

Before “revolution” will appear in the squares and streets, it must occur in people’s mind. Postcommunist Belarus did not undergo a revolutionary revision of values society-wide. Education and culture are interpreted by the Belarusian authorities exclusively as instruments of ideological up-bringing. Any criticism of the government is punishable. There is the ban on foreign financial support of Belarusian third sector and culture. On 14 of October 2007 Belarusian pro-European opposition organized European March which was denounced to be a manifestation of the support for the European vector of Belarusian development.

### ***Belarus today***

Postcommunist Belarus avoided radical transformation after the fall of Soviet Empire. It has never said a radical “no” to its socialist past, nor did it undergo a revolutionary revision of values society-wide. The economy is mainly controlled by the state (80% of it being state-owned enterprises). Education and culture are interpreted by the Belarusian authorities exclusively as instruments of ideological up-bringing and moulding “the correct” Weltanschauung of the citizens. Despite constitutional provisions for freedom of the press, the state restricted such rights in practice and increasingly asserted control over the alternative sources of information.

Numerous restrictions are also introduced in order to diminish civil society’s activity. According to the Belarusian law, NGOs, political parties, and trade unions are required to register with authorities and it is illegal to work with an unregistered NGO. Any criticism of the government is punishable. Appeals to international organizations or foreign governments can be qualified by the authorities as “discrediting the Republic of Belarus” or “presenting false information about political, social, military, or foreign policy in Belarus” and are punishable under the law. NGO’s are not permitted to receive foreign aid, as according to the Belarusian law, international assistance can be accepted by an organization that is registered with the Ministry of Economy. Any local body that receives “illegal” foreign aid be closed after just one violation. In practice, this leads to the ban on foreign financial support of Belarusian third sector and culture. Many independent media outlets and NGOs have already been shut down.

Authorities frequently deny permission to opposition groups to meet in public buildings or organize meetings in public places. Nevertheless, public demonstrations occurred frequently in Minsk, varying in size from a few participants to several thousand like. The most recent event was the European March organized by the Belarusian pro-European opposition 14 of October 2007. It was denounced to be not a demonstration of protest but, rather, a manifestation of support for the European vector of Belarusian development. The idea of rally was to demonstrate the Belarusian citizens’ support to “12 conditions” formulated by EU for Belarusian government as the starting point in their collaboration. Authorities ignored the Europe’s appeal and tried to reduce the effect of the European March in country in a different ways. None of Belarusian state-run media ever mentioned the event, many oppositional activist

were detained before the March; after the demonstration took place the number of participants in the official sources was purposefully diminished (1500 took part in the March according to the Belarusian special forces, and 5 000 to 7000 according to the organizer's of March)...

Though, what must be admitted is that number of 7000 of the supporters of European development for Belarus (with nearly 10 million inhabitants) indicates that the prevailing majority of Belarusians seems not to be interested in politics or in vector of country's development... Indeed, what is a particular serious problem in country is not even lack of political freedom, lack of the freedom of speech and meetings, but the fact that many Belarusians seem either not to be aware of these substantial deficiencies in their lives' organization, or not to care. There really are among the inhabitants of country those believing in the idea of a "fair state" that takes care of them and protects them, coupled with the myth about the hostility of the entire outer world towards the independent Belarus. This is the picture of the world actively propagated by state ideology. There are also those who prefer to slip away from the state, politics, and authorities into the territory of their private everydayness, into some sort of niches which have appeared in people's lives. This makes some Belarusians paradoxically insensitive to the violation of their rights and strikingly tolerant to the flagrantly repressive behaviour of their authorities. Participation in political life is important only for those who cannot put up with the necessity to live under an authoritarian regime and obey directions of an ideology. Indeed, before "revolution" will appear in the squares and streets, it must occur in people's mind. That is why to support democracy in Belarus means to facilitate the liberation of people's mentality from the totalitarian legacy, i.e. to promote educational and cultural projects and events which bring along the ideas of democratic values in the society.