

MEDIA MONITORING
“2006 Presidential Election Coverage in Belarusian Media”

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MEDIA MONITORING
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**PRESENTATION OF THE ELECTION AND ITS POLITICAL SUBJECTS IN
BELARUSIAN MEDIA ON THE EVE OF CANDIDATES’ REGISTRATION**

(January 16 – January 27, 2006)

Bulletin #1

Issued on January 30, 2006

Minsk, Belarus

1. Introduction

This report summarizes the data of ten days period’s (*from January 16 to January 27, 2006 included*) monitoring of the Belarusian electronic and printed media from the perspective of the 2006 presidential election coverage.

According to the schedule of the Central Election Commission of the Republic of Belarus the monitored period included such activities as collecting signatures for prospective *candidates for the Presidency* at their most active phase. These activities ended with submitting of signatories’ sheets to the Central Election Commission on January 27, 2006.

Given below is an analysis of electronically processed data for the period mentioned above. Taking into account the importance of this period we also monitored *In the Focus of Attention* weekly programme of the Belarusian TV (National Channel 1), which gave a special item summarizing signatures’ collection campaign conducted by the prospective *candidates for the Presidency*.

2. Summary of Findings

- During the monitored period election news items and election-related topics were far from being a priority for the state-owned electronic and printed media. In the meantime, in the same media there was dominant a positive representation of *just one candidate* for the Presidency, that of *Alexander Lukashenka*, the current President of the country. As for the *other prospective candidates* they were either absent in the State owned media or just mentioned.
- The same media did not practically cover the signatures’ collection campaign. As for the the special item in the weekly programme of the Belarusian TV (National Channel 1) mentioned above, it covered the end of signatures’ collection campaign in an extremely biased way.
- During the monitored period a number of “media effects” (cases of non-professional coverage being in contradiction with internationally recognized standards and principles of journalist’ ethics) were detected in the State media.
- Non-State owned press, in its turn, presented a quite wide picture of this period of election campaign. At the same time different independent newspapers gave clear preference to one of the two prospective candidates from opposition forces, either to Mr. A. *Kazulin* or to Mr. A. *Milinkievich*.

All these findings are elaborated on in the following sections.

3. Main findings

3.1 *Electronic media*

The cumulative sheet of monitoring ONT (Nationwide TV – *Our News* program) has shown that presidential election news items and election-related topics were far from being a priority for it. Only 1 min. 10 sec. was given to the coverage of this topic. The programme paid major attention to social issues of the Belarusian society (*Social Sphere* rubric took up 1 hour 10 min. 25 sec or 27,9% of the total time) as well as to foreign policy and economics. As for the signatures' collection campaign it was not covered at all.

No one prospective candidate for the Presidency, either democratic or not, except Mr. *Lukashenka*, was mentioned. The picture of the Belarusian political reality as represented by the programme did not contain the political opposition of the country either.

Thus, the main actor was Mr. *A. Lukashenka*. ONT Channel (the same program) allocated almost 90% of its total time to the President. (The other covered election process subjects were only the *Central Election Commission, observers from CIS and western observers.*) The program depicted him in a positive, very positive (66 times) or neutral (13 times) way. No one time the current President was mentioned negatively.

The same trends while covering the presidential campaign were evident in the regional TV news programs either. Namely, the talk is about the dominance of social and economic topics over all the others, no information on signatures' collection campaign and no other prospective candidates present, except *A. Lukashenka*.

As for the election issues as covered by Channel 1 of the National Radio ("*Radio-fact*" news program), they took up 5% of the program's total time. To compare, *Social sphere* rubric and *Weather* were allocated 13,2% and 8% of the program's total time respectively. The *President* of the country, who was portrayed in a positive or neutral manner, took up almost 50% of program's time, if to compare him with other monitored political subjects. No one alternative candidate was mentioned. In the meantime, the *opposition*, represented in non-personified way, took up 13,7% of program's total time. And it was depicted in exclusively negative manner.

3.2 *Printed Media*

The State owned daily *Sovetskaja Belorussia (SB)* gave to the *President* 80,2% of space in the materials dedicated to the monitored political subjects. Two other prospective candidates *A. Milinkievich* and *Z. Pazniak* (who has already refused to take part at the election) took up 0,7% of the newspaper's space every one respectively. The other *pretenders* to the Presidency were not mentioned. *A. Milinkievich* and *Z. Pazniak* were depicted in a neutral way and the *President* was portrayed either positively or neutrally.

The other State owned daily *Zvezda* represented the named candidates in the same way. However, it mentioned also another candidate *Mr. Gajdukievich* and allocated to him 0,02% of its space in the materials dedicated to the election related topics.

The non-State newspapers *Narodnaja Volia* and Russian *Komsomolskaja Pravda v Belarusi* gave a quite wide picture of the election process and covered practically all monitored subjects.

As their political favourite both newspapers chose the prospective candidate *Mr. A. Kazulin*. "Media-rating" of all pretenders to the Presidency according to *Narodnaja Volia* looks as follows
1) *A. Kazulin* – 18,7% of the newspaper's space in the materials dedicated to the political

subjects, 2) *A. Lukashenka* – 13,3%, 3) *A. Milinkievich* – 2,4%, 4) *Z. Pazniak* – 0,9%, 5) *S. Skrabiec* – 0,6%, 6) *V. Fralou and S. Gajdukievich* – 0,2% every one.

The same “rating” according to *Komsomolskaja Pravda v Belarusi* is as follows 1) *A. Kazulin* – 31,01% of the newspaper’s space in the materials dedicated to the political subjects, 2) *S. Skrabiec* – 13,08%, 3) *A. Lukashenka* – 4,59%, 4) *A. Milinkievich* – 2,21%, 5) *S. Gajdukievich* – 2,19%, 6) *Z. Pazniak* – 1,33%, 7) *V. Fralou* – 0,21%.

Both newspapers portrayed Mr. *A. Kazulin* positively or neutrally. As for *A. Lukashenka*, *Narodnaja Volia* represented him in a neutral, critical and positive way. *Komsomolskaja Pravda* depicted him in a neutral manner only. All other candidates were portrayed in a neutral way by both newspapers.

Independent weekly *Nasa Niva* dedicated much more space to Mr. *A. Milinkievich* than to any other candidate, but it wrote also about all others. All the candidates, with the exception of several negative references as regards *A. Lukashenka*, were represented in a neutral way.

As for the monitored State owned regional newspapers, they wrote about *A. Lukashenka* only.

4. Media Effects

During the monitored period a number of cases of non-professional and extremely tendentious coverage of presidential election related topics were detected.

Here are some examples from *In the Focus of Attention* weekly program of the Belarusian TV (National Channel 1). These cases are really interesting because they give a picture of how the program summarized the results of the signature’s collection campaign.

At the very beginning of the item presenter said that Mr. *A. Lukashenka*’s team collected much more signatures for him than any other team for any other candidate – around 2 million: “*The figures the other pretenders have are of another order limit. One of the pretenders even contrived to gather 700 signatures only. The others are not far from him*” (*In the Focus of Attention program, National TV Channel 1 – 29.01.06*).

The names of other *prospective candidates* (*A. Milinkievich, A. Kazulin and S. Gajdukievich*) as well as the fact that their teams managed to collect more than the minimum of 100 000 signatures necessary for registration, were not disclosed.

Further on presenter stated: “*...these modest figures could be even smaller. Nowadays the Central Election Commission receives a bulk of complaints from citizens who were swindled during the signatures’ collection campaign. They were told that signatures were collected in favor of the current President, while they were collected in favor of an absolutely different candidate*” (*In the Focus of Attention program – 29.01.06*). As an example of fraud an interview with a student was shown. And indignant girl student wants to make known family name of that candidate whose team swindled her. At this moment evident tape editing interrupts her and a family name was not told.

Reporter puts a question: “*What drives candidates for the presidency to the swindle?*” and she gives an answer: “*Having an understanding that in reality they have nothing to oppose to the current authorities and that their chance of victory is rather illusive, candidates did everything to leave the presidential campaign struggle*”.

As a result of journalist's research reporter discloses why the prospective candidates resort to swindle and why they want "to leave the presidential campaign struggle": "And if they would say that they did not manage to collect even several percents of signatures needed for registration or about that the only way to have signatures of Belarusians is to introduce themselves as members of the Presidential team... If to tell about that then at once the myth about awful deeds of the regime will crumble... and they will lose the sources of financing" (In the Focus of Attention program – 29.01.06).

Thus, the audience had to have an impression that only the *Lukashenka's* team managed to collect the necessary number of signatures. And as for the other candidate's teams their members used to collect signatures in a fraudulent way by introducing themselves as representatives of A. *Lukashenka*.

It is evident that the passages have nothing to do with professional standards and principles of journalist's ethics. In the meantime they are evidence of disinformation and propaganda approach to the election campaign coverage.

5. Conclusions

5.1 The "quiet" presidential election campaign as it is was covered in the State owned media in this period shows that the same media concentrated on one person only, that of the current President.

5.2 The President was represented in a positive, extremely positive or neutral way.

5.3 The other pretenders to the Presidency were practically absent in the same media. Accordingly those people who consider the State owned media as the only true source of information could have an objective or any information as regards *alternative candidates*.

5.4 The President of the country was portrayed as the only real candidate and opposition candidates as having no electoral support in the Belarusian society.

5.5 The State owned electronic and printed media ignored the political opposition (different political parties and alliances) and, even if covering its activities represented it in a non-personified and extremely negative way.

5.6 Non-State owned press presented a quite wide picture of this period of election campaign. At the same time different independent newspapers gave clear preference to one of the two prospective candidates from opposition forces, either to Mr. A. *Kazulin* or to Mr. A. *Milinkievich*.

**MEDIA MONITORING:
“2006 Presidential Election Coverage in the Belarusian Mass Media”**

**POLITICAL SUBJECTS’ REPRESENTATION IN THE BELARUSIAN MEDIA PRIOR
TO THE CANDIDATES’ REGISTRATION**

(January 28 — February 10, 2006)

Bulletin #2

Issued on February 13, 2006

Minsk, Belarus

1. Introduction

This Report summarizes the monitoring results from the Belarusian electronic and print media coverage of the 2006 Presidential Election in Belarus and presents an analysis of electronically processed data from *28 January to 10 February 2006*.

At this period the Central Election Commission verified signatures collected by the initiative groups of potential *candidates for the Presidency*. As it is known, 4 initiative groups by prospective candidates *S. Gajdukievich, A. Kazulin, A. Lukashenka* and *A. Milinkievich* submitted signatories’ sheets to the Central Election Commission. And at the same period the potential candidates made their income and property statements.

2. Summary of Findings

- As previously, the President of the Republic of Belarus and potential candidate *A. Lukashenka* remained the main political subject in all State owned media, which represented him in a predominantly positive or extremely positive manner.
- The same media did not give any portraits of alternative pretenders for the Presidency. In a way an exception was *A. Milinkievich* whose image in the State owned media has started acquiring negative traits.
- At the same time the State-run electronic media allocated more time to *the opposition* as a non-personified subject, which was portrayed in a negative or extremely negative way.
- And some new intentional TV-projects appeared to be part of prime time. One of them is called “*For Belarus*”. Being a series of pop-concerts staged in the biggest Belarusian cities, it has been launched by *ONT (All-National TV)*. The project makes little doubt as for which of the pretenders it is meant to support. In the meantime, it should be noted that the project has been started prior to the official registration of candidates.
- In the State owned media there increased also the number of extreme opinions upon different subjects of the electoral process. There are more appreciations as regards *A. Lukashenka* and more discrediting opinions upon the *opposition* and *A. Milinkievich*.

These monitoring results are elaborated in the following sections.

3. Main Results

3.1. Electronic Mass Media

The most active phase of election process being approached the State owned electronic media increased their coverage of the *Central Election Commission's* activities and *opposition*. They also launched three special TV projects, a series of pop-concerts “*For Belarus*” (ONT), “documentary” *Agent 590* and a series of propaganda films called *Spiritual War (The First National Channel – BT)*.

Thus, the aggregate monitoring form (28.01 – 10. 02. 06) of *Our News* program broadcast at the *All-Nation TV channel* (ONT) shows that the time allocated to *the Central Election Commission* increased by 6 times to compare with the previous period (16. 01 – 27. 02. 06). However, if previously *the Central Election Commission* was characterized in a neutral way only, at this period of monitoring it was represented in both neutral and positive manner. For the first time ever, the program disclosed the existence of *opposition*, which was depicted in a non-personified and exclusively negative way.

Another news program *Panorama* (04 – 10. 02. 06) broadcast at the *First National Channel – BT*, in its turn continued representing the *opposition* in a predominantly negative or extremely negative way. And as for the films mentioned above, the *opposition* was depicted there in sinister tones.

The similar coverage trends are also evident with *Radio-Fact* news program broadcast at the *First Channel of the National Radio* (30. 01 – 10. 02. 06). Thus, to compare with the previous period the program almost doubled the time devoted to the *opposition*. And it was characterized in an exclusively negative way.

As for the potential candidates, *Our News* program devoted 10 sec. to A. *Milinkievich* and A. *Kazulin* per everyone, 15 sec. to S. *Gajdukievich* and almost half an hour or 63, 56% of its time to A. *Lukashenka*.

The news program *Panorama* devoted 0,2% of time to A. *Milinkievich*, 0,02% to A. *Kazulin* and S. *Gajdukievich* per everyone and almost 43% to A. *Lukashenka*. More attention paid to A. *Milinkievich* is explained by the fact that in difference of A. *Kazulin* and S. *Gajdukievich* mentioned in a neutral way he was also treated in a negative way. No time the same program mentioned A. *Lukashenka* in a negative manner. 10 times he was treated in a neutral way and 88 times was portrayed in a positive light.

Radio-Fact news program tended to create the same “portraits” of potential candidates.

3.2. Print Media

In difference of the State-run electronic media the most influential State owned periodicals *Sovietskaya Byelorussia* (SB) and *Zvezda* (31. 01 – 10. 02. 06) used much more simplistic way to represent the subjects of election process. They wrote nothing about *opposition*, A. *Kazulin* and S. *Gajdukievich*. Just *Sovietskaya Byelorussia* gave 0,7% of its space to A. *Milinkievich*, but portrayed him negatively. It goes without saying that A. *Lukashenka* was the major figure in both newspapers. For example, *Zvezda* devoted 76,3% of space to him among other subjects of election process.

As before, the independent press gave much wider picture of election process and its actors. In difference of the State owned press the non-State newspapers wrote about practically all potential candidates.

Narodnaja Volia (30. 01 – 07. 02. 06) devoted 20,3% to A. Lukashenka, 8,77% to A. Kazulin and 6% to A. Milinkievich of its space in the materials, where subjects of election process were described or mentioned. The newspaper represented A. Lukashenka in a neutral and negative way, A. Kazulin in a positive and neutral manner and A. Milinkievich in a neutral and positive tone.

The same “rating” according to *Komsomolskaja Pravda v Belarusi* (28. 01 – 10. 02. 06) is as follows A. Milinkievich – 30,7%, A. Lukashenka – 23,4%, A. Kazulin – 14,4% and S. Gajdukievich – 7,0% of the newspaper’s space in the materials dedicated to the political subjects. A. Milinkievich and A. Lukashenka were represented both neutrally and positively and A. Kazulin and S. Gajdukievich in a neutral way only.

Independent weekly *Nasa Niva* gave 49,08% to A. Milinkievich, 24,97% to A. Kazulin, 24,79% to A. Lukashenka and 0,26% to S. Gajdukievich of its space in the materials dedicated to the monitored political subjects. A. Milinkievich was portrayed in a neutral and positive tones. A. Kazulin and A. Lukashenka were represented neutrally and negatively. And S. Gajdukievich was mentioned in a neutral way.

No extreme positive or negative characteristics as regards different subjects of election process were detected in the independent press. In the meantime, plenty of such cases were evident in the State owned electronic and print media.

4. Media Effects

The First National TV Channel – BT, “Panorama” program – 04. 02. 06. Item is based on interview on direct air with Mr. M. Lazavik, secretary of the *Central Election Commission*. Journalist says, that a TV viewer called (!) to the studio to comment the interview – (*it should be known that Belarusian TV does not practice calls of the audiences on political issues*). At the end the call turned out to be a staged one. The structure of the comment’s text and intonations of a “viewer” made it evident that a text was written in advance and just read.

Our News program broadcast at the *All-Nation TV channel* (ONT) on 09. 02. 06. An item says that the Coordination Council of a number of (pro-governmental) parties and public organizations discussed an issue of participating of their representatives at the work of different election commissions. Further on presenter says: “*Just today there was also adopted a joint resolution to support political and economic course implemented by the current President of the country Aliaksandr Lukashenka*”. Was that resolution meant to make an impression among the viewers that election commissions have been composed of reliable people who support “*political and economic course implemented by the current President of the country*”?

Radio-Fact news program broadcast at the *First Channel of the National Radio* on 02. 02. 06. The program’s item is called “*New Stage of the Election Campaign: Our Comment*”. A journalist states: “*The opposition does not like its people*”, “*The goal of the opposition is to do as much harm as it is possible*”. No comment.

(ONT – *All-Nation TV channel*) project called “*For Belarus*” is a series of pop-concerts staged in the biggest Belarusian cities. The project makes little doubt as for which of the pretenders it is meant to support. Singer Ilona Bronievickaja says: “*...I was happy, I had a real honour to be at the stage of “Slavianski Bazar”. Aliaksandr Grigorievich made his appearance. He presented to*

us bunches of flowers and embraced all of us. Oh, my God, I thrilled with delight! I love Belarus. For Belarus!” In the meantime, it should be noted that the project has been started prior to the official registration of candidates.

The serial “*Spiritual War*”, film II, “*Empire of Satan*”, the First National TV Channel – BT is dedicated to the United States of America, the country, which “*has become a torn wound at the body of the Christian world. In this country worshiping to Satan has become an open cult*”. Almost at the very beginning of the film there makes his appearance one of the potential candidates for the Presidency A. Milinkievich. A voice says: “*they are ready...in a lackey way to implement any wish of governors of this country*”.

To take into account the context of another “documentary” *Agent 590*, which discloses secret plans of foreign special services (mostly Polish ones) against Belarus, there become much more expressive the intuitions by P. Jakubovich, editor-in-chief of the Presidential daily *Sovietskaya Byelorussia*, who writes: “... *I cannot get rid of a feeling that, despite his respective exterior, Milinkievich is a dangerous man*” (SB – 07.02. 06).

5. Conclusions

5.1 As previously, the State owned electronic and print media imposed the positive image of just one potential candidate for the Presidency.

5.2 The alternative pretenders to the Presidency were practically absent in the same media. In a way an exception was A. Milinkievich, an extremely negative image of whom the State-run media started creating.

5.3 At the same time the State owned electronic media increased the time devoted to a non-personified subject “opposition”, which is portrayed in a negative or very negative light.

5.4 There increased also the number of media effects in the State owned electronic and print media.

5.5 The appearance of new and widely advertised TV projects aired on prime time is indicative of the beginning of campaign launched against the Belarusian opposition and its leader. These projects show also that the election campaign in favor of the current President has stepped into more active phase.

5.6 Independent press demonstrated restrained approach towards the representation of potential candidates. In addition, it gave a quite wide picture of the election process and its different actors.

MEDIA MONITORING:
“Presidential Election 2006 Coverage in the Belarusian Mass Media”

**THE CANDIDATES AND OTHER POLITICAL SUBJECTS’ REPRESENTATION IN
THE BELARUSIAN MEDIA PRIOR TO THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION 2006**
(February 11 — February 21, 2006)

Bulletin #3

Issued on February 23, 2006
Minsk, Belarus

4. Introduction

This Report summarizes the monitoring results from the Belarusian electronic and print media coverage of the Presidential Election 2006 in the period from 11 to 21 February 2006.

At this phase the *Central Election Commission* finished to witness signatures collected by the candidates’ initiative groups as well as to check up the candidates’ income and property statements. On February 17, 2006 it registered *S. Gajdukievich, A. Kazulin, A. Lukashenka* and *A. Milinkievich* as candidates for the Presidency. The *Central Election Commission* established also the schedule of their talks on the TV and radio officially launching candidates’ election campaigns.

2. Summary of Findings

- The President of the Republic of Belarus and one of the registered candidates for the Presidency remained the main political subject of the country as covered by the State owned electronic and print media. As previously, he was represented either positively or extremely positively in the same media. The fact of candidates’ registration did not change the share of time and space dedicated to him and the three other candidates in the State owned media.
- By a series of pop-concerts *All-Nation TV Channel (ONT)* and the *First National Channel – BT* launched an election campaign in favor of just one candidate.
- While at the prime time there were advertised and shown propaganda films directed against Belarusian opposition and Western democracies, the State owned TV channels mentioned above did not make any announcements as regards the election speeches by the candidates on TV and radio scheduled in advance by the Central Election Commission.
- The general trend in the State owned electronic and print media was to represent western observers in a negative way and to portray CIS observers in positive colors mainly. More time and space to cover CIS observers’ activities was also devoted in the same media.
- Non-governmental press wrote about practically all monitored subjects of the election process in a balanced way and tended to cover them neutrally.

Given below is an analysis of electronically processed data for the period mentioned above.

3. Main Results

3.1 Electronic Mass Media

Prior to and after the registration date *A. Lukashenka* remained the main political figure in the State owned electronic and print media. The new status acquired by the pretenders for the Presidency did not change the ratio of time and space the same media continued allocating to *Mr. Lukashenka* and the *other candidates* for the Presidency.

Thus, “*Our News*” program (11 – 20. 02. 06) broadcast at the *All-Nation TV channel (ONT)* devoted almost 60% of its time to *A. Lukashenka* compared with the 12 other monitored subjects. *A. Milinkievich*, *A. Kazulin* and *S. Gajdukievich* took up 2, 3%, 1, 8% and 1, 2% of the program time respectively. And as previously, unambiguously positive way of President’s representation prevailed in all Belarusian electronic media. As for the representation of the other *candidates*, *A. Milinkievich* and *A. Kazulin* were portrayed in a mostly negative way and *S. Gajdukievich* in a mostly neutral way. The news program *Panorama* broadcast at the *First National Channel – BT* revealed the same trends of candidates’ representation.

In line with the general trend to make visible just *one candidate* in the State owned media the named TV channels covered the registration’s ceremony either. Thus, a fragment of a registration speech by *A. Lukashenka* in the “*Our News*” program dated February 17, 2006 was almost 6 times longer than those by each of the three other candidates. In general, the same program at that day allocated 71,2% of its time to *A. Lukashenka*, 9,1% to the *Central Election Commission*, 7,7% to *CIS observers*, 4,3% to *A. Milinkievich*, 3,5% to *A. Kazulin*, 2,2% to *S. Gajdukievich*, 1,6% to *western observers* and 0,4% to the *opposition*.

After the candidates’ registration procedure took place, State owned electronic media informed the voters of sociological pool results by the State owned Institute of Sociology, which were in favor of the *candidate A. Lukashenka*. The data pertaining to the alternative candidates were, however, commented in a contradictory way. Thus, “*Our News*” program (17. 02. 06) gave a *Rating of Trust* diagram, one of the segments of which showed that 24% of voters were in favor of the *alternative candidates*. However, a reporter did not score for sound this figure. And “*In the Focus of Attention*” program (19. 02. 06) at the *First National Channel – BT* without making a picture of the same diagram commented as follows: “*As for the ratings of the other pretenders for the Presidency their cumulative rating, according to the Institute of Sociology, does not exceed 3 or 4%*”. No surprise that the same TV channels did not inform of sociological pools conducted by any non-governmental sociological institutions.

At the same time *All-Nation TV channel (ONT)* and the *First National Channel – BT* by a series of pop-concerts “*Pure Age*” and “*For Belarus*” launched an election campaign in favor of *A. Lukashenka*. During two days prior to the concert “*Pure Age*” (19, 02, 06) numerous announcements were made, in which the singer *Ina Darofejeva* used to declare: “*And finally we can say that we support our father of the nation!*” In the meantime, the same TV channels did not launch any campaign in favor of *alternative candidates*.

Moreover, the *First National Channel – BT* having had previously shown such propaganda films as “*Agent 590*” and the beginning of the serial “*Spiritual War*” broadcast two new films “*Warsaw Bridge*” (17. 02. 06) and “*Directed Chaos*” (20. 02.06). The latest film, which portrayed *opposition* as a destructive force of the Belarusian society, was shown the next day also, instead of candidate’s speech by *A. Lukashenka* scheduled by the *Central Election Commission*.

As in the previous period of monitoring, “*Radio-Fact*” news program at the *First Channel of the National Radio* paid much attention to the *opposition* representing it in a negative or extremely negative way. The general trend in the State owned electronic media was also to represent *western observers* in a negative way and to portray *CIS observers* in positive colors mainly.

3.2 Print Media

As before, the two largest State owned newspapers *Sovietskaya Byelorussia (SB)* and *Zviazda* aimed at representing *A. Lukashenka* as a dominant political figure portraying him in a positive or very positive light. *SB* devoted to him 63, 48% and *Zviazda* 64, 09% of their space to compare with all other monitored subjects. The fact of candidates’ registration did not change the ratio of space devoted to major actors of the election process. *SB* gave 0, 06% of its space to *A. Milinkievich*, 0, 02% to *A. Kazulin* and 0,02% to *S. Gajdukievich*.

Representing the registration ceremony *SB* published a big picture of *A. Lukashenka* and no pictures of other candidates. And *Zviazda* did not give any pictures at all. The trend to minimize the presence of the alternative candidates in the State owned media was in a way explained by the regional newspaper *Mahilieuskija Vedamasci (14. 02. 06)*, which published an opinion by the President *A. Lukashenka* as regards the peculiarities of the current presidential campaign: “*Distinctive feature of the campaign consists also in that its principle actor is the current President*”.

As in the previous period, *Sovietskaya Byelorussia* and *Zviazda* wrote nothing about opposition to the regime.

On the contrary, non-governmental press wrote about practically all monitored participants to the election process. It was noticeable that the non-State run newspapers tended to cover them in a neutral way mainly.

As for the attention paid to the main actors of the election process, the non-State *Narodnaja Volia* devoted 8,36% to *A. Lukashenka*, 7,03% to *A. Milinkievich*, 2,25% to *A. Kazulin* and 0,087% to *S. Gajdukievich* of its space in the materials, where subjects of election process were described or mentioned. The same “rating” according to *Komsomolskaja Pravda v Belarusi* was as follows: *S. Gajdukievich* – 24,5%, *A. Lukashenka* – 18,1%, *A. Milinkievich* – 13,0%, *A. Kazulin* – 8,1% of the newspaper’s space in the materials dedicated to the political subjects.

6. Conclusions

4.1 Except *A. Lukashenka*, the State-owned electronic and print media aimed at minimizing the identification of candidates by the voters at this period. The State owned press did not publish any pictures of alternative candidates and TV news programs concentrated mostly on the figure of just one candidate. Moreover, in deference of numerous announcements of propaganda films and pop-concerts in favor of *A. Lukashenka* the election speeches by the candidates scheduled on TV and radio by the Central Election Commission were not advertised in advance.

4.2 The fact of candidates’ registration did not influence the share of time and space devoted to the candidates in the news and other programs broadcast at the State owned TV and radio channels at this period.

4.3 By a series of pop-concerts All-Nation TV channel (ONT) and the First National Channel – BT launched an election campaign in favor of just one candidate.

4.4 Two new films broadcast at the First National Channel – BT continued to represent Belarusian opposition and Western democracies in an extremely negative light.

4.5 In all State owned media there was evident a trend to pay more attention to CIS than western observers. The latest ones were mostly represented in a negative way, while CIS observers were portrayed in a positive way mainly.

MEDIA MONITORING:
“Presidential Election 2006 Coverage in the Belarusian Mass-Media”

**THE CANDIDATES’ REPRESENTATION AND THEIR ELECTION CAMPAIGNS’
CONERAGE**

(February 21 — March 5, 2006)

Bulletin #4

Issued on March 9, 2006

Minsk, Belarus

5. Introduction

The Report summarizes the monitoring results from the Belarusian electronic and print media coverage of the Presidential Election 2006 in Belarus *from 21 February to 5 March 2006*.

At this phase of monitoring the candidates launched their election campaigns and addressed to voters with their election speeches.

6. Summary of Findings

- The candidates’ presentations on TV and radio, as scheduled by the Central Election Commission, were broadcast at an inconvenient time for many voters. Moreover, they were not advertised in advance and as a result a significant portion of Belarusian voters could not get acquainted with the candidates’ election programs. There were also established facts of editing recorded speeches by two candidates.
- At the scheduled time the speeches of the candidate A. Lukashenka (him being also the President of the country) did not make their appearance. Instead, the propaganda materials in favor of the President and against the opposition and some its leaders were broadcast.
- In the meantime few days later all State-owned electronic media put on the air the 3-hour speech by the President of the country at the Third Pan-Belarusian People’s Congress. The same day the speech, although made two times shorter, was rebroadcast by the State owned TV channels at the prime time. It replaced the news TV programs. Comparative analysis of the speech and the printed program of the candidate A. Lukashenka show that both texts are similar in their basic theses and some wordings are the same.
- The State owned print media represented the election programs of A. Lukashenka and two other candidates in different ways. Thus, the program of A. Lukashenka was published on the front page, while the programs of other candidates made their appearance on pages 3, 14 and 15 of the monitored newspapers.
- As previously, the President of the Republic of Belarus remained the main political subject of the country. He was presented either positively or extremely positively in all State owned media.

These monitoring results are elaborated in the following sections.

7. Main Results

7.1. *Electronic Mass-Media*

There is no doubt that the major events at this period were the candidates' election speeches. The *Central Election Commission* formally provided them with equal opportunities in time and space in the State owned media and established a timetable for their speeches. One of the candidates *Mr. Lukashenka* missed this formal opportunity and his scheduled speeches on TV and radio were not broadcast. The State owned TV and radio did not give any explanation on the case. Instead *the First National TV Channel (21. 02. 06)* showed a film "*Theory of Plot. Directed Chaos*" being a part of propaganda serial "*Spiritual War*", which represented the Belarusian opposition and some its leaders in an extremely negative way. The second presentation by *A. Lukashenka*, which was to be shown at the same channel on March the 1st 2006, was replaced by 30-minute long program exposing the support of talented youth by *Lukashenka*.

As for the other candidates they used the opportunity to make known their election programs through TV and radio. The broadcasting time scheduled by the Central Election Commission for candidates' speeches was not however favorable for doing that. It dropped either to the end or beginning of a working day. Thus, election speeches on TV were broadcast at 18.00 – 19.00 and at 8.00 – 9.00 on radio. As a result many voters being on their way to offices or home, could not see the election speeches. Moreover, the State owned electronic media, in difference of propaganda films, did not make any announcements as for the candidates' speeches.

The maximum duration of a speech, no matter on radio or TV, was 30 minutes. At the same time the *Central Election Commission* did not fix any minimum duration. And the candidates could abridge their speeches by their own decision. However it may be, it is evident that one of the TV speeches by *Mr. A. Kazulin* at *the First National TV Channel (02. 03. 06)* was subject for editing, which makes us concluding that it was abridged by 1 min. 20 sec. The same is true as regards the radio presentation by *A. Milinkievich* at *the First Channel of the National Radio (06. 03. 06)* whose speech was abridged by 58 sec. In both cases the candidates made public statements that their speeches were censored.

On March the 2nd 2006 the current President of the country *A. Lukashenka* made the 3-hour speech at the Third Pan-Belarusian People's Congress. The same day the speech, although made two times shorter, was rebroadcast by the State owned TV channels at the prime time. It replaced the news TV programs. Comparative analysis of the speech and the printed program of the candidate *A. Lukashenka* show that both texts are similar in their basic theses and even some wordings are the same. Thus, it is to be also considered the election speech by the candidate *A. Lukashenka*. Additional proofs can be found in some phrases of the speaker who, in particular, said: "*Lately we considered the Presidential Program "Children of Belarus for 2006 – 2010..."*" as well as in the recurrent grammatical usage of future time as regards different tasks to be completed. There is no doubt that the author considered his speech to be the program of activity of the future President *A. Lukashenka*.

Except the election speech by *Lukashenka*, no other speeches were commented by the State owned electronic media. The same media did not make any interviews with the *alternative candidates* either. And their election campaign activities were not covered.

Thus, the aggregate monitoring form of "*Our News*" program broadcast at the *All-Nation TV channel (21. 02 – 04. 03. 06)* shows that candidates *A. Milinkievich* and *S. Gajdukievich* were not mentioned at all. *A. Kazulin* took up 0,4% and *A. Lukashenka* – 89,6% of the program's time dedicated to the monitored political subjects. In its turn, news program "*Panorama*" at *the First National TV Channel* did not mentioned the candidate *S. Gajdukievich*. As for *A. Kazulin*, it

dedicated to him 0,1% of its time. *A. Milinkievich* took up 0,2% and *A. Lukashenka* – 58% of the program's time compared with all other monitored subjects.

The First Channel of the National Radio (“*Radio-Fact*” news program – 23. 02 – 03. 03. 06) ignored all the candidates except *A. Lukashenka*. He took up 63,17% of the program's time compared with all monitored subject.

7.2. *Print Media*

The largest State print media provided their pages for the candidates' election programs.

The State owned dailies *Sovietskaya Byelorussia* and *Zvezda* published (02. 03. 06) on their front page the election program by the candidate *A. Lukashenka*. And they supplemented it with a big color picture showing smiling and happy people with flowers and flags. Before them *A. Lukashenka* is present. He is unnaturally taller and bigger than other people are. The picture is actually a computer collage. The total space of the candidate *Lukashenka*'s presentation is 1595 square cm. in *Sovietskaya Byelorussia* and 1950 square cm. in *Zvezda*.

Sovietskaya Byelorussia, on the contrary, published the election programs by candidates *S. Gajdukievich* and *A. Kazulin* with their small pictures on the pages 14th and 15th. And *Zvezda* published them on the 3rd page. The total space of their programs' presentation was twice less than that of the same materials dedicated to *A. Lukashenka*.

As for the coverage of the candidates election campaigns *SB* dedicated to *S. Gajdukievich* 0,4%, to *A. Kazulin* 1,1%, to *A. Milinkievich* 1,1% of the space in the materials covering the activities of all monitored subjects. *A. Lukashenka* took up 63,1%. *Zvezda* created the similar media picture of the candidates.

The manner of the candidates' representation in the State owned media, both printed and electronic actually remained the same. Thus, *S. Gajdukievich* was portrayed in a neutral way mainly. *A. Kazulin* and *A. Milinkievich* were represented in a mostly negative way. And *A. Lukashenka* was portrayed in a positive or very positive way.

Non-State press covered the activity of practically all candidates. For example, *Komsomolskaja Pravda v Belarusi* (23. 02 – 04. 03. 06) dedicated to *S. Gajdukievich* 4,6%, to *A. Kazulin* 25,6%, to *A. Lukashenka* 19,2% and to *A. Milinkievich* – 14,5% of its space in the materials pertaining to the monitored subjects. The way of representation of all these subjects was either positive or neutral. No one candidate was characterized in a negative way.

7. **Conclusions**

4.1 Despite the fact that all candidates formally had an equal opportunity to make presentation of their election programs in the State owned electronic and print media the same media were actually aimed at the election campaign's promotion of just one candidate.

4.2 Due to the inconvenient broadcasting time the alternative candidates' speeches could not reach a significant portion of voters. Moreover, the State owned electronic media actually strived not only to marginalize the alternative candidates with their programs, but also to deprive voters of a real situation of choice.

4.3 By representing just one candidate in a positive or extremely positive way and the other candidates in a negative light the State owned electronic and printed media violated the principle of equal opportunities while conducting the election campaigns.

These conclusions are supported by the data revealed during the previous stages of monitoring the election process.

**MEDIA MONITORING:
“Presidential Election 2006 Coverage in the Belarusian Mass-Media”**

**THE CANDIDATES’ REPRESENTATION AND THEIR ELECTION PROGRAMS’
CONERAGE
(March 6 — March 15, 2006)**

Bulletin #5

*Issued on March 17, 2006
Minsk, Belarus*

8. Introduction

The Report summarizes the monitoring results from the Belarusian electronic and print media coverage of the Presidential Election 2006 in Belarus *from March 6 to March 15, 2006*.

At this phase of monitoring the candidates continued conducting their election campaigns. Preliminary voting has been also started at this period.

9. Summary of Findings

- As in the previous period, the State owned electronic and print media continued to work in favor of just one candidate. And the general trend to ignore the alternative candidates became even more discernible.
- As regards A. Lukashenka and the other candidates, the same media actually build up two different synonymous series of key words. The first series was as follows: “*independent Belarus*” – “*State for the people*” – “*peace and stability*” – “*well being*” – “*clear perspectives*” – “*good energy*” – “*President Aliaksandr Lukashenka*”. The other series meant the opposition in power and it was as follows: “*plundered country*” – “*State for few*” – “*chaos*” – “*joblessness and poverty*” – “*betrayed expectations of voters*” – “*scoundrels*” A. *Milinkievich* or A. *Kazulin*.
- As before, while covering alternative candidates’ activities the State owned media violated the principle of equal opportunities.
- At this period the Belarusian TV showed special items to remind the voters about the important date in the political life of the country (they ended with a kind of poster “*March 19th is the day of voting for the President of the Republic of Belarus*”). These items, however, were in fact the illustrations of success of the previous policy of A. Lukashenka and, in particular, of such thesis of his election program as “*stability*”, “*welfare*”, “*defense of peaceful life of Belarusians*” etc.

These and other monitoring results are elaborated in the following sections.

10. Main Results

10.1. State owned Electronic and Print Media

The State owned electronic and print media continued to build up a positive image of the candidate A. *Lukashenka* (the current President of the country also), allocating him more time and space compared with all other candidates. Moreover, at this period, to compare with

previous ones, the alternative candidates took up less time and space or disappeared at all as subjects of the election campaign.

Thus, according to the aggregate monitoring form, “*Our News*” program broadcast at the *All-Nation TV channel* (06. 03 – 13. 03. 06) dedicated to A. Lukashenka 64% of its time compared with all other monitored subjects. And “*Contours*” program (05. 03 – 12. 03. 06) at the same channel gave him almost 85% of its time. Another news program “*Panorama*” (06. 03 – 11. 03. 06) at the *First National TV Channel* allocated him 60% of its time.

In the meantime, as for the candidates S. Gajdukievich, A. Kazulin and A. Milinkievich “*Contours*” program did not mention them at all. “*Our News*” program gave 1% of its time to A. Milinkievich only and characterized him negatively. Another news program “*Panorama*” gave to A. Kazulin and A. Milinkievich 0,5% of its time per everyone.

Moreover, the State owned electronic and print media did not cover any discussions as regards the alternative candidates’ programs and did not show any interviews with them. If mentioned, the alternative candidates’ programs were characterized in an extremely negative tone. For example, in “*Big Politics*” program at the *All-Nation TV channel* (11. 03. 06) a journalist states: “*To be honest, it does not make sense at all to discuss the election programs of the oppositionists...*”

In the meantime, journalists, State officials and «ordinary» people characterized the election program by A. Lukashenka in an extremely positive way. And all the Belarusian TV channels, either in parts or wholly, showed for more than one time an interview with him given to the Russian political analyst G. Pavlovski.

At this period the *Belarusian TV* showed special items to remind the voters about the important date in the political life of the country (they ended with a kind of poster “*March 19th is the day of voting for the President of the Republic of Belarus*”). Formally, these items were a part of voters’ education process, but in fact these were illustrations of success of the previous policy of A. Lukashenka and, in particular, of such thesis of his election program as “stability”, “welfare”, “defense of peaceful life of Belarusians” etc.

On March 15 there was published also a special issue of *Sovietskaya Byelorussia*, a daily. The issue had a print run of 830 000 copies or 300 000 more than an ordinary circulation of the newspaper. The issue was delivered by the State owned distributors to those people who were not the newspaper’s subscribers.

The issue is formally dedicated to the day of the Belarusian Constitution. The front page makes readable words by A. Lukashenka: “*State for the people*”... *this is our basic slogan, which will be our guidance in the next five years to come*”. At the same time this is the title of the election program by the candidate A. Lukashenka. And the materials published in the newspaper are also an exposition of the ideas and statements contained in the speech by A. Lukashenka at the Third Pan-Belarusian People’s Gathering. Almost a half of the third page of the newspaper is an article called “*Color Misfortune*”, which heavily criticizes “color revolutions”, *Belarusian opposition* and *alternative candidates* without giving their family names.

10.2. Independent Press

This week three independent newspapers, one of which is an object of monitoring, were not published due to the fact that a printing house unilaterally cancelled printing contracts with them.

At the monitored period all independent newspapers, namely, *Belarusy i Rynok*, *Komsomolskaja Pravda v Belarusi*, *Narodnaja Volia* and *Nasa Niva* revealed almost the same trends while covering the candidates' activities and allocated to them a comparable space (in percentage ratio). The same newspapers wrote about all the candidates either (the only exception was *Narodnaja Volia*, which did not mention the candidate *S. Gajdukievich*).

Thus, *Belarusy i Rynok* weekly (06. 02 – 06. 03. 06) dedicated to *S. Gajdukievich* 2,8%, to *A. Kazulin* 20,1%, *A. Lukashenka* – 33,4% and to *A. Milinkievich* 33,6% of the space in the materials covering the activities of all monitored subjects.

The manner of the candidates' representation in these publications was also similar. It was predominantly neutral. At the same time all these newspapers, except *Komsomolskaja Pravda v Belarusi*, were also critical towards *A. Lukashenka*. The monitoring, however, did not reveal any case of journalists' ethics violation in the independent press.

8. Conclusions

4.1 To compare with the previous periods, the State owned electronic and print media allocated more attention to *A. Lukashenka*, giving to the alternative candidates less space and time or excluding them from the election process' coverage.

4.2 This period of monitoring made it evident that the same media were systematically building up two different synonymous semantic series to represent *A. Lukashenka* and some alternative candidates. The first series was as follows: “*independent Belarus*” – “*State for the people*” – “*peace and stability*” – “*well being*” – “*clear perspectives*” – “*good energy*” – “*President Aliaksandr Lukashenka*”. The other series meant the opposition in power and it was as follows: “*plundered country*” – “*State for few*” – “*chaos*” – “*joblessness and poverty*” – “*betrayed expectations of voters*” – “*scoundrels*” *A. Milinkievich* or *A. Kazulin*.

4.3 As in the previous period these media violated the principle of equal opportunities while covering the candidates' activities and their election programs. They worked in favor of just one candidate. And as before, they were programming the choice of voters.

4.4 Although the independent press strived to give a balanced picture of the Belarusian election process, due to its limited circulation it could not withstand the tendentious coverage of the candidates' activities and their programs by the State owned media.

**MEDIA MONITORING:
“Presidential Election 2006 Coverage in Belarusian Mass-Media”**

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MEDIA MONITORING: “Presidential Election 2006 Coverage in Belarusian Mass-Media”

1. INTRODUCTION

This Report summarizes the monitoring results from the Belarusian electronic and print media coverage of the Presidential Election held on March 19, 2006. The monitoring was conducted in the period *from January 16 to March 26, 2006*. It included such election process' phases as signatures' collection, election campaigns of registered candidates as well as one-week period after the vote, during which media commented the results of voting.

The Belarusian Association of Journalists (BAJ) implemented the Project.

1.1 Summary of Findings

From the very beginning of monitoring a positive representation of just one prospective candidate for the Presidency, that of A. Lukashenka, was dominant in the State owned media. As for the other pretenders they were either absent or just mentioned. The fact of candidates' registration did not change this general picture.

The Central Election Commission, although having provided candidates with equal opportunities in the State owned electronic media, scheduled their speeches for the time, which was not favorable for voters. It dropped either to the end or beginning of a working day. As a result many voters could not get acquainted with candidates' messages on radio and TV. Moreover, in difference of propaganda films, the same media did not make any announcements of candidates' speeches in advance.

The candidate A. Lukashenka missed this formal opportunity. In the meantime, he made 3-hour speech at the Third Pan-Belarusian People's Congress. The same speech, although made two times shorter, was also rebroadcast by all State owned TV and radio channels at the prime time. And at the same day the State run press published his election program. Comparative analysis of both texts showed that they were similar in their basic theses and even some wordings coincided. The further analysis also showed that even the author considered the speech to be the program of his future Presidential activity.

The State owned electronic and print media did not cover any discussions as regards the alternative candidates' programs and did not show any interviews with them. If mentioned, the alternative candidates' messages were characterized in an extremely negative tone. The election program by A. Lukashenka, on the contrary, was much discussed and highly appraised. And an interview with his was broadcast for several times.

In an absolutely different way the State owned press represented candidates' printed messages either. Thus, the State run dailies the election program by the candidate A. Lukashenka was published on front pages supplemented with a big color picture showing smiling and happy people with flowers and flags. Before them A. Lukashenka is present. He is taller and bigger than other people are. And the election programs by candidates S. Gajdukievich and A. Kazulin with their small pictures, on the contrary, were published on the 3rd, 14th and 15th pages. Moreover, the total space of their programs' presentation was twice less than that of the same materials dedicated to A. Lukashenka.

Prior to the election campaign State owned TV launched a number of special projects. These were a series of pop-concerts staged in the biggest Belarusian cities and a number of films. The

films were directed against the opposition, which was represented as an enemy and destructive force of the Belarusian society. And pop-concerts were meant to support A. Lukashenka.

Although the Belarusian TV channels showed special items to remind voters about the important date in the political life of the country, in fact these were illustrations of success of the previous policy of A. Lukashenka and, in particular, of such thesis of his election message as “stability”, “welfare”, “defense of peaceful life of Belarusians” etc.

At the day of voting the State owned TV channels were actively evaluating the results of the vote. Journalists, State officials, observers and Russian politicians made extremely positively evaluations. In the subsequent days the character of evaluations did not change. In the meantime, the same media made OSCE observers mission an object of harsh criticism.

It is to conclude that the State owned electronic and print media did not complete their basic task to inform voters in a non-biased and objective way, so that well-informed voters could make a competent choice at the day of voting.

The independent press, although strived to give a wide and balanced picture of the Belarusian election process and candidates’ messages, could not withstand the tendentious election coverage by the State owned media due to its limited circulation and non-access to its readership.

1.2 Monitoring Objectives

The monitoring Project’s objectives were as following:

- *To assess the professional level of election campaign and its political actors coverage by different broadcast and print media;*
- *To evaluate media ability to cover in an efficient, complete and non-biased way candidates’ messages as well as a variety of political and social opinions by their supporters;*
- *To define the role of both State and independent media in the voters’ education as well as their influence on the voters’ choice.*

1.3 Evaluation Criteria

Evaluation criteria were the internationally recognized professional standards and principles of journalist ethics. The most important among them were as following:

- Freedom of expression;
- Accuracy and transparency;
- Balanced reporting;
- Impartiality;
- Equal access for candidates to public media;
- Non-biased coverage of candidates messages;
- Right of reply and corrections.

All these principles are elaborated in the section “International standards on media coverage of elections” prepared by the International organization Article 19. (See APPENDIX 2).

2. MEDIA SITUATION IN BELARUS

2.1 Media and Administration

In Belarus there exists a quite significant number of electronic and print media¹. The overwhelming majority of them, either directly or indirectly, are controlled by the State. They are controlled by means of administrative and financial mechanisms (subsidies from the State budget and senior managers' appointment by different State bodies) or with the aid of numerous leverages of limiting their activities and a quite simple procedure of license withdrawal as regards those media, which are not owned by the State. Moreover, the Ministry of information is endowed with the right to suspend media activities without applying to the court.

As a result, not only censorship, but also self-censorship is present in the country. And the last decade is actually the history of gradual disappearance of independent press in the country. In 1996 there was closed the only independent FM-station. Since that year the number of independent publications had decreased by several times.

At the end of the last year 19 independent newspapers were excluded from the subscription catalogues and deprived of an opportunity of distribution through the State owned monopolist distribution systems. As for today there are 20 independent publications only. Until recently 7 of them were printed in Russia. One week prior to the voting day a printing house in Russia unilaterally cancelled printing contracts with all of them. Before that happened, a weekly circulation of the independent press was around 300 000 copies or twice less than the print run of just one issue of the Presidential daily. Nowadays it is much less.

2.2 Monitored Media

The objects of monitoring were the most influential State owned electronic and print media as well as independent newspapers having the largest audiences. Among them were State owned media, which the Central Election Commission entrusted with a task of providing candidates free time and space. And finally, these were regional media outlets. As a result of the selection process 3 broadcast media (plus 2 regional TV programs) and 7 both State owned and independent newspapers were chosen. All electronic media were monitored at prime time. (The list of media outlets monitored is available in APPENDIX 3). And how electronic and print media were monitored is also described in the same APPENDIX.

3. ELECTRONIC DATA PROCESSING RESULTS

3.1 Electronic and Print State Owned Media

From the very beginning of the monitoring process the State run media revealed several trends while covering the election campaign. They did not practically cover the phase of signatures' collection. All kind of information as regards alternative candidates was minimized. Their election programs were not discussed. And just one candidate, the President of the country, was dominant in the State run media, which portrayed him in a positive or extremely positive way.

¹ According to the Ministry of Information of the Republic of Belarus in 2005 there were registered 153 radio- and 54 TV programs, 779 newspapers and 447 journals.

Thus, for example, *Our New* program broadcast at the *All-Nation TV channel (ONT, 16. 01. – 27. 01. 06)* mentioned no one prospective candidate for the Presidency, except *A. Lukashenka*. And the same program allocated him almost 90% of its total time to compare with all other monitored subjects.

And in the period from February 11 to February 20 the same program devoted to *A. Lukashenka* almost 60% of its time compared with the 12 other monitored subjects. *A. Milinkievich*, *A. Kazulin* and *S. Gajdukievich* took up 2,3%, 1,8% and 1,2% of the program time respectively. And as previously, unambiguously positive way of President's representation prevailed. As for the representation of the other candidates, *A. Milinkievich* and *A. Kazulin* were portrayed in a mostly negative way and *S. Gajdukievich* in a mostly neutral way. The news program *Panorama* broadcast at the *First National Channel – BT* revealed the same trends of candidates' representation.

In line with the general trend to make visible just *one candidate* the named TV channels covered the registration's ceremony either. Thus, a fragment of a registration speech by *A. Lukashenka* in the "*Our News*" program dated February 17th, 2006 was almost 6 times longer than those by each of the three other candidates. In general, the same program at that day allocated 71,2% of its time to *A. Lukashenka*, 9,1% to the *Central Election Commission*, 7,7% to *CIS observers*, 4,3% to *A. Milinkievich*, 3,5% to *A. Kazulin*, 2,2% to *S. Gajdukievich*, 1,6% to *western observers* and 0,4% to the *opposition*.

In the concluding period of the election campaign the general picture did not change. According to the aggregate monitoring form, "*Our News*" program broadcast at the *All-Nation TV channel (06. 03 – 13. 03. 06)* dedicated to *A. Lukashenka* 64% of its time compared with all other monitored subjects. "*Contours*" program (05. 03 – 12. 03. 06) at the same channel gave him almost 85% of its time. And another news program "*Panorama*" (06. 03 – 11. 03. 06) at the *First National TV Channel* allocated him 60% of its time.

As for the candidates *S. Gajdukievich*, *A. Kazulin* and *A. Milinkievich* "*Contours*" program did not mention them at all. "*Our News*" program gave 1% of its time to *A. Milinkievich* only and characterized him negatively. Another news program "*Panorama*" gave to *A. Kazulin* and *A. Milinkievich* 0,5% of its time per everyone.

The same trends were evident at the State owned radio either. Thus, "*Radio-Fact*" news program (23. 02 – 03. 03. 06) at the *First Channel of the National Radio* ignored all the candidates except *A. Lukashenka*. He took up 63,17% of the program's time compared with all monitored subject.

Moreover, the State owned electronic media did not cover any discussions as regards the alternative candidates' programs and did not show any interviews with them. If mentioned, the alternative candidates' messages were characterized in an extremely negative tone. For example, in "*Big Politics*" program at the *All-Nation TV channel (11. 03. 06)* a journalist states: "*To be honest, it does not make sense at all to discuss the election programs of the oppositionists...*"

The election program by *A. Lukashenka*, on the contrary, was much and quite often commented. Journalists, State officials and "ordinary" people characterized it in an extremely positive way. And all the Belarusian TV channels, either in parts or wholly, showed for more than one time an interview with him given to the Russian political analyst *G. Pavlovski*.

The monitored State run press while covering the alternative candidates' programs or their activities was not so much different from the State owned electronic media. Thus, *Zvezda* newspaper (22.02 – 04.03. 06) wrote nothing about *S. Gajdukievich*. *A. Milinkievich*, *A. Kazulin* and *A. Lukashenka* took up 0,03%, 0,03% and 30,86% of its space respectively. At the same period another daily *Sovetskaya Belorussiya* dedicated 0,4% of its space in the materials

covering the activities of all monitored subjects to *S. Gajdukievich*, 1,1% to *A. Kazulin* and 1,1% to *A. Milinkievich*. *A. Lukashenka* took up 63,1% of the space compared with all other monitored subjects.

3.2 Independent Press

During all the period of monitoring non-State newspapers strived to give a wide picture of the election process and wrote about all monitored subjects.

While covering the candidates' activities all independent newspapers, namely, *Belarusy i Rynok*, *Komsomolskaja Pravda v Belarusi*, *Narodnaja Volia* and *Nasa Niva* revealed almost the same trends. And in a percentage ratio they allocated to the candidates a comparable space either.

For example, *Belarusy i Rynok* weekly (06. 02 – 06. 03. 06) dedicated to *S. Gajdukievich* 2,8%, to *A. Kazulin* 20,1%, *A. Lukashenka* – 33,4% and to *A. Milinkievich* 33,6% of the space in the materials covering the activities of all monitored subjects. *Komsomolskaja Pravda v Belarusi* (23.02 – 04.03. 06) gave to *S. Gajdukievich* 4,6%, to *A. Kazulin* 25,6%, to *A. Lukashenka* – 19,2% and to *A. Milinkievich* 14,5% of its space.

The manner of candidates' representation was also similar. It was mostly neutral. At the same time all these newspapers, except *Komsomolskaja Pravda v Belarusi*, were also critical towards *A. Lukashenka*. The monitoring, however, did not reveal any case of journalists' ethics violation in the independent press.

3.3 Direct Access

“Direct access” is a term to describe media coverage of candidates' programs that are not controlled by the editorial boards of media allocating time or space for election messages. This coverage can be free of charge or paid. In Belarusian State owned media the direct access is exclusively free of charge and paid advertising has never been a real practice in both State owned and independent media.

Formally speaking, the *Central Election Commission* provided candidates with equal opportunities in time and space in State owned media. However, the broadcasting time scheduled by the Commission for candidates' speeches was not favorable for voters. It dropped either to the end or beginning of a working day. Thus, election speeches on TV were broadcast at 18.00 – 19.00 and at 8.00 – 9.00 on radio. As a result many voters being on their way to offices or home, could not get acquainted with their messages. Moreover, the State owned electronic media, in difference of propaganda films, did not make any announcements of candidates' speeches in advance.

The candidate *A. Lukashenka* missed this formal opportunity. Instead of his presentation *the First National TV Channel* (21. 02. 06) showed a film “*Theory of Plot. Directed Chaos*”, which represented the Belarusian opposition and some its leaders in an extremely negative way. The second presentation by *A. Lukashenka*, which was to be shown at the same channel on March the 1st 2006, was replaced by 30-minute long program exposing the support of talented youth by *Lukashenka*.

As for the other candidates they used the opportunity to make known their election messages through TV and radio.

The maximum duration of a speech, no matter on radio or TV, was 30 minutes. At the same time the *Central Election Commission* did not fix any minimum duration. And the candidates could abridge their speeches by their own decision. However it may be, it is evident that one of the TV speeches by *Mr. A. Kazulin at the First National TV Channel (02. 03. 06)* was subject for editing, which makes us concluding that it was abridged by 1 min. 20 sec. The same is true as regards the radio presentation by *A. Milinkievich at the First Channel of the National Radio (06. 03. 06)* whose speech was abridged by 58 sec. In both cases the candidates made public statements that their speeches were censored.

In the meantime, the current President of the country *A. Lukashenka* made 3-hour speech at the Third Pan-Belarusian People's Congress. The same speech, although made two times shorter, was also rebroadcast by all State owned TV and radio channels at the prime time.

The same day *Sovetskaya Belorussiya* newspaper (02.03. 06) published his election program. Comparative analysis of both texts showed that they were similar in their basic theses and even some wordings coincided. Additional proofs were also found in some phrases of the speaker who, in particular, said: "*Lately we considered the Presidential Program "Children of Belarus for 2006 – 2010..."*" as well as in the recurrent grammatical usage of future time as regards different tasks to be completed. There is no doubt that even the author of the speech considered it to be the program of his future Presidential activity.

In an absolutely different way the State owned newspapers represented candidates' printed messages either. Thus, the State run dailies *Sovietskaya Byelorussia* and *Zviazda* published (02. 03. 06) the election program by the candidate *A. Lukashenka* on their front pages. And they supplemented it with a big color picture showing smiling and happy people with flowers and flags. Before them *A. Lukashenka* is present. He is taller and bigger than other people are. The picture is actually a computer collage.

The election programs by candidates *S. Gajdukievich* and *A. Kazulin* with their small pictures, on the contrary, were published on the pages 14th and 15th of *Sovietskaya Byelorussia*. And *Zviazda* published them on the 3rd page. And the total space of their programs' presentation was twice less than that of the same materials dedicated to *A. Lukashenka*.

4. PROPAGANDA IN FAVOR OF JUST ONE CANDIDATE

4.1 Special Projects

Prior to the election campaign State owned TV launched a number of special projects. These were a series of pop-concerts "*Pure Age*" and "*For Belarus*" staged in the biggest Belarusian cities, TV serial "*Spiritual War*" and a number of films such as "*Agent 590*" or "*Warsaw Bridge*". The films were directed against the opposition, which was represented as an enemy and destructive force of the Belarusian society. And pop-concerts were no doubt meant to support *A. Lukashenka*.

Thus, the participant to the concert "*For Belarus*" (*ONT – All-Nation TV channel*), singer *Ilona Bronievickaja* made little doubt as for the support of whom the concert was. She said: "*...I was happy, I had a real honour to be at the stage of "Slavianski Bazar". Aliaksandr Grigorievich made his appearance. He presented to us bunches of flowers and embraced all of us. Oh, my God, I thrilled with delight! I love Belarus. For Belarus!*" In the meantime, it should be noted that the project had been started prior to the official registration of candidates.

One more example is. During two days before the concert "*Pure Age*", which was broadcast on February 19, 2006, announcements were made, in which another singer *Iryna Darafejeva* used to

declare: *“And finally we can say that we support our father of the nation!”* In the meantime, the same TV channels did not launch any other projects in favor of *alternative candidates*, either A. Milinkievich, A. Kazulin or S. Gajdukievich.

As for the films mentioned above, they slandered not only the opposition as a non-personified subject, but also some its leaders and the single democratic candidate. Thus, the film *“Empire of Satan”* from the serial *“Spiritual War”* was actually dedicated to the United States of America, the country, which *“has become a torn wound at the body of the Christian world. In this country worshipping to Satan has become an open cult”*. However, at the very beginning of the film there was shown one of the potential candidates for the Presidency A. Milinkievich. A voice commented: *“they are ready...in a lackey way to implement any wish of governors of this country”*.

As one of such kind of projects there should be also considered a special issue of *Sovietskaya Byelorussia* published on March 15, 2006. The issue had a print run of 830 000 copies or 300 000 more than an ordinary daily circulation of the newspaper. And it was delivered even to those people who were not the newspaper’s subscribers.

The issue was formally dedicated to the day of the Belarusian Constitution. The front page made readable words by A. Lukashenka: *“State for the people”... this is our basic slogan, which will be our guidance in the next five years to come*. At the same time this was the title of his election program. And as for the materials published in the newspaper they were just an exposition of the ideas and statements contained in the speech by A. Lukashenka at the Third Pan-Belarusian People’s Congress. Almost a half of the third page of the newspaper was an article called *“Color Misfortune”*, which heavily criticized “color revolutions”, *Belarusian opposition* and *alternative candidates* without giving their family names.

4.2 Media Effects

While monitoring electronic and print media the monitors fixed the cases of serious deviations from the professional standards and principles of journalist ethics, which as a rule are indicative of a biased coverage of publicly important issues, topics or figures. These cases evaluated on the scale of highly positive or highly negative presentations are called **media effects**. Essentially these are the cases of emotionally charged critical remarks. The quantity of such cases conveys to what extent media are involved or not involved into the manipulation of public opinion, whether they are propaganda oriented or not. What follows are just some examples.

In the Focus of Attention, a weekly program (the First National Channel – 29.01.06) “summarized” the results of the signatures’ collection campaign. At the very beginning of the item a presenter said that A. Lukashenka’s team collected much more signatures for him (2 million) than any other teams. As for the other prospective candidates he stated: *“The figures the other pretenders have are of another order limit. One of the pretenders even contrived to gather 700 signatures only. The others are not far from him”*. The names of “other pretenders” as well as the fact that A. Milinkievich, A. Kazulin and S. Gajdukievich’s teams collected more than 100 000 minimum of signatures necessary for registration were not disclosed.

Radio-Fact news program broadcast on 02. 02. 06 at the First Channel of the National Radio. The program’s item is called *“New Stage of the Election Campaign: Our Comment”*. A journalist stated: *“The opposition does not like its people”, “The goal of the opposition is to do as much harm as it is possible”*. No comment.

After the candidates’ registration took place, State owned electronic media informed voters of sociological data by the State owned Institute of Sociology and some other institutions. The data,

no doubt, were in favor of A. Lukashenka. The interesting point was, however, the way of data presentation as regards alternative candidates. Thus, “*Our News*” program (17. 02. 06) gave a *Rating of Trust* diagram, one of the segments of which showed that 24% of voters were in favor of the *alternative candidates*. Reporter did not score for sound this figure. And the program “*In the Focus of Attention*” (19. 02. 06) at the *First National Channel* without making a picture of the same diagram commented as follows: “*As for the ratings of the other pretenders for the Presidency their cumulative rating, according to the Institute of Sociology, does not exceed 3 or 4%*”.

P. Jakubovich, editor-in-chief of the Presidential daily *Sovietskaya Byelorussia*, based on his intuitions and without making any references to the facts stated in an editorial: “... *I cannot get rid of a feeling that, despite his respective exterior, Milinkievich is a dangerous man*” (07.02. 06).

Finally, this is an example of non-logical sequence. A presenter makes a conclusion: “*According to the polls, almost 90% of the population is to take part at the election. This means that the head of the State will be elected at the first round and probability to appeal against vote’s results is reduced to zero*” (“*Our News*” program – 16. 03. 06)

4.3 Propaganda Advertisements

According to the international standards one of the most important functions of the media before and during an election campaign is voters’ education. This means explaining to them how to register, to vote, what the vote means and how and where to vote. The media should also stress the fact that vote is secret. While educating voters it is essential that the media should be politically impartial. In no way they should push the electorate towards voting for one or other candidate. During the Presidential election campaign in Belarus the voters’ education was, however, far from corresponding to the international standards.

Thus, on the eve of the vote the Belarusian TV channels showed special items to remind voters about the important date in the political life of the country (they ended with a kind of poster “*March 19th is the day of voting for the President of the Republic of Belarus*”). Formally, these items were a part of voters’ education process, but in fact these were illustrations of success of the previous policy of A. Lukashenka and, in particular, of such thesis of his election message as “*stability*”, “*welfare*”, “*defense of peaceful life of Belarusians*” etc.

4.3 State Owned and Independent Media after the Election

At the day of voting the State owned TV channels in its evening issues were actively evaluating the results of the vote. Journalists, State officials, Russian politicians, observers, head of the State and chairman of the Central Election Commission made extremely positively evaluations. These are some examples.

News program “*Panorama*” (19. 03. 06) at the *First National TV Channel* gave an item dedicated to the long-term observation. Journalist stated: “*Practically all international observers made their positive evaluation of the Presidential election in Belarus*”. To support this opinion the item showed a fragment of interview with Israeli observer Mr. Feldman: “*We checked, but there were no one violation at any polling station... In this respect, if to talk about democracy in Belarus, we, Israelites, have to learn much*”.

“*Contours*”, a weekly program (19. 03. 06) at *All-Nation TV channel* showed in direct air a fragment of the press conference held by Mrs. L. Jarmoshyna, chairman of the Central Election

Commission. She said: *“The gravest violation, as the observers from the Mahiliou regional Committee of voters reported it, was the fact that the pictures of candidates for the Presidency were not put in an alphabetic order. Let me also disclose my personal judgment... To tell the truth, if we could conduct all election campaigns in such a pure way, as we did this one, I would be really happy, like a human being who implemented her mission up to the end”*.

In the subsequent days the character of evaluations did not change. Thus, *Our News* program (20. 03. 06) made known the evaluation exposed by the head of CIS observers Mr. *Rushayla*: *“Observers from CIS evaluate in a positive way measures undertaken by the Central and Territorial Commissions, executive authorities, which were aimed at setting up equal conditions for the candidates for the Presidency...”* And as for the comment by the vice-speaker of the Russian Duma in the news program *“Panorama”* (21. 03. 06) at the *First National TV Channel*, it was really short and clear: *“These were brilliant elections!”*.

In the meantime, the same media made OSCE observers mission an object of harsh criticism. This is just one example. Presenter in the news program *“Panorama”* (22. 03. 06) stated: *“Being back to their home countries, observers, who witnessed the election campaign, continue to expose their evaluations. Among them: campaign was pure, transparent and even perfect. In this light the opposite evaluations made by the OSCE mission are perceived as... nonsense by everyone, except its leadership...”* It should be noted that the Belarusian State owned media did not give any time or space for the representatives of the mission to make public results of their work in Belarus in this or any other day.

Finally, the State owned media evaluated positively the election campaign coverage. Editor-in-chief of the Presidential daily *Sovietskaya Byelorussia* P. Jakubovich in the program *“Elections 2006”* (19. 03. 06) at *All-Nation TV channel* declared: *“Our newspaper provided pretenders with equal and lawful opportunities”*.

As for the independent press, *Belarusy i Rynok* represented alternative views including those by the European Union and the single candidate A. Milinkievich. And having concentrated its attention on the facts of numerous arrests and detentions another independent weekly *Nasa Niva* actually created an appropriate background for critical perception of the vote’s results. Finally, *Narodnaja Volia* turned out among those 7 newspapers, which could not reach its readers before and after the voting day.

5. CONCLUSIONS

5.1 The State owned electronic and print media worked in favor of just one pretender representing him as the only real candidate. As a rule, he was characterized either positively or extremely positively. The presence of other candidates in the same media was minimal, if any at all. And, as a rule, they were portrayed negatively.

5.2 Although the Central Election Commission formally provided candidates with equal opportunities in time and space in State owned media, the broadcasting time it scheduled for candidates’ speeches was not favorable for voters. They did not have a real opportunity to get acquainted with candidates’ election messages.

5.3 The State run electronic and print media did not supply the candidates with equal direct access. Moreover, in some cases the candidates’ speeches were censored.

5.4 In the State owned media, while approaching the date of voting, there increased a number of media effects, extremely negative opinions as regards opposition candidates and extremely positive opinions as regards A. Lukashenka.

5.5 The State owned media actually operated in a propaganda regime. Thus, they were not impartial. And they did not provide voters with a balanced coverage of candidates' activities and messages.

5.6 As a result, the State owned electronic and print media did not complete the basic task to inform voters in a non-biased and objective way, so that well informed voters could make a competent choice at the day of voting.

5.7 Although the independent press strived to give a wide and balanced picture of the Belarusian election process and candidates' messages, it could not withstand the tendentious election coverage by the State owned media due to its limited circulation and non-access to its readership.