

## It's blowback. State-run TV gloating over the domestic turmoil in the countries that used to pressure Belarus

### Monitoring of State TV Narratives in Belarus

(26/10/2020 – 01/11/2020)

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”).

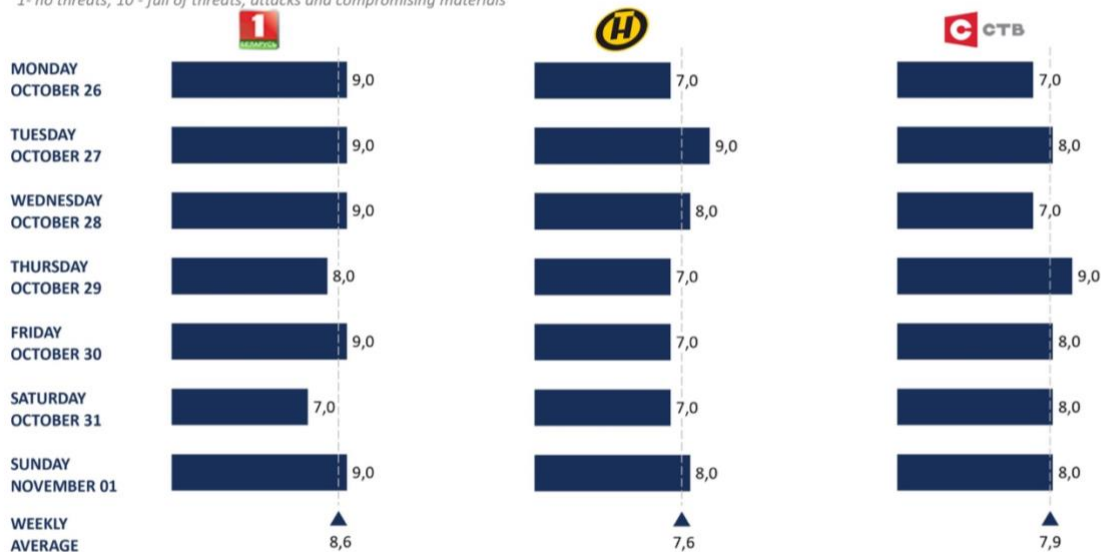
#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The week after the end of the term of Tsikhanouskaya's ultimatum only strengthened the state-run TV's commitment to political confrontation.

#### ■ IN ADDITION TO ACTIVE PROTESTS CONFRONTATION, CONFLICTOGENITY INDEX WAS INCREASED BY HOSTILE NARRATIVES TOWARDS OTHER COUNTRIES

##### CONFLICTOGENITY INDEX\*

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

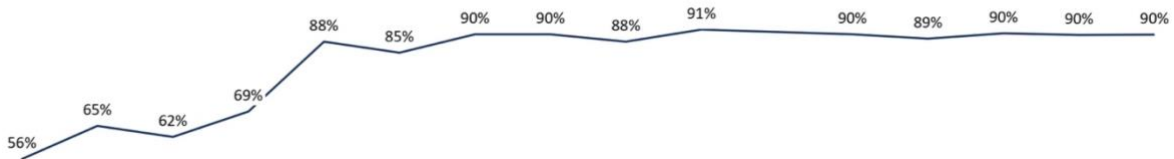


\*CONFLICTOGENITY INDEX - an indicator measuring the percentage of news stories that intensify political tension and conflicts (through accusations and threats towards opponents, equating protests to violence, and similar).

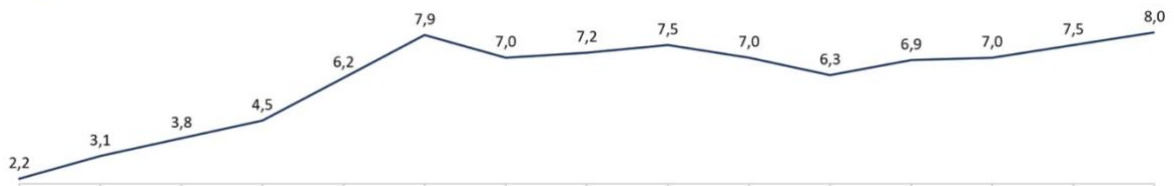
The whole week the air was dominated by the idea of a "boomerang effect" — the retribution for Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, and even the United States for supporting the protests in Belarus: their concerns about the democracy in Belarus were overshadowed by their own domestic issues.

**CONFLICTOGENITY INDEX ROSE TO 8 POINTS. THE WHOLE WEEK THE AIR WAS DOMINATED BY THE IDEA OF A "BOOMERANG EFFECT" — THE RETRIBUTION FOR POLAND, UKRAINE, LITHUANIA AND THE USA FOR SUPPORTING THE PROTESTS IN BELARUS**

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



AVERAGE CONFLICTOGENITY INDEX, by weeks



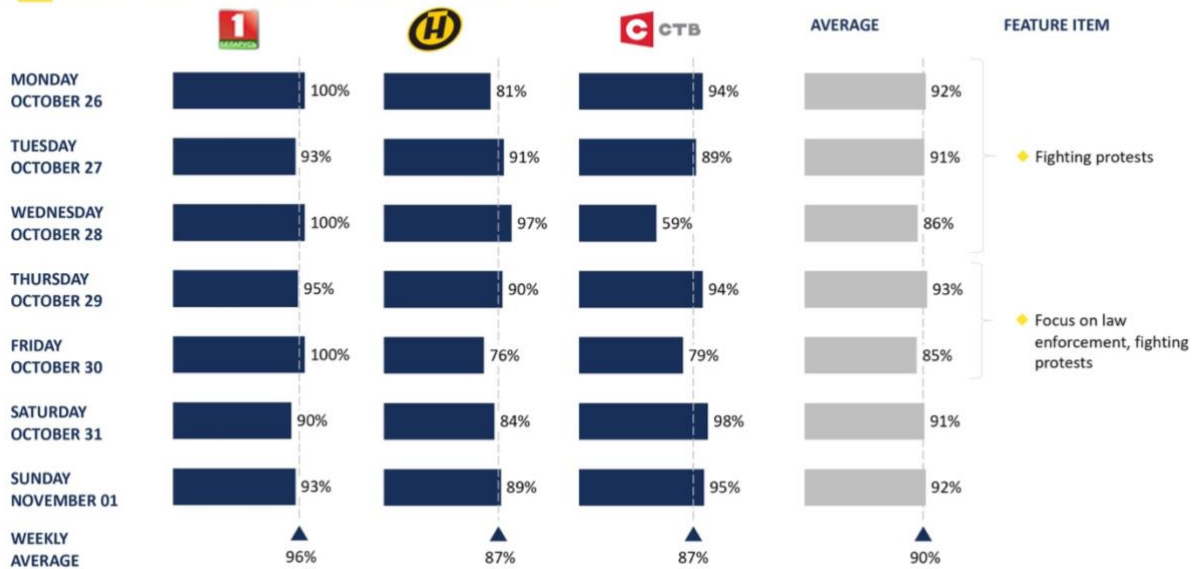
29.06 – 05.07 06.07 – 19.07 20.07 – 26.07 27.07 – 02.08 10.08 – 16.08 17.08 – 30.08 31.08 – 06.09 07.09 – 13.09 14.09 – 20.09 21.09 – 27.09 28.09 – 04.10 05.10 – 11.10 12.10 – 18.10 26.10 – 01.11 19.10 – 25.10

The share of ideological stories remained around 90%.

The focus on the law enforcement, possible sabotage, terrorist attacks and toughening of the fight against "extremists" were in the center of attention of Aliaxandr Lukashenka and, accordingly, of the state channels.

■ THE FOCUS ON THE LAW ENFORCEMENT, SABOTAGE, TERRORIST ATTACKS AND TOUGHENING OF THE FIGHT AGAINST "EXTREMISTS" WERE IN THE CENTER OF ATTENTION OF ALIAXANDR LUKASHENKA AND, ACCORDINGLY, OF THE STATE CHANNELS

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).

In response to ongoing protests, TV highlighted the vital role of the state for various groups, while carbon-copied stories called for the appreciation of the government's paternalistic efforts, including free education. Another narrative was the failure of strikes. On the contrary, the students' protests were acknowledged and reported as consisting primarily of freeloaders.

The coverage of the second wave of the coronavirus was dominated by reports on the achievements of the country's healthcare and the gravity of the situation in the world. This was manifested even in statistical reports focusing on the number of people who recovered in Belarus and the global incidence rate.

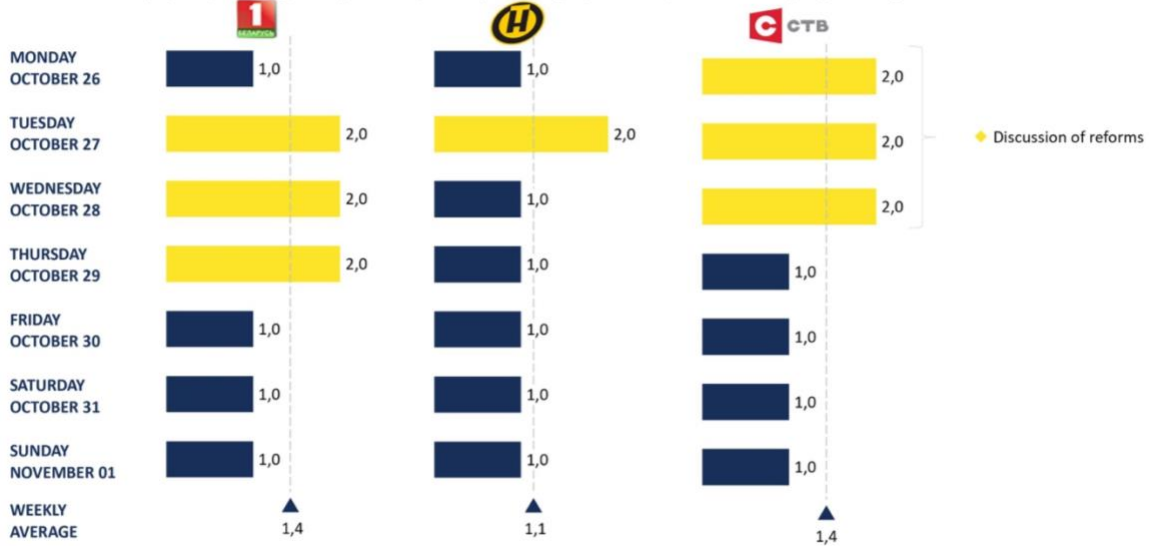
Key narratives can be found in [APPENDIX 1](#)

Reformism in the stories of the state TV was of a formal nature, manifested either as a discussion of changes in specific industries, or as messages for the future with reference to the upcoming All-Belarusian People's Assembly.

**REFORMISM IN THE STORIES OF THE STATE TV WAS OF FORMAL NATURE. DISCUSSIONS WERE HELD ABOUT CHANGES IN SPECIFIC INDUSTRIES AND QUESTIONS FOR THE UPCOMING ALL-BELARUSIAN PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY**

**REFORM-ORIENTATION INDEX\***

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



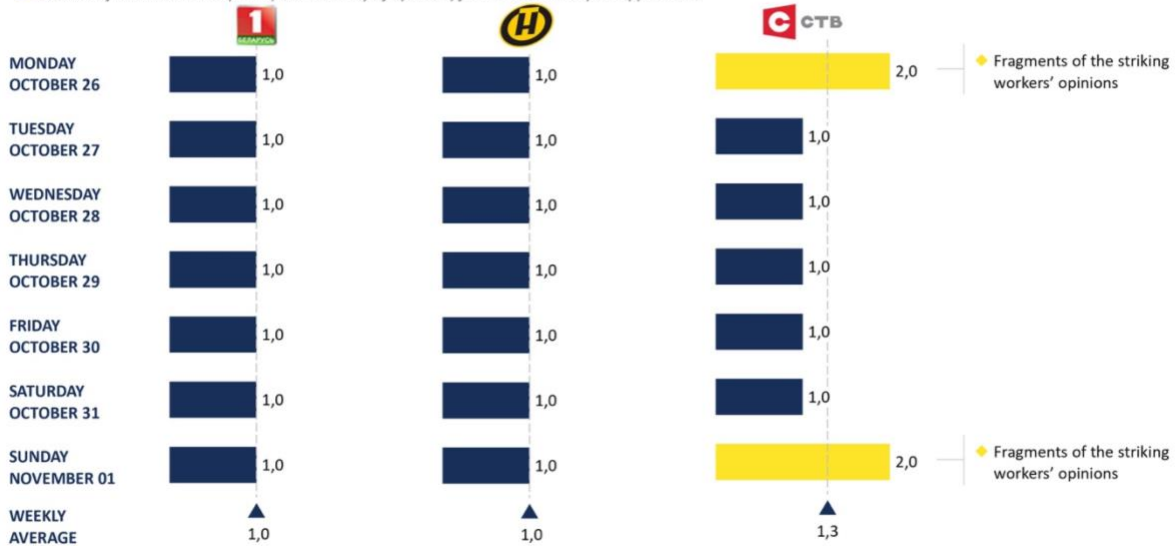
\*REFORM-ORIENTATION INDEX – an indicator evaluating the presence of news stories with reformatory proposals or decisions.

There were no significant signs of pluralism; fragments of the protesters' opinions were quoted only to illustrate their aggressiveness.

**THERE WERE NO SIGNIFICANT SIGNS OF PLURALISM. FRAGMENTS OF THE PROTESTERS' OPINIONS WERE QUOTED ONLY TO ILLUSTRATE THEIR AGGRESSIVENESS**

**PLURALISM INDEX\***

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

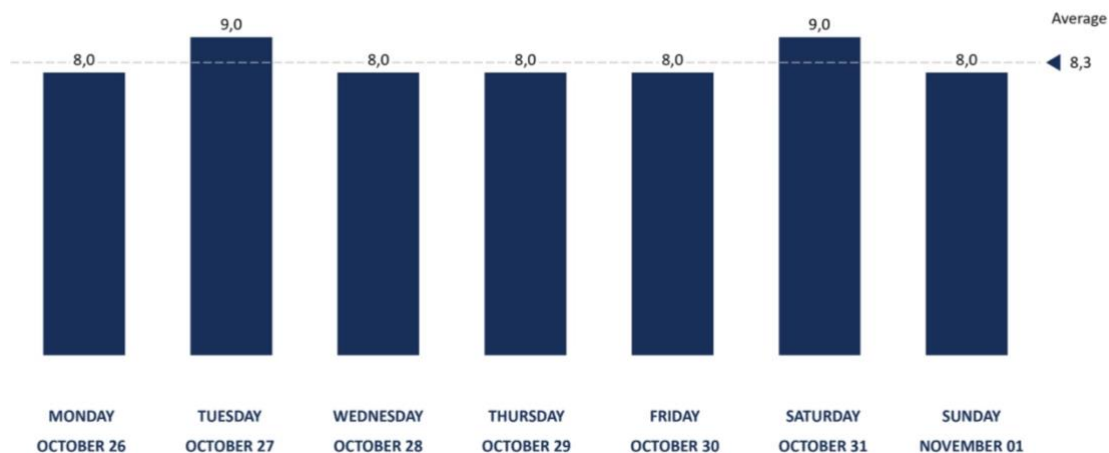


\*PLURALISM INDEX - an indicator evaluating the share of critical reports and news stories citing opposing, critical, and other opinions alternative to the official rhetoric.

The uniformity of broadcasting remained at the same levels, some very similar reports, such as stories about achievements in the field of higher education, were repeated on all three channels on the same day.

- THE UNIFORMITY OF BROADCASTING REMAINED AT THE SAME LEVEL. SIMILAR REPORTS, SUCH AS STORIES ABOUT ACHIEVEMENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION, WERE REPEATED ON ALL THREE CHANNELS ON THE SAME DAY

#### 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

### ALL STAKES ON LAW ENFORCEMENT AND WEAPON EMPLOYMENT

- “Everyone will be held accountable. Those flipping the finger, those intimidating and threatening the people around. While this material was being prepared for broadcast, the police detained the coordinator of yesterday's protests”.
- “The situation in Belarus is basically stable, and this is largely the merit of the officers of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, who demonstrated wisdom, decisiveness, true patriotism. After all, it was the Ministry of Internal Affairs has been and still is doing the bulk of the work to return tranquility and peace to the streets of Belarusian cities. Aliaxandr Lukashenka noted that iron will and patience were required from every security official at that time. While those who sought to realize their political ambitions through aggression and banditry in the streets of the capital city, crossed more than one red line. That is why the time has come for more decisive, but careful actions on the part of the state, the president added.
- “All this, of course, will be sorted out. And everyone will be held responsible for what they have done. Some — for terrorist attacks, some — for gross misconduct, arson, libel, and threats. All this is punishable by law, and sometimes very harshly. Every crime will inevitably be punished.”
- “For several weeks in a row, citizen militia have been helping to maintain order in the Belarusian streets. The old format has undergone a modern upgrade and today makes a meaningful contribution to ensuring security.”
- “The primary task for the new minister is to stabilize the situation in the capital city. While three generals from the highest positions in the law enforcement block are being sent to work in the regions. However, security issues will remain a priority for them, too.
- “Aliaxandr Lukashenka has warned the riots participants and those who are trying to destabilize the infrastructure of the state. The law enforcement are determined, there are not retreating.”

### UNDERMINING THE PROTESTS

- “Can you imagine what would have happened if yesterday's aggressive crowd with that inventory attacked the building of the Central District Police Department of Minsk? They won't be throwing rocks, they'll be hurling grenades.”
- “It is clear that when the goal is blocking the roads, arson and attacks, this does not encourage dialogue. Radicals don't need it. They continue to call for strikes, disrupt educational processes and upset the normal life of the Belarusians.”
- “While trying to look enlightened, the white-red-white zombies have nothing but contempt for culture. Foul language has already become the only one spoken for them. They see each building only as a canvas for their outrage (remember how they spray-painted the church). The overthrowers take nothing for sacred, nothing for lofty.”

- “Shooting, arson, violence on the roads and in the streets — we are supposed to look at this and seen nothing but peaceful protests. So that we forget that we are one people and one country. However, all this is temporary, this dangerous performance will soon be over.”
- “The growing number of criminal cases following the riots speaks of the radical nature of protests in Belarus. The figures reported by the Prosecutor General's Office are quite illustrative. While at the beginning of the month there were more than 400 such cases, today there are already 657. Some seventy have been sent to courts. About 200 people were are now facing trial”.
- “A caring activist of the anti-vandal movement reprimanded the man for putting up the white-red-white ribbons. As a result, instead of talking this over, the young man attacked the girl, punching her. The culprit from this video has been detained. It is now up to court to rule on such non-gentlemanly behavior of his.”
- “Closing the roads has become somewhat of a fetish for the white-red-white mob. They once again blocked the traffic on the Logoiski avenue. But as soon as the police appear, the justice warriors run like pro-athletes. This is the miracle work of the riot police. The intersection was only now blocked by protesters, but as soon as the police appeared, the road was immediately cleared.”
- “Few have reached the destination. There were also anarchists who, of course, were upset that there were too few people. As for Kurapaty — a place of memory and silence — many, apparently, only learned about this place today. Otherwise they would have behaved differently, in a more civilized manner.”

### **PATERNALISM, DIRIGISME**

- “Water supply, landscaping, upkeep of the military cemeteries. Local authorities know the the local issues like their own. The film crew of our channel went to Dubrovensky district. "Panorama" report "In its place" tells a story of important projects that have made life in the countryside more comfortable.
- “Not just a deposit in a bank, but the first step to one’s own apartment. Moreover, with a premium from the state. The housing savings system is being launched in Belarus. The presidential decree, signed the day before, makes it possible to obtain housing on favorable terms. ”
- “Big gifts for the big city. New filling station “Belorusneft” was opened in Minsk today”.
- “We’ve got basic, secondary, higher education. The future of the country depends on the quality of education. This is a real investment. The development of this area is closely monitored by international experts. Belarus ranks 30th out of 189 states reviewed in the education level index. Today, we have about 26 thousand students from 107 countries. Isn't it a sign of recognition of the level of our education ?!”

### **PERSONALIZM**

- “Today's meeting with the president, from the first messages that appeared in the newsfeeds, drew everyone’s attention — both in terms of topic covered and statements made. Preparations have begun for the All-Belarusian People's Assembly — this

representative forum should become a platform for a real dialogue on the elaboration of the country's development strategy. After all, the issues that are brought up for discussion concern everyone."

- "The cynicism of the Tsikhanouskaya&Co project seems to have no limit — calling for people with disabilities to the rallies. Let me remind you that people with disabilities receive assistance from the state. And the system under which their interests and life are protected by the state was, mind you, hand-crafted by President Lukashenka."
- "The 14th hockey competition among amateur teams for the prizes of the President's Sports Club has started today in Minsk at the Olympic Park arena. The head of state's team emerged stronger than the representatives of the Vitebsk region".

### **PREPAREDNESS TO COVID-19 SECOND WAVE**

- "Belarus still does not intend to stop life during a pandemic. However, there is an understanding that the second wave can be even more difficult. Still, our technique, like the Swedish one, which was recognized by the World Health Organization, has already been tested and proven valid. Moreover, the domestic system got ready advance for the new spike in the incidence rates, it is equipped with the previous experience, lessons learned and the new knowledge about COVID."
- "The second wave of coronavirus was inevitable. And that, alas, means there will be more "dirty" zones again, and the "covid" bed fund will expand, and, to be honest, the workload will grow considerably. The healthcare workers were ready for this. The key to success is a clear action plan at all levels. "
- "The most urgent tasks are the sufficiency of all means of protection, places in hospitals and, of course, timely assistance to patients. And judging by the reports, there are no implementation problems in each region. But, as usual, they have a plan in case something does not go according to the plan. For the sake of efficiency, such online meetings at the Council of the Republic will be held routinely, Natalya Kochanova will receive a weekly summary report on the fight against COVID."

### **PRO-GOVERNMENT ACTIVISM**

- "Local residents of the region decided to pay tribute to those fallen in an unusual way. The Chausy-Bynovo rally brought together dozens of those not indifferent. This season's "Memory Watch" was not limited to the Chausky District alone. The search teams managed to recover the remains of almost a hundred Red Army soldiers."
- "In two months the rally has turned into a regular meeting of friends who love their homeland with all their hearts. This time it is 300 km westward, five hours on the road, with stops in iconic places. "
- "The rally carrying the symbols unites hundreds of people not indifferent to the fate of the country. Entire families in their cars are ready to travel half the country in any weather on Saturday to effectively and beautifully declare that peace and order in their own independent Belarus is important for them."



- “Yulia Artyukh, a STV host, a mother of several children and a regular on Saturday rallies, also hit the road. And before leaving, she talked with those who are not indifferent to the future of their country.”

### **ANTI-WEST NARRATIVES**

- “And more recently, they were lecturing and criticizing us. In the Odessa region, for example, three buses with bribed voters were found.”
- “According to Andrey Lesik, every day Ukraine is becoming more and more dependent on the West and has already turned from an independent industrial state into a raw materials satellite of Europe”.
- “The attempt to change the government in Belarus was made with the political and financial support of the West. This was stated by Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu at a meeting of the joint Collegium of the Defense Ministries of the Russian Federation and Belarus. At the same time, the minister noted that our country has been and remains the closest neighbor, reliable ally and strategic partner of Moscow.”
- “The prosperous Europe, used to lecturing giving us advice, seems to be in need of counsel itself. Countries, one after another, are slipping into the chaos of street riots. They are lavishly flavored with police batons, tear gas, and increasingly stringent restrictions.”
- “And, despite the fact that Polish women will be dispersed by the military police, a popular march “To Warsaw!” is announced throughout Poland tomorrow. The country is not just split now — it is on the verge of a popular anger explosion. This is what happens when, instead of caring for own people, one unapologetically meddles in the internal affairs of another country and encourages the neighbors to take against it.”
- “I mean, as neighbors, we feel sorry for Lithuania. There, the ruling party (well, the one that preached to the Belarusians about the recipe for success) lost its credit in its own country.”

### **CONTROLLED DIALOGUE**

- “The dialogue continues. Sites for preparing the agenda of the All-Belarusian People's Assembly have been created throughout the country. They collect proposals not only for the reform of the Constitution, but also for possible changes in all areas. ”
- “Students, workers, social activists, parents with many children joined the discussion. The spirit of the upcoming All-Belarusian Forum was felt in all regions ”.
- “Party building, local government and self-government, problems of providing people with electricity. On October 28, the issues of concern to Belarusians were discussed in the public reception of Belaya Rus.
- “From the proposals of ordinary people to real actions. Every day Denis Zhavoronkov is busy addressing various issues. There are more than five thousand people that make the constituency of the Novkinsky rural council. Today the schedule is to visit the elderly. They are the ones who especially need support.”
- “Everything will be as the Belarusian people decide. Aliaxandr Lukashenka has been repeating these words more than once in recent weeks. This, perhaps, is the essence of the

upcoming most important and, given the current situation, obviously, fateful political event."

### **FAILED STRIKES**

- "Something is telling me that these guys will soon have to doff the fancy MAZ-branded overalls, since they don't want to work. It will be just another statistically insignificant trifle for the company, and it will keep developing."
- "The Belarusians, of course, came out — however, contrary to expectations, they went to work, as on any other Monday of the year. Nobody wanted to stop the production. However, some decided to disrupt the educational process. Today, students (that is, those who have not worked a day in their lives) were at the forefront; also there were small groups of retired seniors (those who no longer work, but live off the welfare paid by those employed) in the streets. This is somewhat of a paradox. But there are no people at the industrial companies' gateways. More precisely, everyone is there, at their workplaces."
- "The third direction is sabotage and economic extremism. An attempt to sow discord into the workers groups and stop the production is not a strike. Strikes are supposed to follow certain laws and regulations. This here is a deliberate attempt to behead the competition." It is a pity that not all factory workers understand whose interests are best catered to by the downtime. However, they are an absolute minority — not even three percent, but a third of a percent at the most troubled enterprises."
- "There are messages and even pictures of industrial strikes on the Web and Telegram channels. All this, as it turned out, is far from being real: "Grodno Azot" is operating as usual. And the people, who act extras in the shots with the factory gateway in the background, for the most part, have nothing to do with this company."