

islav Shushkevich's most ardent opponents and believed that Belarus needed to join the CSTO as a defense-only organization. However, at present he thinks somewhat differently:

«At large, these two lines (neutrality and the CSTO membership) are incompatible because we should remain neutral with respect to all nations. At present no one threatens us or claims our territory. Therefore, we should stick to neutrality and not join anyone. As for the CSTO, when this Treaty was signed, it was meant that this organization is of defense-only nature. But if someone attacks one of the Treaty member-countries, the rest of the CSTO nations must help it. How will it be reconciled with neutral status then? It will not. So much for the defense nature of the CSTO! This has nothing to do with neutrality. The international community will not accept or understand such neutrality.»

This law, as deputy Krasutski noted, was adopted «for the first time in the life of this country and in the history of the Belarusian parliamentary system.» In the deputy's opinion, «this is quite consistent, as the Belarusian development model proved its viability in the realm of the NIS». Moreover, he claimed that none of the NIS countries, including the Russian Federation, had got such a document so far.

The new law identifies most important vectors of the State's activities. In accordance with this regulatory act, this country will structure its foreign and domestic policies for the future. The document has been developed on the basis of the Constitution and consists of two sections. The first one identifies domestic policy spheres. In the field of economics, the strategic objective is defined as establishing an effective socially-oriented market economy. The need for activation of investment and innovation operations is emphasized. The domestic policy of Belarus is based upon the principles of stability of the constitutional system, secured rights and liberties of citizens, equality of all forms of ownership, and social justice. The draft law reflects budget and finance, taxation, monetary, and foreign exchange policies. There have appeared new standards concerning investment and structural policy, healthcare, art, and housing relations. The second section records long-term foreign-policy orientation. It is built on the principles of enhancing the effectiveness of instruments of state sovereignty protection, voluntary entry into and participation in intergovernmental formations. Emphasis is laid on the importance of international cooperation and interaction in the space field. The foreign policy priorities now include such areas as education and tourism.

*Vladimir Glod. 10.10.05.*

## REACTION TO DEMOCRATIC CHOICE

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*While Moscow is having a gripe session with Kiev by means of «gas diplomacy», the allied Minsk is attempting to uncoil another spiral of tension with Warsaw*

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Aggravation of relations between Moscow and Kiev concurrently with the enunciation of the Democratic Choice Commonwealth does not appear a simple coincidence. It was joined by Russia's neighboring countries from the Baltic to the Black Sea. The idea of the new Com-

monwealth was perceived to be anti-Russian and as an alternative to the NIS, where Moscow attempts to dominate. And, on the whole, the Kremlin is known to have taken the triumph of the Orange Revolution as its own defeat, while its Belarusian ally saw it as a threat to its sovereignty. Judging by the work of the state propaganda apparatus and politicians' statements, we are still a long way from establishing normal Belarus-Ukraine contacts at the high and supreme levels. Apparently, with regard to the commitments on coordinating foreign policies of the two parts of the virtual union state, official Minsk took the baton from Moscow to «construct» relations with Warsaw.

The rulers of Belarus did not expect the results of the parliamentary and presidential election in the neighboring Poland, which took place in the fall, to be of any good for themselves; even when Self Defense Party, whose leader Lepper used to be a guest at Lukashenko's residence, joined the coalition with the winning Law and Justice Party. With regard to the Belarusian leader, there is a consensus of opinion among the Polish establishment. Therefore, the ruler can hardly hear any nice personalias from Warsaw, especially after the scandalous dispersal of the administrative body of the Union of the Poles, one of the largest NGOs of Belarus. Belarusian authorities do not need independent NGOs. Moreover, they regard them as a hazard, especially with regard to the experience of the driving forces of the Ukrainian revolution.

The embassies of Belarus and Poland in the capitals of both countries are currently almost «exsanguinated». Following a series of reciprocal renvois of diplomats on the eye-for-eye principle, the personnel of the two neighbors' diplomatic missions was reduced to customary minimum. Minsk lost the Polish Ambassador, who resigned because of accusations of being unable to improve advocacy of Poland's interests. It may be said that, in view of these interests, Warsaw has lately started to undertake certain steps to remedy the abnormal situation. For example, it has recently applied to the Belarusian MFA with a request to accredit another staff member — the fourth military man in the Polish Embassy. The Belarusian Embassy in Warsaw has only one military diplomat. Minsk is unlikely to take such an imbalance positively.

The situation with appointing a new Poland's ambassador to Belarus does not seem quite clear either. After unofficial information, among the candidates there is former Polish ambassador to Ukraine Marek Ziolkowski, who worked in Minsk in the 1990s. But the most likely candidate to become a new ambassador may be National Security Bureau chief Jerzy Bar. He is also familiar to the Belarusian side after the conducted meetings with Gennadi Nevyglas, State Secretary of the RB Security Council, and tri-lateral contacts, with the involvement of Ukraine, on the issues of border cooperation. However, in view of the planned new appointments to Minsk, attention is drawn to the fact that after Stefan Meller had been transferred from Moscow, where he was ambassador, it is his former subordinates who became candidates for positions in Minsk, including the above-mentioned military diplomat and another candidate ambassador to Belarus. The Minister's bent for his staff members is generally understood. It is most essential that, if they get selected, they should be able to quickly adjust to the Belarusian reality. And this reality is very different to that of Moscow. In the coming year Belarus is expecting an important event — a presidential election. And Poland's diplomatic mission in Belarus, as well as missions of other EU countries, will operate under very difficult conditions.

The developments in relations between Minsk and Warsaw, which have been observed in the recent days, bear evidence to that.

Belarusian Ambassador to Poland Pavel Latushko was summoned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland. He was received by Wojciech Zainczykowski, Deputy Head of Europe Department. The Polish MFA demanded explanations from the Belarusian Ambassador with respect to the refusal of Belarusian border guards to allow entry to Belarus to Michal Dvorczik, Councilor to Prime Minister of Poland Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz. Belarusian border guards said he «was a persona non grata in the territory of the Republic of Belarus». According to Pavel Dobrowolski, Polish Foreign Ministry Spokesman, this incident is unacceptable in the relations between two European states. He also noted that «the Ministry took notice of the explanations provided by the Belarusian Ambassador». «I cannot say that Poland-Belarus relations can qualify as good,» Mr. Dobrowolski said.

We can add to this story that on 13th December Agnieszka Romaszewska, correspondent of the Polish Public TV (TVP) was detained in Minsk-2 airport by Belarusian border guards. According to TVP, Romaszewska was refused entry to Belarus. She was explained that she would not be allowed into the country on the basis of the law regulating foreign nationals' stay in Belarus. Meanwhile, as they emphasized at the TV company, Romaszewska has official accreditation as a permanent correspondent, issued by the MFA of Belarus.

The events that took place in Belarusian–Polish relations during the last days of the ending year are indicative of the twisting of a new spiral of tension. And, regardless of the defiant condescension attitude of Lukashenko's statements on the forum of the Democratic Choice Commonwealth that took place in Kiev (in his opinion, such a commonwealth does not have a future), the current behavior of official Minsk toward its neighbors can be with a high degree of probability regarded as a nervous reaction to the democratic choice they made.

*Roman Yakovlevsky. 15.12.05.*

## **WASHINGTON'S WARNING**

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*The US Government and European partners may take a number of possible resolutions and steps in their approach to Belarus*

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At a special meeting with a group of journalists invited to the US Embassy in Minsk, George Krol, US Ambassador to Belarus, confirmed that facilitation of democracy development remained the long-term policy of the US with respect to Belarus. In this context, the Belarus Democracy Act, unanimously passed by the US Congress last year, is of importance. There is a range of possible resolutions and step, Ambassador Krol emphasized, which the US Government and European partners might take in their approach to Belarus. To quote him, these potential resolutions and steps are being actively reviewed by the Government of the United States. For instance, the report on the accounts and property owned by the Belarusian leaders, envisaged in the Democracy Act, remains at the stage of preparation with the US government machinery.