



Sleep Barefoot — We Are Watching

by Jehona Gjurgjeala

Jehona Gjurgjeala is a staff member of the Kosova Action for Civic Initiatives, a think tank and NGO support center begun in 1998 to encourage democratic analysis and citizen participation.

17 November 2001 was a historic date for the citizens of Kosovo. For the first time, they participated in free parliamentary elections, choosing from among 18 political parties, three coalitions, one civic initiative, and three independent candidates running for 100 of 120 seats in the Kosovo Assembly. Twenty seats were reserved for minority parties as “set-asides”.

Kosova Action for Civic Initiatives (KACI), building on its previous work in creating an NGO monitoring network for the municipal elections (see issue no. 23), set out to organize an intensive all-inclusive monitoring effort for the Kosovo-wide elections that on election day mobilized 1,600 Kosovar citizens in the monitoring process¹ and covered 95 percent of the polling stations. Election Day activities, as well as all other aspects of the electoral process, were observed by the watchful eyes of these monitors under the slogan, “Sleep Barefoot: We are Monitoring the Elections,”² KACI’s assurance to the Kosovar electorate that it could trust the fairness and transparency of the elections.

Our aim therefore was to provide as much transparency as possible. KACI worked with a network of NGOs, from within and outside Kosovo to conduct media monitoring, election campaign monitoring, election day monitoring, and parallel vote tabulation, covering not only Kosovo but also significant parts of Serbia and Montenegro. Over thirty NGOs and organizations were involved in this NGO network, including the Forum for Democratic Initiatives (Jakova), Democratic Circle, Dardanica, Media 9, and Grupa 72 from Kosovo and the Center for Democratic Transition and Kosovski Bozur in Belgrade and Podgorica.

KACI had been assisted a year before by a number of organizations from Eastern Europe and other countries in helping to build its monitoring capacity and to carry out successful monitoring for the November 2000 local elections. As part of an IDEE-supported program, the Democracy After Communism Foundation in Hungary hosted a team of Kosovar election trainers in an exchange program to Budapest, and similarly IDEE-Warsaw hosted a second team in Poland, where they got direct training in the field by taking part in national election monitoring. A team from the election monitoring organization GONG in Croatia and also the Foundation for Civil Society in Slovakia provided training to 90 lead election observers. The contribu-

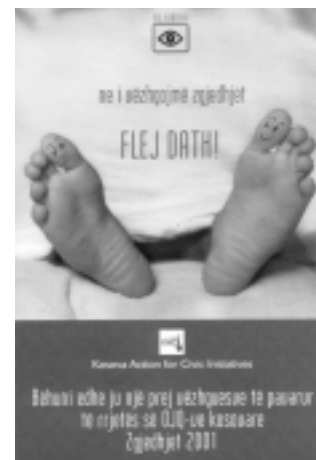
tions of this regional network, and others, were incalculable.

For the November 2001 elections, KACI recruited observers in Kosovo from its previous network for local elections, through its regional coordinators, and through a media volunteer recruitment campaign. Given the importance of the elections for all communities in establishing the foundation for Kosovo’s future, KACI believed that minority participation in the election monitoring effort—and the elections—was essential for their success. Despite initial uncertainty over whether the Kosovo Serb community would participate in the elections, KACI sought to expand its network to include partners from within Kosovo that could help monitor elections in the Serb enclaves. As well, we contacted the NGOs Kosovski Bozur and Center for Democratic Transition in Serbia and Montenegro to monitor elections among Kosovo Serb communities. They in turn contacted their network of activists and observers to become active in this project.

There were eight permanent regional centers, including two in the Serb enclaves, with KACI serving as the headquarters in Prishtina. Each regional and municipal center had a coordinator, teams of election campaign monitors, and people in charge of media monitoring.

Both the media and election campaign monitoring started even before the official beginning of the election campaign. KACI monitored six Kosovar daily papers, four major radio stations and three television stations, as well as over 20 local press, radio and television stations. These included media in the enclaves as well. The media monitoring included quantitative analysis on the coverage of party promotional activities and events and qualitative analysis of how the events were covered and what language was used to indicate bias.

On Election Day, mobile election teams gathered information on how the voting process was being conducted in polling stations both inside and outside of Kosovo, which was then reported to the regional centers. An internet system allowed KACI to communicate with the regional centers. As a result of the outstanding work of each part of the monitoring effort, KACI was receiving information regularly and updating reports every



1. There were more than 13,000 observers on Election Day, or more than 1 percent of the total voting population. It is probably the highest per capita monitoring effort in election history.
2. "Flej Dath" literally translates as "Sleep Barefoot" and its use is related to the experience of the last ten years of repression and war in Kosovo, when people would find it necessary to sleep with shoes on for fear of the need of immediate flight from danger. Sleeping barefoot means that one can sleep without such worry and may more simply be used to mean "rest assured." The poster appears on the cover.

hour on its web page. Through internet, direct interviews, and interviews on local and international media – including CNN, *The Guardian*, *Le Monde*, AFP, AP, Reuters, BBC, *The New York Times*, and *24 Hours* – KACI served as the spokesman for the NGO network and the main source of information for Election Day preliminary results, which appeared first on the KACI election monitoring web page, including percentage projections of each of the parties and likely seat allotment.

KACI's preliminary results, done on the basis of its Parallel Vote Tabulation (PVT) team, repeated the accuracy of last year's municipal elections effort. The PVT results had a 99.1 percent accuracy with the OSCE's preliminary results and even higher approximation with the OSCE's final results, published on 24th November 2001. However, the first preliminary results, issued ten hours after the polls closed at 7:00 am Sunday, proved a shock to parties who were expecting their results to be at least 30 percent higher than what appeared to be their real

vote. But since the process was open to the public and a high degree of transparency was maintained, the results had a high degree of legitimacy.

A Final Note

To ensure that all "Sleep Barefoot," there was at least one citizen of Kosova ready to do each necessary task, from the most mundane and administrative to the most complicated computer programming or sophisticated analysis. We are very pleased that, only two years after a war, we have been able to gather such a diversity of people in a dynamic team that completed a formidable task with great success.

Kosova Action for Civic Initiatives, which is part of the Center for Pluralism Network, can be reached at: <kaci@kohamail.net>. ■

A Chance For Everyone

The following is an excerpt of an interview with **Ylber Hysa**, director of the Kosova Action for Civic Initiatives (KACI), which helped coordinate the election monitoring effort (see article and also issue no. 23 for a description of KACI and its work). The interview was conducted by Stojan Obradovic, editor-in-chief of the **Network of Independent Journalists**, in the **NIJ Weekly Service**, no. 253, December 13, 2001. (See page 17 for a description of the Network of Independent Journalists.)

What have these elections changed in Kosovo, both for the Albanian and Serbian sides? What do you think about their results?

Hysa: These elections have given a chance for everyone in Kosovo – Albanians, Serbs and others – to live here. First, I want to emphasize that international observers and officials considered these to be the best elections conducted in the region. They passed without irregularities or incidents. They were the most heavily monitored, with over 13,000 local and international observers, or one per 100 eligible voters. They were also inclusive, enabling minorities to have 20 reserved or "set aside" seats out of 120 total seats in parliament. Through a favorable election system, an advanced model of positive discrimination, the Serb coalition "Return" won 12 seats plus the 10 already reserved for Serbs. "Return" thus has a 22-member parliamentary group, the third largest. These elections thus gave everyone a real chance to build democratic institutions and create a new political reality for postwar Kosovo. . . . In theory, coalitions are possible among the three largest Kosovar parties or one of them combined with Serbian coalition "Return." In either case, the temporary constitutional framework provides Serbs and other minorities places in the division of power. One out of 9 ministries is reserved for Serbs, and yet another for a representative of other ethnic minorities. . . .

. . . What needs to be done now? Are the present political groups able to ensure [formation and functioning of the government]? What is needed and what should the new authorities do to act?

Above all, one needs to say that these are the first free elections in Kosovo. There are therefore at least three groups of problems before a normal parliament and government can function. First is the lack of experience in working in a multi-party democratic institution after living under a repressive apartheid system for ten years. Second, the temporary Constitutional Framework puts many limits on new Kosovar institutions. The Special Envoy of the U.N. has right of veto of any decision of the parliament. Of course, overusing this power would create a parliamentary crisis. . . . The third problem is that Albanians and Serbs will be sitting together in the same place, the Kosovar Parliament, from which Albanians were thrown out ten years ago, an act many see as the symbolic beginning of the bloody disintegration of former Yugoslavia. That is a psychological and emotional barrier that must be passed.

Kosovar politicians are preoccupied with the issue of independence, which is unacceptable at this stage to the international community. . . . how will this finally be resolved?

Kosovars are for independence, and everybody knows it. However, they are also very well aware of the political situation pointing to the necessity for building our own functional democratic institutions. . . . There is a social consensus that all forces should now be concentrated to building of democratic and functioning institutions in Kosovo.



Representatives of the Serbian ethnic community will participate in the Kosovar parliament. In what way can productive dialogue be reached between the Serbian minority and Albanians in order to stabilize situation in Kosovo?

Productive dialogue can be reached if there is goodwill from both sides to profit from democratic institutions that could contribute to a more tolerant and democratic society in general. Such a contribution is possible only by working through the institutions established based on the temporary Constitutional Framework. . . .

Is there any hope for improvements in relations between Kosovar Serbs and Albanians? What is the role of civil organizations and how much can they help and contribute to easing of tensions?

There has been no radical progress so far. It would really be news were it not so. We shouldn't forget that it has been only two years since a devastating war took place in which half of the Albanian population was systematically forced out of Kosovo, ten thousand people were killed and massacred, and thousands of women raped in a planned ethnic cleansing executed by Belgrade. Mass graves are still being discovered. Such a past is not an ally of a peaceful transition and painless democratization.

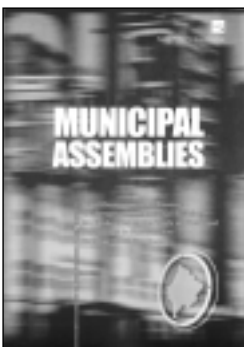
But not everything is so black. It is important that there is not now such a high level of inter-ethnic crimes. That is also a start. The situation of other minorities has significantly improved. Of course, reconciliation with Serbs won't come easily. One must say that a tribunal for war criminals would help this process, and we almost have not seen such trials in Kosovo. A full democratization and de-nazification in Serbia, meaning facing all that has happened during the four wars Serbia led in past ten years would not only help Serbian society, but also Serbia's neighbors. . . .

In what way and when might one expect a solution to the Kosovar issue?

. . . . I see democratization of Kosova itself as a solution, what the Independent International Commission for Kosovo labeled Conditional Independence. In that sense everybody would win, not only Kosovars. Of course, independent Kosova cannot be projected over an antique 19th century concept of sovereignty. Kosovo is not an island and it has to cooperate with its neighbors. In that sense, independence plus is a model which can be suggested in the near future as a concept of regionalism which will see Kosovo and the Balkans in a united Europe. Of course, that takes awhile, but one shouldn't wait and lose precious time. ■

Publications of the KACI – Kosova Action for Civic Initiatives

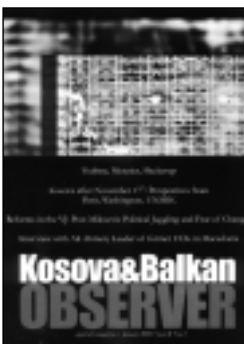
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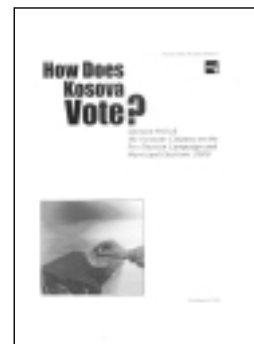
Municipal Assemblies. Local Government in Kosova: Challenges of Institutional Building, An Evaluation of the Work of Municipal Assemblies in Kosova after October 2000 Elections. Published in English. A joint work of KACI with cooperation of Kosova NGO network FER.



Kosova & Balkan Observer. A quarterly magazine published in English.



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The First Step

NGOs and the Presidential Election in Belarus

by Alaksandar Shalayka, Siarhiey Mackievich

Alaksandar Shalayka is the director Assembly of Belarusian Democratic Non-Governmental Organizations <<http://ngo.unibel.by>>. Siarhiey Mackievich is working in the Supolnasc - Civic Society Center (CSCSC) <<http://www.cacedu.unibel.by/cscsc/>>. The following is a shortened version of a longer analysis on civil society and the elections in Belarus, which will be published soon. See "Belarus. The Third Sector" on page 10.

September 9, 2001, the conclusion of the presidential elections, opened a new phase in the life of Belarusian society and the development of its third sector. After so much concentration of effort by so many people, the election's conclusion¹ made many people wonder whether it was worth it at all. But most activists realized that the democratic movement had taken its first important and most difficult steps. The question is whether it can identify its mistakes and not repeat them.

In Belarus, political parties are not developed enough to fill their role. So, since the state automatically perceives any independent activity as political opposition, non-governmental organisations did not think twice about whether to participate in elections. NGOs exist to solve problems of society. If some problems cannot be solved without radical changes in the state, the only way to solve them is through encouraging citizens to vote for change.

[NGO activity in Belarus in 2001 centered around the presidential campaign.] . . . There were two non-partisan or non-political activities related to the election process, a voter mobilization initiative and an election monitoring campaign, and three more political activities, collecting signatures, agitation, and a negative campaign. They are analysed below.

Vybiray!

Elections in Central, Eastern, and Southern Europe from 1996 to 2000 proved that election results can be strongly affected by mobilising certain parts of the electorate, especially the young and uneducated, that are normally apathetic. . . . In December 2000, the 3rd Congress of the Assembly of Democratic Non-Governmental Organisations of Belarus, an association of more than 500 members, decided to organize a mobilisation campaign focused on these target groups.

The campaign had three parts: providing objective information about the election and the situation in the country; fostering an optimistic message about the possibility for changes for the better and challenging people to cope with their fear of repression and disbelief in change. Finally, the campaign encouraged voters to go to the polls on the last day of the elections, in order to minimise the opportunities for fraud.²



The campaign was called *Vybiray!* which in both Belarusian and Russian has a dual meaning of Elect! and Choose!. It had a single emblem, logo, style, and a coordinated positive message. It was separate from other campaigns as well as highly decentralized, having only basic coordination at the national level. There were four stages: (1) identifying target groups (December 2000 – January 2001); (2) preparing campaign themes, materials, organization, and schedule (February – May); (3) public promotion (June – July); and (4) the informational campaign, including distribution of booklets and campaign merchandise, printing special issues of newspapers, and other actions (August – September 9).

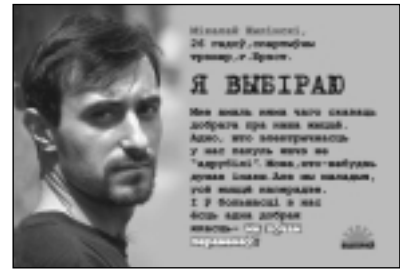
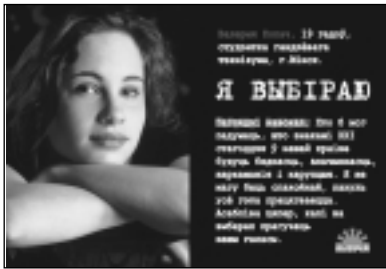
In all of these stages, there were a total of 500 actions carried out by 200 organizations in 100 towns, including material distribution, concerts, youth hiking journeys, family festivals, football matches, and a variety of "happenings." . . . For example, in July, 50 young people calling themselves the Good Will Movement walked through villages and towns in the Palesse area, staging sports and cultural events, giving away campaign or self-made souvenirs and newspapers. The family festival "When We Are Together" was organised by a Belarusian organisation of working women in numerous towns, where they held contests, shows, and fairs all featuring Vybiray's orange sun-themed materials. In Minsk, the Association of Belarusian students organized "Orange Mood" actions in which young people dressed in orange gave away Vybiray! materials, leaflets, orange badges, oranges or tangerines to passers-by on the central avenue.

The mobilisation campaign combined both centralised and decentralised approaches. The logo, basic schedule, pro-



1 With an official turnout of 83 percent, Aleksandar Lukashenka was declared the first-round victor in the presidential elections, with 75 percent over the 10 percent allotted the main opposition candidate Uladzimir Hancharyk. – Editor's Note.

2 The Belarus elections allowed for a five-day early voting period, which, according to the ILEOM, had no justification and provided greater chances for electoral fraud since ballot boxes could not be properly monitored or secured. – Editor's Note.



duction of printed and other materials, and working with the media was carried out by a national office. Local groups chose the format, place, and time of their actions, produced their own materials, and distributed functions among themselves. BARC (the Belarusian Association of Resource Centres) provided an important information collection and distribution network for the Vybiray! press office.

The founding of youth and women's coalitions was an important development for the campaign and the third sector in Belarus. The youth coalition "Peramenaw!" (meaning "Press for Change") was formed by the Young Front, the Association of Belarusian Students, the Association of Young Entrepreneurs, Young Hramada, the UCP Youth, the Belarusian Association of Young Politicians, Youth Solidarity, and the Youth Christian Social Union (YCSU). Unfortunately, only one part of the coalition joined the Vybiray! campaign. The other, Young Front, decided to pursue an independent mobilisation campaign, which spread out the strength of youth activists.

The mobilisation campaign clearly failed in affecting the outcome of the elections, but this failure was the result more of the weak campaign of the democratic candidate and the blatant fraud of the regime during the voting. More relevant criticisms would include lack of coordination and confusion among campaigns, some organisations using the campaign for self-promotion, shortage of experience, especially at the regional level, mis-targeting of likely voters, and late promotion in independent media. At the same time, based on the official turnout result of 82 percent (even if exaggerated) and the visible increase in target group participation in elections, the campaign's objective to increase voter turnout was accomplished.

Vybiray! had several other major achievements important for the future, including:

- Demonstration by organisations of their reliability in nation-wide campaigns;
- Demonstrated professionalism of organisations in carrying out various kinds of campaigns;
- Expansion of NGOs' influence to new groups in society;
- Gaining of experience and expertise in running a nation-wide campaign, as well as at the regional and local levels;
- Recruitment of a large number of new volunteers to non-governmental organisations.

Election Monitoring

In 2000, seven major NGOs came together in the Central Coordination Council³ in order to monitor elections for the

House of Representatives of parliament, but these were boycotted by most democratic forces in Belarus due to the regime's impediments to election monitoring and lack of protections for democratic procedures. At its 3rd Congress, the Assembly of Democratic NGOs of Belarus, which had not participated in the Coordination Council, decided to fully participate in the monitoring process for the presidential elections and commissioned Ales Byalatski to head the Central Coordination Council, whose members belonged to the Assembly. Among the Assembly's member organisations, about 200 actively supported the monitoring campaign. The original and new networks were joined together in one, called Independent Monitoring, and were able to work in partnership by establishing co-coordinators at the national and local levels. Independent Monitoring had the following aims:

- creating a strong, effective network of independent, non-party observation of elections throughout the country;
- providing civic control of the presidential election in Belarus to ensure it was democratic, open, public, and transparent.
- informing the Belarusian public and the international community about the true results of voting in the country.

More than 16,000 observers were trained to fulfill these aims in 320 training courses conducted in six months. The observation process was organised in two stages: observing pre-electoral proceedings (monitoring the choosing of electoral commissions, collection of signatures, registration of candidates, etc.). The second stage consisted in observing both early voting and the main election day, as well as the counting of ballots. NGOs, having the right to nominate members of local commissions, put forward 600 candidates but were effectively barred from the commissions (only 1 percent were selected).

In the second stage, observers were supposed to register violations and carry out parallel counting of votes. Approximately 25 percent of the observers, or 4,000, withdrew or were barred before the election due to repression, intimidation, and other state pressure. On the eve of the election, all monitors of the Viasna human rights network were barred. Thus, about 10,000 observers were present at more than 6,000 polling stations on election day.

In the end, neither the election monitoring nor parallel vote count could be properly carried out because monitors were not allowed to observe the ballot count, ballots were mixed together (both pre-election and election day voting),

3 These were: the Belarusian Helsinki Committee, the Belarusian Republican Club of Voters, the Free Trade Union Belarusian, the Lew Sapaha foundation, the Belarusian Initiative Centre, the Belarusian Women's Information and Coordination Centre, and the Movement for Democratic and Free Elections.



and monitors were not allowed to look at the records of the electoral commissions. The commissions themselves did not even check who was voting against their official voting lists.

The monitoring campaign had several other difficulties, including shortage of experienced observers and lack of coordination between the two networks. But the positive achievements were indisputable: the campaign mobilized a lot of new people who are now ready for further work and gave many organisations experience in participating in a large-scale national campaign.

The Negative Campaign

The negative campaign was . . . carried out mainly by Zubr [meaning Bison, a symbol of Belarusian nationhood], a youth movement established by representatives of the civic organization Charter '97, among others. As a result, it enjoyed significant professional assistance from its inception in late 2000. Its organisers were directly influenced by contacts with the Serbian movement Otpor (Resistance) and hoped to copy its success with adjustment to specific Belarusian conditions. Zubr built its structure within a very short time and showed skill in designing promotional material. An early campaign was in fact civic in character, including its inquiry about the fate of missing people, backed by the United Civic Party under the motto "We Want to Know the Truth."

The negative campaign's aim was to destroy the positive image of the president in office by highlighting his negative aspects and the shortcomings of his policy. Zubr capitalised on the lack of planned activity of other youth organisations to quickly engage a large number of activists in their actions. There was a high degree of public awareness of its campaign due to widespread advertising. Zubr's structure, however, was scarcely democratic, based as it was on a verticle management structure more aking to a military organization than to democratic procedures. Material incentive was widely used by Zubr to recruit new people and motivate its activists, increasing their campaign efficiency but damaging the movement's potential for longer-term impact and viability. Relatedly, Zubr radiated its negative campaign not just to the existing president but also towards non-governmental organisations, especially youth organisations, which they considered as their main rivals. Zubr almost never co-ordinated its activities with other groups.

The negative campaign had another flaw, namely running its negative and positive campaigns under one name, "Time to Choose!", which harmed not only Zubr's mobilisation activity but also harmed the similarly named "Vybiray!" campaign. Mixing a negative campaign with a positive one ignored the lesson of Otpor, which separated its campaigns,

and thus neutralizing the effect of each. In fact, the official newspaper *Soviet-skaya Byelorussia* used Zubr's "Time to Choose" stickers set in Russian to electioneer for Lukashenka, simply replacing Zubr's insignia with its own. . . .

Conclusion

The 2001 president election took place in the atmosphere of repression of political and non-partisan activists alike. There were numerous arrests, mainly of Zubr activists, seizure of property and NGO materials, and implementation of Decree No. 8, which made it very difficult or impossible to receive foreign aide. Some non-governmental organisations put up a coalition to get around the specific elements of the decree (including Next Stop–New Life, the Belarusian Organisation of Working Women, and the Independent Society for Law Studies).

The results of the 2001 election disappointed many people in Belarus and abroad. They were disappointed by political personalities, organisations, working methods, approaches, ways of organising coalitions, etc. Non-governmental organisations were disappointed by the fact that despite the third sector's

. . . [T]he development of civil society and its political structures based on grass-root democracy represents the basis of a strategy for bringing Belarus up to European democratic standards, having its origin within Belarus society itself (. . .)

growth from 1996 to 2001 and the development of an educated, organized, professional NGO community, the elections showed clearly that it was still quite distant from society at large. The main positive outcome of the election for non-governmental organisations is the unique experience they gained together with recruitment of many new people. While NGOs must continue to train, organize, and educate themselves as before, the next challenge is for them to win greater confidence from society. For this, non-governmental organisations have only one possibility: to work for the benefit of society and show the society the benefits of independent organization. This has to become the top priority for NGOs for the next several years. In this way, NGO leaders can gain a reputation for putting the needs of the people above their own ideas.

Additional information on civil society participation in the presidential elections and on the work of civil society in general, including the Assembly of Democratic Organizations in Belarus, may be obtained from the Center for Pluralism in Belarus, the Supolnasc Civil Society Centre in Minsk, or another CfP, the East European Democratic Center – IDEE, in Warsaw (see listings in "Who is Where" for contact information). ■

International Limited Election Observation Mission

2001 Presidential Election in the Republic of Belarus Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions (excerpts)

Minsk, 10 September 2001 – The International Limited Election Observation Mission (ILEOM) for the 9 September 2001 presidential election in the Republic of Belarus is a joint effort of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR) and the Parliamentary Troika composed of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE/PA), the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and the European Parliament. . . .

Regrettably, due to a delayed invitation by the authorities of Belarus, the OSCE/ODIHR had to limit its observation to the last three weeks of the electoral process only. . . . The ILEOM undertook its monitoring mission on the basis of international standards for conduct of democratic elections as formulated by the OSCE and the Council of Europe. . . .

There were fundamental flaws in the electoral process, some of which are specific to the political situation in Belarus, including:

- A political regime that is not accustomed to and does everything in its power to block the opposition;
- Executive structures with extensive powers, including rule by presidential decree, that are not balanced with commensurate legislative controls, and that allow the arbitrary changing of the electoral environment;
- A legislative framework that still fails to ensure the independence of election administration bodies, the integrity of the voting results tabulation process, free and fair campaign conditions, and imposes excessive restrictions for campaigning and observers;
- The legal provisions for early voting do not guarantee the proper control and counting of early votes;
- An election administration system that is overly dependent on the executive branch of government from the national to the local community levels, and is partial;
- A campaign environment seriously to the disadvantage of the opposition candidates;
- A campaign of intimidation directed against opposition activists, domestic observation organizations, opposition and independent media, and a smear campaign against international observers; and

- Highly biased State-controlled media and censorship against the independent print media.

During the last year and on the occasion of the 2001 presidential election, some positive features were noted in Belarus, in particular as regards the democratic awareness of the people. These changes may constitute hope for further improvement. These positive elements are the following:

- An emerging civil society mobilized and deployed many thousands of domestic observers, including those favorable to the government; it was however profoundly regrettable that a few thousand of these observers had their accreditation revoked;
- The democratic forces of the opposition were able to overcome their differences and jointly contest the election, being an expression of greater and maturing political and democratic awareness;
- With three candidates competing in the presidential election, voters in Belarus were offered a genuine political choice, although the restrictive campaign regulations and practices made it extremely difficult for the voters to be fully informed about the alternatives;
- With the help of international experts, improvements have been made in some areas of the legislative framework for elections;
- Administrative preparations were conducted well from an organizational point of view; . . .
- Voting on 9 September was in accordance with the legal provisions and orderly.

The international community is especially concerned about explicit threats made recently by highest government representatives against the opposition and independent media and activists. Developments in this area will remain under special international scrutiny. . . .

The full report of the OSCE election monitoring mission may be obtained through its web page at or by contacting the OSCE/ODIHR at odihr.observe@osce.org.by, or the OSCE Advisory and Monitoring Group in Belarus at: osceamg@osce.org.by ■

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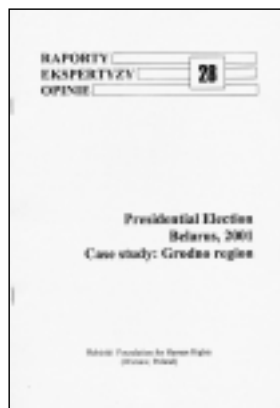
Published by the Belarusan youth centre-right organisation "YOUNG FRONT", Web: <http://www.mfront.org>
E-mail: belarusnews@tut.by

BARCNEWS.org, 1999-2001

On-line Bulletin in Belarusan language published by the Belarusan Association of Resource Centers (BARC)
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"Naviny" - Weekly Informational Review

Presents situation in different regions of Belarus in the spheres of NGO life, schools, social development.
Distributed in Belarusan language.
E-mail: asiptsov@krug.unibel.by



Presidential Election. Belarus, 2001 Case study: Grodno region

Published by the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights (HFHR), Poland. Languages: English and Russian.

...” Although the HFHR held the position that the elections legislation of Belarus does not offer an opportunity to monitor the elections choices, we closely watched the preparations of the Belarusian public organizations for monitoring of the Presidential elections of 2001. Besides the analysis of the elections law of Belarus we systematically viewed the Belarusian press and observed the evolution of the elections process.

In this situation we decided to observe the developments in one chosen region of Belarus, which is Grodno and Grodno Region, to observe the responses of the public and to monitor the local authorities’ actions on the eve and on the day of the elections.

Representatives of the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights stayed there from August 2 till September 9, 2001. At that time they visited Shchuchino, Volkovysk, Svysloch, Lida, Mir, Novogrudok, Radun and Grodno. From the documents collected by us and the witnesses’ narratives of events we pieced together a material resulted, which is a fragmentary and in a certain sense a snapshot description of the situation in the region of Belarus we chose.”

(from the *Introduction*)

Report available from:

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Legal Regulations of Non-Governmental Organizations in the Republic of Belarus



Belarusian National Non-Governmental Organization "United Way" has published two-volume reference book "Legal Regulations of Non-Governmental Organizations in the Republic of Belarus". It is the fourth legal edition for Belarusian NGOs prepared and edited by this organization.

The first volume contains texts of the basic laws and normative legal acts regulating NGOs activity in the Republic of

Belarus. The readers could find here the extracts of the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus and the Civil Code; laws "About Non-governmental Organizations", "About Political Parties", "About Trade Unions", "About the State Support of Youth and Children's NGOs". The first part includes the following Decrees of the President of the Republic of Belarus:

- "Some Measures on Regulation of Activity of Political Parties, Trade Unions, other NGOs",
- "Some Measures on Improvement of the Order of Conducting Assemblies, Meetings, Street Processions, Demonstrations, other Mass Actions and Picketing",
- "Some Measures on Improvement of the Order of Receipt and Use of Foreign Free Aid" etc.

The lawyers of governmental, commercial and non-profit sectors wrote articles for the second volume. This part includes such Chapters as: 1. Setting up & Registration of NGOs and their Symbols in the Republic of Belarus. 2. Legal Regulation of Representative Office of Foreign Organization in the Republic of Belarus. 3. Order of Executing of Status Activity by NGOs. Control of NGO Activity Accordance with its Charter. 4. Internal and External Control in NGO Activity. Defence of Business Reputation. 5. Organization Work with Documents. 6. Book-Keeping in NGOs. 7. Taxation of NGOs: Calculation, Payment and Book-Keeping. 8. Questions of Administrative Responsibility of Officials of NGOs. 9. Treaty Practice in Activity of Subjects of Civil Relations. 10. Licensed Activities in Work of NGOs. 11. Creation and Registration of Periodical Publications. 12. Intellectual Property of NGOs.

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Belarus. The Third Sector People – Culture – Language

This is a continuation of the special edition of the CfP Newsletter published in 1998, "Belarus. The Third Sector". This edition is also a presentation of texts by Belarusian authors with the introduction by Pawel Kazanecki, President of the East European Democratic Center IDEE. This time, however, the authors go beyond the subjects connected with the third sector. It is more of a compendium of information about the independent life of Belarus, national minorities, religious structure of society, culture, education, organization of culture life, etc. The main idea was to present the changes that have occurred in Belarus during the presidency of Lukashenka.

Texts devoted to the presidential elections in September 2001 are important component of the publication. Excerpts of one of these texts you may find in our Newsletter on page 5.

The compendium will be published in Polish and English and distributed along with a CD-Rom containing the database of Belarusian NGOs prepared by the Belarusian Association of Resource Centers (BARC) and all texts published in the paper edition. The Belarusian version of the compendium will be published as a special edition of the Belarusian magazine "Arche".

Belarus. The Third Sector. People - Culture - Language

will be soon available from:

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"The Sixth Trial of Mustafa Jemilev. Investigation files and trial transcripts. Tashkent, 1983-1984." Simferopol, 2001, 496 pages.

In May of 1944, after enduring a three-year German occupation, the entire Crimean Tatar population was brutally rounded up by Soviet troops. For their alleged collaboration with the Germans, Stalin forcibly deported about 250,000 people to Central Asia, mostly to Uzbekistan, with many dying en route. Only decades later would the Crimean Tatars be able to return to their homeland. This book is a collection of documents on the 1984 trial of the leader of the Crimean Tatars, the well-known Soviet dissident Mustafa Jemilev. For twenty-two years, until his sixth and final arrest in 1983, Jemilev was one of

the most active and unflinching dissidents in the Soviet Union. From his early years in the underground "Union of Crimean Tatar Youth" to his eventual triumph as leader of the Crimean Tatar National Movement, Jemilev has lived a life most uncommon.

"The Sixth Trial" is the compelling result of Jemilev's efforts to obtain documents from archives of the court and prosecutor's office that were only recently made available. Along with "samizdat" (underground publications during the Soviet era) documents and correspondences with other prominent dissidents, the collection also contains the transcripts of the court proceedings, reports of searches, interrogations, Soviet documents that were appended to the case, and witness testimonies in a preliminary court investigation. Through official documents and eyewitness accounts, the Soviet punitive system and the insidious surveillance methods used by the KGB are exposed to the reader in all their cruelty and capriciousness.

Of interest to both scholars and students of Soviet history and the general reader, "The Sixth Trial" not only reveals the extraordinary life of an extraordinary man, but also vividly depicts the courageous and dramatic struggle for democracy in the Soviet Union.

To purchase the book (in Russian), contact Express Khronika in Moscow (chronicl@online.ru) or through its daily news service (prima@mail.cnt.ru). The book is available for list price (72 Rouble or approximately \$2.50 USD) plus postage and handling fees. Or the book is sold in Moscow for 72 Roubles at the "Express-Chronicle" kiosk at Pushkin Square (near the exit of the "Chekhovskaia" metro on Strastnyi Boulevard).

World Conference Against Racism: The Durban Statement

Joint Statement by Eastern and Central Europe NGO Caucus
Supported by Other NGOs in Europe and Asia
Durban, South Africa September 5, 2001

From August 31 to September 7, 2001, the UN's World Conference Against Racism was held in Durban, South Africa in the face of widespread criticism that its deliberations had become politicized in both the conduct of the conference, the speeches, and in the concluding document, especially in the expression of anti-Israeli and anti-Semitic sentiments. The WCAR's NGO Forum was held from August 31 to September 3, attended by representatives from hundreds of international and national non-governmental organizations but also from a large number of government-controlled organizations posing under the same rubric.

Below is the statement of the Central and Eastern European NGO Caucus in response to the WCAR NGO Forum's concluding document. (The full document may be obtained through the web site: <http://www.hri.ca/racism>.) The CEE NGO Caucus statement was signed by a total of 81 NGOs from 35 countries as of September 5, 2001. Following the statement is the speech to the plenary of the WCAR by the CEE NGO Caucus's representative, Yuri Dzhibladze, President of the Centre for the Development of Democracy and Human Rights, Russia. For more information on the CEE NGO Caucus, contact Yuri Dzhibladze at:

dzhib@demokratia.ru

We, World Conference Against Racism (WCAR) NGO Forum delegates of 36 non-governmental organizations from 19 countries of Eastern and Central Europe and the former Soviet Union, state that we do not support the documents allegedly adopted by the WCAR NGO Forum and come forth with a forward-looking positive proposal.

First and foremost, we declare that the process of compilation and adoption of the NGO Forum Declaration and Program of Action was neither transparent nor democratic and permeated with procedural violations. The draft documents were not submitted to the delegates in a timely manner; the rules of procedure were unclear and repeatedly changed; the discussion was heavily restricted. Finally, the delegates were not given an opportunity to vote on the draft documents in their entirety. This enables us to affirm that the documents cannot be considered adopted by the NGO Forum and are not consensus documents.

We believe that as a result of this flawed process, the contents of the documents include unacceptable concepts and language. We are particularly concerned with certain ideas included in the chapters "Globalization," "Palestine," "Reparations," and a number of other paragraphs in the documents. We must emphasize that the language of the chapter "Palestine" as well the deliberate distortions made to the chapter "Anti-Semitism," are extremely intolerant, disrespectful

and contrary to the very spirit of the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance.

Nevertheless, despite the negative results of the NGO Forum, we strongly believe that the international NGO community should not give up but continue to work on the basis of the positive aspects of the entire preparatory process to the World Conference and the Forum itself. In particular, the following achievements represent a sound foundation for future consolidated efforts: reinforcement of the available international legal mechanisms of protection against racism and discrimination; development of national anti-discrimination legislation and institutions; creation of national plans of action; recognition of the slave-trade as a crime against humanity; acknowledgement of the consequences of colonialism; inclusion on the agenda of such issues as denial of racism; double discrimination; religious intolerance; state racism; ethnic cleansing; racism not rooted in the slave-trade; sexual orientation; migrants and internally displaced persons; indigenous peoples; and specific groups of victims such as Roma, Chechens, Tibetans, and Dalits.

We intend to immediately move on to implementation of the above achievements and call upon the international NGO community to join in these efforts.

* * *

P.S. On top of all the troubles of the NGO Forum, at the closing ceremony, the delegates had to listen for over two hours to a speech by Fidel Castro. We are offended by the fact that one of the worst dictators in the contemporary world, particularly notorious for gross violations of human rights, was invited to address this world gathering of non-governmental organizations. Listening to Fidel speak, we only had to wonder why the organizers had failed to invite Alexander Lukashenko, Turkmenbashi, Saddam Hussein, or a Taliban regime representative.

List of signers to the statement (as of September 8, 2001): Women's Rights Center (Armenia), "Millennium" Association for Education and Research (Armenia), Belarussian Gipsy Diaspora (Belarus), Czech Helsinki Committee (Czech Republic), Globea Transborder Initiative for Tolerance and Human Rights (Czech Republic), Dzeno (Czech Republic), Legal Information Center for Human Rights (Estonia), Institute for Refugee and Minority Problems (Georgia), Center for Development and Cooperation-Center for Pluralism (Georgia), Georgian Young Lawyers Associa-

tion (Georgia), Hungarian Helsinki Committee (Hungary), Legal and Information Service "Dialogue" (Kazakhstan), Youth Human Rights Group (Kyrgyzstan), Latvian Center for Human Rights and Ethnic Studies (Latvia), Lithuanian Center for Human Rights (Lithuania), Association for Democratic Initiative (Macedonia), Helsinki Citizens Assembly of Moldova (Moldova), Youth Helsinki Citizens Assembly of Moldova (Moldova), Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights (Poland), "Never Again" Association (Poland), Midrasz Association (Poland), Jagielonian University Human Rights Center (Poland), Liga Pro Europa (Romania), Romanian Helsinki Committee (Romania), Center for the Development of Democracy and Human Rights (Russia), Institute for Independent Sociological Studies (Russia), Moscow Helsinki Group (Russia), Information and Research Center "Panorama" (Russia), Roma National-Cultural Autonomy (Russia), Stavropol Regional Human Rights Center (Russia), Minority Rights Group of the Saint Petersburg Association of Scientists and Scholars (Russia), International Society of Meskhetian Turks "Vatan" (Russia), Anti-Defamation League – Russia (Russia), Youth Human Rights Movement (Russia), Harold and Selma Lights Center for Human Rights Advocacy (Russia), Youth Center for Human Rights and Legal Culture (Russia), Human Rights Center "Memorial" (Russia), Antifascist Youth Action (Russia), Foundation for Civil Society (Russia), Civic Assistance for Refugees (Russia), Citizens' Watch (Russia), Icumbi Society (Russia), African Unity (Russia), Center for Environmental Public Advocacy (Slovakia), Minority Rights Group – Slovakia (Slovakia), Project Schola (Slovakia), Center for Legal Analysis (Slovakia), Romani Legal Defense Agency (Slovakia), "Hayot Jollazi" (Uzbekistan), Humanitarian Law Center (Yugoslavia), Helsinki Committee for Human Rights

(Serbia), European Roma Rights Center, International Romani Union.

International Institute of Peace (Austria), Hill Watch Human Rights Forum (Bangladesh), B'nai Brith (Canada), the United Nations Association of Denmark (Denmark), Society for Threatened People (Germany), Indigenous/Tribal Peoples Development Centre (India), Sangarsh Karnataka Dailith Samithi (India), Centre for Organisation, Research and Education (India), Indonesia Anti-Discrimination Movement (Indonesia), Italian Helsinki Committee (Italy), Poovulagin Nanbargal (Malaysia), Magenta Foundation (the Netherlands), Swedish Helsinki Committee (Sweden), The United Nations Associations of Sweden (Sweden), Expo Foundation (Sweden), Swedish NGO Foundation for Human Rights (Sweden), Save the Children (Sweden), Society for Threatened People (Switzerland), Mohajis Quami Movement (United Kingdom), Human Rights Documentation Center (USA), International League for Human Rights (USA), Jacob Blaustein Institute for Human Rights (USA), Asian Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Network, European Union of Public Relations, NGOs' Coordinating Committee of Human Rights, Simon Wiesenthal Center, South Asia Human Rights Documentation Centre, World Federation of Trade Unions, UN Watch.

Since September 8, 2001 several dozen more NGOs from various regions of the world have informed the Eastern and Central NGO Caucus that they endorse the Joint Statement. Their names are not included in the list since the Caucus decided to close the Statement for signing on September 8, 2001. ■

Our Region Knows All Too Well

The following is the presentation of the representative of the Eastern and Central European NGO Caucus, **Yuri Dzhibladze**, to the Plenary Session of the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. Mr. Dzhibladze is President of the Centre for the Development of Democracy and Human Rights, Russia (dzhib@demokratia.ru).

Durban, South Africa, September 6, 2001

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am speaking on behalf of NGO delegates from 21 countries of Eastern and Central Europe and the former Soviet Union – nations now being called "countries in transition." Like many other groups here, we are concerned about addressing global problems of racism and also are trying to have our specific issues included in the agenda of the World Conference. But probably no other region as big as ours is so much out of focus in the Conference's debates. We believe that if specific problems of racism and xenophobia affecting lives of almost half a billion people living on 20 per cent of the world territory are left out in the discussions of the World

Conference, this global forum will not have the right to be called truly global. We call upon you to respond to the challenge and address all different forms and manifestations of modern racism because they require different remedies.

People of our region who have lived in the last decade through the most tragic experience of human suffering resulting from intolerance and ethnic hatred, such as the bloodshed in the Balkans and the Caucasus have lots of lessons to share with the rest of the world. Racism has many ugly faces, not always easily recognised and confronted. Our experiences teach us that it takes honesty, courage and responsibility to address contemporary manifestations of racism and develop effective responses.

The conference should recognise that in many regions of the world, particularly in countries in transition, there is alarming growth of aggressive nationalism and ethnocentrism, which are expressions of racism and xenophobia not rooted in the slave-trade but deeply embedded historical prejudices and hatred towards ethnic and religious minorities. They often lead to large-scale human rights violations, discrimination and persecution targeting specific groups such as Jews, Roma, peoples from the Caucasus and Central Asia, and Meskhetian Turks, and even to "ethnic cleansing" and crimes against humanity with elements of genocide, particularly in the Balkans and Chechnya.

Our region knows too well how ethnic hatred escalates into armed conflicts which in turn perpetuate xenophobia and intolerance in the war zones and beyond. Impunity should not be permitted. We urge the States speedily conduct on the national level investigation and persecution of war crimes in compliance with resolutions of the UN Commission on Human Rights, not awaiting for the establishment of the International Criminal Court.

Effective protection should be granted to refugees and IDPs, the majority of whom are minorities, and that are being forced to return to the areas of armed conflict in violation of international humanitarian law. UN special rapporteurs must be provided access to areas of armed conflict.

. . . State racism is typical for many countries in our region and is often manifested by political and intellectual elites who exploit the nationalistic and xenophobic sentiments of the general public for political mobilisation and legitimisation of their authority and political power. It is done not only in the traditional blatant ways but also in relatively new, more covert institutionalised forms. In many countries official programmes and actions aimed at controlling migration and preventing ethnic conflicts often represent these new covert forms of institutionalised racism.

. . . Racial profiling is extensively used. A legacy of the communist past – internal passport and residence permit system – represents a policy leading to discrimination and expulsion of ethnic minorities in many countries in transition. All this leads to the institutionalisation and justification

of racism, xenophobia and discriminatory practices tolerated, inspired, or perpetrated by government institutions and officials. These policies must be abolished.

The problem is aggravated by the problem of denial of the very existence of racism by government officials. On many occasions we, NGO activists, hear from our public officials: "Racism is not our problem; we do not have it." We affirm that no efforts to combat the scourge of racism can be successful without recognising that the problem exists. It is essential that governments stop denying, tolerating or legitimising racism and xenophobia in all forms.

My statement would not be complete without drawing your attention to the plight of the people who live through a terrible tragedy today, the Chechen people. We affirm that the Chechen people still suffer mass outrageous violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. This is about racism – because the military operations in Chechnya are accompanied by a wide-scale campaign to incite hatred toward the Chechens which results in mass persecution and discrimination of the people of the Caucasian ethnic origin outside of Caucasus.

This is the last lesson from our region that I wanted to share with you today. When gross abuses of human rights and violence are justified through the creation of enemy images, hate and intolerance permeate the whole society, and the infectious virus of racism and xenophobia becomes much more difficult to cure.

Unfortunately, a similar problem has undermined the process of compilation of the NGO Forum documents here as well as debates at the World Conference. When difficult dialog about human rights is substituted by political and ideological accusations, it gives way to new intolerance and hatred.

Our region has important lessons to share with the rest of the world but has also a lot of home work to do to combat racism and xenophobia. We need to work together, all regions of the world, governments and NGOs, citizens and politicians, to fight the dragon, including the most dangerous dragon – the one within us. Thank you. ■

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"The Civic Forum in Russia: Opportunity or Entrapment?"

a presentation by Aleksander Nikitin

On November 21 and 22, a gathering of 5,000 people was held in Moscow called the Civic Forum, an initiative to bring NGOs and the government together for common discussions. The following are excerpts of a presentation by environmental activist Aleksandr Nikitin describing the Civic Forum to the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) at its Russia and Eurasia Program Seminar on December 13, 2001. His presentation is followed by a critical commentary by Aleksander Podrabinek, editor-in-chief of the human rights news service Prima.

... [F]or the first time in Russian history, on November 21 and 22, there was a meeting of representatives of civil society organizations and the authorities in the Kremlin. From the Ministry of Justice, we found out there are over 350,000 registered NGOs and 90,000 active NGOs. Over 3,453 representatives of NGOs traveled to Moscow representing all regions of Russia [and] representing many different NGOs. Twenty percent, approximately, represented environmental and human rights NGOs.

The preparation for this meeting began on June 12 of this year when President Putin met with 12 representatives of NGOs incapable of criticizing the president. They recommended some sort of convention of NGOs, which became rather a forum. . . . The first committee worked in the direction of designing a political show in which civil society representatives would uniformly support the president. . . .

But in September the organizers of the forum approached environmental and human rights NGOs, in particular Memorial and the Moscow Helsinki Group, inviting them to participate in the conference. These organizations established some conditions for their participation, such as [being able to change the agenda, affect the composition of the committees so that human rights and environmental organizations had at least one-third representation, and ensuring that attendees were chosen from civil society]. . . .

Ludmilla Alekseyeva of the Moscow Helsinki Group opened the conference on the 21st of November. The hall was filled to capacity with 5,000 people. . . . [Alekseyeva] said that . . . this would not be a party convention and so there would not be a presidium. There would be no resolutions, there would be no banquets and the budget of the forum [\$1.5 million] would be completely transparent. And the opening of the forum would not play the Russian national anthem [which is the old Soviet anthem]. . . .

After Alekseyeva's comments, President Putin read what in my view was a very proper and very sober speech. It was written for him. He said there was a need for dialogue with civil society . . . that it is dangerous for civil society to be established from the top down, that civil society needs to be independent and have grassroots and government should establish the best conditions for civil society. . . . Of course, it's impossible to disagree with what he said. But the most

important thing is whether the words actually correspond with the actions of the government. [T]o provide the conditions for the development of civil society, there has to be a real separation of powers. There has to be a parliament which is independent of the president or the executive branch. There has to be a media that cannot be dictated to by various different power structures, and there must be a non-criminal branch of authority, which unfortunately, in Russia there is none.

The administration made certain to protect the president from hearing any sort of negative comments toward him or toward the authority of the president. . . he was in the hall for approximately an hour, hearing all the people he hears every single day, like Seleznev, Pavlovsky, or Pamfilova. . . . I was sitting fairly close and I can say that I didn't see any particular interest on his face. And what were the people doing while he was there? They were writing notes with all sorts of requests that they were passing to the president. When the pile got so high it blocked the president's view, an assistant came up and gathered them all up. In Russian, this is called making an appeal to the czar, when the people bend down on their knees for the czar's favor. After the president left, no one from various civil society organizations had a harsh word about the president. . . .

Then the conference broke into 21 working groups for the remainder of the day and the next. . . [dealing with subjects like] national security, national policy, social policies, military reform, media, environment, and so on. Representatives of the ministers or the ministers themselves were supposed to be at respective groups. . . . [But] there were ministries that didn't want to have any discussions with us whatsoever. The one I attended was called the military-industrial complex and environmental protection. [Representatives of] the Ministry of Atomic Energy and the Ministry of National Resources said they had nothing to discuss with us. And I realized then that the best negotiating table for these types of discussions is before a judge's table. . . .

The level of trust between the authorities and organizations representing civil society is very low. I spoke with the people who were at the table discussing Chechnya and I asked them "Were you able to come to some sort of agreements?" And they said no. It was a very argumentative meet-

ing. . . . [Coming out of these meetings], human rights activists and environmentalists breathed a deep sigh of relief, because they said nothing bad happened. We didn't establish a Ministry of Civil Society or a governmental representative of civil society. . . . There is an attempt to try to establish some sort of structure or mechanism by which they can have representation with or in the government. But we could see that although there was no general structure established, at least we can say that there were individual structures established.

[I]t is a little premature to give any sort of a final grade or conclusion on the success of the forum. At the conclusion of the forum, Premier Kasyanov was there. There were 21 people who made presentations of working groups. . . . Personally I didn't hear any concrete or hopeful results regarding any immediate agreements. There's a possibility that there can be success and work done in the future. ■

The Joy of a Slap in the Face

by Aleksander Podrabinek

Aleksander Podrabinek is editor-in-chief of the human rights weekly Express Chronicle and its daily news service Prima (see listings in "Who's Who" and "Who is Where"). He contributed this article on the Civic Forum conference in Russia for the Centers for Pluralism Newsletter.



Just two months have passed since the Civic Forum took place and already no one can remember it. Several weeks before its convocation, passions boiled over in the human rights community and splashed into the press. The public clearly discerned the face of the Russian "third sector." Discerned and recoiled. Of course, there is nothing new about the government cynically using everything that it can possibly buy up for its own interests; it learned this lesson more than once during the Soviet era. But in Russia, people love to step senselessly on the same rake and hit themselves in the head many times over. On the other hand, the democratic press as a whole was very skeptical about the Kremlin's enterprise, provoking the displeasure of servile human rights activists.

Human rights organizations in Russia, with the exception of a few influential ones, lead a wretched existence. They are constrained by lack of money, the enmity of the government, and the indifference of society. The western foundations that are financing the beginnings of civic institutions here are not in a position to provide for all of them. Society and local businesses are not being won over toward supporting non-governmental organizations. And to be fed by the authorities can only mean one thing: supporting their undertakings wholeheartedly.

Having grown tired of perpetual opposition and destitution, many human rights organizations have already taken the course of courageously criticising the government only within the allowed limits. In truth, not all of these organizations have taken this new path. Among respected human rights activists, Yelena Bonner publicly denounced the Civic Forum and Democratic Union leader Valeria Novodvorskaya and Anti-Militarist Radical Association leader Nikolai Khramov refused to participate. But these are a distinct minority and their voices of opposition are lost in the general chorus of appeals for constructive cooperation with the government and reasonable compromises. What such cooperation and such compromises consist of everybody in the

human rights community knows, although they do not advertise it. The Moscow Helsinki Group (MHG), having started at one time with cajoling President Yeltsin's aide Mr. Krasnov, now cooperates with Mr. Mironov, the government representative for human rights in the Russian Federation, who unceasingly echoes the "concerns" of the government and president about human rights in Russia. The Committee of the Mothers of Soldiers of Russia, while announcing a campaign to aid and pardon deserters, is transferring necessary intelligence to the military prosecutor. The government, pleased with such good, cooperative nongovernmental organizations, encourages them little by little: MGH is given reduced-cost office space in the center of Moscow, for example, but there are other methods.

The preparation for the Civic Forum occurred in the spirit of similar deals. Many spears were broken for the sake of procedural subtleties – who will represent civil society at the Forum, how, and in what proportions. All of these petty disputes should have demonstrated the imaginary character of these activists' principles. For the Kremlin, sacrificing formalities was acceptable in order to gain a demonstration of unity, including even the concession to not play the ignominious Russian-Soviet hymn at the opening of the forum.

The Kremlin thus got what it wanted. The entire country saw how the participants of the Civic Forum gave a standing ovation to its favorite president, a man stained with the blood of thousands of innocent victims of his Chechen escapade. Everyone could observe the trained Cheka agent sitting next to Lyudmila Alekseeva, chairman of the Moscow Helsinki Group, in a spirit of mutual understanding and unity. What tolerance and goodwill!

Supporters of the Civic Forum explained their decision to participate by the need for dialogue with the government to create "grounds for negotiations." No one, however, could explain why the need for dialogue had to take place in the government's Palace of Congress and to have the Kremlin foot the bill for the two-day gathering. Or why it is impossi-

ble to conduct dialogue with the government through the press. Or why it is impossible to try to influence the government through elections. Or why it is impossible to influence the government's policies through public actions, like demonstrations. Or why, finally, it is not possible to have a dialogue as equals on the same terrain instead of having to come together in grand unity and cohesion. Perhaps, the answer is that human rights activists and democrats are not popular in society or the media and want to have a quicker impact at any price.

To justify themselves, many human rights activists referred to the academic Andrei Sakharov's dialogue with the government in 1989 within the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. But this was carried on in a disadvantageous position and, even so, it involved a dissident who commanded a high degree of moral authority. But unfortunately this form of dialogue signaled the end of the democratic movement and a definitive loss of values from the Soviet dissident movement. The opportunity was lost to create a genuinely democratic opposition and to influence the political life of the country not from within Soviet structures but on truly equal footing, relying on the support of the voters who trusted in them.

At that time, the democrats lost face, as have the present-day builders of civil society. Evidently, their own reputation does not concern them too much. They are roused by illusory hopes for the authorities' understanding, for their cooperation, and for tranquil coexistence under the protection of the government. They will receive all this in exchange for giving up their own independence and their ideals, the very reason of their existence. But this "equal rights" dialogue with the present-day Russian government is a soap bubble that will burst at exactly the moment when the authorities have gotten what they want. Indeed, this has happened already. The Kremlin has slapped the human rights activists coming to the Civic Forum in the face, handing down sen-

tences to environmentalists and others for doubtful espionage activities, promulgating a severe law on printing, dissolving the commission on pardons, liquidating TV-6, and sentencing Chechen leaders in a closed court. By fraternizing with the Kremlin at the Civic Forum, the human rights activists gave the Russian leaders the green light for these and many new excesses. And now it is not worthwhile to be cunning, to pretend to have been deceived – the situation was analyzed from the very beginning, and enough was said about it before the start of the Civic Forum.

And what about the activists? They were spat upon and they wiped themselves dry. They now do not speak about their participation in the Civic Forum, about the discussions before it, and the ensuing consequences. It passed and has been forgotten. For the next Civic Forum, provided that one takes place, they will come with a virginally clean memory, unburdened with responsibility for either the past or the future. With enraptured enthusiasm they will step upon the same rakes more than once.

This false forgetfulness suits the Kremlin in the best possible way. It suits Putin's strategy of building a directed democracy, one in which he will direct the regions, the parliament, the courts, the prosecutor's offices, businesses, the institutions of civil society, and all of society, which he is now calling "civil." In essence, so it was and always is in Russia. And it goes without saying that he is preserving "open-to-dialogue" organizations of the "third sector," of which the most courageous will proudly call themselves defenders of human rights. Knowing the measure, they will keep on criticizing power within the necessary limits and depict equal rights dialogue under the approving glance of the strict Kremlin boss. The Civic Forum has turned into the beginning of the hopeless degradation of the human rights movement in Russia. ■

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Applied Research Topics

A website has been created to help faculty and graduate students find applied research topics. It works like this: non-profits and public agencies post their research needs online; faculty and graduate students search the site for topics that match their interests; and then the researcher contacts the organization directly about taking on a project. Use of the site is free of charge. To browse the current projects, sign-on to www.LinkResearch.org. If you have questions or need help finding an applied research topic, call Holly Goshin at 201-653-7760 or email at: Holly@LinkResearch.org

CHILD LABOUR NEWS SERVICE (CLNS) is an on-line bulletin produced as a non-commercial public service managed by the Global March Against Child Labour. To subscribe/unsubscribe or to contribute any relevant news, please e-mail us at childlabournews@vsnl.net
Archives available at
<http://www.globalmarch.org/clns/index.html/>

Network of Independent Journalists

The **Network of Independent Journalists (NIJ)** was founded by the Institute for Democracy in Eastern Europe in 1993 to foster greater cross-border reporting by independent newspapers and publications about the historic events taking place in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Since 1994, the NIJ has been coordinated by the STINA Press Agency in Split, Croatia in cooperation with IDEE.

The NIJ was initiated in response to the surprising insularity and general lack of information and coverage in independent newspapers about events in the region and about its transition from communism. Before 1989, journalists allowed to report international events were carefully selected adherents for the communist regime. Even after 1989–91, independent journalists have had little opportunity to report directly on world affairs, since most print media have not had the resources to include international reporting.

The Network of Independent Journalists offers key independent newspapers and other media throughout the region direct, reliable reporting and analysis on postcommunist countries. Today, over 50 journalists who provide articles to the NIJ, which since 1997 has published a **Weekly Service** in which four or five articles are included each week covering the region's major political events and analyzing key issues of the transition from communism such as ethnic conflict and regional wars, the process of democratization, economic crisis, privatization, social change, and civic developments. Many of the journalists are leading reporters in their own countries; others are new, young, talented reporters quickly emerging in their field.

The NIJ has become a basic resource for more than 200 newspapers and other media in their coverage of regional events. Among NIJ's *Weekly Service* users are *Azadlyg* (Azerbaijan), *Naviny* (Belarus), *Demokratiya* (Bulgaria), *Novi List* (Croatia), *Lidove Noviny* (Czech Republic), *Eesty Aeg* (Estonia), *Koha Ditore* (Kosova), *Puls* (Macedonia), *Monitor* (Montenegro), *Rzeczpospolita* (Poland), *22* and *Monitorul* (Romania), *Vreme* (Serbia), and *Sme* (Slovakia). As a result of the NIJ, regional reporting is more widespread, allowing a greater understanding of the region's varied developments and transitions. The NIJ *Weekly Service* is provided free to most of its Eastern European users in consideration of their lack of resources, with aim that over time the *Weekly Service* will become a self-sustaining regional service for news and analysis. It is supported with grants of the National Endowment for Democracy and previously of the Open Society Institute's Regional Media Fund.

For more information on the Network of Independent Journalists, contact:

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Prima, a division of the Moscow-based Express-Chronicle weekly newspaper, is a news agency that reports on human rights issues around the world. It has correspondents throughout Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, and reports on developments in countries ranging from Cuba to Iran to China. Prima publishes an email news brief that may be requested by writing to prima@mail.cnt.ru. Prima stories are also available on its website: www.prima-news.ru

EurasiaNet Now Posting Articles in English and Russian

EurasiaNet, a comprehensive resource for news about the Central Asian and Caucasus regions of the former Soviet Union, is now posting articles in Russian. The Russian-language stories are translations of exclusive analysis articles that are posted every day on the website. Subscribing to EurasiaNet costs nothing. Just go to EurasiaNet's homepage and type your email address into the subscriber box. As a subscriber, you will automatically receive weekly announcements on stories posted on EurasiaNet in both English and Russian. You can find EurasiaNet's mainpage at: <http://www.eurasianet.org/>

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