

The Belarusian National Dilemma *And Its Implications for U.S. Policy-Makers*

KATHLEEN MIHALISKO*

The Republic of Belarus has earned plaudits and words of gratitude from President Bill Clinton and his administration for its resolute commitment to nuclear disarmament. Immediately following the final collapse of the Soviet state in December 1991, officials in Belarus, one of four nuclear-armed successor states to the USSR, expressed a desire to become the first nation in history to voluntarily give up its arsenal of nuclear weapons. As the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) enters its third year of existence, Minsk has shown no sign of hesitation before the task. In February 1993, the Belarusian Parliament voted to ratify START-1 and the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. With a U.S. pledge of \$65 million toward the costs, Belarus has already dismantled nine of its 81 SS-25 missiles and shown interest in eliminating the remainder well ahead of the schedule imposed by START-1. Given mounting concerns over the intentions of other former Soviet republics, it is easy to understand why Secretary of State Warren Christopher, during a recently completed visit to Minsk, was profuse in his praise of the example Belarus was setting for a more sluggish Kazakhstan and an alarmingly recalcitrant Ukraine.

Anti-nuclear sentiment indeed runs deep in this little-known country situated in the geographic center of Europe. In sharp contrast to their counterparts in neighboring Ukraine, even the most radical supporters of Belarusian independence shun discussion of maintaining a nuclear deterrent against potential Russian aggression. Public and parliamentary debate on the implications of nuclear disarmament for national security has been conspicuously absent, barring a few murmurs of protest from members of the former Soviet officer corps based in Belarus. Such aversion to the nuclear option can be explained in large part by the lingering trauma of Chernobyl—the consequences of which were most dramatic and widespread in Belarus—and by broad exasperation with the country's status as one of the most militarized societies in Europe in terms of the concentration of troops and arms.

But to an important degree, the ready rejection of nuclear weapons also stems from a characteristically Belarusian sense of moderation. If many Ukrainians envision their country as a future powerhouse, the national self-image among Belarusians is more restrained and cognizant of the country's very poor endowment in natural resources. A good illustration was provided last year by

* Kathleen Mihalisko is a senior analyst at the Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute in Munich, Germany.

head of state Stanislau Shushkevich, when asked by the present author to outline his definition of the national interests of Belarus.¹ Shushkevich put forth a modest list of goals, primarily concerning the revival of Belarusian national pride and values. Other spokesmen have defined Belarus' place as a bastion of peaceability in conditions of latent or actual instability elsewhere in the new Europe.

While such statements may strike appreciative chords in Washington and other Western capitals, they do not really address the basic and legitimate security concerns of a state living in the shadow of a nuclear giant. What is more, Belarus has plenty of geographic and historical reasons to meditate on its vulnerability to outside aggression. During World War II, one-quarter of Belarus' population perished and 90% of its infrastructure was destroyed. If Belgium is often referred to as the soft belly of (Western) Europe, the same might be said of Belarus' position in east-central Europe. With no mountain ranges or other natural barriers, it lies squarely on a major east-west invasion route. Its territory is also easily accessible from the north and south. Belarusian leaders might justifiably be preoccupied, therefore, with the defense and security needs of their newly independent state. Yet again in comparison to Ukraine, where the literature on national security issues has been proliferating rapidly in the past few years, the relative absence of policy debate in Belarus is striking.

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Defense and security planning is one of the most complex tasks confronting any state, demanding a significant commitment both to and from the nation. The fact that, at present, such a two-way commitment is highly problematic in Belarus accounts for the wide gulf between the objective security considerations outlined here and the actual amount of attention they are drawing. When the Soviet state ceased to exist, Belarus was one of the least prepared republics to make the transition to full independence, despite the irony that the USSR was buried on Belarusian soil, in Belavezha and Miensk. It would be a mistake, however, to confuse the notions of unpreparedness and unworthiness: in determining qualifications for statehood, there are no cosmic rules. As historians note, the emergence of the Belarusian nation-state dates to the Middle Ages and, in the sixteenth century, this one gave birth to one of Europe's first constitutions, written in the old Belarusian tongue. Nevertheless, following later centuries of foreign rule and in most recent decades, Sovietization and intense linguistic and cultural Russification, Belarus faces the tremendous challenge of coming to terms with itself as a nation. It must embark on a search for a “national idea,” without which, as Shushkevich himself has admitted, “there can be no

statehood.”² The lack of a melding sense of nationhood already has had consequences of two basic and interrelated kinds.

First, in the domestic policy arena, the dilemma has severely hampered the democratic and economic reform process in Belarus. For all the negative connotations that have been attached to the term, nationalism fueled the popular movements that tore asunder the Soviet empire and prepared the ground for new democracies. It was, in fact, an absolutely crucial component, and in its healthier manifestations it continues to serve as a safeguard against the return of undemocratic regimes. In the Baltic states, Poland, Ukraine, and elsewhere, few question the direct connection between the welfare of the nation and the development of democratic institutions. In short, while recognizing that nationalism is demonstrably capable of generating tyranny, democracy-building in much of the former Soviet Union was, and is, sustained by “national ideas” and ideals.

In Belarus, however, national democratic organizations and platforms did not develop a broad-based following. Official propaganda succeeded in stigmatizing the main opposition movement, the Belarusian Popular Front (BNF), with the label of nationalist extremism. At no point did public support for the BNF and like-minded forces reach any critical mass necessary to force a change of regime

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or regime policies. As a result, in contrast to other countries in the vicinity, Belarus has undergone virtually no personnel turnover in state and government organs since Communist times. Although categorizing post-Soviet Belarus as an authoritarian state would be overstating the case, it is no exaggeration to

say that former Communist *apparatchiki* retain a monopoly on the reigns of government and are the dominant force in the Belarusian Supreme Council (parliament). Authoritarianism has been replaced merely by “colossal stagnation,” to borrow another phrase from Shushkevich.³

If weak national consciousness lies at the root of the problem, a parallel factor is the relatively late arrival in Belarus of an urban culture. A predominately rural society until just a quarter-century ago, priorities in Belarus tend to be driven by immediate social needs as opposed to long-term or lofty goals that, more often than not, are the product of the urban intellectual environment. Much of the population has not forgotten that in Soviet times, they enjoyed one of the highest standards of living in the USSR. Soviet Belarusian authorities proved to be highly competent in local administration, even if all but the most mundane matters were referred to Moscow. Until the present day, the views of the authorities on “big picture” policy issues are often irrelevant to a population that

is overwhelmingly concerned with bread, butter, wages, and pensions. By and large, the promotion of unfamiliar concepts imported from the West is rather more difficult in Belarusian conditions than elsewhere in the region. Shushkevich is one of the few public figures attempting to struggle against the notion that “it is better to be well-fed and unfree than independent and starving”—a slogan that is becoming increasingly popular as economic hardships multiply.

Second, as might be expected, Belarus' particular circumstances cannot fail to influence the evolution of its foreign policy. Thus far, it has approached the far-away countries of the West with good will, as most clearly demonstrated by the fulfillment of its obligations on nuclear arms. But what is the state of affairs closer to home, in the area known as post-Soviet Europe? The remainder of this article will focus on the regional impact of what is posited here as a national dilemma, with particular reference to the Belarusian-Russian relationship. The exceedingly warm relations between Minsk and Moscow are not the stuff of news; the headlines are reserved instead for the rancorous and tension-ridden disputes between Moscow and Kiev. Seen from another level, Belarus' situation vis-à-vis the Russian capital merits the closer attention of U.S. and European policy-makers and students of the region. The main question to be addressed is whether the accommodationist position adopted by Belarus with respect to its large eastern neighbor helps or hinders the prospects for regional security.

Following the formation of the CIS on 8 December 1991, the outlook for developing Belarusian sovereignty seemed auspicious. For the first time in its history, Belarus was recognized as an independent state by most nations of the world. As the coordinating center of the new Commonwealth, Minsk hoped to augment its prestige by taking on the role of CIS peace mediator at large. In addition, as a country on the crossroads of East and West, liberal elements of society envisioned a time when Belarus would be a central rather than peripheral part of European civilization. While such hopes have not been abandoned, this most promising period was of very short duration. Approximately six months after the creation of the CIS, i.e., by the middle of 1992, Belarus' situation began to alter. Events then have witnessed a steady undermining of the country's sovereignty and freedom of action.

The decline of sovereignty can be dated more precisely, perhaps, to the Commonwealth summit in Tashkent in May 1992, when Belarus joined Ukraine and Turkmenistan in rejecting a collective security pact that Moscow was proposing to CIS member-states. As head of the Belarusian delegation, Shushkevich cited the pact's apparent violation of the principles of military nonalignment and neutrality. These goals, together with the achievement of non-nuclear status, had been set down in the constitutionally enshrined Declaration of Belarusian State Sovereignty of 1990. Though scarcely a model international treaty, powerful circles in Moscow, including the CIS/Russian armed forces command, attached great significance to the Tashkent agreement. Belarus' failure

to endorse it may have been interpreted as a possible alignment of the positions of Miensk and Kiev in the military sphere. Worse, it may have invited scenarios of broader and more threatening implications, including the participation of the Western frontier of the former Soviet Union in a regional security buffer (or *cordon sanitaire*) against Russia. Indeed, Polish President Lech Wałęsa already had proposed a so-called “NATO-2” security alliance of east-central Europe, the Baltic states, Belarus, and Ukraine.

Whatever the specific nature of Russian disappointments, there can be no doubt that Belarus paid a price for its refusal to fall in step with Moscow. Following the Tashkent summit, pressure began to build on Miensk to reorient its “sovereign principles” in a direction more amenable to the Russian Federation. In view of Ukraine's intractable determination to assume full control over military forces and equipment on its territory, Belarus' position acquired added urgency. Securing the loyalty of civilian Belarusian officials to Moscow was not a hard task in any event, for the reasons described above. Furthermore, Moscow could count on the support of the Belarus-based officer corps, composed of a majority of ethnic Russians, and the Ministry of Defense, where, incredibly, ethnic Belarusian constituted—and still constitute—no more than 25 percent of the staff. It is possible that efforts to lay the groundwork for the national armed forces of Belarus were deliberately stalled as a result of Shushkevich's stand on the collective security pact. Importantly, too, pro-Russian forces in the government and in Parliament began to speak out against neutrality and went as far as to try to remove the term from a new military doctrine that was under discussion in the autumn of 1992.

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Here it would be useful to return to a point made earlier in this discussion, concerning the contrasting attitudes of Belarusian and Ukrainian pro-independence activists toward nuclear weapons. Quite apart from the psychological effects of the Chernobyl accident, Belarusians

harbor no illusions about the country's ability to maintain and control strategic arms. Different circumstances prevail across the border in Ukraine, where scientific and technological potential, in addition to the world's largest missile plant, render such notions far more realistic. As long as 30,000 strategic rocket troops remain stationed in Belarus, their allegiance to the Russian Federation will not be in doubt. The disappearance of the weapons would lead, therefore, to the removal of a substantial Russian “occupation force” and alleviate concerns for the fate of sovereignty. In other words, nuclear disarmament serves the cause of independence; whereas many in Ukraine have drawn the opposite conclusion. Similarly, the concepts of neutrality and nonalignment are inextricably linked, in

the opinion of Miensk liberals, to the survival of Belarus as a sovereign country.

Hence, the assault by conservative spokesmen on the goals of neutrality, beginning mid-way into Belarus' first year of independence, was an ominous development. Equally portentous was the signing in July 1992 of a series of far-reaching agreements between Prime Minister Vyacheslau Kiebich and acting Russian Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar.

In the military sphere, Miensk explicitly recognized these strategic troops on its territory, as well as the relevant technical and production facilities, as belonging to Russia. Elsewhere, the agreements provided for a "common economic space" and close cooperation between Belarus

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and Russia in a number of other areas. They were so sweeping and comprehensive in nature that Gaidar was moved to announce the creation of common "political" and "social spaces" in addition to an *ekonomicheskoe prostranstvo*. The Belarusian-Russian agreements were a complete surprise to Shushkevich, whose only pronouncement after the fact amounted to a grunt of disapproval. Other signs indicated that the government of independent Belarus found itself somewhat embarrassed. Kiebich barely mentioned the accords again, except to note that he had obtained a promise of Russian oil at cheap prices until the end of 1992.⁴

No matter the embarrassment, the Kiebich-Gaidar accords established a certain pattern in relations between the two countries, driven by the Russian Federation's overpowering advantage as the source of 90 percent of Belarus' energy supply. The steady lifting of Russian oil prices to close to world levels was contributing, moreover, to catastrophic inflation and the overall deterioration of Belarus' economy. Oil, therefore, proved to be a most effective lever in exacting concessions from Belarus beginning in 1992. At the same time, the Belarusian government frequently has acted as a willing accomplice in the hostage-taking. The habit of referring problems and decisions to Moscow has not changed substantially, owing to the leadership's extremely limited experience in the crafts of statesmanship and policy-making.

Another aspect of the pattern bears mentioning. In referring to Moscow in general, it is understood that the Russian leadership itself is split into warring camps. Yet whenever Boris Yeltsin's conservative opponents have mounted a fresh challenge to the Russian president, the Belarusian government has immediately retreated from policies and positions that run counter to the interests of Moscow hard-liners. In fact, the direct impact of right-wing ascendancy in Russia has a history extending to the era of perestroika in the Belarusian SSR (and much before, of course, if the entire span of Communist rule is taken into

account). In the summer of 1991, for instance, when the adversaries of Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev were plotting the ill-fated coup, Belarusian politics witnessed a stepped-up militancy on the part of local Communist Party leaders. Other examples as far back as the publication of Nina Andreeva's famous manifesto against perestroika, in March 1988, could be given.

There can be little doubt that the eruption of the so-called Russian constitutional crisis in March 1993, which ultimately resulted in a referendum of confidence in Yeltsin, was responsible for the launching that same month of a controversial Belarusian government initiative. To be precise, the initiative was a product of the same circumstances that featured conservative attacks on Yeltsin, encouraged by parliamentary Chairman Ruslan Khasbulatov, for the president's role in the collapse of the USSR and the alleged betrayal of Russia. Wholly unexpectedly, Kiebach announced on March 18 that his government would seek parliamentary approval for military and economic union with Russia. This entailed, specifically, postponing the pursuit of neutrality in favor of the CIS collective security pact. In the course of a two week-long campaign organized by Kiebach to win public support for this reversal of policy, a few industrial spokesmen hinted at heavy-handed pressure from Moscow, apparently in the form of a threatened suspension of Russian orders to Belarus' military-related enterprises.⁵ Such an action would have jeopardized the livelihood of the nearly 400,000 employees of the Belarusian military-industrial complex. Coming to the government's defense, plant director Mikalai Yarokhau told Belarusian Radio that "it is better to be in a defense union [with Russia] with a sound economy than impoverished but neutral in principle."⁶

In presenting his case for a defense union with Russia, Kiebach dwelt on Belarus' security requirements. He referred, among other points, to a) political and economic instability throughout the CIS, which posed the threat of spreading military conflicts; b) Belarus' questionable ability to pay for an effective defense force; c) the "determined unilateral disarmament" under way in a number of states; and d) the all-round integration of the states of Western Europe, which cast doubt over the feasibility of Belarus' neutral status. In the days following Kiebach's speech, a number of other officials pointed to Austria, Finland, and Sweden as examples of countries that were in the process of re-examining their neutral status. The government-organized campaign in the last two weeks of March constituted, as a matter of fact, the only genuine public discussion of national security issues ever to take place in Belarus. To be sure, it was a rather tendentious discussion. Kiebach had no reason to doubt that the archconservative majority in Parliament would endorse his proposal.

Shushkevich, however, expressed his vehement disapproval of the government's initiative, as did members of the BNF opposition in parliament and the noncommunist political parties. Opponents of the collective security pact interpreted the development as a clear threat to Belarus' independence. For

instance, Supreme Council deputy and BNF economic expert Uladzimir Zablotzky maintained that if Belarus signed the pact, it could be throwing away its last chance to build an independent state.⁷ Shushkevich, viewing matters in the same spirit, stated that military union with Russia “could only hurt the country's interests . . . and lead even a stronger country up a blind alley.”⁸ Over Shushkevich's fierce objections, the Supreme Council acted on Kiebach's recommendation and voted on April 9 to endorse Belarus' accession to the collective security pact, albeit with two qualifications.⁹ Subsequently, Shushkevich's reluctance to carry out his mandate to sign the document led, in July, to the first serious attempt by pro-Communist deputies to oust him as Supreme Council chairman.

As was already clear, the collective security agreement was part and parcel of Moscow's drive to secure military intervention rights in the so-called “near abroad,” the former republics of the USSR. Most recently, these efforts have led Russia to seek changes to the treaty on Conventional

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Forces in Europe in order to augment the Russian military presence in the Caucasus. The act of coercing Miensk into accepting the CIS pact¹⁰ was not, however, aimed at procuring Belarusian help in areas of armed conflict; much more was at stake.

First, Marshal Yevgeny Shaposhnikov and others in the CIS/Russian command had obvious institutional interests in maintaining a unified military and security umbrella over the territory of the former Soviet Union. These could not fail to coincide in essential respects with the interests of Yeltsin's right-wing opponents, who were openly condemning the president for destroying the Soviet Union and Russian might. Second, there was deep concern about the direction and substance of regional security options under discussion in east-central Europe and Ukraine, as noted above. Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk seemed sincerely tempted by Wałęsa's NATO-2 proposal (indeed, Kravchuk was also fashioning his own idea for “a zone of stability and security in Europe”), and Polish-Ukrainian military contacts and agreements were developing rapidly. Polish-Belarusian relations were also improving in the wake of Polish Prime Minister Hanna Suchocka's visit, in November 1992, to Miensk. The urgency attached to Belarusian acceptance of the pact sent a clear signal that Moscow regarded Miensk—and Kiev—as belonging still to its rightful sphere of influence. Forcing Belarus into a Russian-dominated security alliance would have the effect, in addition, of driving a wedge through the center of any regional security buffer and prevent a Polish and Ukrainian link-up with the Baltic countries. Significantly, although Poland has since abandoned the proposed

NATO-2 for the chance of being accepted into NATO itself, Wałęsa asked Shushkevich in May not to sign the CIS collective security agreement.¹¹

Third, for historical and psychological reasons too complex to cover here in detail, Russia does not easily accept the idea of independence for the fellow Slavic countries of Belarus and Ukraine. When public figures as disparate as Alexander Solzhenitsyn¹² and Ruslan Khasbulatov elaborate similar visions of a Slavic state uniting Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan (with its 40 percent Slavic population), what is at issue here are emotions at the level of the psyche rather than cold security calculations. Russian policy circles are not fundamentally interested in a core grouping of Russia and Muslim Central Asia. The ideal of a core Slavic state, on the other hand, finds direct and indirect expression in any number of official statements and proposals. In July, following a wave of debilitating strikes in eastern Ukraine that set off a full-blown crisis in Kiev, Moscow took the opportunity to draw a weakened Ukraine into partnership with Russia and Belarus in a three-way “Slavic economic union.” While the fate of the various economic, financial, monetary, and customs unions being contemplated is beyond the scope of this article, it is interesting to note that conservative political elements in Russia (and Belarus) have called on many occasions for an economic and defense union of the Slavs and Kazakhstan.

The internal situation in Belarus throughout the summer of 1993 very much favored these elements. In the midst of serious economic disruptions owing to a cut-off of Russian fuel deliveries, representatives of the pro-Communist “Belarus” faction, the largest deputies' bloc in Parliament, met in August with Ruslan Khasbulatov to explore the possibility of joining in a “unified political state” with Russia. The delegation, headed by Alyxander Lukashenka, returned from Moscow with the news that Belarus would be receiving all the necessary credits to pay its oil bills. The fact that the deputies incorrectly attributed the extension of technical credits to their visit was beside the point; more important was to generate the impression that Belarus would collapse if it remained independent. Lukashenka's group proceeded with a new effort to put the renunciation of the Belavezha (founding CIS) accord on the agenda of the next Supreme Council session.

With Russia plunging into its latest, and ultimately most serious, political crisis, the climate in Belarus resonated with echoes of the conservative stand-off in Moscow against Yeltsin. On September 11, Sergei Baburin, leader of the “Rossiya” faction in the Russian Federation Parliament, headed a delegation to Minsk to attend a Congress of the Peoples of Belarus, organized by Communist and pan-Slavic organizations as well as the pro-Russian Union of Officers of Belarus. Among the points of discussion were, predictably, the creation of a Russian-Belarusian-Ukrainian superstate, the renunciation of Belavezha, and the resurrection of the USSR.¹³ In addition, the delegates reportedly arranged for Belarusian assistance in defending the Russian Parliament against Yeltsin. Yet

the significance of this event paled in comparison to the sensation created one week later by no less a personage than Kiebach. During a trip through the Homel (Russian: Gomel) region, the prime minister decried the “complete unviability” of the Commonwealth of Independent States, adding that he was directing his efforts “not toward the resurrection of the Soviet Union—which is practically impossible—but toward its creation in a renewed form.”¹⁴

The prime minister's remarks touched off an angry response from Shushkevich, whose relations with the head of government are chilly at the best of times. In an interview, the Supreme Council chairman stated that renouncing Belavezha would be

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tantamount to resurrecting the Russian empire.¹⁵ But Shushkevich's sharp remarks could not allay the fears of Belarus' democratic groups that the government and its backers in Parliament were seriously intent on rejecting not only Belavezha, but independence itself. The “striving for reunification with Russia,” as Soviet history books described the formation of the tsarist empire, appeared to be entering a critical stage.

In the first week of October, however, the same democratic groups were able to proclaim that the existence of an independent Belarus was assured,¹⁶ following Yeltsin's dramatic armed victory on October 4 over opponents inside the Russian White House and the arrest of Khasbulatov, Alexander Rutskoi, and their supporters. As might be expected, the outcome was also hailed as a major defeat for Belarus' own Communists; BNF leader Zyanon Paznyak called for Lukashenka, Ivan Trusau, Mikalai Skarynin, and other members of the “Belarus” faction to be stripped of their deputies' immunity for activities aimed against the independence of Belarus. These events add a corollary to the thesis that conservative revanchism in Russia inevitably brings conservative revanchism in Belarus: when democratic forces prevail in Russia, the prospects in Belarus for democracy—and sovereignty—soar accordingly.

Earlier in this article the question was posed whether the interests of security in the eastern European region were served or harmed by Belarusian policies vis-à-vis the Russian Federation. What is certain is that Belarus' own image appears to have been tarnished throughout the region, notably in the wake of its *volte face* on the collective security pact. Polish commentaries at the time, for example, referred to Belarus as an armed extension of Moscow.¹⁷ Of greater consequence were Czech protestations, during Prague's contest with Belarus for a seat on the U.N. Security Council, that the Security Council already had “one Russian member.”¹⁸ Although that argument alone did not cause Belarus to lose the bid to the Czech Republic, it came uncomfortably close to suggesting that little had changed since the days when the Byelorussian SSR could be counted on to vote

with Moscow in the United Nations.

Minsk campaigned vigorously for the Security Council seat, and it remains to be seen whether the disappointment or failure will force a re-examination of its pro-Russian orientation. Meanwhile, the search for solutions to the security needs of postcommunist eastern and central Europe continues, with most efforts in the West directed at reaching agreement on Polish, Czech, and Hungarian requests for admission into NATO. As the material presented here suggests, Belarus' experience in the first two years of independence is of particular relevance to Western appreciation of fears and concerns throughout the region. The recuperation of an empire is still high on the agenda of Russia's conservatives. Despite the humiliating defeat of their leaders in October, the problems posed by the existence of an independent Belarus or Ukraine are likely to preoccupy the political and military leadership of Russia for years to come. This argues for a firm Western commitment toward the sovereignty and inviolability of the new states; as the case of Belarus shows, encroachments on sovereignty are encroachments on democratic development. The West must also be sensitive to the ironies abounding in the region. Ukraine is a source of anxiety to U.S. policy-makers, but neither can it be overlooked that its resolve to protect Ukrainian sovereignty is one of the single most important factors in keeping imperial ambitions in check. Belarus, causing no such worries in Washington, has a government that spoke freely in 1993 of renovating the Soviet Union. Where lies the greater threat?

If the U.S. has devoted energy and financial resources toward ensuring that Belarus fulfills its nuclear arms obligations, it should also encourage Minsk to abide by its principles of neutrality and nonalignment in the present security vacuum in east-central Europe. This would offer the best guarantee for a stable transition to modern European statehood. At the same time, Belarus, like any nation, has concrete security concerns that must be addressed. Against this background, Warren Christopher's recent invitation to Belarus to cooperate and consult with NATO is a welcome development and should be taken seriously. Contacts at all levels and in many different areas are especially important where Belarus is concerned because of the country's isolation hitherto from the international community and its severe shortage of independent-minded experts in affairs of state, jurisprudence, economics, and defense matters. In short, the possibilities are numerous and worthy. Belarus is, after all, a peaceable and tolerant country and, as such, deserving of greater attention.

Notes

¹ See, "Belarusian Leader on the First Year of Independence: An Interview with Stanislau Shushkevich," *RFE/RL Research Report*, No. 3, 15 January 1993, pp. 8-13.

² *Sovetskaya Belorussiya*, 9 September 1993.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Belarus ratified the military provisions of the Kiebach-Gaidar agreement in February 1993 when it also voted on START-1 and the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

⁵ Events surrounding the Kiebach initiative are explained in more detail in Kathleen Mihalisko, "Belarus: Neutrality Gives Way to 'Collective Security'," *RFE/RL Research Report*, No. 17, 23 April 1993, pp. 24-31.

⁶ Belarusian Radio, 24 March 1993.

⁷ Belarusian Radio, 9 April 1993.

⁸ Reuters, 31 March 1993.

⁹ The qualifications said that Belarusian troops could not be used abroad, nor foreign troops stationed in Belarus, without the approval of the Belarusian Supreme Council.

¹⁰ Although Shushkevich claims to have carried out his mandate to sign the Tashkent agreement, it has not yet been ratified by the Belarusian Parliament. Neither, for that matter, has Russia ratified it, owing to its difficult situation in the Transcaucasus. The pact's greatest non-Russian enthusiast appears to be Armenia.

¹¹ *Rzeczpospolita*, 25 May 1993.

¹² Alexander Solzhenitsyn, "How Are We to Reconstruct Russia?" *Komsomolskaya pravda*, 18 September 1990 and elsewhere.

¹³ *Express-Khronika*, 9-16 September 1993.

¹⁴ Quoted in, inter alia, *Narodnaya Gazeta*, 18-20 September 1993.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Zvyazda*, 7 October 1993.

¹⁷ See, for example, *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 21 April 1993.

¹⁸ "Czech-Belarus Security Council Contest Was Serious," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Special*, 30 October 1993.