

Nazis' and Poles' atrocities. State-run TV keeps riding its hobby-horse of 20th century wars while undermining the protests

Monitoring of State TV Narratives in Belarus

(15/03/2021 – 21/03/2021)

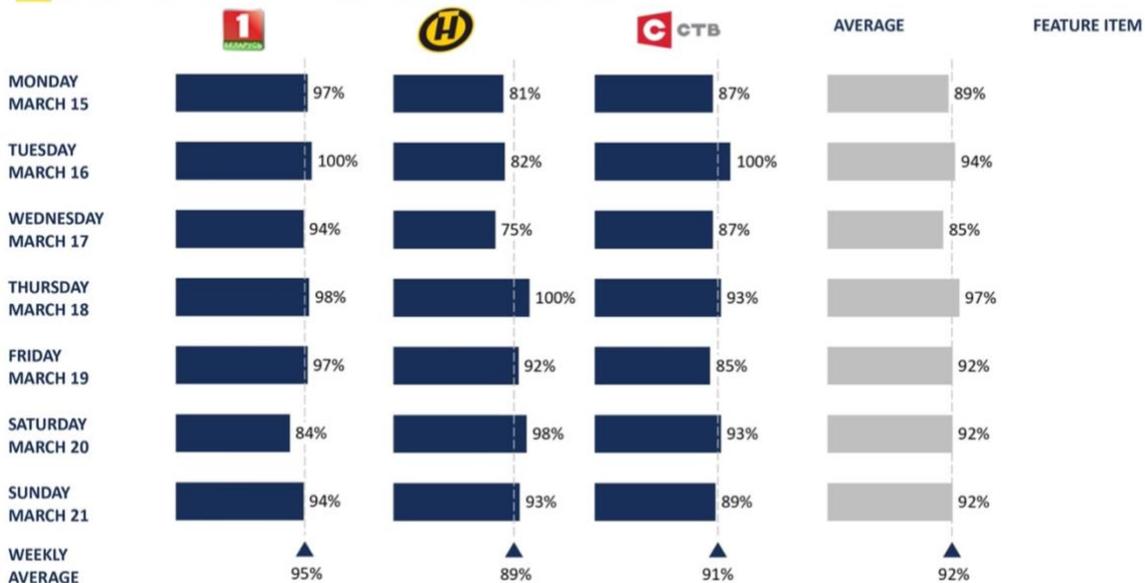
The purpose of this monitoring is to study how the Belarusian state conveys its ideological narrative. The most important mechanism for conveying its narrative is the evening broadcast. Then the informational function of media is complemented, and sometimes replaced by, the broadcasting of official ideological messages. We monitor the outputs of the Agency of the Television News (ATN), which prepares the news broadcasts for the **Belarus-1** channel (“Panorama” and Sunday’s “Main Airtime”), the channel **ONT** (“Our News”, “Saturday’s Edition” and “Contours”), and the channel **STV** (“24 Hour News” and “The Week”).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Throughout the week, state channels have been promoting political and historical topics. The key narrative was the preservation of the memory of the Second World War, the atrocities of the Nazis during the war years and building patriotic education on this basis.

THROUGHOUT THE WEEK, STATE CHANNELS HAVE BEEN PROMOTING POLITICAL AND HISTORICAL NARRATIVES – THE PRESERVATION OF THE MEMORY OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR, THE ATROCITIES OF THE NAZIS AND PATRIOTIC EDUCATION

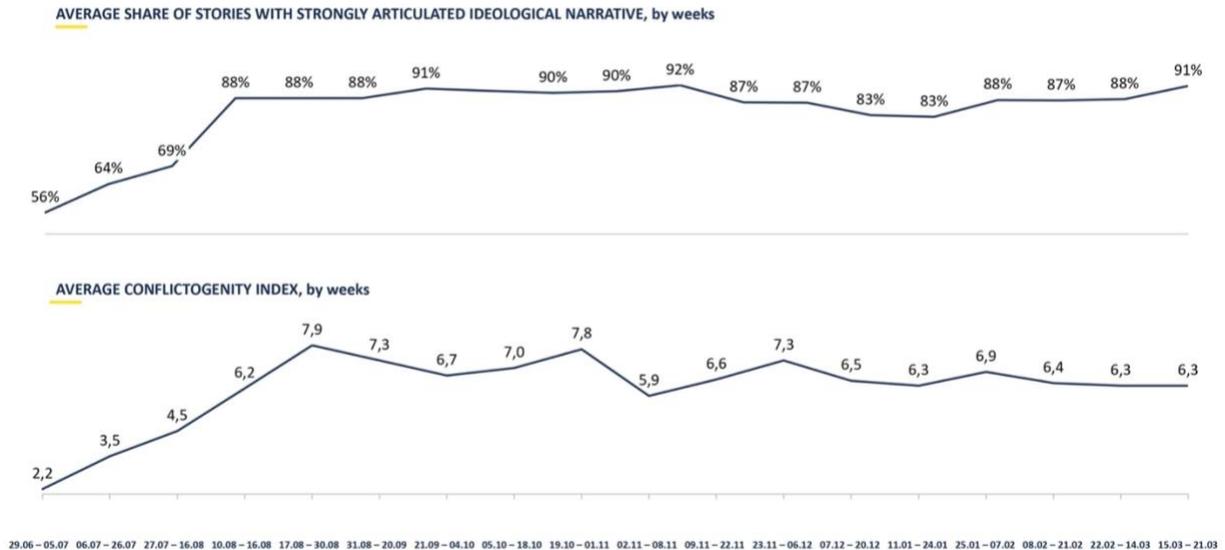
THE SHARE OF STORIES WITH STRONGLY ARTICULATED IDEOLOGICAL NARRATIVE*



*STRONGLY ARTICULATED IDEOLOGICAL NARRATIVE - one or more key ideas that define the content of a news story (e.g., the inadmissibility of destabilizing the political situation).

From the historical theme, the state-run TV seamlessly transitioned to denouncing opponents, frequently employing a technique of linking the complicity with the Nazis with the opposition symbols, as well as airing anti-Polish rants in connection with the centenary of the Peace of Riga, after which Western Belarus became part of Poland.

ANTI-POLISH RANTS WAS BASED ON THE CENTENARY OF THE PEACE OF RIGA AND PLIGHT POSITION OF WESTERN BELARUS AS A PART OF POLAND



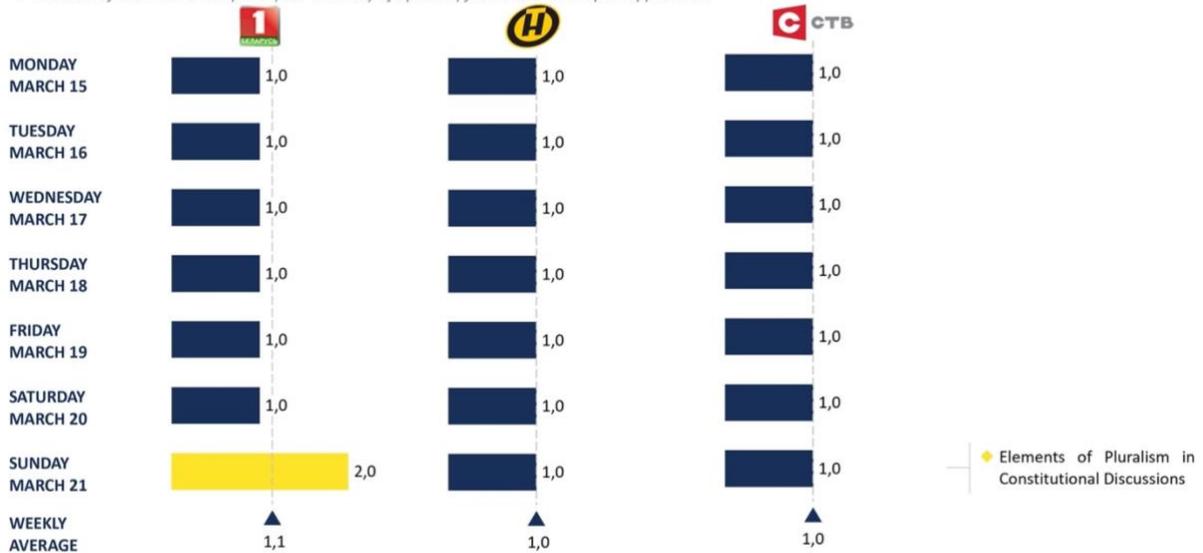
STV editorials retain the most aggressive orientation fishing for geopolitical sensations, conspiracy theories and mystical explanations of what is happening in the country and the world. The video series glorifying the heroes of state-run TV (Lukashenka, security officials, pro-government figures) and blaming enemies (oppositionists and "traitors") all the way to comparing them with rats raises the image of political confrontation in the country to the level of a sacred battle.

One of the notable topics of the week was the work of the Constitutional Commission. State TV channels stressed that the current Constitution has not exhausted itself, and the dominant request from the society is for order and stability.

DISCUSSIONS OF THE MEMBERS OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL COMMISSION WERE THE ONLY ELEMENT OF PLURALISM ON THE AIR. AND YET THEY DID NOT GO BEYOND THE MAIN NARRATIVE

PLURALISM INDEX*

1 - absence of alternative viewpoints; 10 - diversity of opinions, journalistic and expert approaches



*PLURALISM INDEX - an indicator evaluating the share of critical reports and news stories citing opposing, critical, and other opinions alternative to the official rhetoric.

Although state-run TV likes to emphasize the sovereign path of Belarus, criticize the imposition of alien standards, if necessary, it willingly supports the argument for domestic legislative innovations with international practices.

Key narratives can be found in [APPENDIX 1](#).

References to foreign experience allow presenters to fend off accusations of the repressive nature of the legislation. To this end, they present a curated selection of specific provisions and indications of police brutality in Western countries.

As March 25 draws near, the exposure of the opposition and information preparation for the suppression of possible rallies intensified. TV channels aired the exercises of the internal troops with promises to repeat the earlier forceful scenario as needed. Prominent opposition figures were accused of preparing a bloody insurgency.

AS MARCH 25 DRAWS NEAR, THE EXPOSURE OF THE OPPOSITION AND INFORMATION PREPARATION FOR THE SUPPRESSION OF POSSIBLE RALLIES INTENSIFIED

CONFLICTOGENITY INDEX*

1 - no threats; 10 - full of threats, attacks and compromising materials



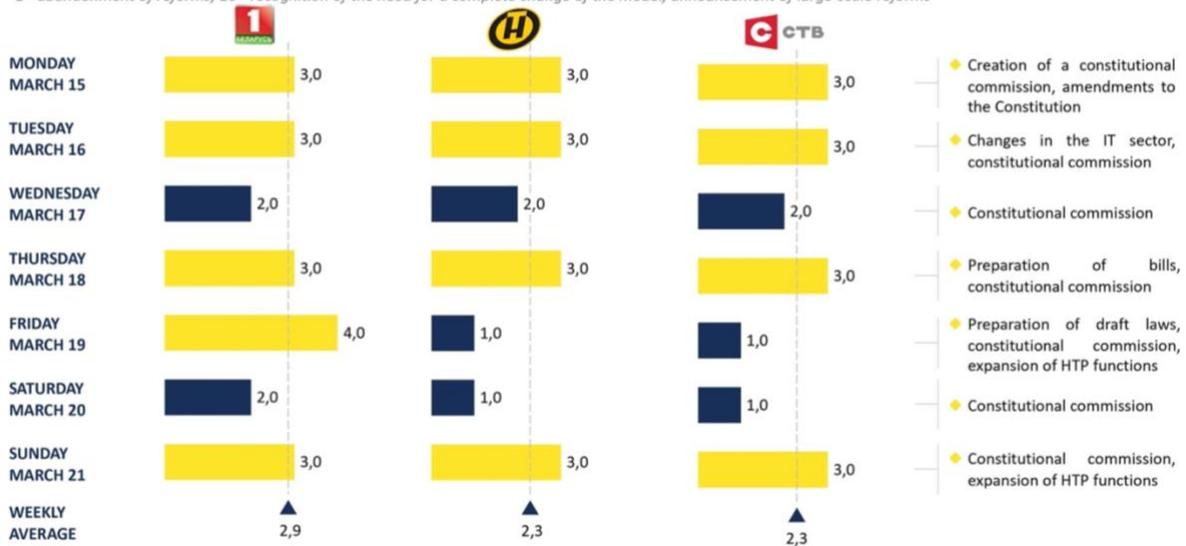
*CONFLICTOGENITY INDEX - an indicator measuring the percentage of news stories that intensify political tension and conflicts (through accusations and threats towards opponents, equating protests to violence, and similar).

The coverage of the work of the Constitutional Commission, the expansion of the functions of the HTP administration and the preparation of some legislative changes for the spring session formally brought the reform orientations of state channels to a higher-than-usual level.

ONE OF THE NOTABLE TOPICS WAS THE WORK OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL COMMISSION. THE LEVEL OF REFORM-ORIENTATION INDEX WAS HIGHER THAN USUAL

REFORM-ORIENTATION INDEX*

1 - abandonment of reforms; 10 - recognition of the need for a complete change of the model, announcement of large-scale reforms

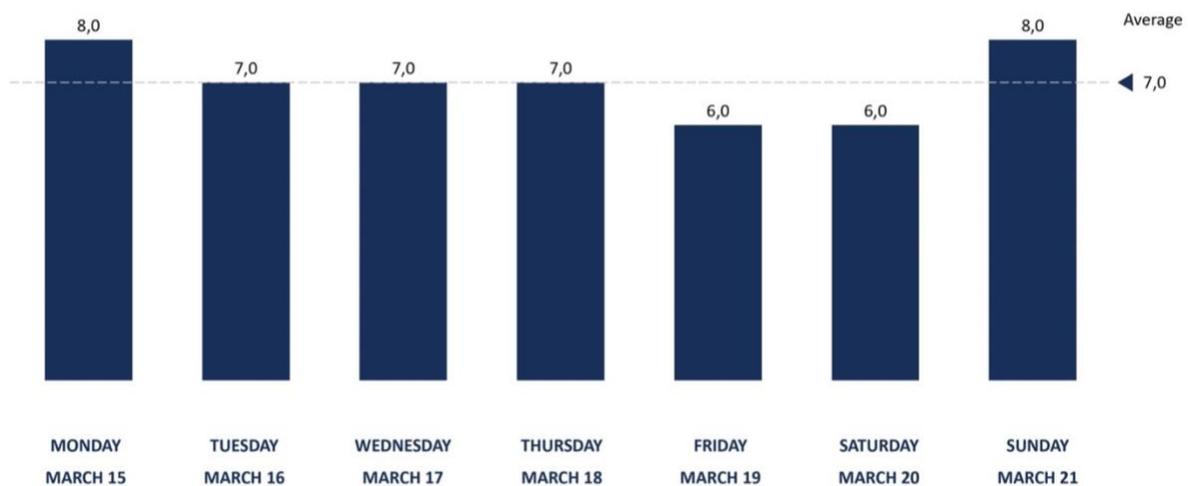


*REFORM-ORIENTATION INDEX - an indicator evaluating the presence of news stories with reformatory proposals or decisions.

The uniformity of the broadcast has somewhat increased against the background of the aired military-historical narrative and the coming date of March 25, the next date for the ideological consolidation of the state-run TV.

■ **THE UNIFORMITY OF THE BROADCAST HAS INCREASED AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF THE MILITARY-HISTORICAL NARRATIVE AND APPROACHING FREEDOM DAY – ANOTHER DATE FOR THE IDEOLOGICAL CONSOLIDATION OF STATE TV**

THE LEVEL OF INFORMATION POLICY COORDINATION*



*THE LEVEL OF INFORMATION POLICY COORDINATION – an indicator evaluating coordination across the air. This is inferred from news stories having similar structures, as well as the duplication of opinions, positions and ideologemes among state TV channels.

The project “Monitoring of State TV Narratives in Belarus” is implemented by Sense Analytics in partnership with Press Club Belarus. The author of the weekly reports is Maxim Stefanovich, the editor and coordinator of the project is Artyom Shraibman.

To see the full version of the report in Russian [click here](#).

APPENDIX 1 KEY NARRATIVES

ANTI-WEST NARRATIVES

- “But in neighboring countries, the overseas priests act as show runners in the offices of local leaders. Sorry, of local presidents. Elected as if by the people, but, in my opinion, approved by the members of the Bilderberg Club.”
- “Let's see how the ever-critical West's reacts to this. In Germany, the riot law has been tightened. The government enabled itself to brutally suppress any protest during the pandemic.”
- “Politicization and scandals during the vaccine campaign, government failures during the first and second waves of the pandemic, economic recession, and now new lockdowns! In Europe, despite everything, discontent remains. And those who are dissatisfied go out into the street and end up unavoidably clubbed by the local police.”
- “The heroization of Nazism is a painfully relevant issue now. Belarus has a law against it, but in some Western countries witness chronic exacerbation of the brown plague.”
- “The epidemiological situation in a number of European countries remains extremely serious.”
- “While in our country they are doing everything possible to preserve the memory and prevent the repetition of those terrible events, Latvia celebrates the Day of Remembrance of Legionnaires — those Latvians who fought during the Second World War in SS volunteer units”.
- “All the while the Ukrainian government needs to ensure by September the largest payments on the state debt, which already today exceeds \$ 91 billion.”

IMPOSING PATRIOTISM, PRO-GOVERNMENT ACTIVISM

- “For the memory to remain. The national campaign for the upkeep of the obelisks of the Great Patriotic War continues in Belarus”.
- “Natalya Kochanova, Chairman of the Council of the Republic, also congratulated the schoolchildren. The Day of the Basic Law has become a personal historical moment in the life of young Belarusians.”
- “We are citizens of Belarus! Today these words were proudly spoken all over the country by 14-year-old children, who were issued their first passport in celebration.”
- “It is no coincidence that the President of our country declared 2021 the Year of National Unity. Because we really need to unite around those values, around the history that we have.”
- “Veterans and young people united today in a large-scale patriotic action to upkeep the memorials. As a tribute to the memory of the heroes.”

- "About fifty cars, decorated with state symbols, drove along the longest streets of the regional center."
- "Formation of legal and political culture among young people is one of the most important state tasks. It is important that every young person loves their family and homeland, because these are indivisible concepts."

POLISH ENEMY

- "The Pilsudski regime created a concentration camp, many of our well-known compatriots were the victims of its bloody dungeons".
- "The Polish authorities carefully look after and cherish anyone who is ready to stick a knife in the back of our state. Warsaw spends colossal resources on anti-Belarusian propaganda and does not miss the smallest cause to stage a provocation."
- "It has been established that language courses were held at the school for applicants for a Pole's card, and scout squads were organized there. Their main activity was based on the devaluation of the historical memory of the Belarusian people."
- "The actions of individual Polish citizens and officials on the territory of our country are far from neighborly."
- "This is our historical truth, which we cherish in the name of those who died at the hands of the Nazis and will not allow any sabotage. The Prosecutor's Office of Brest sent a claim to the Economic Court for the liquidation of the legal entity "Polish School".

PATERNALISM, DIRIGISME

- "Belarus was one of the first in the world to legalize smart contracts, and with them the cryptocurrency. Moreover, Bitcoin is exempt from taxes until January 1, 2023 and is not subject to declaration for individuals."
- "Performance of the utility companies, quality of major repairs, construction. These and other topics were discussed in the Council of the Republic today. But this is not about lawmaking. Natalya Kochanova, chairman of the upper house of parliament, today devoted almost the entire working day to personally receive the people."
- "The state will support all forms of development and training of talented youth."
- "New districts of the capital are being built in a new way. The International Financial Center is being built in Minsk World, it is 700 thousand square meters of commercial and office premises."
- "Almost fifty facilities will be commissioned this year. These are secondary schools, kindergartens, cultural and recreational institutions in all regions of the country. "
- "The number of the registered unemployed is 18% less than a year ago. The unemployment rate at the beginning of March is 0.2%".

ANTI-PROTEST NARRATIVES

- “How much money did the fugitives make on the failed “changes”? And who is the first to abandon from the sinking ship of the Belomaidan?”
- "Well, if the dark room of near-political squabbles is so beckoning, it's time to shed some light."
- “I am convinced that hard physical labor will first solve the problem of being too netitled and unemployed, then a police truncheon. Those too adamant can always end up in prison or a mental institution."
- “And let's start right away with the main feature of the week. This video has never been aired, today we will do it for the first time. And this is, without exaggeration, shock content. And archive footage of the celebration of the Freedom Day on March 26, 1944 in Minsk."
- “The same flag. Let's pause – let this sink in."
- “Bloody clashes with the participation of people who will take part in the so-called peaceful protest are being prepared by the radical wing of the Belarusian opposition. We are talking about the core team, which is managed by Karach, Makar and Prokopiev."
- “Every Belarusian should see the degree and scale of the madness that journalists, medics and security face. Yes, look and enjoy — these are our people, and if we are tolerant of them, and the state does not isolate them, they will destroy our country."
- “Today in Brest the verdict was announced to eight more riot participants. The court sentenced two of them to one and a half years to a year and eight months of imprisonment. Another 4 people were sentenced to restraint of freedom and sent to an open-type institution for a period of one and a half to two years."
- “12 defendants are in custody. These are students from different universities in Minsk, a teacher and a so-called professional curator from the headquarters of ex-candidate Tikhanovskaya."
- “They have fake everything — bruises on what they have for head. Fake protests. This is when they go out for 15 minutes, take a picture with a flag and run away before they are spotted. They have a fake vote. They have fake leaders."

PRESIDENT'S CONSTITUTION

- “They are completely different people. Honored and respected Belarusians. Parliamentarians, lawyers, economists, public figures, scientists, industrialists and agricultural workers. People with an active civil position."
- “The youth will build a new political and legal foundation of the nation along with the eminent Belarusians”.
- “Unlike the cardinal breakdown proposed by the opposition who fled the country, the updated Constitution in Belarus is not about reforms, but evolution.”

- “Meanwhile, some of our compatriots hastened to propose their alternative version of the Constitution and are actively promoting it in telegram channels. We looked into this legislative work, but before we asked ourselves the question - who are the authors? Well-known persons, some are on the wanted list today.”
- “The country has faced certain threats, I receive a lot of information from people who are patriotic. They communicate very important information. First, it is sovereignty on the Internet, it is an opportunity to somehow regulate it, somehow monitor negative trends, including those that affect the psyche, the hearts of our children, our youth.”
- “In the near future, changes are coming in the legislation to suppress riots, provocations and offenses.”
- “So Belarus, like many countries of civilized Europe, will also be unyielding within the framework of the law. There will be greater liability for resisting the police and those who guard public order. And also for using violence against them.”
- “The work of the Constitutional Commission will be transparent and open. When updating the Basic Law, the best international experience will be taken into account. But each norm should serve the main goal - to preserve the country. This is the president's request.”

PROMOTING THE PRO-GOVERNMENT POLL BY ECOOM

- “As it turned out, more than half of the respondents believe that the current Constitution is still relevant. The current Basic Law will not be written off. ”
- “Along the same lines, topic, let us remind that in the same nationwide opinion poll the majority of Belarusians, and this is almost 80%, when answering the question, what achievements of sovereign Belarus should be preserved, answered order and stability”.
- “The results of a large-scale sociological study are very revealing. More than 60% of Belarusians have a negative attitude to the use of such symbols.”

PERSONALISM

- “This time the sports achievements of the Belarusian president haunt his sports and political opponents”.
- “We have such a country that ... It needs a strong leader in an individual person. We trust the one, so to speak, one leader. And this is absolutely necessary that the society is ready for this itself”.
- “While you mold your fakes from abroad, the president is with his people. With those who have it the hardest now. Not in words, but in deeds. In the red zones. Which president is found there more often than Lukashenka? It is with such a leader that Belarusians will be, and not with those who are not just in the red zone, but in their homeland won't dare set foot without wetting their diapers.”
- "Alexander Lukashenko asks not to offend the rural dwellers who put their work and soul into the land."

- “On the eve of the 78th anniversary of the destruction of Khatyn, an all-Belarusian prayer will be held. President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko will come to pay tribute to the victims.”

ALL STAKES ON LAW ENFORCEMENT

- “As a result, the assigned tasks were completed by the personnel perfectly well. The security forces have demonstrated that any illegal mass events will end without even starting. ”
- “No red by mouth, no white in your hands, do not become a bullfighter. You cannot defeat the state.”
- “The first responders. One of best trained flying squads is the Security Department. This year, they are introducing intelligent platforms for the safety of people and the safety of property.”
- “GUBOP continues identifying administrators of destructive telegram channels. The head of the residential chat was detained in Minsk.”
- “The Internal Troops, together with other units of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Belarus, conducted planned exercises. Officers and soldiers have practiced riot control.”
- “These are the absolute enemies of our state, our structure, and we will deal with them very quickly. We will even try to do some proactive detention, so that there are no such attempts. And if they come out, we will repeat everything that happened with great pleasure.”
- “No matter the destructive forces, law enforcement officers always display firmness, courage and mutual assistance, protect the constitutional order of the country and stand guard over sovereignty and law and order”.
- “The video presents first-hand experiences of the security forces who took part in restraining the protests, we will show the police footage, some of which will be aired for the first time ever. Premiered on Tuesday 23 March. Do not miss”.
- “Now foreigners who like barricades will be banned from entering our country altogether, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs will make one list of all radicals and extremists.”

SUCCESSFUL GOVERNMENT'S ANTI-COVID STRATEGY

- “All in all, according to the agreements of the leaders of the two countries, 100 thousand doses of the drug were delivered free of charge. Today the entire vaccine shipment has been distributed to Belarusian medical institutions.”
- “Belarus has produced trial batches of a drug, together with Russia, designed for comprehensive testing. The next step is the mass production of the drug by the Minsk “Belmedpreparaty” company equipped with cutting-edge technology.”
- “Meanwhile, polyclinics are preparing for mass vaccinations. They decide how many rooms to convert into vaccination posts to keep the patients from queuing up, they draw up lists of those wishing to be vaccinated — there are more than 50 thousand of them in Grodno region alone.”

- “The President assured: Belarus will make every effort for the sake of health and life. Everyone will be vaccinated, no queues, no hassle. As for the British strain or any other — we will treat everyone and everything. Belarusian healthcare workers are ready.”