

nius and Moscow. The rigid anti-Western policy of the official Minsk can be added to this list of negative events. What is your opinion, Mr. Minister: can we speak about some special situations around the region of Lithuania–Kaliningrad–Poland–Belarus?

- **A.V.** Expansion of the EU and NATO, democratic revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine, their orientation towards European integration, the similar stand of Moldova have radically changed the situation in the Central and Eastern Europe. Very important geopolitical changes have taken place over a very brief period of time. For example, the Kaliningrad Oblast has become a neighbour of two countries from the European Union, which opens unprecedented opportunities for development in this region. Now, it is very important to find tools meeting the interests of the EU and Russia and to develop projects making this happening.

Belarus is a European country and the people of Belarus deserve living in a democratic, modern and prosperous state. Unfortunately, A. Lukashenko is more oriented towards the USSR of the period of stagnation, though we all know too well what happened to the USSR. The only way forward is democratization and reforms. Belarus, first of all, needs a strong civil society — this is the first step towards creation of a democratic and prosperous state.

What is, in your opinion, the future international event that can be considered the main event in the remaining months of 2005?

- **A.V.** I think that even the most important event will not turn the world over. More important are not the events, but problems and issues that should be solved. We know these issues; therefore, we will strive to find positive solutions to these issues through joint efforts of international public.

Questions were asked by Roman Yakovlevsky. 22.09.05.

BRONISLAW GEREMEK: «THE BELARUSIAN REGIME IS A DESTABILIZING FACTOR IN THE REGION»

Eleven known Polish public figures called to support Belarusian democrats.

Eleven known Polish public figures made a call to support Belarusian democrats. This call was signed by the film director Andrzej Wajda, one of the most known leaders of «Solidarity» Bogdan Borusewicz, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs Wladislaw Bartoszewski ...

More and more Polish politicians openly speak about the fact that radical sanctions will be applied against Belarusian officials and their entry to Poland will be significantly restricted. In particular, the view on the situation was presented by Bogdan Borusewicz, one of the leaders of the Pomorsk region. When Mr. Borusewicz was the Vice Prime Minister, he was the head of the joint Belarusian–Polish Commission on interregional cooperation. Now he is member of the Senate (in the past, he was twice elected member of the Parliament) and says that he will personally initiate introduction of economic sanctions against Belarus. He explains this radical change of his views as follows:

- Poland was against the sanctions towards Belarus which were proposed by the European Union. This is explained by the fact that we are neighbours and must solve specific issues together. Besides, we did not want to make the life of Polish minorities in Belarus more complicated. These were two reasons which made us come against sanctions proposed by the European Union. Moreover, when the EU prohibited entry visas to some Belarusian officials, Poland did not follow suit. However, now it is quite probable that, following parliamentary and presidential elections, our country will come up with the initiative in the European Parliament to introduce economic sanctions against Belarus. Recently, the trade turnover of Belarus with the EU countries has made almost 40%. And this is a serious argument!

The former head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland and current deputy of the European Parliament Bronislaw Geremek thinks that Europe will support such initiatives. The former minister stresses that the Belarusian regime is a destabilising factor in the region and they have to respond adequately to this.

- Until recently, there has been a weighty argument in the European Union that Belarus is a lost cause and, therefore, no need to deal with it. Or else, it is no use dealing with it, because they will not allow doing anything, there. And only in the recent time, primarily through the influence of representatives of Poland and Lithuania, they have begun to understand that more resolute actions are needed. Now, it is very important that Europe should not view anymore the affairs of Belarus as affairs of Poland, Lithuania or Slovakia, but as affairs of the entire Europe. I think we have found the right direction in this respect.

This point of view of the former minister is shared by another former minister, now deputy of the European Parliament Dariusz Rosati:

- Until now, the European Union has thought that Belarus is a country located somewhere in ... Australia. However, Belarus has become a direct neighbour of the European Union and has a common border with it. And this fact should be taken into consideration. Because we, Poles, cannot agree, for example, with the stand of France which thinks that Belarus — and until recently Ukraine — are within the interests of Russia exclusively. We do not agree with this, because we are concerned with what is happening just across our border. We want to see Belarus and Ukraine democratic countries. I want to remind that the European Union has no contacts with President Lukashenko. However, we must also give much more support to non-governmental organisations in Belarus, especially to students and young people. The Belarusian people, just as the Ukrainians, will come to power by itself. However, what is needed is that the Belarusian young people clearly see the difference between the authoritarian and totalitarian system and market democracy which exists in our countries.

Incidentally, the letter signed by eleven public figures reminds that only one year ago the Polish public warned that repressions against Belarusian citizens would be enhanced. However, the support from the Polish state «was limited by verbal support». This is little, because the atmosphere of Stalin-epoch fears, as well as the cult of Stalin are revived in the Belarusian society. In opinion of those who signed the letter, the situation in Belarus is becoming critical. Therefore, it needs specific support and interests on the part of the European Union, including the adoption of the «joint policy in relation to Russia, because there may be no normal cooperation between Moscow and democratic states while Russia supports the dictatorship».

Poles can be understood — they want to see Belarus as a reliable partner and predictable neighbour. And this can be only a democratic, sovereign and European Belarus.

Vladimir Glod. Gdansk–Warsaw–Minsk. 29.09.05.

EUROPE' GROWING CONCERN WITH THE BELARUSIAN SITUATION

The European Parliament is pressing on the European Commission to facilitate democratisation in Belarus, while Moscow is pressing on Lukashenko in its own interests

In the last months, the European Parliament has taken several resolutions on the policy of the official Minsk, containing strict lines. The last resolution was dated 29 September last year. What should be done with this European enfant terrible? Among other measures, in item 17, the European Parliament «calls on the Council and the Commission to raise the issue of Belarus in the negotiations with the Russian authorities so as to outline joint responsibility for actions that would lead to concrete democratic transformations in this country». This thesis is repeated in different resolutions with small variations. Thus, if we look up the similar document of 7 July 2005, we will find actually the same wording in item 16. This refrain already causes noticeable irritation among a significant part of internal political opponents of Lukashenko. They think that such appellation to the Kremlin is like of a voice of one crying in the wilderness. Therefore, they raise a sharp rhetorical question: Is it time for the West to renounce its illusions about the beneficial role of Moscow in the hypothetical process of refinement of the Belarusian regime?

It is indicative that leaders of the right Russian opposition call on Europe to see the Kremlin not through rosy glasses. We had a talk in Brussels with Grigory Yavlinsky, leader of the Russian party «Yabloko». Visiting Brussels on the invitation of the European Parliament, this Moscow leader called Western colleagues not to close their eyes on the authoritarian character of the Putin regime, who started to curb democracy and civil freedoms in the country. We think it is useful to reproduce a fragment of our talk in literal terms.

The last resolution of the European Parliament on Belarus again has a note of hope: allegedly, Russians can in some way influence the Lukashenko regime and help to democratise the country. What do you think: to what extent are such hopes grounded, or are them illusions?

- **G. Ya.** These are illusions. The present regime of Belarus is the regime that Russia wants to see there. That is all. If it wanted to see another regime, this other regime would have been in place long ago.

Why then does Europe persistently repeat this thesis about the Russian factor from one resolution to another?

- **G. Ya.** Simply, because it does not know what to do. Because, this is a really complicated topic.