

You want it to be like Bishkek? State-run TV suggests the opponents should repent and take the “constructive dialogue” offer

Monitoring of State TV Narratives in Belarus

(05/10/2020 – 11/10/2020)

The purpose of this monitoring is to study how the Belarusian state conveys its ideological narrative. The most important mechanism for conveying its narrative is the evening broadcast. Then the informational function of media is complemented, and sometimes replaced by, the broadcasting of official ideological messages. We monitor the outputs of the Agency of the Television News (ATN), which prepares the news broadcasts for the **Belarus-1** channel (“Panorama” and Sunday’s “Main Airtime”), the channel **ONT** (“Our News”, “Saturday’s Edition” and “Contours”), and the channel **STV** (“24 Hour News” and “The Week”).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

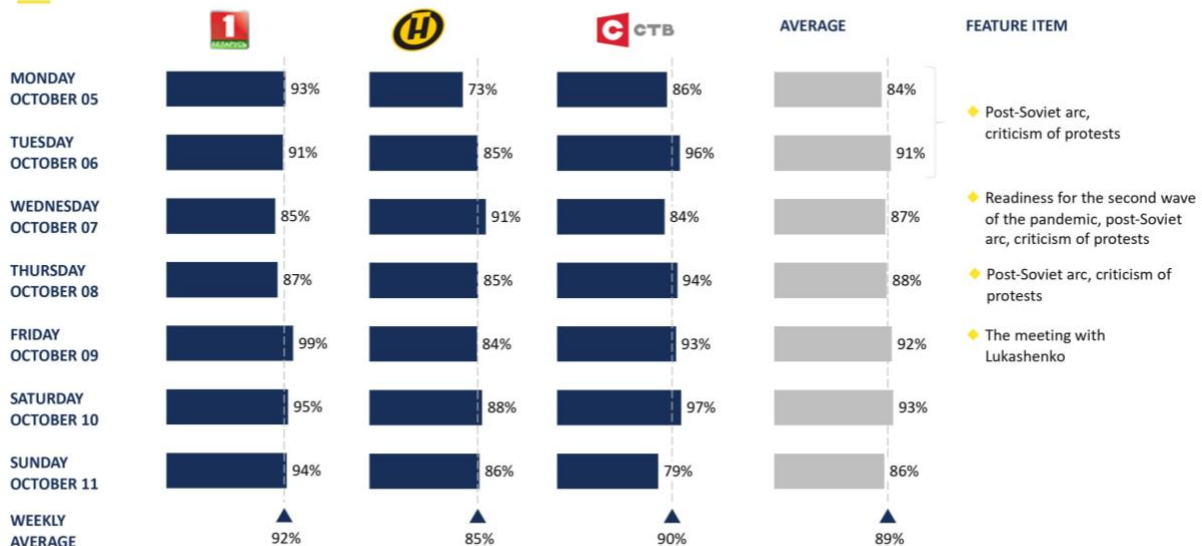
Events in Nagorno-Karabakh and Kyrgyzstan provided state channels with the main material for the anti-West and anti-protest narratives.

Key narratives can be found in [APPENDIX 1](#)

State-run TV found the “foreign trace” and the common general scenario in what was

THE CENTRAL NARRATIVE OF THE WEEK WAS THE “POST-SOVIET ARC OF INSTABILITY” - STATE CHANNELS TRIED TO BRING TOGETHER VARIOUS EVENTS IN THE COUNTRIES OF THE FORMER USSR

THE SHARE OF STORIES WITH STRONGLY ARTICULATED IDEOLOGICAL NARRATIVE*



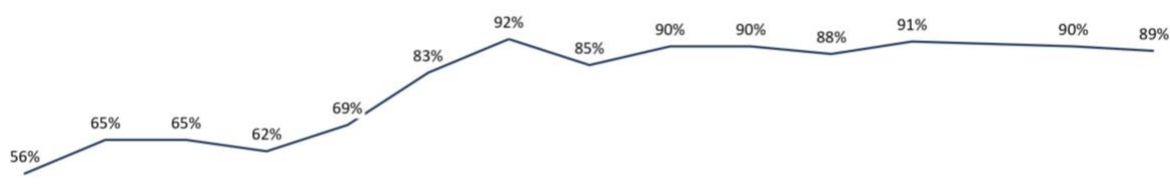
*STRONGLY ARTICULATED IDEOLOGICAL NARRATIVE - one or more key ideas that define the content of a news story (e.g., the inadmissibility of destabilizing the political situation).

happening there and in Belarus. The general conclusion was that revolutions and protests are to be identified with the loss of territory, war, instability and decay.

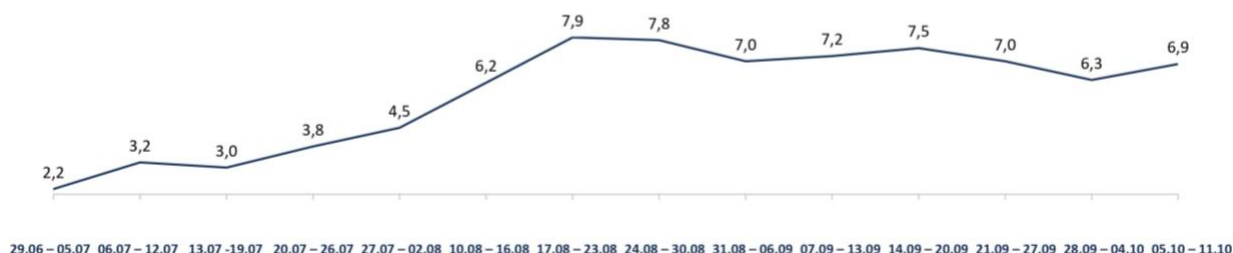
On a strictly domestic front, more attention was paid to “comments from the pre-trial detention center” — words of remorse, regret from some prisoners of participating in the protests and this year's political campaign.

CONFLICTOGENITY INDEX INCREASED DUE TO «RADICALIZATION IN THE PROTESTS», BUT THERE WERE NO SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN THE CONTENT

AVERAGE SHARE OF STORIES WITH STRONGLY ARTICULATED IDEOLOGICAL NARRATIVE, by weeks



AVERAGE CONFLICTOGENITY INDEX, by weeks

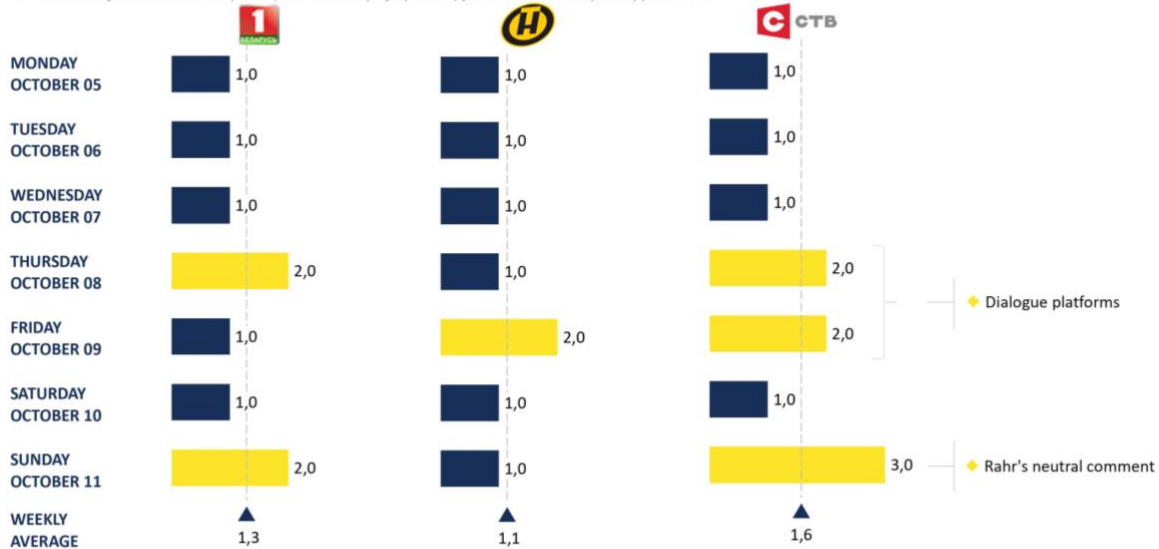


The antipode to chaos was the image of a strong state that managed to “defeat the color revolution”. Strengthening the power vertical, relying on loyal personnel and building up the ideological work remained the main recipe from the state-run TV. The protests were actively undermined by the framework of discussions offered by the state and the formats of “constructive dialogue” — the pinnacle of which was Lukashenka's visit to the KGB pre-trial detention center.

THE LEVEL OF PLURALISM DID NOT INCREASE, BUT DURING THE DISCUSSION OF THE NEGOTIATIONS IN THE PRE-TRIAL DETENTION CENTER OF CGS, SOME ALTERNATIVE OPINIONS WERE NEVERTHELESS MENTIONED

PLURALISM INDEX*

1 - absence of alternative viewpoints; 10 - diversity of opinions, journalistic and expert approaches



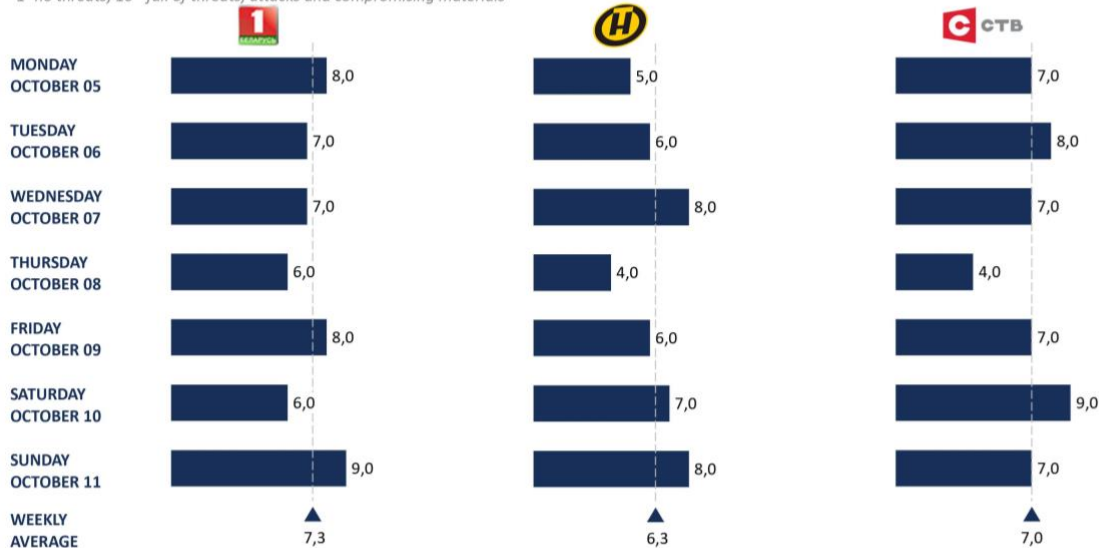
*PLURALISM INDEX - an indicator evaluating the share of critical reports and news stories citing opposing, critical, and other opinions alternative to the official rhetoric.

State-run TV stories again became more conflictogenic (6.9 points). They saw radicalization in the protests, the rallies were covered with the usual comments about waning senseless and aimless walking around. Western neighbors of Belarus were declared puppets.

STATE-RUN TV STORIES AGAIN BECAME MORE CONFLICTOGENIC . AN IMPORTANT NARRATIVE OF THE WEEK WAS THE TOPIC OF RADICALIZATION IN THE PROTESTS

CONFLICTOGENITY INDEX*

1 - no threats; 10 - full of threats, attacks and compromising materials



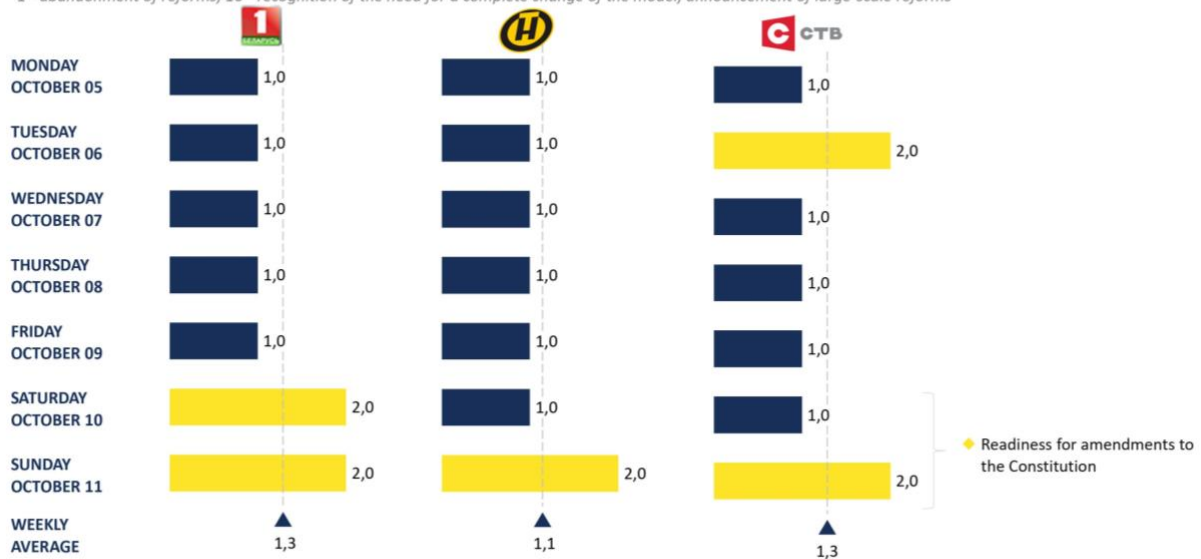
*CONFLICTOGENITY INDEX - an indicator measuring the percentage of news stories that intensify political tension and conflicts (through accusations and threats towards opponents, equating protests to violence, and similar).

Despite claims of the controlled change, the indices of reform orientation and pluralism have not increased.

DESPITE CLAIMS OF THE CONTROLLED CHANGE, THE INDICES OF REFORM ORIENTATION HAVE NOT INCREASED

REFORM-ORIENTATION INDEX*

1 - abandonment of reforms; 10 - recognition of the need for a complete change of the model, announcement of large-scale reforms

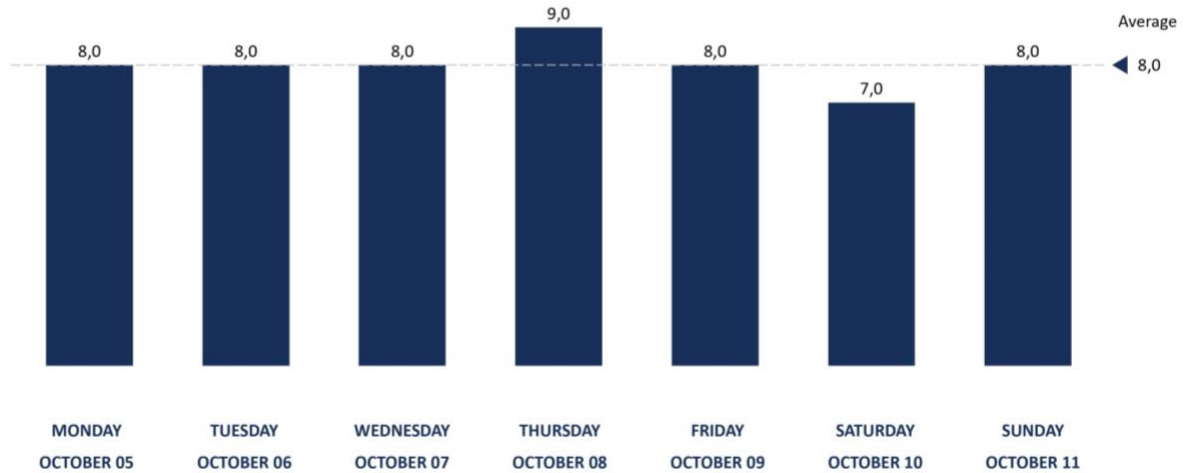


*REFORM-ORIENTATION INDEX – an indicator evaluating the presence of news stories with reformatory proposals or decisions.

The uniformity of ideological attitudes was mitigated only by stylistic differences in the editorial policies of different channels.

THE UNIFORMITY OF IDEOLOGICAL ATTITUDES WAS MITIGATED ONLY BY STYLISTIC DIFFERENCES IN THE EDITORIAL POLICIES OF DIFFERENT CHANNELS

THE LEVEL OF INFORMATION POLICY COORDINATION*



*THE LEVEL OF INFORMATION POLICY COORDINATION – an indicator evaluating coordination across the air. This is inferred from news stories having similar structures, as well as the duplication of opinions, positions and ideologemes among state TV channels.

The project “Monitoring of State TV Narratives in Belarus” is implemented by Sense Analytics in partnership with Press Club Belarus and with the support of [Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung](#). The author of the weekly reports is Maxim Stefanovich, the editor and coordinator of the project is Artyom Shraibman. The authors of the project thank the SATIO team for their help with illustrating the monitoring results.

To see the full version of the report in Russian [click here](#).

APPENDIX 1

KEY NARRATIVES

UNDERMINING THE PROTESTS

- “Radical attitudes and no peaceful protest. It seems that the opposition rally on Sunday has finally dispelled the myth about it being all flowers and smiles.”
- “Shortly before that, those unhappy about the results of the parliamentary campaign, clashed with the police, broke into the White House and literally plundered it. Molotov cocktails and stones were thrown at the law enforcement officers. These events are reminiscent of an attempt to unleash a street war in Minsk in early August. But let's also take a very brief run through the color technologies of "Kyrgyz-Maidan 3.0" to notice the very familiar... White ribbons. You remember this pre-election device of the "incredible fighters"? It seems as if the ribbons were brought directly from Belarus.”
- “For the second Saturday in a row, they suggest people should wander about holding flowers. It took them some time to come up with the route. Half an hour before the start, they decided on the Independence Avenue. Why Independence, why not on Freedom Square? After all, along with the independence, Tsikhanouskaya's admirers also demand freedom, while stuffing their faces with Polish propaganda.”
- “An ideal route for women. This time, on Telegram channels, disgruntled women were offered a walk from one department store to the other. This would have had some purpose had they been shopping during, otherwise this aimless walking around is nothing more than... well, simply walking around. If you keep staring at the people passing by for long enough, you may be able to discern another women's march there. Seeing that Saturday rallies are failing, the foreign Telegram channels are now trying to conceal the flop: no big crowds or large groups from now... Simply because they don't have a crowd — neither large, nor even a mid-sized one. And once you talk to the “disgruntled”, it turns out there is no march. All the curators managed to come up with this time was for the women to wander between two department stores. They tried to boost the moral as best they could. Even used the pep talk from Bruce Lee himself. The protesters were supposed to “be water”! Although, they were supposed to not fill up the proverbial mental cups and teapots, but rather infiltrate the scarce groups of passers-by.
- “The Liberation March is ridiculous and disgusting. The liberation march was the one our ancestors had across Europe, and you only dishonor their memory, dancing to someone else's tune. You just got owned by the investors from foreign capital cities, yes, you, the allegedly educated ones.”
- “Less than two hours later, the flower rally was blown off the street, with women quickly losing interest in walking around with no action. While back home, one should surmise, each of them has things much more important than the “unidealized” protest to the broken record of a Polish tune.”
- “Remember that the president warned you: it will be interesting before the elections, and things would get even more interesting after the elections. Many took this as a figure of speech. But behind this phrase is a serious analysis of the information coming through

different channels. The scenario of the "color revolution" in Belarus has been thwarted, the situation is under control. And we somehow got used to the rallies on weekends. They won't be able to lull us with protest technologies. The plot to blow up the situation got contained, but did not go away."

- "And when the police made it clear that they wouldn't let the law and order to be trod on like this, the women fired up their foghorn, as if on cue. And then the thugs with the bottles were up, and we noticed some of them carrying sticks. So the law enforcers tried to push the crowd back. The crowd reacted very aggressively. Bottles were thrown. There was direct contact. Some sound-minded citizens saw: it doesn't look like any kind of peaceful protest."
- "While the defiant protestors were waking up, the Polish curators were trying to figure out where to drive them today. They have already been to the Palace of Independence, went on a tour to Drozdy, banged their heads against the walls of the Akrestsin Street detention center. Today they were told to go to the KGB pre-trial detention center and to the prison on Volodarsky Street. One gets the feeling that the foreign masters already want their adepts to end up behind bars as soon as possible, since it is getting ever more difficult to come up with the names for the marches. And again, there were people who took their children with them."
- "People do inexplicable things not only when they have nothing else to do. For example, some students had a sit-in during their big breaks. Not for nothing, but out of a protest. They come out, sit in, and when the break ends, they leave."
- "This next one is the story of how the social justice warriors make money. According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, a group of four guys and a good-time girl mugged a foreigner. All of them were active participants of the protests. In their own time away from the revolutionary activities they turned to mugging."

ANTI-WEST NARRATIVES

- "According to some political analysts, Nagorno-Karabakh has become another reason for the West to interfere in the fate of the post-Soviet countries. Such attempts were made in Belarus, Russia, now it is easy to do it via the aggravated conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan."
- "Minsk, in response to a number of inappropriate statements addressed to the government of our country, not only recalled the Belarusian ambassadors from Vilnius and Warsaw, but also invited its neighbors to follow suite."
- "In Kyrgyzstan, the president's weak determination has led to growing revolutionary unrest, Kubat Rakhimov, ex-adviser to the Prime Minister of this country, told our channel. The expert also noted that the government of Kyrgyzstan did not take the peaceful rallies seriously enough, which subsequently escalated into riots. As a result, the entire state got paralyzed."
- "In August Lithuania made the top-three in unemployment in the EU. 141 thousand people in this Baltic republic were unemployed as of August, 25 thousand of them —under 25 years old. Over the year, youth unemployment rose there by a quarter. No jobs, no money. In the meantime, certain migrant worker is given a room in a five-star hotel for some reason. A logical question: who's paying for all this?"

- “After the Maidan, Ukraine has lost decades in economic and social development. The country is under external control and gets deeper into debt bondage. This could happen in Belarus, says the deputy of the Kharkiv city council Andrei Lesik. ”

SOVIET HISTORY NARRATIVE

- “The people keep the memory alive, and history teaches not to make mistakes! The "Belarus Remembers" project of the TV News Agency " took the award of the international festival "Eternal Flame" in Volgograd. It is possible that the series will be extended with new episodes — as a vivid reminder of how fragile the world can be and how terrible war is."
- “In the global media, the Belarusian agenda has already faded into the background. At first, the erupted Nagorno-Karabakh became the focus of the attention, and then the main characters were the new presidents, prime ministers, and coordination councils from Kyrgyzstan. It's far from political stability — how else if the "color revolution" has won? Nevertheless, analysts are increasingly drawing our attention to the fact that all the recent conflicts, and even the Ukrainian Maidan, have a lot in common, right down to the interests of the Western masters, who failed to make Belarus its puppet. "
- “We are all used to seeing the war in the movies, in computer games. However, one needs to understand what is happening in Nagorno-Karabakh is not staged, it is not a virtual battlefield on your computer screen. This is all reality! If a projectile hits a tank and it burns, there are people burning in it — alive. And the houses that are shelled have people in them too! People, who go to sleep and wake up only with one wish — to survive. And all the other problems — domestic, financial — are nothing compared to when your family house implodes and the earth under your feet shakes from explosions."

ALL STAKES ON LAW ENFORCEMENT

- “If our security forces had faltered on August 9, and in the following days, the Government House or the Palace of Independence in Minsk would have blazed up like the one in Bishkek. And the owners of cafes, shops, businesses would also have to fight off looters in the same way."

PATERNALISM, DIRIGISME

- “Help in finding a job, issues of relations with the executive power and landscaping — more than 10 appeals on October 8 in Belyniichi were addressed to the Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration”.
- “In one of the youngest micro-districts of Grodno, a new polyclinic is being built — the eighth one in this city. It is still under construction, but the experts already say that it will become one of the largest in the region."
- “The Belarusian economy did not curtail production during the pandemic, thereby not losing cooperation ties. The new milestones for the 5 years ahead were discussed today at the Presidium of the Council of Ministers. Thus, by 2025 there should be no underperforming regions."
- “Dialogue platforms in the regions will help in discussing the constitutional proposals: what our country will be like in the future is up to us and no one else! Dialogue platforms were

launched to discuss the issues of constitutional reform, as well as the prospects for the development of the state in general and the regions in particular."

COVID-19 SECOND WAVE

- "Despite the criticism of our country in spring, the Belarusian and Swedish strategies for countering COVID-19 — in fact, they were identical — were recognized as the most effective ones. And if the path is the right one (and the WHO has recognized it), then it is only logical to follow it, not getting sidetracked."
- "Bonfires of anti-quarantine protests were ablaze in New York. In Europe, public venues are gradually being closed down and, judging by the demonstrations of, for instance, the restaurants staff in Finland, no one in the European Union is happy about the coronadictatorship and the upcoming coronavirus crisis. The flame of indignation is still roaring in Israel, where strict quarantine has been extended. Sea and sun don't convert into cashflow without tourists, while demonstrations do not help the lockdown requirements compliance. In Belarus, in this regard, there is no reason for indignation — there is no quarantine. Some, on the contrary, even take walks in large crowds, as if begging for the coronavirus. In Belgium, healthcare professionals wrote an open letter to their government demanding the abolition of quarantine restrictions, saying there is no rationale for the COVID-quarantine, not even a medical one, saying this is a human rights violation. And that there is more harm done by that than by the COVID itself."
- "The readiness of the healthcare system — from the medical personnel to protective equipment — was discussed today at the Palace of Independence. The president will be informed that everything is under control! No need for exotic know-hows. The Belarusian experience did not only serve us right, but also bode well with many countries. Indeed, despite the recent growth in the number of new cases, no one is in a hurry to "close down". And Belarus will definitely not go into strict isolation either."

PERSONALISM, PRO-GOVERNMENT ACTIVISM

- "Indeed, it's true, as you said, there a rift in the society, a split. We don't want that. It is very easy to destroy something. But to preserve what has been systematically built in our country for 26 years, all things we managed to achieve... Look around, how much our life has improved. Just basic things. Today I was riding the bus and I thought to myself that the residential district where they are now flying the read-white-red flags didn't use to have subway. That is, there are developments. And how many residential buildings were built there!"
- "And I want this flag to be the state flag, and not the flag used by the fascist henchmen, not the one flows when they burned down villages, in particular, my native village was also burned down by the people carrying these very flags. Therefore, I want this flag to be the state flag, and I want peace and tranquility in my country."
- "Today the president spent almost half a day in the KGB pre-trial detention center. The footage shows the head of state meeting with the representatives of opposition political movements. For all those present, this meeting came as a complete surprise. This is exactly how they discuss it on the Internet now — "Absolutely unexpected. I mean, such public

open meetings with the enemies are not something heads of state would do" — this is a quote from a Telegram channel. But Lukashenka did, and he listened. This exchange of views lasted four and a half hours. Naturally, the conversation touched upon many important topics, primarily politics and economics. However, the details of the meeting were kept confidential by a unanimous decision of the participants."

- "The President of Belarus has proven to be an absolutely extraordinary politician, this being the result of long-term analytical work and, of course, now the opponents have no business saying that dialogue is impossible".
- "400 km on the way. Thousands of patriots took part in the "For United Belarus!" rally. These are the people who want to see the country strong and independent, united and prosperous. It has become a good tradition to hit the road on weekends."
- "I am not in this for money. I am for the country, for my beliefs, for a united statehood. What we have here is beautiful, neat and orderly. We have real statehood. We have the strong hand of the president, and we are for it. We are for our Father, for the Master, for the Motherland!"
- "Of course, there have been changes over the days, or rather months, since the elections. I am absolutely sure and wrote about this in the Russian media and on social media: some people who voted for Mrs. Tsikhanouskaya or for any other opposition candidate would not have voted for them today. Too many mistakes and stupid things have been done, too often we have heard calls for, frankly, anti-constitutional, illegal actions. Attacks on government officials, damage to property, threats to the children of police officers. At first, the ridiculous talk of the 3%, then the opposition themselves started saying that, ok, he maybe got 5. Don't think others to be dumber than yourself. Alexander Grigorievich has a clear-cut electoral support."

LAMENTING THE BULLYING

- "Being under the guise of anonymity, many neglect to think about the consequences of posting certain types of messages on social media and instant messengers. Some, forgetting about it, shift from virtual threats to real ones. In the capital city, a local was detained for spray-painting slur on the walls of the house where the riot policemen live. Another case of bullying, this time on the Internet. A resident of Bobruisk, upon coming across a photo of the policeman who had detained him at an unauthorized rally, decided to take revenge and posted on one of the Telegram channels. However, he had to do some explaining, this time at the police station. "
- "In a Verkhnedvinsky Telegram-channel, one of the subscribers would write offensive comments under a picture of the local district policeman. The policeman turned to internal affairs. The offender was detained and had trouble coming up with a rationale for his action. This crime is punishable by up to three years in prison. While in Minsk another amateur street artist was detained. She defended her graffiti by spraying mace at the police officer.

CHARACTER ASSASSINATION

- "All the while the desperate housewife is on an increasingly incredible tour of Europe in search of leadership. During the closed session of the Danish parliament, Svetlana was

allegedly unable to immediately connect to the meeting due to technical problems with the camera. Well, you never know, she is internationally wanted, so this might be her trying to scramble the signal. And only after Mrs. Tsikhanouskaya became a bit too concerned about zoophilia of Denmark, the deputies got suspicious, and when asked about the brothels with animals, they gave a brief answer and terminated this conversation. Although, nothing unusual for the Danish parliament.”