



DIFFERENT CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THE BELARUSIAN ELECTION

The election in Belarus was as usual judged differently in east and in west. This time it was a detail in the election process that caused the different conclusions.

The eastern election observers could follow the counting of the votes and then accept the outcome. Half of the observers from west admitted that they could not follow when experienced election commissions counted. The western group meant that they therefore could not guarantee that the result corresponded to the will of the voters

West meant that the election was better carried through than before, east had already confirmed that Belarus has the best election procedure in eastern Europe.

The Belarusian television had three hours exposure of the parliamentary election. During the programme the viewers could vote twice, if they thought that the election was fair and if they had seen something against the rules. 92 % accepted the election, only few had discovered something wrong. The opposition parties had 56 candidates in 110 electoral areas, but none of them got more than 20 % of the votes.

The system of each electoral area electing its representant does not give the same possibility for opposition as the proportional system where the parliamentary seats are distributed in proportion to the number of votes in the whole country. The Belarusian system does not fit party elections. The only advantage the registered parties have is that they can have their own candidates in all electoral districts. If oppositional parties used this possibility in all districts, they should have given places for 880 candidates

The non-partial candidates appeal to the voters in beforehand in order to gather signatures. Each candidate, who succeeded in getting 1000 signatures got 800 dollars for producing election material. All 263 candidates got five minutes in radio and television, which was doubled after demands from the western observers. Furthermore their campaign programmes were printed in central news papers. The candidates were not allowed to receive contributions. In reality the conditions for the candidates were not the same. Those already in the Parliament had an advantage as they were known already. 34 of them candidated again, 31 of whom were elected. But 76 of the members of Parliament did not participate again, as the government considered a certain circulation necessary in a presidential governed state.

The administrative factor, that plays a great role in all eastern countries is free to work when the possibilities of the candidates to campaign are limited. That may be the reason why the lady MP failed to be elected again in the electoral area I watched for the weekly magazine Ryska Posten.

An election observer could have demanded a re-counting of the votes, but none of the 900 international observers or thousands of domestic ones did

The Belarusian election shows an effort to increase the direct democracy on the national level which is not usual in other countries, where party boards and media dictate which ones can be elected.

The election system in Belarus needs corrections. The mandate periods could be limited to two and the administrative factor be controlled by statistic analyses. The visits of the observers in the polling stations were usual in the beginning of the 1990ies. To-day the use is limited to the fact that the observers get an impression of the unknown country Belarus

The aim of the election observations ought not to be that the world shall accept the results. But foreign observers can increase the credibility of the election process, so the population can be sure that the results correspond to the people's will.

Belarus has progressed far, because more than 90 % of the television viewers who called considered that everything had been fair.

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