

## Post Election Events



Kazulin negotiates with police to prevent violence



Police assaults the demonstration



Tear gas and other special means were used



Candles of Solidarity with political prisoners

### Chronicle

#### Monday, March 27

-Courts in Minsk are busy sentencing the participants of peaceful demonstrators to various terms in jail (mostly from 10 to 15 days). The courts like in Stalin's times are held in closed sessions not allowing relatives and journalists to be present.

-Many people are still missing and relatives do not know their whereabouts since police denies any information on the arrested and do not release their names. All in all about 1000 persons were arrested during the week of protest in Belarus, according to human rights groups "Vyasna" and Charter'97

#### Sunday, March 26

- Ilya Rassolov, a spokesman for Alyaksandr Kazulin, said that Kazulin was being detained in the town of Zhodina, about 50 kilometers east of the capital, Minsk. "Kazulin will meet a lawyer only tomorrow. The case is being led by an investigator from Minsk, although Zhodina is outside of Minsk," he said. Alyaksandr Milinkevich and his wife Inna Kulei visited the detention facility. They went there to express moral support to Kazulin and to clarify the fate of Mrs. Kulei's son, who was also detained on Saturday.

-Alyaksandr Milinkevich told reporters that he would attempt to solve the problems of students expelled from university and other people dismissed from their jobs. He said that universities in Poland, Ukraine, and Slovakia had expressed a readiness to accept the students.

-The EU and the U.S. as well as some European governments condemned the brutal use of force by the Belarusian authorities on March 25. The EU declared that it was shocked by the unprovoked violence and seriously concerned with arrests of peaceful demonstrators, in particular former presidential candidate Alyaksandr Kazulin. Brussels demanded the immediate release of all detainees. U.S. State Department spokesman Sean McCormack called on the Belarusian authorities to stop using force and to release all "who have been detained for expressing their political views."

- About 200 people gathered in the evening at the place where the peaceful demonstration was violently assaulted by the police to light the candles of Solidarity.

## **Saturday, March 25**

- Belarusian police assaulted opposition demonstrators in Minsk as they were marching toward the city's main detention center to demand that all people arrested in the past few days be released. Opposition leader Alyaksandr Kazulin, who was leading the march, had been detained. The clashes erupted after thousands of opposition supporters had peacefully rallied on Yanka Kupala Square to demand that the outcome of the March 19 presidential election be annulled. Police brutally beat the protesters using sound grenades, tear gas, other special means.

- U.S. President George W. Bush spoke to the Belarusian people on Freedom Day, expressing his support to the participants in the opposition meeting on October Square, and condemning the actions of the Belarusian authorities. Former American Secretary of State Madelaine Albright, now head of the National Institute of Democracy, also expressed solidarity with the protesters.

- Pavel Sheremet informed the Internet site "Belorusskiy Partizan" that he was under escort in Minsk's 2nd hospital with 4 people near the ward – two in uniform and two in muftis (WHAT ARE 'MUFTIS'); most likely to be KGB officers. Sheremet said that Special Forces officers had detained him in the street, not in the crowd. He was put into a car and handcuffed; his face was tied with a band. In the car, Pavel was beaten and threatened to be driven in to the forest. But ultimately he was delivered to the Central ROVD. He said was charged with disorderly conduct and insulting policemen. All his documents and money were confiscated. (On Monday 27 Sheremet was released without any explanation)

- Alyaksandr Milinkevich announced the creation of a Belarusian National Liberation Movement to fight for Freedom, Truth, and Justice. This movement is to unite all democratic forces in Belarus. "We shall fight for free elections, without Lukashenka," Milinkevich said. By rigging the elections results, the regime has set the scene for its own demise. But we are the majority. The dictatorship will fall."

- Syarhei Atroshchanka, a protester brutally beaten up by police today during the disbanding of a peaceful rally, was taken to the 4th hospital in Minsk where he was in a grave condition. Doctors refused to give journalists and human rights activists any additional information.

- An opposition rally ended today in Minsk by adopting a declaration demanding that a new presidential election be held and that all people detained in the past few days be released. The declaration also says Alyaksandr Lukashenko should not be allowed to run again. The demonstration of more than 10 000 people took place on Yanka Kupala Square, near the larger October Square, which authorities had blocked off.

- In remarks carried by the official BELTA news agency, Interior Minister Vladimir Naumov said demonstrators attacked police forces first, "throwing bottles and other objects." He also denied responsibility for the explosions, saying they wounded one civilian and eight security officers. Naumov accused Alyaksandr Kazulin of calling upon demonstrators to seize state buildings and overthrow Belarus' government.

- BelaPAN independent news agency quoted rights campaigners as saying no less than 328 people were arrested during the March 24 sweep. This figure could not be officially confirmed.

Also BelaPAN reported the head of Milinkevich's election campaign staff in the city of Brest was also arrested.

- The media-freedom group Reporters Without Borders (RSF) says 22 journalists have been detained in Belarus over the past week, and 13 of them remain in police custody. The group issued a statement in Moscow saying that the detained journalists are from Belarus, Poland, Russia, Ukraine, Georgia, and Canada. Thousands of opposition supporters rallied in Minsk to demand that the outcome of the March 19 presidential election be annulled and assembled on Yanka Kupala Square. The opposition rally was initially due to take place on Minsk's October Square but police prevented the crowd from reaching the area.

### **Friday, March 24**

- Reacting to the crackdown on pro-democracy protests in Belarus, European Union leaders on Friday agreed tougher measures aimed at Aleksandr Lukashenko over presidential elections widely seen as having been rigged. "The European Council has ... decided to take restrictive measures against those responsible for the violations of international electoral standards, including President Lukashenka," said the EU leaders. Austrian Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik said that sanctions, to be coordinated with the US and other partner countries, could extend the bloc's travel ban on leading officials from Belarus.

- Opposition leader Alyaksandr Milinkevich urged the West to be "tougher and more resolute" in its assessments of developments in Belarus. Speaking at a news conference in Minsk following an overnight crackdown on his supporters in Minsk, he welcomed the solidarity of the United States and the European Union on Belarus, but stressed that mere statements in support of pro-democratic forces were not sufficient. "It is necessary to send a stronger message that Belarus has experienced a constitutional coup that brought to power a man who is not eligible [to run for president]," he said.

- The Party of European Socialists (PES) urged the European Union to impose tough sanctions against Aleksandr Lukashenko and his top officials and politicians. "Those who deprived the people of Belarus of free and fair elections should be held responsible and accountable, avoiding actions that hurt the people of Belarus," said Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, president of the party. "There can be no accommodating an authoritarian regime in modern Europe."

- Moldova supported an EU declaration on non-recognition of Belarus' presidential election results.

- Belarusian riot police speaking through bullhorns ushered the roughly 250 protesters on the square into waiting vans and on to detention centers. They were to be taken to court to face charges of taking part in an unsanctioned rally. Police denied they had used excessive force in arresting the protesters and breaking up the tent city they had assembled over the course of their five-day demonstration. Some protesters alleged they were punched by police during the operation. People complained that gas was used against them inside one of the white trucks. Alyaksandr Milinkevich told reporters the Lukashenko's regime had once again resorted to force

in dealing with public dissent. He said an opposition rally planned for March 25 was still on.

- Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov accused the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) of instigating tensions over the March 19 presidential election in Belarus. He said the OSCE had played an "inflammatory role" by announcing long before the March 19 vote that it would not be legitimate. He added the OSCE had made "biased" comments on the course of the election and its results.

- Arrested activists from the tent camp were taken to the courts of Partyzanski, Maskouski, Frunzenski, Savetski, Kastychnitski, Leninski districts. Part of the people were transferred to the Interior Affairs Department of Minsk city executive committee. One of the detained girls, Darya Zyalinskaya, fainted, and an ambulance was called. She was almost unconscious and could not speak.

- About 60 people were taken to the detention center in Okrestsyn Street from October Square. The special center was filled to capacity by oppositionists. People were allowed to go to the lavatory only if they had passports.

- Former Polish Ambassador in Belarus Mariusz Maszkiewicz was detained during the storming of the protesters' tent camp. "People were hauled into cars – by their arms, legs and hair, And then they were beaten up in the paddy wagons," he told Radio Svaboda right after the event.

- Tatsyana Snitko, who was detained by police together with tent camp dwellers, people in the buses were beaten up -- many young men had smashed up faces -- and policemen used foul and threatening language. During the detention operation policemen ordered everybody to lay on the floor, faces down.

- The overnight dispersal of a peaceful demonstration in Minsk spurred quick reaction from EU diplomats in Brussels. EU leaders confirmed plans to impose "restrictive measures" on all officials considered responsible for electoral violations during the March 19 presidential poll. Austrian Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik announced the planned sanctions at the close of a summit in Brussels. She gave no details of the sanctions, but she underscored that their key target is Lukashenka himself. "The European Council has thus decided to take restrictive measures against those responsible for the violations of international electoral standards, including Lukashenka," she said. The measures are likely to take the form of visa bans on top officials. The extent of the bans remains unclear as yet – other than including Lukashenka. But they are certain to go beyond the six Belarusian officials who are currently barred from entering the European Union. Some EU officials have also privately raised the possibility of an asset freeze, however others doubt the value of such a move.

### **Thursday, March 23**

- Belarusian opposition supporters have been keeping a vigil on a central square in Minsk to support demands that results of the presidential polls be annulled.

- The Belarusian rights group Vyasna said 150 people had been detained in connection with the protests, though some of them were later released.
  
- The OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Belgian Foreign Minister Karel De Gucht, has expressed his deep concern at the continuing arrests, detentions and arbitrary court trials of political and civil society activists following presidential election. "The Belarusian authorities must immediately put an end to the persecution of their opponents. We have received information of over 200 detentions in the first three days following the elections, mainly linked to the peaceful demonstration that is taking place in Minsk. It is unacceptable that people are being detained for trying to uphold their right to assemble and to express their views in a peaceful way", he said. The Chairman-in-Office stressed that he would continue to closely follow post-election developments, in co-ordination with the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and other relevant OSCE institutions.
  
- The ODIHR election observation mission issued a report concerning the presidential election saying that it failed to meet OSCE standards for democratic elections.
  
- Lidiya Yermoshina, chairwoman of Belarus' central election commission (CEC), called the recent presidential election "absolutely brilliant." She announced that the third inauguration ceremony for Aleksandr Lukashenko would be held on March 31. The CEC voted unanimously to reject a demand by opposition candidates and non-governmental organizations to invalidate the results of the March 14-19 presidential election.
  
- Georgia's Foreign Ministry issued a statement condemning last weekend's presidential elections in Belarus as undemocratic. Georgia also demanded that the Belarusian authorities free opposition supporters arrested during protests in Minsk.
  
- Syria's President Bashar al-Assad sent congratulatory cable to Aleksander Lukashenko on his re-election as president of Belarus. He expressed confidence that relations of friendship and cooperation between Syria and Belarus will be stronger in the interest of the two countries.
  
- Adrian Severin, the U.N. special rapporteur on the human rights situation in Belarus, said that more than 100 people protesting Alexander Lukashenko's runaway victory were detained and many others were blocked from joining demonstrations. He called for their release.
  
- Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko stated that Kyiv's position toward Belarus' election would be based on the conclusions of the OSCE election monitors. "I do not have grounds to doubt the OSCE's conclusions. Ukraine supports democratic processes and this principle is inviolable with regard to any country," he said.
  
- Alyaksandr Milinkevich urged solidarity in the face of a growing crackdown on government critics protesting the disputed re-election of Alexander Lukashenko. "We must defend one another," he told demonstrators amid arrests and harassment. Milinkevich said he was concerned that people are being fired from their jobs or expelled from universities for opposing the government.

- Alyaksandr Milinkevich cannot accept the invitation by Czech Foreign Minister Cyril Svoboda and the European People's Party (EPP) to attend the upcoming EPP summit, EPP sources told Czech information agency CTK. The sources said that Milinkevich believes he should remain in Belarus during such turbulent days, when the opposition is planning further demonstrations against the regime of Alexander Lukashenko.

- Czech President Vaclav Klaus will not congratulate his Belarusian counterpart Alexander Lukashenko on re-election as president, presidential office spokesman said.

### **Wednesday, March 22**

- Opposition action at the Kastychnitskaya square in Minsk was still continuing with the participation of hundreds of people.

- Alyaksandr Milinkevich called on his supporters to keep a vigil on Oktyabrskaya Square until at least March 25, the 88th anniversary of the Belarusian National Republic, the country's first, brief moment of independence from Russia in 1918. "The 25th of March is a sacred day for the Belarusians," he said. He suggested that all those who hold Belarus and the fate of democracy dear in the country should gather together on the square on that day and uphold their freedom.

- 108 people were detained on the night of March 19-20 and a further 20 on March 20-21, according to the Belarus human rights organization Vyasna. The detentions were continuing and no complete figures were available, but Vyasna estimated that in all 400 arrests may have taken place throughout the country. Most of the detained were charged with administrative offences such as participation in unsanctioned meetings or hooliganism, which carry sentences of 10 to 15 days' detention.

- Mikhail Kamynin, an official representative of the Russian foreign ministry, criticized conclusions of the OSCE observation mission on the presidential election in Belarus. He said that the assessments of the ODIHR were biased and contradictory. "Election day voting took place in a quiet and peaceful atmosphere and was well-organized on the whole," he said.

- Iranian President Mahmud Ahmadinejad congratulated Alyaksandr Lukashenko on his reelection. Ahmadinejad said he hopes Iranian-Belarusian ties will be expanded in the future and said he was looking forward to Lukashenko visiting Iran.

### **Tuesday, March 21**

- Several hundred demonstrators spent another night in the central square in Minsk. Opposition supporters braved the threat of police action.

- The European Parliament has described the presidential elections in Belarus as undemocratic, and called for repeat elections, thus supporting the demands of the Belarusian opposition. "Alyaksandr Lukashenko cannot be recognized a President," the Polish press agency quotes the position of the European Parliament delegation, whose representatives were not allowed to monitor the elections in Belarus. The chairman of the largest faction in the European Parliament

Hans-Gerd Petering noted that the European Parliament would support the Belarusian opposition in its bid for new, fair elections.

- A camera crew from the Ukrainian TV Channel “Novyj Kanal” was detained on its way from Minsk to Kyiv, and four cassettes with footage were seized “for further examination”, and to see whether they comply with Belarusian law. According to the internet-newspaper “Ukrainskaya Pravda”, it was a video recording of the opposition meeting and a press conference of the democratic leader Alyaksandr Milinkevich.

- Two Estonian observers, Erik Mora and Tarmo Leht, were detained near October Square. They did not received accreditation for observation and arrived in Belarus on tourist visas. They arrived in Belarus to carry out independent observation. They had cameras and different materials about the real situation in Belarus during the elections.

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