

# **On the situation in Belarus. Eyewitness impressions**

Confederation of Revolutionary Anarcho-Syndicalists

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What can I say about the events? Now there is a lot of everything on the Internet, so it makes no sense to retell in detail. I can tell you based on the situation in Brest, where I live and the moods that I myself see.

The situation by August 16 was as follows: according to the information of the cops, about 850 people were detained; according to rumors, three civilians were killed, more than 50 people were seriously injured. The main arrests took place on the 9–12<sup>th</sup> (both locally and throughout the country): the security forces pressed all the detainees, both men and women. The first shot from a firearm, confirmed by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, was in Brest. The main crowd that offered resistance and clashed with the cops were fans of DB<sup>1</sup> (now sitting) and young people (about a hundred and 100 people). The main crowd was of young people from 16 to 30 years old, but there were older people too. Basically it was a peaceful protest, there was no aggression, there were no pogroms of shops. There were events in Pinsk and Kobrin, when on the evening of August 9 the local cops did not want to take active actions against the passive crowd and everything went quietly. However, the next day the cops were replaced by riot police, and as a result 1 man was killed (unofficially). There were manifestations in Baranovichi too.

In general, the geography of the protest went to agro-towns. From the 9<sup>th</sup>, Lenin Square was closed in the evenings, first cops were on duty there, then border troops, patrols from the Airborne Forces brigade were taken to the central streets. They are on duty on the rooftops, all with personal weapons. The security of warehouses with weapons of units located in Brest has also been strengthened.

After the batch on August 9–11, the repressive system collapsed and threw off the pace. The relatives of the beaten joined the protest, actions against violence began (they continue to this day), they stopped screwing.

### ***How it all began.***

Active hysteria on the part of the opposition began already before the elections. The main slogan is “Fair Elections”. After the mash of August 9–11, the tone changed and the protest became wider, and after the workers began to speak out, it got a new breath.

This is not a classical Belarusian opposition, this is a different movement now, but with the same “Zhyiye Belarus!” shouts<sup>2</sup>. In general, this mass is quite, let’s say, “peculiar”.

At the same time, there are also people who are against the arbitrariness of the cops, but do not want to stand under the white-red-white flags of the opposition. The entire middle class is in favor of “Change”, but what they mean by this, only few people understand.

At the same time, the average person can often be both “For” and “Against”.

Personally, I would like a different agenda, and not nonsense about “Elections”. I would like social activity. This crowd did not resist against the increase in the retirement age, but they are ready to be beaten for elections! Nonsense.

So, without an adequate agenda, it is better to just watch what is happening, but such an agenda is not yet visible<sup>3</sup>. And of course, the actions of the security forces can only be condemned angrily

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<sup>1</sup> Dynamo Brest soccer club. There are various fan companies inside, but they are all under the hood of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

<sup>2</sup> “Long live Belarus!”, nationalist slogan of opposition

<sup>3</sup> On the 17<sup>th</sup>, in the demands of the workers of Belaruskali, the requirement appeared to abolish the contract system which is as a form of intimidation. Since 1999, all workers don’t have stable workplace, but a contract for

— this is clear and correct. Hell was going on in the police department and paddy wagons ... This is really some kind of Gestapo, but the courts were held like under Stalin ... I know this from friends. 7000 detainees are a lie, there really are more.

There are videos on the web showing some protesters hugging cops. They are already being criticized for this, as well as for the fact that the slogan “Police with the people” is still used.

Life does not teach fools.

As for the elections, this is, by the way, a different question. The head of the Central Election Commission, Lidia Yermoshina, has already announced that it will not be possible to recount the votes, since the ballots were burned.

The campaign “Stop Cockroach” (name given to Lukashenka by the opposition) started even earlier, and was activated by Tikhanovsky, the husband of opposition candidate Svetlana Tikhanovskaya, who is now in Lithuania.

Generally speaking, Tikhanovsky’s blogging did a lot, his “Country for Life” channel did a lot to reveal the problems of the Belarusian hinterland.

Blogging in general has been actively involved in the life of the country for more than 4 years. At the same time, the most active are now under arrest, they were “closed” before the elections, when the repressions began, but it have now become massive. Then the representatives of the candidates were detained and sent for a day under arrest, just like that.

And the authorities raised the fines. And our fines are wild. According to rumors of one employee, not only did the cops beat him at the rally on the 10<sup>th</sup>, they also issued a fine — 20 “basic” wage<sup>4</sup> (540 rubles) — that’s almost two-thirds of his salary.

## ***About Lukashenka’s actions***

It looks like he was really scared. Even “Almaz” and “Alpha”, anti-terrorist special forces, were brought out in Minsk, and the experience of December 2010 suggested that it could work. But it was clear that a lot of people really come to the opposition rallies, so there simply will not be enough forces for the whole country. Therefore, the two-day punitive “education” did not give the result required by the authorities.

Will the protesters succeed in overthrowing Lukashenka? I don’t think so, since there is no one to throw it off in reality. But the riot police have preferences here, houses and support from the State, so what will they do?

In 1996–1997 there was a constitutional crisis. The impeachment process was launched, there were protesting deputies, there were a lot of things. Now everything is diffuse and floating and it is difficult to beat the regime.

Complete idiocy!

At the same time, Lukashenka is behaving openly stupidly and inadequately. On the 16<sup>th</sup>, he held a rally in Minsk with his supporters brought from the outskirts. As expected, the rally was gathered in a teaspoon. And he said nothing new.

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determine time. Each employee before the end of the contract is in fear that the employer may not renew the contract with him, or will offer a new one, but already on worse working conditions.

<sup>4</sup> The “base unit” is now 27 rubles. This unit is the amount from which the subsistence minimum is formed, the payment of fines, duties and other taxes.

As they say, it would be better for him not to spend at all. All his actions are a continuous inversion.

Of course, the history with coronavirus also played a role; many were humiliated by such behavior of the authorities, especially with regard to schools and business support.

In general, the mask topic is not particularly relevant, since the state did not press, but many in the localities did. But in general, this crap touched the country more via the Internet. In some factories and enterprises, people were sent on a downtime or on vacation. Trade and service and catering have sagged a lot, but now everyone does not care. But Lukashenka was criticized for not pushing through the wearing of muzzles, and it was those who are now protesting.

I think he lost some points on this, while he laughed and was rude to those who died from this virus, but over time he recognized the danger, though only economic.

By the way, about the stuffing, that opposition rallies are “paid for”, that people are paid to participate in them: Belarus is actually a closed country, here the mouse will not slip, let alone money for such a crowd, the border is no longer a castle, but you can enter the city only by registration.

Lukashenka done things himself ... added fuel to the fire. Now he got for this – but unfortunately not for things he really deserved and not from those people have real reasons to doing so ... But he was always the same as now.

In general, he made a lot of mistakes, he hoped for the authoritarian vertical. At the same time, the vertical of lower power has sagged and does not know what to do. This is evident from the fact that the heads of the city committees run away or hide. The power crisis is growing.

By the way, Lukashenka now has the main program: without me, the country will be ruined. Whether he will decide to crush the protest by force, that is, to act even harder than it was on the 9–11, is not yet clear. But he definitely wasted time.

There is no legitimacy. Whether his orders will be followed is unclear. He can introduce an emergency. But time is working against him. Lukashenka is not de Gaulle of 1968.

On August 15, Lukashenka said that Putin had promised him military assistance from Russia to ensure the security of Belarus. I wonder in what form this “help” will be. Chief redactor of Russian Today, Simonyan has already spoken out.

The events of the last days are a lesson for the population. After all, the youth who are coming out against Lukashenka now are the youth who were born and raised under his rule.

## ***On the opposition rally on the 16<sup>th</sup> in Brest***

On August 16, a pro-government rally was held on Lenin Square, and in the evening, a rally of – opposition. After the opposition rally, a crowd of thousands marched through the city center along the roadway. They picketed the pre-trial detention center. The riot police that day did not interfere.

By the way, the parties “Hramada”<sup>5</sup> and the UCP<sup>6</sup> do not show themselves for working with the crowd, so everyone is driven only by emotions.

First impressions from those who attended the opposition rally: the movement is predicted an imminent demise, since there are no leaders or current slogans. People began to disperse even

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<sup>5</sup> Belarusian Social Democratic Party (Hramada), aka BSDP (Hramada).

<sup>6</sup> United Civil Party (UCP) – liberal conservatives.

before the end of the meeting. At the same time, the rally was attended by the activists of local parties.

Officials call to solve the problem in their offices, but this is a mistake. It is necessary to press while they are weak. This people cannot be found from the 10<sup>th</sup>.

Not everyone has been released yet and there is no information at all about many of them, and the relatives are shocked. The prosecutor promises to help, the mayor promised to help, but this is not a demand that would be formalized, but a chant of the crowd. There were proposals to take the mayor and go to the pre-trial detention center, but no one supported him.

If someone thinks that Lukashenka is already read to fly away, then they are very mistaken. It seems to me that the System can recover quickly.

So when the “whites” (the color of protest) found out that the workers were stirring, that information about the strike, etc. emerged, they were very happy, since it is clear that this whole protest in the existing form will not last long.

## ***Situation in the economy***

Meanwhile, the country's economy is in an obvious crisis, we live worse and worse. Salaries have not been raised for a long time.

By the way, there are not many enterprises in Brest, since the industry in our city has long died.

Today, the railway depot is part-time, everything related to passenger transportation has only intra-republican load, no compensation for such a mode of operation is expected. Salaries in this industry have not been raised for a long time. A few profitable enterprises, Santa, Savushkin, Meat Processing Plant, are export-oriented and keep afloat, but workers often have low wages, with hard work and very flexible hours. But the fact that they are producing best-selling products guarantees timely wages.

The gas stove plant (Brestgazoapparat, Hephaestus and Hephaestus Quartz) also has a low salary; because of the coronavirus they spent their holidays, and now they are slowly starting to work. The work is stable, but the salary is not high and varies by shop.

There are many woodworking enterprises. The situation is different for them. It depends on capital and owner. The average salary for furniture is from 400 to 800 rubles.

Sewing production collapsed due to the closure of borders, the import of raw materials and the sale of goods, because of this it is idle.

Summer and winter are different. Heating plays a big role, plus how much is prescribed and whether you exceed the consumption limits.

In general, for a two-chamber-apartment for a family of two, people pay 75 Belarusian rubles, or 100 or a little more in winter. This is without the Internet and mobile communications. That is, a communal apartment for two is about 120–130 Belarusian rubles, or 3,600 in terms of Russian rubles. But if you add a child, then everything increases.

This adds clothing, school, kindergarten, food, and the same payment for the mobile.

Strictly speaking, for a man in Brest a salary of 700 rubles is just a dream. Women traditionally receive less, if they are not seamstresses who mow on a deal during the season, that is, they try to make the most during this period, working on a flexible schedule, seven days a week, etc. This is generally Hell.

In cities near Brest, there is generally an ass. Zhabinka — there is only a sugar factory and a railway station, plus budget offices. In Ivatsevichi, there are woodworking and prison. There, in general, the ass is complete. If we take the food sector, then they bring to Santa from the surrounding villages. And they go to Brest to work from Zhabinka, which is 30 km away.

That is, labor migration from the surrounding area is active, plus trade in goods from Ukraine and to Ukraine. They live on the difference, but only now the border is closed.

There are many recruiting firms to work in Poland ...

As for pensions, this is generally genocide, 400–450 rubles. For women, this is the typical.

At one time I myself lived in an area where almost only pensioners live. Accordingly, I often saw how they live, what they buy, what they sometimes sell, how they calculate the communal flat, bringing in an amount equal to a penny for housing and communal services. The pensions of the military and cops, of course, are higher ...

Well, I will also add about the construction sector. It is mainly state-owned. Salaries there were quite good in the mid-2000s and until 2014, and now it has become very bad. Therefore, many people go to work in Poland.

Well, the prices per square meter of housing (what to buy, what to get a loan for this purpose) are simply not lifting. Without a loan, nowhere.

At the same time, since the salary is small, they will not give a loan for it, and therefore you have to take an aggregate loan, that is, a general loan for the income of the whole family. And then the entire salary will go to the monthly loan payment. In this case, parents help.

And in general, people from want often get into credit dependence.

And finally, I will add one more thing about the situation at Gomselmash (Gomel). There the salary is 300 rubles. in winter, and 600 R. in other months. It's a penny! It's time to really fucking get out here.

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*A resident of Brest talks about the situation in this Belarusian city, about the protests and the socio-economic situation in the country*

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