

8. What do you think about the policies of other neighbors with regard to Belarus?

Volha Abramava

As for our neighbors, I will be very harsh. Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine adhere to a policy that conflicts with their long-term interests. But I do not believe that a majority of people there would vote for the current attitude to Belarus if the question were put on a national referendum and politics and ideology, as well as the ruling elite's aspirations, were put aside. I believe people would choose a different policy from that pursued by the authorities in the above-mentioned countries at present.

Svyatlana Aleksiyeovich

I cannot say much about politics because I am not interested in political affairs. I am more into history, culture, mentality and psychology. During a recent promotional event for *The Prayer of Chernobyl* in Moscow, three Russians said, 'We would like to have a president like Lukashenka'. These were losers of the Russian reform period. They regard Belarus as an islet of socialism. But I do not meet many people like them. It is more often that I hear, 'Hey Belarusians, why do you let them treat you like this. Where are your intellectuals and writers?' These remarks sound as if they were addressed to a child.

Psychology of a victim always crying for help is characteristic of our opposition. They waited for help from the West, afterward from Russia and now from neighbors. No one can deal with our problems except for ourselves. Our neighbors can only show us an example.

Yauhen Babosau

The incumbent right-wing government in Poland (not ordinary people, I have many friends among Poles) is hostile toward Belarus (although things were probably the same when Kwaśniewski was in power). And this sours relations between our people. It's not Poles, but their government that is to blame for this.

As for Lithuania, the situation is pretty much the same there. Its leadership looks at the West and does not look at the East much. I think this is a temporary phenomenon: they have no other choice but to live in peace with Belarus. And all these things concerning the disposal of nuke waste on the Belarusian border, all these military maneuvers – they are not going to yield any results. Belarus has a stronger economy than Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia and is a bit behind Poland in this respect. So they won't do anything as far as it concerns economy. From the point of view of military confrontation, our servicemen are better-trained than the neighbors' armies (I know this because I chaired a military reform commission). So, they will get nothing in this sphere either! As for culture – we are not behind them either. So, they really have nothing to match against our strength, except some attempts that can do nothing good. That's why I think that 'Hitlers come and go and the German people stays' (although they do not cite Stalin now). Adamkuses and others come and go, and the Lithuanian people will stay and will have friendly ties with Belarusians – it simply has no other choice. No other choice! And Poles do not have other choice either.

As for Ukraine, the situation is more difficult. Yushchenko actively seeks accession to NATO, this aggravates the situation, as Belarus is not going to join NATO. Ukrainians are now worse off than we are in terms of wages and

other things. They are! That's why I think they have no other choice than to be in a union with Russia and Belarus. They have no other choice.

Maybe five years later, when Yushchenko leaves and someone new takes power... The countries of Eastern Slavs now tend to develop toward their stronger union. There are all preconditions for that. And there are few preconditions for their separation, with the exception of geopolitical aspirations by certain leaders that Yushchenko and Saakashvili obey.

Anzhalika Borys

The neighboring countries react to the aggressive policies of Belarus. I worry that Belarus pursues a policy toward self-isolation and is a potentially destabilizing factor for its neighbors.

Henadz Buraukin

I think our neighbors have some influence on Belarus, but it is not as strong and obvious as the influence of Russia. Oil, gas and manufacturing ties give Russia considerable leverage. It has a big cultural influence. Our children learn about Russian writers Pushkin³³ and Nekrasov³⁴ earlier than about Kupala, Kolas³⁵ and Bahdanovich. Our government officially supports and encourages that influence.

Our neighbors, I mean Ukraine and Poland in the first place, and also Lithuania, also have influence, but it is not so obvious and it is not supported by the government. The Belarusian public closely followed and discussed developments during the Orange Revolution in Ukraine. It follows developments

³³ Aleksandr Sergeyevich Pushkin (Russian: Александр Сергеевич Пушкин; 1799–1837) is the greatest Russian poet and the founder of modern Russian literature.

³⁴ Nikolai Alekseevich Nekrasov (Russian: Николай Алексеевич Некрасов; 1821–1877) was a Russian poet and a long-standing publisher of *Sovremennik* (The Contemporary).

³⁵ Yakub Kolas, Jakub Kolas (Belarusian: Якуб Колас; 1882–1956), real name Kanstancin Mickievič (Канстанцін Міцкевіч) was a Belarusian writer.

in Poland. But the state propaganda machine, especially Belarusian Television, seeks to play down good news from these countries. Ukraine has hard times and Poland also faces difficulties. But bad news are widely publicized in our country, while good developments are ignored. Although Belarusian Television has taken the same approach to Russia lately. The Belarusians usually trust the authorities. Good things about Ukraine and Poland, which could be useful in Belarus, are played down or ignored. Therefore with radio, television and the Internet, news from neighboring countries have an impact on people. But the state seeks to monitor, select and control the news. It is in the Belarusians' nature to trust the authorities, unlike our neighbors who used to distrust the authorities. It is better to trust but be careful. It has taken the same approach to Russia lately. The Belarusians usually trust the authorities. If Belarusian Television reports about horrible life in Ukraine or Poland, our viewers trust it. This information reminds in their memories, and that's why this influence is a special one, but anyway, it exists.

Look what happens before elections. Russian politicians with dubious reputation come to Belarus. Luzhkov came. Did not he have things to do at home? He came to support one candidate. Ukraine and Poland do not act this way.

We accuse others of double standards. But look at who is coming from Ukraine – representatives of the opposition – Petro Symonenko [leader of the Communist Party] and brassbound Natalya Vitrenko. Official representatives of the Ukrainian authorities elected by the people are not coming.

The authorities deliberately seek confrontation with these nations for fear of their influence and, on the other hand, they encourage influence from Russia.

Although this is a very complicated matter because politics is always full of controversies. Belarus comes under permanent and unequivocal influence from Russia, but influence from the other neighbors is negligible.

Ales Byalyatski

Lithuania, Latvia and Poland have been conducting better policies with regard to Belarus after joining the EU. Earlier it seemed all politicians and political scientists in these countries concentrated on establishing ties with the EU and the United States, seeking to attain their main objective as soon as possible – to join NATO and the EU and meet all membership requirements. After they gained the objective, they relaxed and looked back at Belarus. They realized that the country needs attention because it can undermine stability in the region. The European community required them to pay attention. Like France is required to maintain good relations with Algeria, these countries must be aware of what is going on across the EU border in Belarus. It is good for us that these countries pay much more attention to Belarus. These countries are represented in all European organizations and share views on the situation in Belarus (democracy problems) with that country's internal pro-democratic opposition. Their current policies are much more effective. They show a real interest and take actions, not only speak good words.

As for Ukraine, it is good that the Belarusian regime has lost its ally – the Kuchma³⁶ regime. No doubt, these were two friendly regimes that supported each other in all international organizations – the OSCE, the CIS and the UN, in which Ukraine is a member of the Committee on Human Rights. Interestingly, Ukraine opposed a resolution on human rights violations in Belarus the year before last, and voted in favor of a similar resolution last year after the change of government. I would describe it as passive support for Belarus. Unfortunately, Ukraine has not offered Belarus any active support. The country that has just freed itself from the Kuchma regime and embarked on a democratic path, like a fire survivor, should have offered a helping hand to the one who is still in danger. Ukraine has an opportunity to help – it is not affected by a crisis, a war or some other problem. It stands firm on its feet, but does not help much.

³⁶ Leonid Danylovych Kuchma (Ukrainian: Леонід Данилович Кучма; born 1938) was the second president of Ukraine from July 19, 1994 to January 23, 2005.

Poland, Lithuania and Latvia acted the same way before, but have changed their attitude. We expect Ukraine to make more specific and resolute steps to help Belarus reestablish democracy. Both Ukraine and the EU maintain close economic ties with Belarus. While the EU strongly condemns human rights abuses in Belarus its trade with the country keeps on growing. They should be less concerned with economic interests. More or less consistent policies would have yielded economic benefits too.

Pavel Daneika

It is a difficult question for me. Lithuania seems to be taking some meaningful long-term steps to mold its policy toward Belarus. And it is fairly interesting.

As for Ukraine, I do not see it making any evident moves in this direction. The same is true of Poland. They express some general European positions and seek good neighborly ties – there is a shared border, so it is necessary to build relations. But I believe policy toward another country should aim to achieve long-term goals and have a vision of what will happen in 10 or 12 years. It seems that the Lithuanians only have such policy.

Andrey Dynko

Ukraine's policy toward Belarus has yet to take shape, as Ukraine was in a transitional state for a long period, fluctuating between the European and Eurasian communities and was busy solving its internal problems. Its political elite was busy building its wealth and did not set the country's long-term interests. It seems to me the policy will take its final shape in the years to come when Ukraine joins EU and NATO. But it is already obvious that ordinary Ukrainians and Kyiv's political elite have a great liking for Belarus as for a sister country. They believe that Belarus should be Ukraine's priority partner. In this context, it is important that Kyiv has refused to join the sanctions imposed on Minsk by the European Union and supported by many

countries, as it regards Ukraine as a channel through which the Belarusian government could maintain contacts with the world community. There is a lingering and unresolved problem of an undemarcated border in the Belarusian-Ukrainian relationship, but the countries are united through common history and a pretty large Ukrainian-speaking community in southern Belarus whose members are Belarusians citizens with a strong sense of national consciousness but who still feel kin to Ukraine and have blood relatives there. The presence of this community consisting of hundreds thousand people will always serve as an additional link between our countries.

Poland has proved itself as a country that views the strengthening of Belarus' independence, its civil society and democracy as its national task. And it is doing much to achieve this goal. In fact, Polish diplomats today implement the principles developed by Jerzy Giedroyc and his Paris-based *Kultura* with regard to Ukraine, Lithuania and Belarus. Unlike in Ukraine or Russia, Polish scholars have engaged in in-depth Belarusian studies. Relations between Belarus and Poland are undergoing a rough period but, I guess, they will be on the mend in the years to come. The presence of a strong ethnic Polish community, a well-organized and the most active ethnic minority in Belarus, will contribute to this. On the other hand, there is a fairly large and active community of ethnic Belarusians in Poland.

By the way, the idea of the creation of a Rzeczpospolita extending between the Baltic and the Black Seas remains pretty popular within Belarusian political elites.

Belarusian civil society was impressed by Lithuania's active steps with regard to Belarus. Lithuanian diplomacy may even claim leadership as far as it concerns activities in the Belarusian direction. The Lithuanian embassy is one of the biggest diplomatic missions in Minsk. We have recently learned that Mr. Vaitekūnas, the Lithuanian ambassador to Belarus was offered the job of foreign minister, which testifies to the significance of his ambassadorial position. One also should note that it is rather Vilnius than Warsaw that has become a base for the Belarusian opposition. Belarus' civil society will probably never forget this. Certain Lithuanian intellectuals used to say 10 to

15 years ago that if Belarus lost its independence, it would be good because the country would not claim the legacy of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. It was an egoistic stance but many scholars and top officials adhered to it. Now we see the tradition of solidarity being revived and Lithuania dropping its claims for exclusive rights to the historical heritage.

Latvia appears to be less active as far as it concerns politics, but Belarusian-Latvian economic contacts are pretty strong.

Valery Fralou

I think that the Baltic states, Poland and Ukraine have enough problems of their own. Plenty of them. Probably, they are concerned by their own problems above all. I believe that Belarus' problems concern them as much as they can affect them. We cannot have a great impact on them, so they are not very much interested in us. Belarus may be of interest to Lithuanians and Poles to a certain degree, not ordinary people but politicians. They are interested in Belarus because the United States and Western Europe are attempting to pursue their interests through these countries. This is of interest to certain politicians.

They may be also interested to have a predictable government in Belarus that would be guided by the same principles they are and would not pose a threat. Adamkus said that Belarus wants to attack Lithuania – this is a kind of American approach (he is American, frankly speaking)... So they want to have not the slightest fear that we could do some nasty tricks to them! They want to have a reasonable, transit country, with its own traditions and peculiarities here.

They want us to be reasonable and use the same principles that they do. Unfortunately, we have a bit different principles now.

They develop economic relations [with Belarus] because this brings benefits to them. This is probably a correct approach: if cooperation with someone is beneficial for you, combine your efforts to have mutual benefits!

Lithuania is closer to Belarus. I served there and also was in Latvia. There are still some bonds between us. After seceding from the USSR, Latvia and Estonia treated problems regarding ethnic Russians more harshly, while Lithuania had a softer attitude. Well, it was easier for Lithuania because 80 percent of its population are Lithuanians. Of course, both Latvia and Estonia where there are pretty many Russians and Russian-speaking people face the problem of preserving their national identity.

Svyatlana Kalinkina

The policies of these countries are not coordinated. For instance, until recently, Poland held the most conciliatory position on the Belarusian regime, explaining that neighborhood considerations were prompting to reason with it and maintain a constructive and tolerant dialogue. It was not until the end of last year that the Polish authorities started to implement a stiffer and more clear-cut policy.

These nations are, say, young democracies. I did not expect at all that they would determine Europe's policy regarding relations with Belarus.

Syarhey Kalyakin

These are the most concerned countries in Europe, because they have very serious interests in Belarus. I would not like to offend Spain or Portugal, but they are much less interested in Belarus. Latvia, Lithuania and Poland are the key players in the EU as far as Belarus is concerned. Their support is very important for Belarus' pro-democracy groups.

But one should not overestimate their ability to influence developments in the country. These countries help keep up international pressure on the Belarusian regime, therefore I would say they play a positive role.

Kasya Kamotskaya

The other neighbors also support the dictatorship. They buy oil from us and squeal with delight.

There is a solidarity mood in Poland. The Polish people like to display solidarity and love freedom, even not independence, but freedom.

Lithuania takes no action apart from statements. It is disappointed because it would like to take a lead in supporting Belarus. But it takes no real action. Lithuania shares two-thirds of its border with Belarus and benefits from trade with us.

Ukraine, I think it could do more, but it has too many problems now.

Therefore, only the Poles sincerely support Belarus, they are really concerned.

If they all stopped buying oil from Belarus, that would be a tough response. Empty statements make no waves. Our officials do not need to travel to Europe. They can relax on the River Dnieper, as Lukashenka put it. Sanctions would hit common people in the first place. This is natural. That would help them elect a better president. Nothing will change until the people get in trouble. What do they want? Sanctions should be effective – it is necessary to stop buying goods that generate most profit.

Syarhey Kasttsyau

The Baltic nations understand that they cannot live the way they live now. These nations prospered when they were part of the Soviet Union, whereas now the so-called independent countries have turned into U.S. colonies. Their leaders are not national politicians. Adamkus³⁷ is a fascist who came from the United States. He will seek asylum in the United States again because the people of Lithuania will not forgive him for the chaos. They will hang

³⁷ Valdas Adamkus – the current president of Lithuania was born in Kaunas on November 3, 1926. He emigrated to the United States in 1949 and returned to Lithuania in 1997.

him. Viķe-Freiberga³⁸ also came from the United States and will flee to that country. They ruined their countries and economies. Young people go abroad because they cannot receive education for work or pleasure. The situation is a little bit different in Estonia under R   tel³⁹. Estonia, a country of 700,000, has always been a colony. This is why it is more peaceful.

Latvia, Lithuania and Poland do not have independent policies. These countries act according to instructions from Brussels and Washington.

Ukraine does not have any policy at all. The nation has yet to decide on its policy and its leader. Yushchenko's³⁹ days are numbered. He will not stray for a long time, as I can appreciate it following to the discord with Julia Tymoshenko. He does not have any base, he took power by force was not elected. He will not be in office for long.

Vyachaslau Kebich

It is hard to assess the situation in Ukraine. Even the greatest political analysts do not dare to forecast the country's future. When the cabinet is formed we will see what direction the country is taking.

Anatol Lyabedzka

EU neighbors spearhead a campaign for democratization of Belarus. Lithuania and Poland are the most active players. I respect such policies. Lithuania has many unresolved issues in relations with Belarus – border, readmission etc. – but it shows a strategic vision in its policies with respect to the country.

Warsaw also shows a big interest with all major political forces having a consensus on Belarus, with the exception of small parliamentary groups.

Ukraine is of big importance to Belarus and Belarus is of importance to Ukraine. At first, the recent events in Ukraine. Events in Yugoslavia, in

³⁸ Vaira Viķe-Freiberga – the current president of Latvia was educated and lived in Canada until 1998.

³⁹ Arnold R   tel – president of Estonia (September 21, 2001 – October 9, 2006).

Georgia passed, from our viewpoint, rather far away, so it did not concern us. And Ukraine – did. That's why Ukraine's success boosted the morale of European choice advocates in Belarus, its advocates of changes. Their problems reflect on us.

What is Ukraine? Ukraine has created an alternative in the post-Soviet space. It was widely believed before the Orange Revolution that the EU would not expand farther eastward; not to construct a Berlin wall, but to stay within the European Union. Ukraine broke down that stereotype that started yet its shaping. Georgia and Moldova are too small countries to create an alternative on the post-Soviet space. But Ukraine can do it. The pro-democratic coalition that they have formed opened up opportunities for other former Soviet republics to follow their example and choose a democratic path.

Vasil Lyavonau

This is a policy friendly to the Belarusian people but not to the ruling regime.

Aleh Manayeu

Speaking simply and shortly, their policies, unlike that of Russia, is more adequate. This especially concerns two Baltic neighbors, Lithuania and Latvia. This adequacy manifests itself in the fact that on the other hand, the leaders and elites of these countries have not broken off relations with the Belarusian leadership – an upward trend in trade and trans-border cooperation testifies to this – on the other hand, they maintain close ties with Belarusian counter-elites – pro-democratic forces, civil society, national and religious communities, and so on. This is what I call an adequate policy.

Alyaksandr Milinkevich

I would note the unanimity of Poland, Lithuania and Latvia, especially of the former two countries, in their assessments of the situation in Belarus. I consider these countries' solidarity with pro-democracy forces in Belarus of great importance. These countries help Belarusian pro-democracy forces to advance their interests in European organizations, support victims of repression and the independent media, and provide unbiased media coverage for developments in Belarus.

Ukraine is trying to act as a bridge between Europe and Minsk. But this is a dead-end strategy. We appreciate the support of the democratic part of Ukraine, which went through a similar ordeal.

Tatsyana Protska

Almost all our neighbors have joined the EU and adopted its system of values. Belarus is undecided. This is why neighbors take a cautious attitude to the country, alarmed by the Belarusian authorities' overt defiance of European values. This prevents Belarus from establishing closer ties with its neighbors, although economic relations have been quite good.

Belarus has a very interesting political role – it inspires nostalgia in former Soviet republics. When we recall our childhood, it seems everything was great and we do not remember bad things. People recall the Soviet past as a brilliant crystal. And here comes the Belarusian government with its pro-soviet ideology.

It is trying to sell its system of values. Ukraine looks at Belarus, other countries look at Belarus and it seems as if a strong government can make people happy.

Therefore, Belarus plays a twofold role in relations with other countries. On the one hand, it is associated with the past, while on the other they look at the country and think, 'Should we follow its example?'

Andrey Sannikau

I don't have a very positive opinion of it. We've seen both top Lithuanian and Polish officials saying that their predecessors prioritized a policy of cooperation with the Lukashenka regime. I know for sure that Poland, Lithuania and Latvia used our situation to promote their EU membership bids. It was obvious that Lukashenka created a favorable background. But it's not clear why this has continued after their accession to the EU. Why today, when there are massive arrests in our country, Lithuanian Foreign Minister Valionis says that sanctions against Belarus should not be introduced? And what should be done then? Let's take a look back into the recent history of Poland, if it were not for sanctions against Warsaw during Solidarity strikes, who knows what could have been now in Poland. As Solidarity members were thrown into jail, the world reacted very harshly. And put forward tough conditions in negotiations: if you do this, then we can talk about that. The same was in East Germany during a wave of repression. Willy Brandt conducted a good neighborhood policy but he maintained certain contacts with Honecker to help those who suffered from the regime. This does not happen to Belarus at present.

Poland had had a certain monopoly as an expert on Belarusian affairs until the EU enlargement. I don't think that was good. I wouldn't like to insult anyone in Poland but monopoly is always bad. After the EU expansion, more countries that have no borders with Belarus took interest in our country, and this is a positive result. But this so far has not developed into a serious, strategic approach to Belarus. We've achieved more with the help of campaign of solidarity with Belarus. The leadership of Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, the Czech Republic, Slovakia cannot but notice the people who demand freedom for Belarus, freedom for political prisoners on the 16th day of each month. I hope that we will manage to influence the policy of the European Union as a bloc and its member states through civil society and media outlets supporting us.

Ukraine is going through a rough period. Of course, we all admired their revolution, but we see problems today. Some of them are objective and some subjective. Ukraine so far has not developed a policy toward Belarus, it has yet to gain more confidence, but certain steps showing that Ukraine may play an important role have already been taken. Ukraine backed a resolution criticizing the Belarusian regime which was adopted by the UN Human Rights Commission in 2005. Ukraine did this for the first time ever! Then there were incomprehensible remarks that 'we should build relations with this regime, much depends on trade and economic relations...' I would like Ukraine to have a more principled stance on the Belarusian situation, as this could really be of much help. I wouldn't say that it could equal influence from Russia, but if added to the European Union, it could create a certain balance.

Stanislau Shushkevich

You're asking me a question that I want to answer the way Tolstoi did when asked to describe the content of *War and Peace* in short: 'I can't do it any shorter'.

We have no problems with Ukraine: we have the same troubles, Ukrainians may sing and whitewash their village cottages better than we do. We may be better farmers than they are. But they are happy to learn about our achievements and we about theirs. There are no problems here, as we both have suffered much.

Now concerning Poles. I sometimes work in Poland and is very grateful to this country and to what has happened there. But when I worked at Jagiellonian University in Kraków in 1974 and spoke about Belarus, they responded that the country was 'kresy wschodnie', their Eastern Borderlands that were taken away from them. That's how they treated Belarus. And it took them much time to realize that they were mistaken. Today most of them realize this, mainly thanks to these 15–16 years of our independence. And it seems to me that after embarking on a democratic path of development Poland

developed a normal, democratic attitude toward us. They would like to have a democratic country here. That ignorance that not ordinary people, but professors at Jagiellonian University in Kraków had was caused by failure to realize that we had common history, a common federate state. They did not realize that the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was originally a Belarusian state and only later became a common state of the two peoples. Soviet Era and Russian rule in Poland led them to forget about this. Today I view Poland as a country that knows what is happening in Belarus better than others and wants to help us, and is doing this within the realm of possibility, more than others.

We must improve our life on our own and borrow the best things that exist in Russia, Lithuania, Poland, Latvia and Ukraine. But we must have 95 percent of our own.

Uladzimir Ulakhovich

Their policies are also traditional, but they have new forms that are more adequate and acceptable.

Alyaksandr Vaitovich

The other neighbors' policies are adequate for the current situation in Belarus.

Andrey Vardamatski

These countries see the situation from a longer perspective than Russia.

Vintsuk Vyachorka

I view their policies basically in a positive light. Their policies, depending on how democratic they are, reflect the solidarity potential of their societies.

The EU policies toward Belarus changed, or *came into existence*, thank to new EU members, our neighbors. EU experts on Belarus affairs even compete with each other at present. Belarus' pro-democracy forces should not be a puppet of one neighbor or another. On the other hand, they should take easy attempts to guide them – all countries have their interests, fears and visions.

The neighboring EU countries' values sometimes conflict with their pragmatic interest in trade with Belarus. In addition, the former elite (the Communist Party, Komsomol and secret services) has turned into a business elite and remains influential in the post-Soviet space.

Ukraine has, to my mind, an unrealistic hope to act as a mediator between Lukashenka and Brussels. Kyiv seeks more sway over the Belarusian regime at Moscow's expense. But Ukraine is not the first and will not reach its target.

Usevalad Yancheuski

It is funny. Poland, Lithuania and Latvia are screaming, 'Beat Lukashenka! We want democracy!' But political sanctions and financial assistance to the opposition do not deal a real blow to Belarus.

Economic sanctions could deal a serious blow but not a fatal one. A funny thing is that Poland, Lithuania and Latvia will do their damndest to prevent such sanctions because they will lose much more than Belarus as a result. Actually, they are interested in economic relations with Belarus more than Russia. They will be the first to defend our government when these relations will be on stake.

I can say right the same thing about Europe. If you do not like the regime and want to change it, have a look at available resources first. If you cannot do that why do you try? If you have any spare money available why do you give it our opposition? You would better give it to Chernobyl victims or save it. Why do you need to be in a silly situation?

I also would like to say a few words about 'color revolutions'. Those who took to the streets in Kyiv would have voted for Lukashenka. People took to the streets to voice their dissatisfaction with corruption and low living standards, something what we do not have here in Belarus. It is strange to hear people saying that it was America that had mounted the revolution and that its money was involved. As a matter of fact, Americans just grabbed the moment. Allegations that the US played a key role in the color revolutions are all grist to the mill of its propaganda – such allegations imply that America is omnipotent. People who say so work for the myth of America's omnipotence. People took to Maidan not because of money but because they were fed up with their life and oligarch clans. They were deceived however.

What were Maidan protestors demanding? They were demanding that the corrupt authorities quit. What were Georgians demanding? They were demanding hot water, heat and light at their homes. It was poverty that had driven them into despair.

That is why it is wrong to say that Yushchenko and Saakashvili were swept to power as a result of some CIA plot. The policies of Kuchma and Shevardnadze (who were also pretty pro-American, by the way) brought them to power. They came to power as a result of market, pseudo-liberal or whatever you may call them reforms. Both Kuchma and Shevardnadze pursued policies that were TOTALLY DIFFERENT from those carried out by Lukashenka at present. As a result, they saw Maidans, whereas we live an untroubled and happy life.

That is why America's fuss produced a result in Kyiv and Tbilisi but ended in a failure here in Minsk.