

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

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

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.

It should be noted that the US Congress for the first time in history passed a special law on Belarus. American legislators were pushed to take such a decision by the consistent policy that the Belarusian ruler had been pursuing for 11 years. In the opinion of the world community, the baseline principles of this policy run counter to the generally accepted norms and standards. If previously these contradictions had been successively recorded by national parliaments of European nations, the Council of Europe, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, and the European Union, now the subject was brought before the UN, where a position of special spokesperson for Belarus was established. Over the past year, active critics of Lukashenko regime have been joined by Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova. The object of this criticism has been known to respond by intensifying oppressive measures with regard to the opposition, NGOs, and mass media. The world community began to pressurize and criticize Moscow, which continues defend Lukashenko internationally and provide financial and material assistance to him. As many politicians and analysts believe, the opponents of the ruling circles are losing hope that the Kremlin will put the heat on Lukashenko with the purpose of democratizing Belarus. From the standpoint of several observers, the reforming of the government and strengthening of control over mass media that are currently taking place in Russia, is by no means an illustration of democracy. They also note the synchronism of anti-American propaganda campaigns observed in Russian and Belarusian mass media, especially on state-owned TV channels. And Belarus does not have any other kind of TV.

Ambassador Krol told the journalists that in view of the massive campaign launched by the Belarusian TV, which demonstrates hatred of extraordinary intensity for the American people, the US Embassy in Minsk was forced to impart to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belarus its apprehension of the «anti-American campaign in the state-owned mass media.» Such a position of the Belarusian authorities casts the relations between the two countries back to the worst cold war times.

Mr. Krol said that the United States interestedly observes the preparation in Belarus for the election campaign of 2006. The Ambassador noted that the Belarusian opposition is still separated from the Belarusian community by means of a media blockade. Belarusian citizens do not have free access to information and there is no free exchange of opinions, which is necessary for a free election process. This very much disturbs the world community and brings into a question if the 2006 election is going to be free, fair, and democratic. «Democratic election in Belarus is under threat,» US Ambassador George Krol stated.

Roman Yakovlevsky. 17.11.05.

BELARUS' MISSION

In 2006 Belarus intends to lead the process of collecting the lands of the former Soviet empire

Acknowledgement of the disintegration of the post-Soviet realm as historically inevitable by some of its entities is being postponed again, despite the recent trends. On the oppo-