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Belarus: invisible self-organization and forced spontaneity

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Retrieved on 13th January 2022 from
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II. Demonstrations: forced spontaneity

Comrades report that there is almost no political groups visibly presented on the demonstrations. Marches themselves are of a great spontaneity. Even though initiative of the event and ideas of concrete routs of people's columns is usually promoted by the largest oppositional Telegram-channel NEXTA. On the ground there is often spontaneous discussion among protesters which way to take. From time to time result depends on whose suggestions are shouted louder and with more self-confidence.

From one side, this phenomenon marks certain independence of the protest from politicians. From another side there are some assumptions that sometimes police provocateurs use this spontaneity to forward columns by wrong directions or to the places where riot police ambushes are prepared.

There are several reasons for political groups being not visibly presented. One of them — generally poor level of oppositional forces in Belarus because of the years of repressions.

However there is more important reason. Anarchists tell that as soon as they try to put up their banners or flags — riot police is striking very soon precisely on them. It is likely happens after police agents in civilian who act among protesters inform their «colleagues» about some political groups appearance. The reason for this is clear — to prevent any organized political influence on a spontaneous mass of protesters.

Spontaneity — is the perfect start for the independent movement of the people. But for final offensive against the regime some organized forms are definitely required. If the way to such forms will be found? Maybe this is the most decisive question of today in Belarus.

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I. Neighborhood movement

There are few evidences of «yard protests» in Minsk in media. Actually it covers only a top of the iceberg. Neighborhood self-organizing against the regime is much broader. Usually people from a neighborhood create a chat in Telegram messenger to discuss current events and common actions. There are at least many dozens of such initiatives formed around chats appeared around Belarus in last month.

The most wide-spreaded common practice is to put white and red ribbons on a fence in a block-yard to create an image of alternative white-red-white «national flag». Usually such a composition lives not longer than a day. Then it is being destroyed by local authorities. However after a while ribbons are again at their place. Walking round Minsk neighborhoods in the evening you can see plenty of them. Sometimes local inhabitants perform «chain of solidarity», the line of people usually standing by the road with flags and sometimes with slogans.

In some neighborhoods people go further. They organize meetings, common freetime and also form local columns to join together weekly demonstration which happens every Sunday. In some quarters there is a meeting every day in the evening.

There are also ideas to organize «local self-defence». Now it mostly takes form of groups of scouts whose task is to warn their neighbors if police appears. Police usually intervenes during the local meetings demanding to remove flags and other symbolics and sometimes pushing locals to go home. Sometimes it results in confrontations and arrests.

The spreading of neighborhood initiatives is very inspiring as well as the fact that anarchists play an active role in some of them. Now it is important to implement among participants an understanding that such a structures can be not only temporary instruments of protest but also constant institutions of self-government.