

Spies and Traitors. KGB was the main supplier of Mankurts for State-run TV all week

Monitoring of State TV Narratives in Belarus

(29/03/2021 – 04/04/2021)

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”).

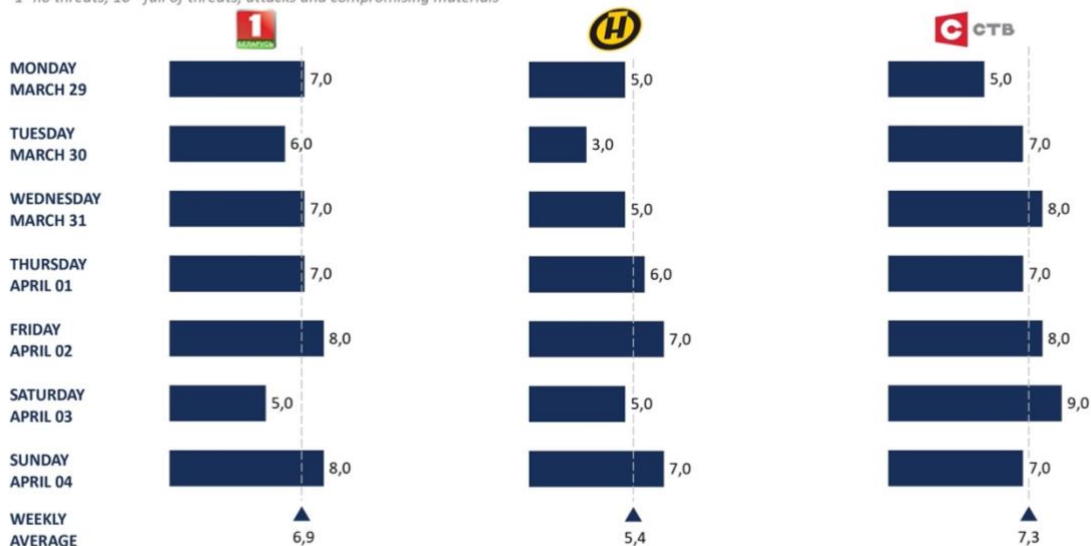
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During the week, ideological grooming in the news broadcasts of the state-run TV was based on the “Mankurt” documentary produced by the KGB and ONT. References to its content and individual fragments made up a significant part of the air on all channels.

- A STRIFE BETWEEN THE KGB AND "MANKURTS" BECAME ONE OF THE MAIN CONFLICTOGENITY NARRATIVES.
- DEMONSTRATION OF SPECIAL SERVICES' STRENGTH, BETRAYAL'S BLAMING AND DEFAMATION OF THE OPPOSITION CONTINUED

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 emphasis on the sensationalism of the materials was intended to highlight the great success and high professionalism of the special services, who are unstoppable.

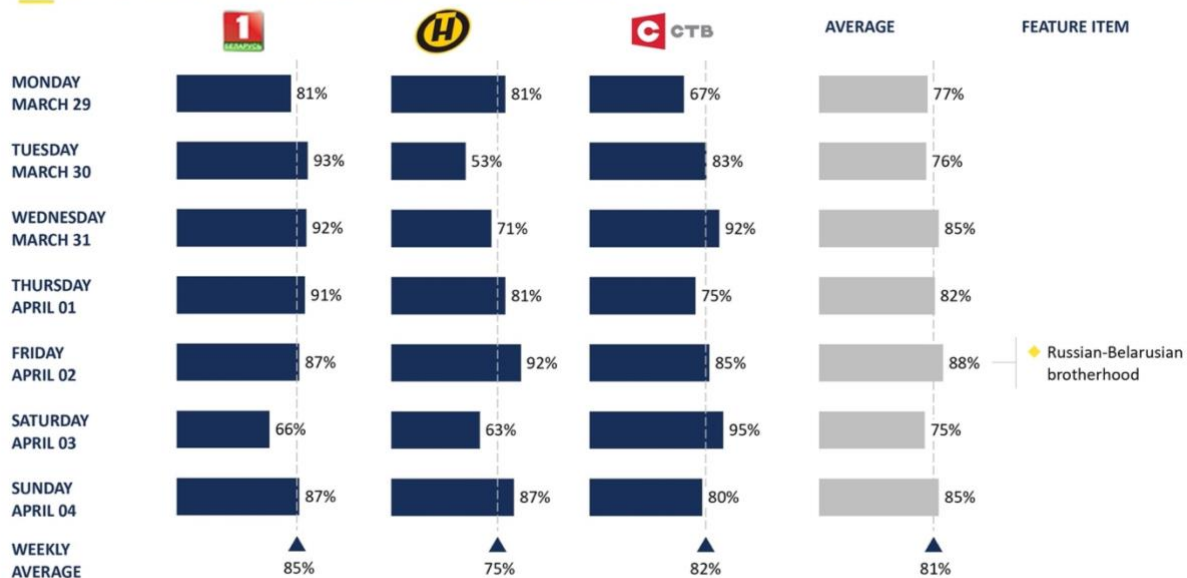
Main state channels again practiced preaching, acting as educators for the whole society or individual groups. After a break Yulia Artyukh returned with another monologue against the leaders of the opposition and Ukraine. After Shpakovsky and Begun, Voskresensky became the new stand-up regular of ONT.

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

One of the main narratives of the week was legislative rebuff to protests, toughening of legislation to counter extremism and “glorification of Nazism”, restricting media activities. The TV speakers expressed the hope that the tightening of laws would “discourage” resisting the authorities.

TOUGHENING OF LEGISLATION TO COUNTER EXTREMISM AND MEDIA RESTRICTIONS WERE MOTIVATED BY A DESIRE TO STOP THE RESISTANCE AGAINST THE AUTHORITIES. PRAISE OF THE RUSSIAN-BELARUSIAN BROTHERHOOD REACHED A NEW HIGH

THE SHARE OF STORIES WITH STRONGLY ARTICULATED IDEOLOGICAL NARRATIVE*

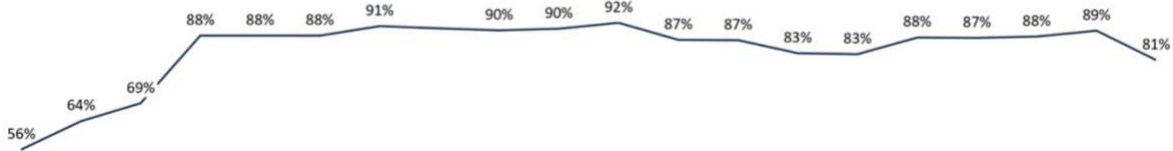


*STRONGLY ARTICULATED IDEOLOGICAL NARRATIVE - one or more key ideas that define the content of a news story (e.g., the inadmissibility of destabilizing the political situation).

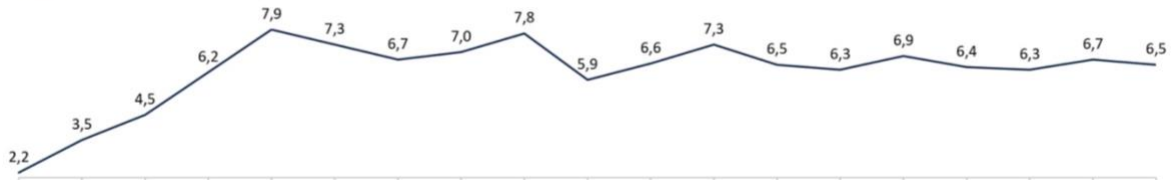
In addition to information warfare and legislative response, the state-run TV cranked up the military theme, including joint exercises with Russia. Praise of the Russian-Belarusian brotherhood reached a new high in such wordings as "sister countries" and even "two states - one motherland."

THE COVERAGE OF THE BELGAZPROMBANK CASE CONTINUES, WITH ESPECIAL EMPHASIS ON THE DIVIDENDS OF THE DEFENDANTS. ATTACKS TOWARDS TELEGRAM CHANNELS AND INDEPENDENT MEDIA PERSIST

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



AVERAGE CONFLICTOGENITY INDEX, by weeks



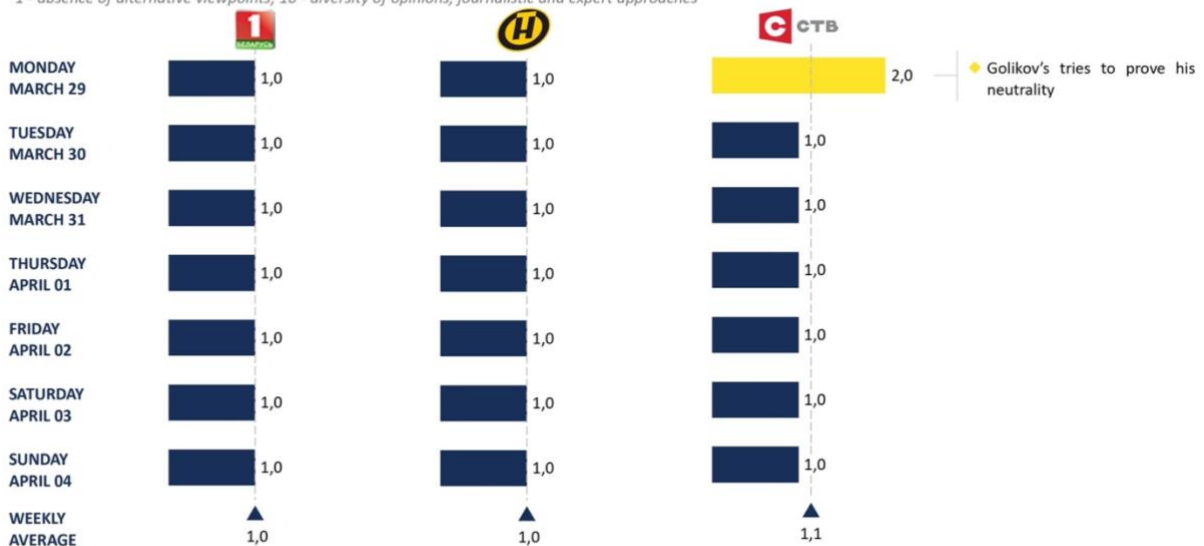
29.06 - 05.07 06.07 - 26.07 27.07 - 16.08 17.08 - 30.08 31.08 - 20.09 21.09 - 04.10 05.10 - 18.10 19.10 - 01.11 02.11 - 08.11 09.11 - 22.11 23.11 - 06.12 07.12 - 20.12 21.12 - 11.01 - 24.01 25.01 - 07.02 08.02 - 21.02 22.02 - 14.03 15.03 - 28.03 29.03 - 02.04

Strong presidency and concentration of the main powers with Lukashenka was assessed as the only possible way for Belarus in the 90s, a safeguard that prevented the “collapse” of the industry, and subsequent privatization and chaos. Accordingly, the outline of a possible reform of the Constitution were reduced to a smooth transfer of some powers while maintaining strict personal control over various areas, including land relations.

PLURALISM IN THE WEEK APPEARED ONLY IN THE STATEMENTS OF GOLIKOV ABOUT HIS OBJECTIVITY

PLURALISM INDEX*

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



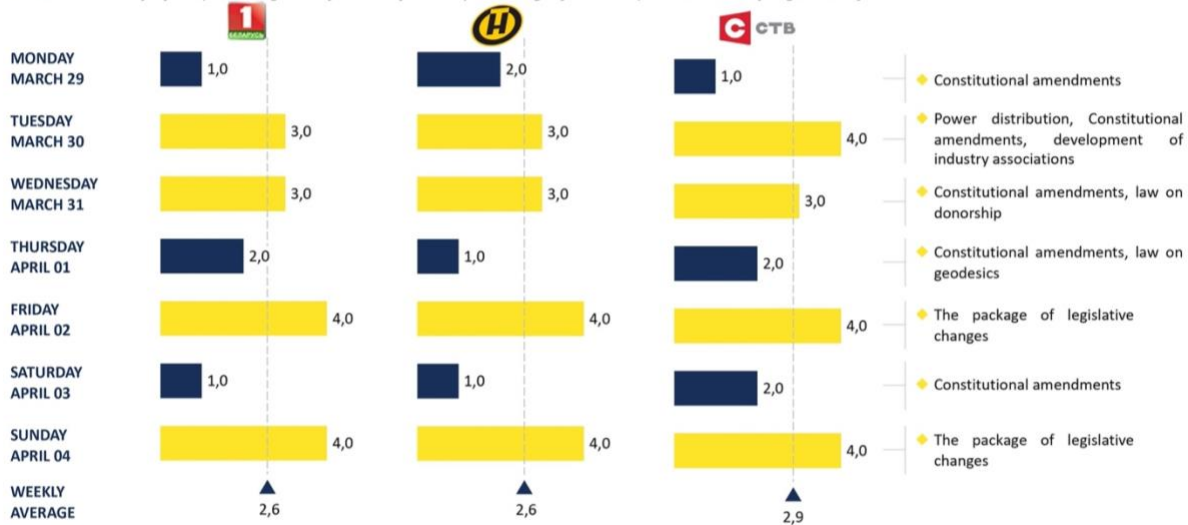
*PLURALISM INDEX - an indicator evaluating the share of critical reports and news stories citing opposing, critical, and other opinions alternative to the official rhetoric.

The package of legislative changes, the prospects for amending the Constitution and the consideration of citizens' proposals are the source of formally reformist messages on the air.

THE PACKAGE OF LEGISLATIVE CHANGES, CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS AND THE CONSIDERATION OF CITIZENS' PROPOSALS ARE THE SOURCE OF FORMALLY REFORMIST MESSAGES ON THE AIR

REFORM-ORIENTATION INDEX*

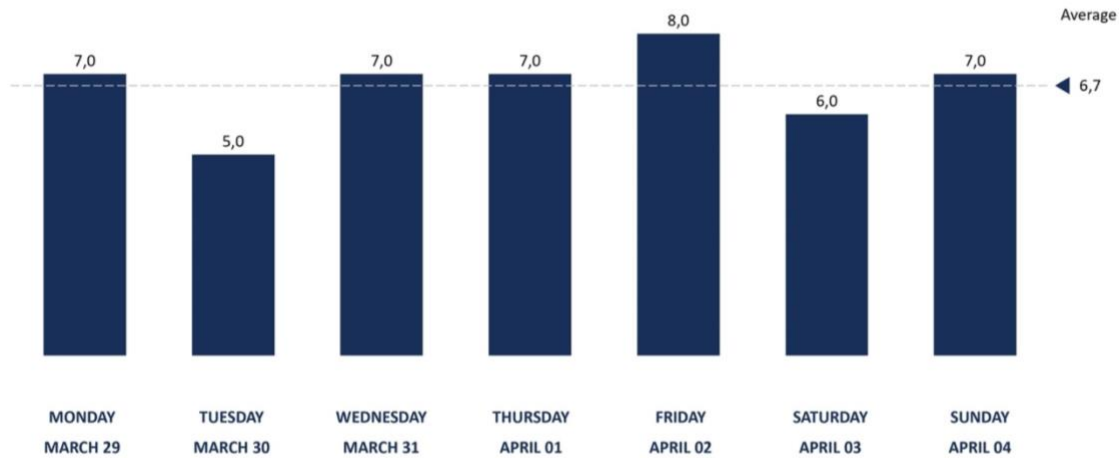
1 - abandonment of reforms; 10 - recognition of the need for a complete change of the model, announcement of large-scale reforms



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

MAIN STATE CHANNELS BROADCASTED THE SAME NARRATIVES, THE ONLY DIFFERENCES WERE IN THE ORDER OF TOPICS AND AUTHOR'S EDITORIALS. THE FILM FROM ONT WAS PROMOTED ON ALL STATE 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.

But in the vast majority of cases, it is only about polishing the existing setup.

The project “Monitoring of State TV Narratives in Belarus” is implemented by Sense Analytics in partnership with Press Club Belarus. The author of the weekly reports is Maxim Stefanovich, the editor and coordinator of the project is Artyom Shraibman.

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

APPENDIX 1 KEY NARRATIVES

MANKURTS BY KGB, ANTI-PROTEST NARRATIVES

- “This investigation has already shocked many of those who previously were the unbelievers and revealed the real truth. Special operation “Mankurt” by the Belarusian counterintelligence revealed a whole spy tangle. It has once again been confirmed that traces of certain foreign special services are visible behind the riots of our streets. ”
- “As a result, the recruited person finds himself in a desperate situation. He's waste. The article “Treason to the Motherland” and prison dungeons await him. Further, those who are addicted to their own greed or revolutionary euphoria are passed through the meat grinder of the merciless military machine.”
- “Mankurt” is someone taken captive, turned into a slave, who has renounced the past, future and oneself.”
- “It is no coincidence that the BYPOL initiative, which consists of former law enforcement officers, who (let's put it bluntly) betrayed their homeland, has mobilized at this very moment. They need radicalization of protests and a sacrifice. And this cannot be allowed. This opinion was shared with our channel by the editor-in-chief of the National Defense magazine, military expert Igor Korotchenko.”
- “Stepping on a rake and getting hit on the forehead is a favorite pastime of those who call themselves leaders of the Belarusian people.”
- “People who adhere to the same views as Dedok showed their true colors during the recent events. Anarchists were at the forefront of the protests. Firecrackers, Molotov cocktails, edged weapons — all this is everyday carry for them. The opposition and the so-called independent media call this species peaceful demonstrators, while the police have to deal with terrorists no less.”
- “Offshore companies and major dividends: the trial in the case of Belgazprombank top managers continues in the Moskovsky District Court.”
- “It is known that the detainee, a former military contractor, “leaked” the personal data of he officers to BYPOL. Until the fall of 2020, he served under a contract in Vitebsk and repeatedly traveled abroad for exercises as part of the special operations forces. However, he was fired for destructive views and participation in street protests.”
- “We need to unsubscribe from the likes of tut.by, “Country for Life” and Polish Telegram channels, and Belsat, because they are nothing but disgraced and lies every day.”

ANTI-WEST NARRATIVES

- “And while Zelensky is sitting in a luxurious office, streaming videos — and this seems to be one of the main functions of the President of Ukraine — people search through trash and garbage for food.”
- “The countries of the European Union are sounding the alarm again. The third wave of coronavirus, which has been officially acknowledged in the EU, is dealing another devastating blow to European healthcare and public life. ICUs are overwhelmed,

governments are introducing new restrictions, the order of movement within the Schengen borders is changing."

- "For those who tend to see exaggeration everywhere, we will mark one date on the calendar in red. On March 24, 1999, NATO air force stated bombing Yugoslavia. Hundreds of thousands of destroyed lives, thousands of bombs that destroyed hundreds of homes, schools, hospitals and bridges. "
- "The British continue a marathon of protests against the new police law. Demonstrations are taking place in many large cities of the country."
- "In the Netherlands, the police were also not shy about taming protest activity. The curfew, which is hated by the citizens, is still in place across the country."
- "This is called mirror measures in global diplomacy. A decree on the introduction of retaliatory sanctions was signed by the President today. "
- "The West is not the whole world yet. And the criticism voiced by Western states as a counterbalance is outweighed by those states and those partners that we have been able to acquire over the years of our independence."

IMPOSING PATRIOTISM, PRO-GOVERNMENT ACTIVISM

- "The sacred duty of every Belarusian is to defend our moral values and ideals, to convey the historical truth to the younger generation and to preserve our memory in stories and historical places".
- "We will build a society where no miserable individual will oppose himself to everyone else, imposing his insanity and perversion. Our building will stand on the solid stone of a real family. "
- "The Palace of Independence has become truly national venue. Tours of it have been offered for a long time. Guests are always welcome here, especially new ones."
- "Maxim Osipov report for the "Ploshchadka" today on how important it is to preserve the cultural code of the nation."
- "The leading university of the country has launched the campaign "The Year of National Unity". For one month, students, teachers and university staff were visiting the shrines of different confessions in Minsk, got acquainted with their specific traditions."
- "The environmental marathon is being held for the 14th time. The current campaign was timed to coincide with the Year of National Unity".

PATERNALISM, DIRIGISME

- "During the difficult transition period, there was no squandering of state property or the sale of mineral resources in Belarus. We also dodged blanket privatization. It is not a problem to slightly change the powers of the president, as some want."
- "Belarusian industrial flagships demonstrate solid performance. For example, BelAZ plans to boost its export by half times by the end of the quarter".
- "The state does not allow political speculators to drag the majority of apolitical citizens into chaos."
- "Today the work of grain growers is mechanized. Energy-rich equipment plays a significant role in the technologies of modern times".

- “Today the Prime Minister requested that the new complex of the Mozyr Oil Refinery be finished ASAP. More than forty types of petroleum products are produced here. Last year, almost 9 million tons of oil were processed.”
- “The state will help those institutions and collectives that are engaged in creative work. I said this today, the head of the Presidential Administration, Igor Sergeenko.”
- “Due to the negative impact of the pandemic on the growth of world prices, there are still risks of increasing the cost of socially important goods. Therefore, the anti-trust regulator decided to extend their regulation in Belarus until the end of June.”
- “Belarus is practically the only one among the countries of the post-Soviet space that has preserved state-owned companies that support people with disabilities.”

PRESIDENT’S CONSTITUTION, TIGHTER ANTI-PROTEST LAW

- “The events of the last year showed that our legislation is too liberal, unlike many foreign countries, which have long followed the path of tightening security-related legal provisions. New forms of extremism, radical activity and information aggression require a symmetrical response in the legal field ”.
- “And all decisions of parliamentarians should be replicated in society. After all, if one knows exactly what the telegram activity or recruitment entails, one might be less inclined to try and feel the swift response of the law.”
- “The wishes of the Belarusians, which will form the basis of the Basic Law, are collected all over the country.”
- “We must expand the list of symbols of Nazi extremist organizations.”
- “Someone will say: time has passed, it's time to change something. The President does not deny it. But, one way or another, the main powers will remain with the head of state. Alyaksandr Lukashenka stressed more than once during the main powers will remain with future president, so that no one tries to find some ambiguity here.”
- “The Constitution of Belarus directly enshrines the rights and guarantees of youth, at the same time there is not a word about obligations. Therefore, of course, we must talk about a certain obligation of youth in terms of preserving the state. All that is based, of course, on patriotism. Therefore, many proposals were related to the consolidation of the obligations of youth in the Constitution.”
- “The most discussed was the draft law on mass media. I do not agree that the law infringes on freedom of the media. On the contrary, the law ensures the right of citizens to receive reliable, complete information and to prevent manipulation of public consciousness.”

ALL STAKES OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

- “On the sidelines, the military say that the scale of the “Slavic Brotherhood” in terms of the number of military personnel and equipment will be exceeded this year. For a large-scale landing of a joint group of forces, today they are even expanding the landing site at the Brest training ground.”
- “Today the President gathered the top brass for a meeting to discuss issues of the socio-political situation. Last week, terrorist attacks were prevented in Minsk and in a military unit in Pechi, the trail of which leads to BYPOL.”

- "Officers are a special caste of people. There are only two kinds of activity that are called service - military and monastic."
- "If the country loses its scalpers, ecologists, editors, website admins, liberal lawyers, analysts from the pres-club and other smoothie-drinking intelligentsia — no biggie. Should the country lose its officers, it will cease to exist the same day."
- "In the light of recent events, NATO exercises near our borders, improving the combat readiness of the Special Services, and of all troops, is a must."

RUSSIAN VECTOR

- "Of course, there are still issues to be resolved, but today, during difficult times for the whole world, when the pandemic has exacerbated negative geopolitical trends, it became obvious that a friend is in trouble. And, being under unprecedented pressure from outside, Belarus and Russia once again showed an example of solidarity and determination to overcome any difficulties."
- "The only outstanding issues pertain to seven areas. The leaders of the two countries can sign the documents even before the fall."
- "Despite the resistance of the West and opposition of the then political elites. Having shown will, relying only on the opinion of their peoples, Lukashenka and Yeltsin decided to remove the borders."
- "Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov called the Eurovision organizers' approach to Belarus disgusting."
- "A quarter of a century, shoulder to shoulder. Belarus and Russia celebrate the day of unity."
- "The presidents also discussed our profession: interaction of central mass media and work in the field of information security."
- "An important role for increasing investment is played by the fact that we speak the same language, both literally and figuratively — we are talking about the convergence of legal fields."

GOVERNMENT'S SUCCESSFUL ANTI-COVID STRATEGY

- "The first stage of vaccination against COVID-19 is coming to an end in Gomel. Vaccinations are given to those most at risk of infection. These are healthcare workers, teachers and social workers. Russian and Chinese vaccines are used — both are effective."
- "Growth in the share of domestic medicines on the market and bottling of the Sputnik V vaccine. Today these issues were discussed at the Belmedpreparaty state-owned company."
- "The Belarusian Ministry of Health has assured that the situation will not be worse than in the fall. There should be fewer cases of ARVI, so there should not be a serious overlap of coronavirus on the seasonal rise in incidence. But there must be no leaving it to chance. Remember the protective measures. And stay healthy."
- Belmedpreparaty will release the first commercial batch of Sputnik V vaccine in mid-April, the Minister of Health said. The company will produce 500 thousand vaccines per month."