

Center for Strategic and International Studies
and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

Present:

The Last Dictatorship in Europe: The Impact of Upcoming Elections in Belarus

With

Stephen B. Nix, *The International Republican Institute*
Iryna Vidanava, *Johns Hopkins University and Students' Thought*
Svyatlana Zavadskaya, *Dmitry Zavadsky Foundation*
Walter Stankievich, *Belarusian Review*

Moderated by

Sarah E. Mendelson, Senior Fellow, CSIS

Thursday February 9, 2006

12:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Rayburn House Office Building
Room B-354

Agenda

12:00 p.m. Lunch

- Introduction by Dr. Sarah E. Mendelson
- **Stephen B. Nix**
Mr. Nix will discuss the political situation in Belarus, the participating parties, and progress of opposition campaigns.
- **Iryna Vidanava**
Ms. Vidanava will highlight the social and youth movements taking place in the country today.
- **Svyatlana Zavadskaya**
Ms. Zavadskaya will comment on the personal freedoms of Belarusian citizens in the context of Belarus' politics.
- **Walter Stankievich**
Mr. Stankievich will discuss the obstacles for independent media faced with state limitations on access to information.

1:30 p.m. Meeting Concludes

Speaker Biographies:

Stephen Nix, Regional Program Director, Eurasia
International Republican Institute

Stephen Nix joined IRI in October 2000 after serving for two years as senior democracy specialist at the United States Agency for International Development. Mr. Nix is a specialist in political party development, and judicial and legal reform in the former Soviet Union. During his three year residence in Kyiv, Ukraine, he served as outside legal counsel for the Committee on Legal Reform in the Ukrainian Parliament. Mr. Nix assisted in the drafting of crucial reform legislation in Ukraine, including the Constitution of Ukraine, the presidential and parliamentary election laws, and the Law on the Constitutional Court of Ukraine.

Mr. Nix also served as legal counsel to the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) in Ukraine and Russia, and has written extensively on legal and political reforms in the region. Among his publications are: *The Compendium of Election Laws of Central and Eastern Europe* (1994); *A Perspective on the Constitution of Ukraine* (1996); and, *Legal Reforms in Ukraine 1989 to Present* (1999).

Mr. Nix received his juris doctorate from the Georgetown University Law Center in 1989. He was an associate in the litigation section of the law firm of Baker & Hostetler in Washington, D.C. from 1989 to 1994, where he specialized in election law and international law.

Iryna Vidanava, Editor –in-Chief
Students' Thought

Iryna Vidanava has been active in promoting civil society in Belarus for more than a decade. Before she became editor-in-chief of *Students' Thought*, the only independent magazine for students in Belarus, Ms. Vidanava has also served as the International Coordinator for the Assembly of Pro-Democratic NGOs, Belarus' largest third sector umbrella organization. She has also held leadership positions in the Belarusian Students' Association and the Youth Information Center. With a university degree in history, Ms. Vidanava is a lecturer and a doctoral student at Belarus State University. She is currently enrolled as a Muskie Fellow at Johns Hopkins University, where she studies public policy, nonprofit management and international relations. While in the United States, Ms. Vidanava has worked for the Center for Civil Society Studies at Johns Hopkins University and Freedom House.

Svyatlana Zavadskaya, President, wife of the disappeared journalist Dmitry Zavadsky
Dmitry Zavadsky Foundation

Svyatlana Zavadskaya, co-founder of the civil initiative *We Remember*, began to participate in the human rights movement in Belarus after the disappearance of her husband Dmitry Zavadsky on July 7, 2000. During the past five years, Mrs. Zavadskaya, together with the wives of other missing people, carried out over 300 trips around the world to speak about politically motivated disappearances in Belarus to raise international awareness of human rights abuses in Belarus, and to lobby international organizations. Mrs. Zavadskaya has also organized various events in Minsk to inform the Belarusian people of actions taken by the ruling regime and speak on the politically motivated disappearances of Yuri Zakharenko, Viktor Gonchar, Anatoly Krasovski, and Dmitry Zavadsky.

The *Dmitry Zavadsky Foundation* supports Belarusian journalists who suffer for their efforts to campaign for freedom of speech in Belarus. It is committed to the search for truth behind Dmitry Zavadsky's disappearance.

Walter Stankievich, Publisher
Belarusian Review

Prior to joining the staff of the *Belarusian Review*, the only English language publication dedicated to Belarus, Walter Stankievich joined Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, where he served as the Director of the Belarus Broadcast Service. He was born in Western Belarus and immigrated to the United States together with his family in 1949. After serving in the U.S. armed forces, he graduated with a Masters in Engineering. For the next 25 years Mr. Stankievich specialized in communications. In addition to his professional involvement, Mr. Stankievich has been an active participant in the Belarusian-American community.

Sarah E. Mendelson, Senior Fellow
Russia and Eurasia Program, CSIS

Dr. Sarah E. Mendelson is a senior fellow with the Russia and Eurasia Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. Before joining CSIS in 2001, she was on the faculty at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University. At CSIS, she manages several projects that explore the links between security and human rights. Her current research includes collaborative work on public opinion surveys of Russian attitudes on democracy, human rights, Chechnya and the military. She works closely with Russia's leading human rights activists. Dr. Mendelson recently completed a survey of Russian youths' attitudes toward Stalin and is currently researching the international response to the wars in Chechnya. Dr. Mendelson is the author of *Changing Course: Ideas, Politics and the Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan* (Princeton University Press, 1998); co-editor of *The Power and Limits of NGOs: Transnational Networks and Post-Communist Societies* (Columbia University Press, 2002) and *Barracks and Brothels: Peacekeepers and Human Trafficking in the Balkans* (CSIS Press, 2005). She received her BA in history from Yale University and her PhD in political science from Columbia University.