn-out) states that to gain a parliamentary seat the candidate had to receive 50% of votes during a 50% turn-out. On May 28, 1995 there was a second round of elections with a 56% turn-out. 101 members were chosen and jointly in two rounds 119 members of Parliament were chosen. However, in accordance with the constitution, the Parliament could be established when two thirds of the seats were filled in a 260-seat Parliament. In Lukashenka's interpretation the whole executive and legislative power remained in his hand because the previous Supreme Council ended its term and the new Supreme Council was not able to constitute itself. On June 12, 1995 Lukashenka signed a decree introducing new state symbols although in accordance with the constitution, the results of the referendum and other presidential

decisions should have been accepted by the Parliament. The stand of the Parliament was supported by the Constitutional Court which invalidated presidential decrees. This state of confrontation lasted to fall of 1995 when by-elections were held in two rounds: on November 29, and December 10, 1995. In the meantime the Belarusian political scene was reshuffled – political parties cooperating with the Belarusian Popular Front forwent the coalition with it creating new alliances. In two turnouts 79 members of Parliaments were chosen. In a new Parliament 198 seats were filled. It came as no surprise that the opposition, devoid of real clout, won only 25% of votes. In the new Supreme Council the biggest number of seats was gained by a pro-presidential faction and members supporting interest of the nomenclature.

The growth of power regulation provoked social protests. In the first half of 1996 Minsk witnessed anti-presidential demonstrations. About 40 thousand people protested against signing a treaty with Russia in March 1996, even more people participated in a demonstration on the anniversary of Chernobyl disaster. These demonstrations resulted in the encounters with the police and the arrest of the participants. In May, demonstrations disseminated in the province. On the 26th of July, seven main parties of Belarus appealed to the Belarusian society and criticised presidential policy. Accordingly Lukashenka stroke back calling for a referendum on amendments to the Constitution which would strengthen president's power and replace the Supreme Council with a new bicameral legislature consisting of a lower chamber – the House of Representatives and an upper chamber – the Council of the Republic. Eight out of sixty four members of the Council of the Republic would be directly nominated by the President. According to the presidential decree, a referendum was scheduled for November 9, 1996 and was obligatory. At the beginning of September, the Supreme Council accepted presidential questions and added own – on the liquidation of the Presidential Office. Moreover, the Parliament scheduled a referendum on November 24, 1996. At the same time, the group of members of Parliament instigated the impeachment of the president,

collecting 70 signatures. The argument in favour of this step was that the Constitutional Court invalidated 16 presidential decrees.

At the beginning of November 1996, the Constitutional Court ascertained that an obligatory referendum breaches the Constitution. In result, the President issued two decrees: the first one stipulated that the results of the referendum would be binding and will be implemented forthwith; the second one annulled the decision of the Constitutional Court. Lukashenka dismissed the Chairman of the Central Electoral Committee, which supported the stand of the Constitutional Court and held a referendum on November 9. On November 19, 1996, 73 members of the Parliament moved a resolution divesting President of an office. The Parliament was supported by mass demonstrations of citizens who occupied the square in front of the building.

The President was saved by the mediators from Russia who helped to strike a compromise between the Chairman of the Supreme Council and the President. Accordingly, the Supreme Council should have withdrawn from the impeachment of Lukashenka. Both sides should have withdrawn own projects of amendments to the Constitution and the referendum scheduled on November 24th would have a consultative, not a binding character. However, in the referendum held in the atmosphere of confrontation, 70% of voters supported presidential amendments to the Constitution; only 9% was against (out of those having a right to vote, not those who were voting). When the referendum was over, Lukashenka broke the signed agreement and implemented a new Constitution based on a presidential project. According to the new Constitution, Lukashenka had the right to nominate, among other, six out of twelve judges of the Constitutional Court's, six members of the Central Electoral Committee, and 8 members (out of 64) of the upper house of the Parliament (the Council of the Republic). Also, Lukashenka could issue decrees under the circumstances of "specific necessity and urgency".

Over 100 hundred members of the previous Parliament who recognized the results of the referendum became members of the House of Representatives. The oppositional members of the

Parliament tried to occupy the building of the Parliament but they were thrown out by force.

3.4.2. Political Control over Cultural Life

The authorities under Lukashenka reign tightened their control over mass-media. First of all, the authorities struggled with the Belarusian national consciousness which was perceived as a threat to the authorities. On September 1, 1995 textbooks on Belarusian history written in the years 1991–1994 were withdrawn from schools. Books presenting Belarusian point of view were censored and prohibited. In the years 1994–1999 most Belarusian schools (600) with Belarusian as a language of instruction were closed. In 2003 the only Belarusian-language high school in Minsk was closed down as a result of teaching wrong version of the national history. In July 2004 the authorities closed down the European Humanities University. There is no university in Belarus where Belarusian is used as a language of instruction. The authorities forbade students and professors to travel abroad and limited contacts and links with Western universities.

In 1999 Belarusian books made up 10% of all titles and 8% of all editions. In 1996 the authorities closed a private radio station *Radyio 101,2* transmitting in Belarusian. State institutions stopped to finance the activity of cultural institutions and associations promoting Belarusian culture and language.

The authorities closed independent radio-stations and newspapers. In June 1994 two radio-stations *Biełaruskaja Mołodioznaja* and *Krynica* were closed. In January 1995 the Belarusian State Publishing House refused to print oppositional newspapers. On March 17, 1995 the editor-in-chief of the newspaper *Narodnaja Gazieta*, published by the Supreme Council, was dismissed. The authorities replaced independently thinking editors-in-chief of state mass-media with loyal ones and closed other oppositional newspapers: *Pahonia* and *Swaboda*. Moreover they repressed foreign journalists refusing them accreditation.

3.4.3. Political Control of Economic Life

Since 1995, the command of economy was restored in Belarus. The government elaborated a five-year plan *Main Direction of Social and Economic Development of the Republics of Belarus in the years 1996–2000* which proclaimed building more flats and producing more food. There appeared a new kind of property – presidential property under direct management of presidential administration who seized best buildings in the capital. The process of privatization was stopped. Private banks were closed or strictly controlled by the state. The state in a different way limited the growth of private ownership in economy. According to a decree of May 24, 1996 private firms had to register every year to obtain concession from the state. It was a tool for closing down private firms. For example, in 1996 over half of private businesses were liquidated in Minsk, one year later – 30%. In 1997 as a result of the procedure of re-registration over 30 thousands firms were closed and 80 thousand companies were devoid of concessions all over the country. State agendas had the right to confiscate private property without court sentence and they set up prizes. For example, the Ministry of Justice issued in 1999 40.0000 different legal acts regulating economic activity. The level of fiscalism is very high because there were over 20 different taxes which seize over 70% of income. As a result of such a policy, state property was made up in 80% of national property. The state control over economy hampered privatization and building of free market economy was thwarted, the emergence of the class of owners weakened the rise of civil society in Belarus. High taxes and other burdens led to periodical strikes and protests of small traders. In January 2004 a permanent employment system at state enterprises was replaced with one-year contract system. The extension of employment depended on political attitude of employees. Even passive forms of protest (refusing to vote) could have been very risky for state employees.

3.5. Stabilisation of Triple-Lordship System

In face of the threat of repressions some oppositional leaders and activists, including Z. Paznyak and Semyon Sharetsky (Chairman of the Supreme Council) had to leave the country, others, like Viktor Gonchar, Anatoly Krasovsky, Iurii Zakharenko, and Dmitry Zavadsky had simply disappeared from public life and are probably dead. About 2 thousand people were arrested on political grounds.

In the period from 2001 to 2006, social system headed by Lukashenka was stabilised and strengthened. The authority curbed organizational basis of independent institutions. In the years 2003–2004 over one hundred civil organizations were closed down or forced to self-liquidation. As a result of the implementation of a new housing code in 2005 three hundred local political-party offices situated in privately owned buildings were closed. Renting rooms in office building was very expensive. There was also a change in the attitude toward oppositional activity, instead of brutal repressions and violence, the regime imposed administration punishments. This social situation may be interpreted as a state of declassation of the class of citizens. Atomised citizenry in Belarus remained passive and it was not able to react against violation of democratic rules. This is why two presidential elections did not provoke social unrest comparable to the events in Ukraine and other post-Soviet republics.

During the presidential elections of 2001 the opposition was not able to support a single presidential candidate. Several political parties supported Vladimir Hancharyk, the Chairman of the Federation of Trade Union, Sergey Hajdukevich, the Chairman of the Liberal-Democratic Party, was the second independent candidate. Hancharyk won 15.39% of votes whereas Hajdukevich 2.48% and Lukashenka 75.62% of votes; the turnout was 83.8%.

The presidential elections of March 19, 2006 did not lead to the repetition of the Ukrainian Orange Revolution. Lukashenka received 82.6% of votes, Alyaksandr Milinkevich, the candidate of United Democratic Forces 6.1% of votes. Other candidates: Sergey Hajdukevich gained 3.5% and Alyaksandr Kazulin – 2.2 % of votes; the turnout was 92.6%. After elections 20 thousand people participated in the demonstration in Minsk against frauds and forgeries during elections but these protests did not threaten Lukashenka's rule.

Conclusions

It is time to answer the questions posed in the introduction. The nomenclature of the Belarusian Communist Party supported the independence of the republic after the Moscow's coup d'état because a pro-independent stand could safeguard its political power. However, it determines further political development of this country. Due to this fact, the authorities controlled the whole process of political liberalization.

Because the level of civil mobilization in Belarus was lower than in Lithuania or Ukraine, the level of political concessions made by the authorities was also respectively lower. Though the decrease in power regulation in the years 1991–1994 led to the state of social peace, this state between the two political classes was not stabilised. The civil society in Belarus was too weak in order to hamper the growth the power regulation after the short period of concessions. This is an answer on question (ii).

There are several reasons why political development Belarusian society differed from political development of Ukrainian one. Firstly, democratic institutions in Belarus functioned for too short a period to be used as an effective tool in the hands of citizens to control the authorities. This is why the deterioration of democracy, ex. frauds and forgeries during elections, did not provoke such strong civil reaction like in neighbouring Ukraine.

Secondly, the structure of ruling classes in both countries is different. Belarusian nomenclature is more united than its Ukrainian counterpart divided into rivalling clans and oligarchic groups. Civil movement of protest in the so-called Orange Revolution since the very beginning was dependent on alliance with Yuschenko's camp which was, in fact, one of the faction rivalling for power inside the Ukrainian ruling class (Brzechczyn 2007a: 44–47; Way 2005: 255). There are no chances for this kind of social alliance between a faction in nomenclature and civil movement in nowadays Belarus because such factions do not exist yet.

The third reason is the kind of social system that emerged as a result of deterioration of democracy in this country. Namely, this society falls into the trap of socialist stagnation. The social system which reproduces itself in Lukashenka's Belarus is a socialist system, not only at the ideological level, but what is more important at the material and institutional level. The authorities tighten their control not only over political life but also economic and cultural life. This deepens social atomisation of the class of citizens making them unable to protest – even in face of apparent election forgeries and frauds. This is why the election of 2006 did not end up in a wave of protest comparable to the Ukrainian Orange Revolution.

Finally, I would like to consider the perspectives of revolution in this country. Because material and organizational resources accessible to citizenry are shrinking, the process of revitalization of autonomous social links – the condition of political revolution – will be prolonged. Therefore, given that the economical and geopolitical situation of Belarus will be stable, one cannot expect an immediate outbreak of a civil revolution in that country. The next revolutionary situation will occur during presidential election in 2011. However, never do elections cause solely a civil revolution. They act only as a detonator of a revolution when the process of revitalization of autonomous social bonds is advanced enough in a society. Assuming that the restoration of socialism in Belarus will be progressing; the atomisation of society will deepen. Therefore, the necessary condition of a civil revolution is reversal of this social tendency. Only then, in conditions of progressing revitalization of autonomous social bonds, the events like election frauds will be act as detonator of revolution. However, from this point of view, the perspectives of civil revolution in the near future are rather pessimistic.

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