



5.1 Public Accord as a Part of Political and Economic Reform and of Sustainable Human Development

Social accord is an important ideological value that *is* not only associated with national interests, but also defines, and acts as a condition for society's successful economic and political development.

Social accord is conditional on economic stabilisation, overcoming production fall and reducing inflation, as well as on an efficient system of social support for the most vulnerable groups. It also requires preventing mass unemployment, equal access to capital, land and social services. It also implies firm guarantees of civil rights and freedoms, political consensus and productive cooperation between the state and non-governmental organisations.

In the minds of all citizens, the role of the state in building social accord should be manifested in the state's sincere efforts to create equal opportunities for every individual, regardless of the social or ethnic background, sex or religion. The individual will then be able to realise his intellectual and work potential, improve his living standards and develop culturally and intellectually.

The realisation that any person, deprived of the understanding of a higher purpose of his activities, could not live in agreement with others or even his own self, determines the desire of the state to create conditions for the strengthening of social peace and promoting public accord.

5.2 Social Accord in Light of the Ethnic Situation in Belarus

Under certain conditions, ethnic tensions may intensify even in Belarus, a country with a reputation for its political stability and tolerance of people. 8.7% of participants in an opinion poll conducted in 1995 by the Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences described serious ethnic conflicts in Belarus in future as «likely», and another 48.7% of respondents did not eliminate the possibility of small-scale ethnic clashes.

For many years, the people of various

ethnic backgrounds, political convictions and religious denominations have lived together in peace and accord. Social cohesion is one of Belarus' priceless spiritual assets. Despite all social, economic and political difficulties, members of various ethnic communities feel comfortable and welcome in Belarus. This can be illustrated by a letter written by an ethnic Ukrainian living permanently in Belarus to the editor of a Belarusian newspaper.

According to the 1989 population census, there were 123 ethnic communities living in Belarus, as compared to 130 listed in the previous censuses.

The ethnic structure of the Belarusian nation, according to post-war censuses is shown in Table 5.1.

The multi-ethnic structure of the population and qualitative imbalances among various ethnic groups may potentially lead to ethnic problems. But never in the history of Belarus have ethnic problems developed into open clashes. If any, ethnic tensions have been limited, and were always caused by factors other than ethnic differences. The friendly attitude of Belarusians to other nationalities is apparent not only in the abstract, but

According to the 1989 population census, there were 123 ethnic communities living in Belarus

Box 5.1

Let Bygones be Bygones

Dear Sir,

I would like to share with you some of my views. I am a Ukrainian, who was born and grew up in Gorodnya District, Chernigov oblast, Ukraine. I have been living in Belarus for the last 27 years. The term «ethnic minority» never seemed to apply to me. Some suggest that a house of National Minorities should be built. As for me, I would not want to visit such a house, even if it were built as a palace.

I am convinced that our people have no nationalism in their souls. Just take a trip from Gomel, Belarus, to Chernigov, Ukraine, stopping by at villages on your way and talking to people. Will any one of them point to that hill or grove behind which are the homes of their enemies or foreigners? Travel from Gomel, Russia, to Chernigov, Ukraine, or from Gomel to Bryansk, and you will discover no border in the souls of the common people.

Borders are needed for those who are building their careers and authority on nationalism. Until recently, I believed that I was the only one who thought so. But I was wrong. The elections to the Supreme Soviet [Parliament] showed that the Belarusian people have rejected nationalism.

It is true that there have been a lot of different events that happened in our history. For example, the Duke of Kiev Yaroslav Mudry waged war against his older brother Mstislav. In 1024, he was defeated by Mstislav in the battle of Listven. There were a lot of dead and wounded. Is it really time for the Ukrainians to start investigating, who was fighting for Yaroslav and who for Mstislav? This could take us very far.

Grigory Gonchar, Baranovichi
Recorded by Mikhail Shimansky

Table 5.1
Population of Belarus:
ethnic break-down

	size of resident population							
	1000's				as % of total			
	1959	1970	1979	1989	1959	1970	1979	1989
total population	8,055.7	9,002.3	9,532.5	10,151.8	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
including:								
Belarusians	6,532.0	7,289.6	7,568.0	7,904.6	81.1	81.0	79.4	77.9
Russians	660.1	938.2	1,134.1	1,342.1	8.2	10.4	11.9	13.2
Poles	538.9	382.6	403.2	417.7	6.7	4.3	4.2	4.1
Ukrainians	133.1	190.8	231.0	291.0	1.7	2.1	2.4	2.9
Jews	150.1	148.0	135.5	112.0	1.9	1.6	1.4	1.1
Other	41.5	53.1	60.7	84.4	0.4	0.6	0.7	0.8

One-fifth of all families are ethnically mixed

also on the everyday level. Cross-marriages are common. One fifth of all families are ethnically mixed. All of this is evidence of relatively low importance attached by Belarusians to their ethnic identity, as well as an indicator of social cohesion in inter-ethnic relations. However, this apparent stability and ethnic peace do not necessarily mean that social cohesion in this area is firmly in place. Under certain conditions, ethnic tensions may intensify, despite Belarus' international reputation for stability and tolerance. It is symptomatic that 8.7% of participants of the opinion poll conducted in 1995 by the Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences, indicated that serious ethnic clashes in Belarus could be likely. Another 48.7% foresee minor ethnic clashes happening in the future.

5.2.1 National Ideology and Civil Peace

Social tension in the area of inter-ethnic relations has grown considerably since the collapse of the old socialist ideology and of the USSR. New state policies of Belarus then began to be dominated by the ideas of sovereignty and national identity.

After proclaiming political independence in July 1990 and stating it in the 1991 Constitution, Belarus was faced with the

need to revise its understanding of national interests and national identity. Based on the historical tradition to associate national interest with a certain ideology (e.g. Orthodoxy in the Russian Empire, or international unity of the Proletariat and Communism in the Soviet Union), the ruling elite put forward the ideology of national revival.

With hindsight, it is becoming apparent that some elements of this approach have been carried too far. On some occasions, employees of certain institutions were obligated to learn the Belarusian language over a short period of time or face dismissal. Special examination boards have been set up to assess the staff's knowledge of the Belarusian language. In some institutions, Russian was treated as a foreign language.

The new version of the Constitution was based on the model of a corporate state exercising control over the industry and finance, as well as the organised labour movement. The increased social role and regulatory power of the state over the economy and social sphere creates realistic opportunities for the strengthening of social cohesion and civil peace.

5.2.2 The State and National Minorities

According to the 1989 population census, non-Belarusians constituted 20% of the entire population of Belarus. There were 84,400 representatives of more than 100 different ethnic minorities, constituting less than 1% of the entire population.

Table 5.2 lists ethnic minority groups accounting for less than 1% of the entire population (based on the 1989 population census).

Poles and Lithuanians tend to live compactly. The share of non-Belarusians in

Table 5.2
Size of ethnic minorities in Belarus (1,000)

Tartars	12.6	Gypsies	10.8
Lithuanians	7.6	Azeris	5.0
Moldovians	5.0	Armenians	4.9
Uzbeks	3.5	Germans	3.5
Chuvash's	3.3	Georgians	2.8
Latvians	2.7	Mordovians	2.6
Kazakhs	2.3	Tajiks	0.9
Estonians	0.8	Turkmens	0.8

Belarus' ethnic structure has a tendency to increase.

In today's social policies, special emphasis should be made on promoting dialogue, socio-cultural, and non-violent methods of resolving ethnic problems. The attention of the state towards national minorities has increased.

The President and government of Belarus are acting on the premise that, in a law abiding state, the formulation of policies in all areas of social life should be based on the creation of an adequate legal framework, that promotes stability, development, civil peace and social cohesion.

In 1992, Parliament enacted the Law «On National Minorities», which set up a legal framework of inter-ethnic relations, based on the national Constitution, Declaration of National Sovereignty and principles of international law in the area of human rights and the rights of ethnic minorities. Representatives of ethnic and cultural communities have taken an active part in the drafting of the Law. Some representatives of these communities were present in Parliament during the first and second readings of the Law. One representative of those communities made a speech explaining to members of Parliament the need for this law. The purpose of the above law is to promote cohesion in inter-ethnic relations, and to preserve and strengthen the cultures of various ethnic communities.

Ethnic communities are constantly working towards achieving mutual understanding and accord, and active partnership between themselves. Various organisations of ethnic minorities have united into an association. Round tables meetings are common, and existing problems are discussed in a quiet and friendly atmosphere.

Many organisations representing national minorities publish their own periodicals. In particular, the Union of Poles publishes the newspaper «Glos z-nad Ncmna», as well as two other private newspapers. The Jewish community publishes the newspaper «Aviv». The Tartar and Ukrainian communities also publish their periodicals.

Far from all cultural needs of the national minorities are being met presently. However, the achievements of the state in this area should not be ignored. The Council of Ministers has formed a Council for Ethnic Minority Affairs, which has been working for more than one year. The government of Belarus has sponsored the National Centre of Ethnic Cultures, which continues to be funded with public funds. In 1996, the first nationwide festival of ethnic cultures took place.

Belarusians abroad. Due to numerous his-

The number of ethnic and cultural associations and centres is growing. Many ethnic communities have been established, and are running their own educational and cultural societies. This includes the Armenian Educational and Cultural Society «Ayastan», the Belarus-Azerbaijan Society «Gobustan», the Association of Jewish Organisations and Communities of Belarus, the society «Moldova», the Society of Germans in Belarus «Revival» (Centre of German Culture in Belarus), the Union of Poles in Belarus, the Russian Cultural Centre «Rus», the Cultural Association of Muslim Tartars «Al-Ketab», the Association of Ukrainians «Varta», Association of Koreans, the Lithuanian Community and the Gypsy Club.

torical reasons, ethnic Belarusians are living all over the world on nearly all continents. Today, there are 3.5 million Belarusians who live outside of their native country. Of this number, nearly two million live in non-CIS countries.

According to certain estimates, the population of Belarus would have been 30 million, if all Belarusians would live in their country. It would also have reached this figure had not World War 2 eliminated one quarter of the Belarusian population.

The statistics on the number of Belarusians living in different areas of the former USSR are also of interest.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Belarusian Diaspora broke up into two sections: one composed of Belarusians living in the former USSR, and the other of Belarusians living in other countries.

During the last five years, a major breakthrough has been achieved in the relations

Box 5.2

Table S.3
Distribution of
Belarusians within
the territory of the
former USSR (1989
Census)

	Thousands	%
Armenia	1.1	0.01
Azerbaijan	7.8	0.08
Belarus	7,904.6	78.76
Ukraine	440.1	4.4
Kazakhstan	182.6	1.8
Georgia	8.6	0.09
Lithuania	63.2	0.6
Moldova	19.6	0.2
Latvia	119.7	1.2
Kyrgyzstan	9.2	0.09
Tajikistan	7.3	0.07
Turkmenistan	9.2	0.1
Estonia	27.7	0.3
Uzbekistan	29.4	0.3
Russian Federation	1,206.2	12.0
including:		
Autonomous Republic of Buratia	5.3	0.05
Autonomous Republic of Kalmykia	1.3	0.01
Autonomous Republic of Karelia	55.5	0.6
Autonomous Republic of Komi	26.7	0.27
Nenetsky Autonomous District	1.05	0.01
Chukotsky Autonomous District	3.04	0.03
Yamal-Nenetsky Autonomous District	12.6	0.13
Autonomous Republic of Yakutia	10.0	0.1

Belarusians living in areas where open military confrontation is in progress, are experiencing the most difficult conditions

Box 5.3

The Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus,

- acknowledging the spiritual and historical closeness of their nations,
- recognising the desire of both nations for further integration,
- willing to take fuller advantage of the natural and intellectual resources of Russia and Belarus for purposes of social and economic progress, and
- acting in accordance with their Constitutions and the universally recognised principles of international law,
- based on the contents of Agreement on the Community between Belarus and Russia of 2 April 1996, and building on its contents in a commitment to promote integration in the economy and other fields, have agreed upon the following:

Article 1

The Community of Russia and Belarus is hereby transformed into a Union, whose functions and authority are laid out by the Union Charter.

Each member of the Union shall keep its state sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity, Constitution, flag, emblem and other attributes of statehood.

Article 2

The objectives of the Union are as follows:

- to strengthen the relations of brotherhood and friendship, and promote extensive cooperation between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus in the political, economic, social, military, scientific, cultural and other fields;
- to improve the living standards of both nations and create favourable conditions for every individual to develop freely and extensively;
- to achieve sustainable socio-economic development of member states, based on the merger of their material and intellectual resources, and on the use of market approaches to managing the economy;
- to harmonise the national legal systems and form a common legal system of the Union;
- to improve national security, maintain high defence capacity, and join efforts in fighting crime;
- to assist in maintaining security in Europe and in the development of partnership in Europe and the world.

with ethnic Belarusians living overseas. In 1990 a global association of ethnic Belarusians was established. The Association pursues the goal of promoting unity among all Belarusians living in different continents.

At the invitation of this Association, Belarus was visited in 1991 by a group of American Belarusians. This initiated permanent contacts with the Belarusian Diaspora in the West. The leadership of Belarus appreciates the desire of compatriots to deepen their knowledge and understanding of today's Belarus and assist its scientific and cultural development.

The First Global Congress of Belarusians took place from 8 to 10 July 1993. More than 1,200 delegates from CIS and non-CIS countries participated. The Congress became an important historical event. In their speeches at Congress, many representatives of the Western Diaspora emphasised that their potential could be used more fully.

The Belarusian people are grateful to their compatriots outside the former Soviet Union for their assistance in overcoming the effects of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster. Aid is coming from many countries of the world, including Germany, the United States, Canada, Australia, Belgium, Holland,

Ghana, and Syria. This aid is forwarded to medical establishments offering treatment for adults and children who suffer from radiation exposure. This aid is excellent proof that, when their homeland is in trouble, the Diaspora is ready to cast away their hurts and ambitions and offer help. The Diaspora is not indifferent to the fate of their homeland and of their compatriots.

5.2.3 Belarusians in the Former USSR

After the break-up of the Soviet Union, thousands of ethnic Belarusians, who had been scattered throughout the territory of the ex-USSR, suddenly became persons with no citizenship.

Belarusians living in the Baltic states, Moldova, Kazakhstan, and Middle Asia, and areas where open military confrontation is in progress, are experiencing the most difficult conditions. They are greatly affected by problems such as unemployment, lack of social support, the language barrier, loss of citizenship, ethnic discrimination, difficulties with housing privatisation and access to medical care. 90% of ethnic Belarusians living in the former USSR would like to return to their homeland.

Many Belarusians living outside Belarus are forming their own organisations, as a way to resolve their problems. The creation of such associations makes the lives of our compatriots outside of Belarus much easier.

In this area, however, there seems to be more problems than achievements. Greater advantage of the opportunity to receive support from the authorities of countries of which ethnic Belarusians are citizens and taxpayers should be taken. Great opportunities are offered in the Agreement between Belarus and Russia, signed on 2 April 1997.

The four-party agreement, concluded by Belarus, Russia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan on 19 March 1996, is aimed at achieving deeper integration in economic and humanitarian fields. Achievement of these goals depends to a great extent on effective ties with the Diaspora, maintained by government agencies and non-government organisations.

Extensive efforts to maintain ties with the Belarusian Diaspora within and outside the former USSR are made by the Belarusian Society for Friendship and Cultural Ties with Foreign Countries, the Belarusian Society for Contacts with Compatriots Abroad «Radzima», and the Global Union of Belarusians «Batskaushchyna».

The congress «Russia - Belarus: Past, Present and Future», took place in Moscow in 1997 and had among its delegates permanent

residents of Belarus and members of the Belarusian Diaspora in Russia.

In their efforts to promote contacts with Bclarusians abroad, non-governmental organisations rely on state institutions, because their involvement is critical in resolving many of the problems faced by the Belarusians abroad.

5.2.4 The State as a Guarantee of Adequate and Responsible Ethnic Policies

The government of Belarus is taking active steps to establish relations with Bclarusian communities throughout the world. Today, there are around 30 Bclarusian communities in the West and equally as many throughout the CIS.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs continues its work to appoint honourable consuls in counties where Belarusian communities are the largest (Poland, the United States, Canada, Argentine, Australia).

The Ministries of Culture and Education, in conjunction with the Belarusian Society for Friendship and Cultural Ties with Foreign Countries and society Radzima» have planned a number of activities as part of the state programme «Bclarusians in the World». The plan is so far being carried out successfully.

Extensive efforts are being made to build business contacts between the business community of Belarus and businessmen of Bclarusian descent living within and outside the former USSR.

From 1991 to 1996, efforts of the state to develop contacts with Bclarusians abroad focused on the following areas: (1) organisational, political and legal support of the national and cultural revival of the Belarusian community abroad, (2) economic partnership, (3) educational issues, (4) humanitarian aid and (5) emigration. In April 1992, the government of Belarus passed an enactment «On Issues Concerning the Global Union of Belarusians «Batskaushchyna».

In 1992, Belarusian government agencies participated in the Congress of Belarusians living in the former USSR. In 1993, the cabinet of Ministers passed the Enactment «On Approval of the State Programme «Belarusians in the World» and Measures to Ensure its Implementation». The programme «Belarusians in the World» was the first document focusing on the relationship with Belarusians living outside Belarus. In 1992, an intra-CIS governmental agreement was signed, establishing an advisory council for migration and support for citizens of CIS countries. In 1992, agreements on cultural cooperation were signed between the Ministry

of Culture of Belarus and similar ministries of the Russian Federation, Ukraine, Lithuania, Poland and Moldova. This increased the opportunities of ethnic Belarusians living in those countries to meet their spiritual and cultural needs. There were also multilateral agreements on cooperation in the field of education, ratified by members of the CIS during a meeting in Tashkent in May 1992. Further agreements are currently being drafted with corresponding ministries of the CIS countries and the Baltic States, and call for a greater protection of the interests of Bclarusians living in those parts of the former Soviet Union.

Despite extensive assistance from the government of Belarus, many important issues related to the government's contacts with Belarusian communities abroad remain unresolved. The stability of Belarus depends to a large extent on a sound and balanced approach to the implementation of existing programmes, based on features of Belarus' ethnic development. The leadership of Belarus is aware that these programmes affect 20% of the Belarusian population, more than two million people living in the CIS countries and Baltic states, and nearly as many Belarusians living outside the former Soviet Union. In January 1997, a State Committee for Religious and Ethnic Affairs was established, to assist in formulating and implementing a sound and efficient ethnic policy in the interests of all peoples and nationalities living in the territory of Belarus.

Today, there are around 30 Belarusian communities in the West and equally as many throughout the CIS

5.3 The State and Religious Communities: Issues of Social Partnership

Civil peace depends to a great extent on the relationship between the state and religious communities. Analysis of the current religious situation shows that in late 1980's and early 1990's, the number of religious organisations and believers rose, as a result of increased political and ideological activity in the country. It can be concluded that the

Table 5.4
Size of religious communities of Belarus by area

Oblast	Size of communities		Including:							
			Orthodox		Catholic		Protestant		Other	
	1996	1988	1996	1988	1996	1988	1996	1988	1996	1988
Brest	550	308	282	158	51	14	209	136	8	—
Vitebsk	302	89	146	43	64	17	64	15	28	—
Gomel	227	82	124	47	19	3	75	25	9	7
Grodno	400	178	154	77	163	74	70	26	13	1
Minsk	403	114	192	49	71	15	132	47	8	13
Mogilev	146	60	54	23	12	—	66	32	14	5
Minsk City	85	11	15	2	11	1	48	7	11	1
Belarus	2,113	842	967	399	391	124	664	288	91	31

Belarus is known as the «canonised land of Orthodoxy». In the past and present, the Orthodox Church has occupied a leading position among other religious groups by the number of communities and followers. As of 1 January 1997, the Belarusian Orthodox Church had 967 parishes, 10 eparchies, 12 monasteries, 10 brotherhoods and 11 sisterhoods. Religious organisations employ approximately 900 priests. The educational institution of the Orthodox Church, the Seminary, trains priests and the religious collegiate of psalm singers. The Belarusian Orthodox Church publishes eight different periodicals and broadcasts the weekly programme «Dobrovest». Comparatively, the Belarusian Orthodox Church is accountable to the Moscow Patriarch, and is headed by Metropolitan Filaret, the Patriarchal Exarch of All Belarus.

Box 5.4

process of religious revival is in progress, and religious institutions are being restored. The role of religion and the church in the life of the society and the state is mounting.

From 1988 until January 1997, religious communities grew 2.5 times, the number of ecumenical religious organisations 2.5 times, and of religious confessions three times. The fastest growth of religious communities was observed in Minsk (7.7 times) and the slowest in Mogilev oblast (2.4 times).

Along with traditional religions, non-traditional beliefs and confessions are spreading, especially among young people. Table 5.4 presents comparative statistics on the growth of various religious communities.

According to data obtained by the Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences, the proportion of believers in Belarus grew from 10 - 15% in 1998 to 30% in 1990, and is currently approaching 45%. The economic and social crisis is deepening the search by society for new ideals in established values of religion. In the minds of many people, religion offers a guarantee of stability, order, firmness of spiritual values, and is associated with the revival of people's national traditions.

There are several levels of religion in today's society:

- *polytheistic beliefs, carrying elements of pagandom, whose traces have survived until the present. Such beliefs are mostly professed in rural areas, where elements of pagandom have preserved in popular rites and traditions, including Christian ones.*

- *established religions - Orthodoxy, Catholicism and some Protestant confessions;*

- *ethnic confessional groups or communities - ethnic groups different from the indigenous nation by their ethnic and religious background, often living compactly (e.g. Jews, Muslim Tartars, Lutheran Germans, etc.);*

- *new syncretised religions.*

- *non-believers interested in religious matters.*

The Belarusian Orthodox Church frequently acts as the organiser of numerous

inter-denominational conferences and seminars. In particular, Christian churches of the CIS and the Baltic States joined efforts to conduct a congress of representatives in Moscow in June 1994 and in Minsk, in October 1996. The aim of these conferences was to promote peace and accord in society and strengthen the solidarity of churches facing political and social changes.

The Roman Catholic Church, which has existed in Belarus since the 15th century, has three eparchies, 391 parishes and three nunneries, one Seminary and Institute of Catechism in Grodno, and one College of Catechism. The Rinnan Catholic Church sponsors tin¹ annual festivals of church music «Magulny Bozha» in Mogilev, religious marches and youth seminars, health trips of young people from Chernobyl affected areas to Poland, and establishment of Catholic communities in new areas.

Today's Roman Catholic Church cooperates mostly with three institutions: Vatican, the Polish Catholic Episcopate, and various cultural and educational institutions. Belarus has established diplomatic relations with Vatican.

Recently, the number of Protestant communities has also grown conspicuously.

Traditional and new Protestant churches are more active than traditional religions. A modernised approach to religious dogmas, traditions and rites enable the wide acceptance of Protestantism as an ideology of the present that quickly adapts to changing conditions.

The number of Protestant communities has grown four times since 1970. Protestantism is represented by 14 confessions and denominations, of which the most widespread are Evangelical Baptists (194 communities), Pentecostals (330 communities), Seventh Day Adventists (38 communities), Full Evangelical Christians (25 communities), followers of the New Apostolate Church (17 communities), and Mormons (three communities).

Other, less numerous denominations are trying to increase their authority in society. The Old Believers' Church, which unites 32 parishes, is making great efforts to attract young people in its communities. The Uniat Church with 11 parishes, has had no new members for the last three years.

In Judaism, there is still a divide between those whose beliefs are widespread in the Jewish community of the United States, and of those who share the religion practised by believers in Israel. Today, there are 10 communities professing Orthodox Judaism and six communities professing the so-called progressive Judaism, mostly uniting young people and the intelligencia.

The proportion of believers in Belarus grew from 10 - 15% in 1998 to 30% in 1990, and is currently approaching 45%.

The Muslim Church, consisting of 22 communities, continues efforts to increase its influence among the Tartars living in Belarus. This work is being coordinated by the leadership of the Muslim community and of the Association of Tartars in the Republic of Belarus. Additional measures are being taken to include in Muslim religious communities representatives of other nationalities living in Belarus along with tartars and to establish links with other Muslim countries, particularly Turkey. Muslim Tartars have managed to preserve their customs, rites and traditions. However, there is still a high influence of the Belarusian culture among them, especially in family traditions.

In the mid 1980's numerous non-traditional religious type organisations began to emerge, and were functioning illegally. Attempts have been recorded to establish branches of several totalitarian sects, now illegal in Belarus, such as the Great White Brotherhood, AUM Senrikk, and Satanists.

5.3.1 Social Cohesion and Relations Between Religious Communities and the State

Relations between the Church and state is an important part of internal politics and largely determines the state of inter-confessional relations, psychological environment of the country, and overall social and political situation of the country.

Efforts to promote democratisation and build a law abiding state have changed the relationship of the Church, State, and various religious organisations. Both sides are actively seeking ways of cooperation to achieve social cohesion based on universal moral values, and ideological, ethnic and religious diversity. To this end, officials of local and central authorities meet more frequently than before with religious figures and leaders of religious communities.

Religious organisations have been given full legal rights. This includes the right to register their charters with governmental authorities and to a legal entity.

The moral revival of society and social cohesion are impossible without respect towards both the church and the state. The state is making active efforts to build and maintain a dialogue by actively participating in the renovation of church buildings as well as handing such buildings over to religious communities. Over the last ten years, religious organisations have taken possession of more than 600 church buildings. In 1996, local authorities were assisting in the construction of 164 churches (108 Orthodox and 28 Catholic) and in the repairing another

Belarus is a secular state which recognises ideological diversity. All religious organisations are equal before the law.

The Constitution of Belarus enables every citizen to freely choose his attitude towards religion, and to profess any religion individually or jointly with other believers. Each citizen may also profess no religion whatsoever, express and disseminate his own views to religion, and participate in religious rites. The Law «On the Freedom of Religion and Religious Organisations» meets all requirements contained in international agreements and pacts referring to religion and church matters. It governs relations between state and the church to ensure equal observance of religious freedoms throughout the country and respect for the citizens' rights to such freedoms.

er 50.

In turn, religion can assist society in the spiritual development of its citizens.

For the duration of more than one millennium, the Belarusian Orthodox Church has been making great efforts to educate its followers, strengthen the family and promote peace, accord in society, and patriotism.

Traditionally, the Belarusian Orthodox Church has been closely connected with the state. It has a well established mechanism of maintaining such contacts, developed for centuries. In a period when the Orthodox Church is faced with numerous problems (financial difficulties, staffing problems, crisis in the internal structure of the Church due to transformations in society), cooperation between the Church and state tends to become closer, particularly in raising funds for the building of new churches. The Church increases its charitable activities and the participation of the Orthodox clergy in educating the youth, and in the work of correctional institutions of the Interior Ministry.

The spiritual and moral experience of various churches and religions is met by Belarusian society with understanding. The words of religious priests who talk about empathy, repentance and universal moral values have a positive effect on people's souls. However, there is no justification for the spread of the so-called «new religious movements», totalitarian sects that have nothing in common with the mentality and traditions of the Belarusian people.

In addition, some missionaries are causing great damage to society by isolating young people from their families and society by their teachings and through the organisation of their sects. Many members of such sects are leaving their employment or studies to distribute religious literature and raise funds for the leaders of the sects. All of this is causing great concern in society.

Some religious beliefs, professed by these destructive sects, pose a threat to the life, health, freedom and dignity of a person.

Box 5.5

Relations between the Church and state is an important part of internal politics

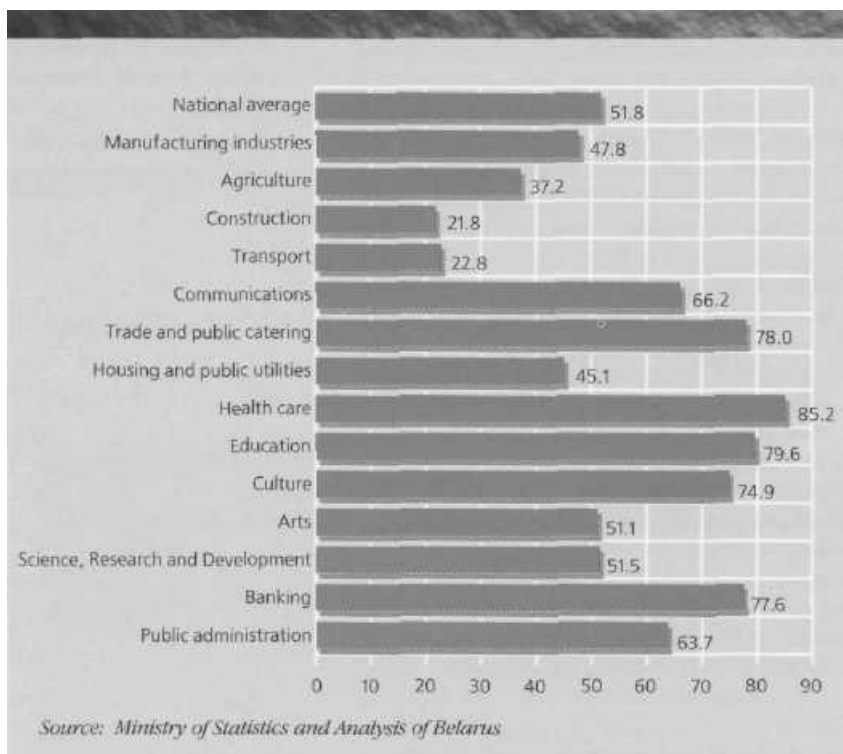
The structuring of relationships between we Churches and state is still in progress

Full abidance by the law of some state institutions and officials has not yet become a norm. As of 1 January 1997, 118 religious communities were operating without registering their charters. Some members of the clergy were participating in election campaigns and referendum⁴, thereby involving their parishes into politics.

The reputation of the Orthodox Church has been negatively affected by the isolation of ordinary parish members from membership in parish councils and their replacement by the clergy. This leads to conflicts and occasional break-ups of religious communities. The exclusive management of church funds by the clergy sometimes leads to financial irregularities. All these factors have a negative effect on the unity of believers.

Belarus is doing a lot to develop its relations with churches in a civilised and legal manner. Religion and the Church are a highly sensitive social institutions. Dealings with the Church require of state officials and those involved in religious affairs to possess a high degree of professionalism and tact. The structuring of relationships between the Churches and state is still in progress. A State Committee for Religious and Ethnic Affairs has been set up to govern this process. Work is in progress on the drafting of amendments to the existing Law «On the Freedom of Religion and Religious organisations». All this work will undoubtedly promote social peace and cohesion.

Figure 5.1
Proportion of women employed in different sectors of the national economy as of 1 January 1996



5.4 Role of Women in Achieving Social Cohesion

The human development paradigm must fully incorporate the gender factor. In Belarus, Women are the largest demographic group. They constitute 53% of the total population and 52% of the total work force (diagram 5.4)

Belarusian women have a high level of educational attainment. The share of working women with higher education is 43%, compared to men at only 29.1%. Women constitute two-thirds of all employees with higher education.

The increasing number of women involved in intellectual labour is an indicator of their high intellectual potential. In many areas of employment requiring high skills and qualifications, women constitute the majority. For example, 68% of all doctors, 79% of all teachers in the primary and secondary school system, and 92% of all economists are women.

At the same time, the proportion of women manual workers had dropped from 68% of the total number of working women in 1979 to 60% in 1989. The share of women in the total number of manual workers had also decreased, from 46% to 43%.

Nevertheless, women constitute 64% of the total number of unemployed. More than one-half of this percentage have small children. As of January 1997, women constituted the absolute majority of workers who had been laid off by employers and officially registered as unemployed. Women and young people are most likely to lose their employment and take more time to find a new job. The greatest difficulties in the job market are experienced by women with secondary and higher education: women engineers, researchers, cultural workers, etc.

Given the present situation living in Belarus the role of women in society may grow, due to the increasing importance of such predominantly female qualities as inter-personal skills, ability to listen to alternative points of view, tolerance, flexibility and openness. The use of these typically female qualities may promote political stabilisation. These qualities are important in private business, where women, who frequently advocate a «humane» approach to management, are involved in charitable activities and social support programmes.

Private businesses attract women with greater opportunities for self-realisation, comfortable working hours and higher incomes. The private sector is currently dominated by men. Women are not oriented for opening their own business, for they often lack the necessary experience or knowledge, and sufficient capital. However, high qualifications and good professional skills, possessed by many women, enable their success in some areas of private enterprise, particularly in industry, finance and commerce.

Presently, the *Corps* of Private Entrepreneurs is undergoing reform, in order to further facilitate reform, a National Association of Women Entrepreneurs has been formed. The strategic goal of this association is to unite business women in all sectors of private enterprise, as well as advocate their interests in government institutions and international organisations. Another focus is equal opportunities for women who wish to start their own businesses including technical assistance and advice. The association is to help women become business managers and personalities.

Another important goal of the association is to establish institutions of market infrastructure that meet the requirements of women entrepreneurs. The association has no intention of contrasting women with men. Instead, it encourages all forms of cooperation and interaction in business, in order to overcome the associated gender and role stereotypes.

Traditionally, the role of a woman has been to raise and educate the young generation. In any family, it is namely the woman that educates the children spiritually and culturally. Based on this premise, some experts argue in favour of returning the woman to the home.

In reality, the majority of women are employed in jobs that offer poor prospects of promotion. A high percentage of women employees in any profession is often a clear indicator of its low social prestige. The situation is unfair, because women are just as capable as of contributing to social, cultural and economic progress, as men are.

Today women play a minor role in politics. The House of Representatives has only five women members out of a total 110 members. There is only one woman minister. Overall, this means that women are practically excluded from the government. A major gap has formed between the art.ua! needs and opportunities for women.

There is an increasing gap between the role played by women in social progress, their high educational and professional achievements, and their participation in government. Poor participation of women in the government supports the statement of hidden discrimination against them. The non-acceptance of women in leadership positions has to do with the old stereotypes and perceptions of social role, where women are in secondary positions within in the family and society.

As the style of leadership changes, under new conditions, so does the role of women in the economy increase. The transition towards a market economy increases the importance of certain predominantly female professional groups, such as economists, financiers, and lawyers, which will nurture future managers and political leaders of all levels.

It is quite possible to state that some social

and economic difficulties experienced by the Belarussian society may be due to the poor participation of women in political and economic decision making. This idea appears reasonable, considering that in many countries where women bear a large share of political responsibility (such as the United States, Canada or Scandinavian countries), the best solution to the problems of education, health care, environment, culture, and of social accord and political stability have been found. Conversely, only a well developed system of social regulation, that is closely linked to the well-being of society, is capable of giving women their fair place in society.

Social crisis has made worse the social apathy. Many women are losing confidence in tomorrow and are worried about the future of their children.

Box 5.6

Women NCO's

League of Women of Belarus: promoting deeper democratisation, high moral standards in society, development of women's intellectual abilities and improving the well-being of women

Union of Women of Belarus: protecting the legitimate rights and interests of women, assisting women in achieving a fair social status, promoting greater involvement of women in politics, the economy and culture.

Organisation of Soldiers' Mothers: strengthening social support for the families of military servicemen who died, without being involved in a war effort, protecting the life, health and dignity of privates and sergeants, as well as members of their families.

Belarusian Association of Women «OSiYa»: cultural, spiritual and moral advancement of women, increasing confidence in themselves and their role in resolving legal, social, economic and environmental issues.

Republican Political Movement «Belarusian Women»: mobilising and activating the efforts of women directed at the implementation of women's rights and freedoms, promoting Belarus' advancement towards a law abiding state.

Belarusian Charitable Women's Fund «Faith, Hope, Love»: charitable activities, protection of the legitimate rights and interests of women, promoting moral and spiritual revival, democratisation of society;

Women's Christian Democratic Movement: protecting the rights of women, the family and children, promoting moral and spiritual revival and democratisation of society

Women's debating Club: conducting debates, improving the education level of children, promoting the ideas of tolerance among youth and universal values

Belarusian Association of Women Entrepreneurs: development of entrepreneurial activity among women in Belarus

Belarusian Women's Fund of Yefrosinya of Polotsk: assisting the revival of the national culture, science, and Christian traditions; promoting the spiritual revival of the Belarussian people, protecting the social rights of women, especially in creative professions, cooperating with progressive women's movements

Name of Party	% of support
Belarusian Women's Party «Nadezhda»	13.7
Belarusian Communist Party	8.3
Agrarian Party	4.5
Party of Common Sense	2.9
Belarusian Labour Party	2.8
Belarusian Environmental Party	2.8
Green Party of Belarus	1.4
Belarusian Party «Green World»	1.0
Belarusian Peasants' Party	2.6
Belarusian Popular Front	2.3
Belarusian Humanitarian Party	1.9
Other parties (21)	17.5
None of the above	36.7

Ratings of political parties in Belarus among women

Women constitute a large potential base of support for social reform

Women are also concerned about the loss of moral values by a large portion of young people and society, declining living standards, rising crime and the growing rate of unemployment among women. These are the main reasons for discontent among women, which has the potential to manifest itself through various forms of protest. Some women who participated in an opinion poll conducted in 1996 by the Institute «Belinformprognoz» have indicated a willingness to actively protest against the poor economic, political and social situations. Responding to the question: «If you were actively invited to participate in illegal rallies, would you do so?», 3.8% of women respondents answered positively; 4.3% indicated a readiness to take part in strikes and 5.9% in mass protests. This readiness, however, was a small percentage of when compared to that of men. Most women rejected violence as a form of political protest. Women are increasing their involvement in social problems and their solutions.

The politicisation of women is going much slower than that of men. Women tend to be more reserved and wary, due to their social nature, and less likely to participate in illegal actions. Another characteristic of women's political views are the practice of conservatism and moderation, as a form of protection against radicalism and extremism.

Because of its different nature, the political behaviour of women serves as a buffer, softening the political climate in society. This trend is confirmed by the results of opinion polls featuring political affiliations of women. According to an opinion poll conducted in late 1996, women participants indicated support for the following political parties registered in Belarus (see table).

More than one half of all women have stated their political affiliation. They support parties that advocate greater social support for the common people and active efforts to protect the environment.

Women constitute a large potential base of support for social reform. The reputation and authority of any party or political movements depends on the support, of women.

5.5 Political Parties and Civil Peace

Political parties play an important role in achieving sustainable human development.

The political system of Belarus incorporates 24 political parties, five popular movements and a number of other organisations.

The ratings of political parties are monitored by regular opinion polls that have taken place for the last seven years. The participants in the poll are asked to reply to the following question: «If elections to the Belarusian parliament were held today, which party would you support?»

It should be mentioned accordingly that, the level of popular trust in political parties had fallen considerably in 1996. This statement was confirmed by the comparison of poll data for 1996 and similar date from the previous year.

Support for political parties is different among various age and social groups.

Among industrial workers, the Belarusian Women's Party «Nadcy» had the greatest share of support (12.1%), followed by the Belarusian Popular Party (7.8%), and the Communist Party (6.6%).

The leaders among peasants are the Agrarian Party (15.4%) and the Belarusian Peasants' Party (9.0%).

Research and development employees have given their support, for the Belarusian Women's party «Nadeya» (16.0%), the Communist Party (10.4%), and the Belarusian Popular front (6.9%).

Among employees in the trade and services sectors, the Women's Party is the indisputable leader, with 12.0% support. The Liberal democratic Party, Party of Beer Lovers and the Communist Party each have 6%.

The Belarusian Social Democratic Party is the most popular among workers in health care, science, culture and education. Support for this party is shared by 10.7% of workers in this sector.

The fact that most students gave support to the Party of Beer Lovers (7.4%) could only be attributed to their scepticism towards politics. The Party of Beer lovers was followed by the Agrarian party (7.4%) and the Party of Labour. Only 1.8% of students who participated in the poll expressed support for the Communist Party.

More than one-fifth of the pensioners (20.9%) participating in the poll expressed the

eagerness to vote for the Communist Party. The Agrarian Party and the Belarusian Women's Party were supported by 5.8% of pensioners.

The ratings of political parties in different parts of the country deserves a special consideration. In Minsk, leadership in the polls is held by the Belarusian Popular Front (8.8%). Communists had the highest ratings in Vitebsk oblast (13.4%), Brest oblast (5.4%), Gomel and Mogilev oblasts (12.9% and 11.3%, respectively), and share leadership with the Party of Women (10.1%) in Minsk oblast. In Grodno oblast, 5.0% of respondents expressed support for the Agrarian Party, Belarusian Peasants' Party, Belarusian Party of Labour, the Party of Women, and the Party of Beer Lovers. In rural areas, leadership is contested between the Communist Party and the Agrarian Party (11.3% each), and in urban areas is held by the Communist Party (9.5%).

Among respondents aged 30 or below, who were born during the time of Brezhnev, the highest rating (8.5%) was held by the Party of Beer Lovers.

Among the generation born during the times of Nikita Khrushchev (aged 30 to 40), the highest rating was held by the Belarusian Women's Party «Nadeya*» (10.3%).

The greatest proportion of respondents born during the war (aged 50 to 60), and of those aged over sixty expressed support for the Communist Party (13.5% and 20.4%, respectively).

But, most importantly, the number of those who have no faith in any of the existing political parties has grown considerably. A great number of respondents have indicated that they were unaware of some of the political parties. Many resent the Communist party because of their decision to form a union with the political right, which they see as a betrayal of their ideals. The poll clearly indicates that Belarus is experiencing a crisis of the multi party system.

1996 has been a bad year for Belarusian political organisations, for they have suffered a major defeat from the «party of power». The new House of Representatives will have no party factions. Their place in the structure of the new parliament will be taken by regional groups of Parliament, members. Thus, as a political institution, political parties have vir-

Nº	Name of party	October 1995. %	October 1996. %
1.	Belarusian Party of Communists	34.9	9.7
2.	Belarusian Women's Party «Nadeya»	6.9	8.7
3.	Agrarian Party	7.4	6.0
4.	Belarusian Popular Front	6.5	3.7
5-6.	Belarusian People's Party	2.7	3.5
5-6.	Party of Beer Lovers	4.2	3.5
7.	Belarusian Peasants' Party	1.2	2.5
8.	Party of Common Sense	3.8	2.4
10.	Belarusian Party of Labour	2.8	2.2
9-10.	Belarusian Social Democratic Party	-	2.2
11-13.	Party of All-Belarusian Unity and Accord	0.8	2.1
11-13.	Republican Party of Labour and Equity	0.8	2.1
11-13.	People's Party «Revival»	-	2.1
14.	Belarusian Environmental Party	2.0	2.0
15.	United Civil Party	-	1.9
16.	Slavic Congress «Belaya Rus»	1.3	1.8
17.	Belarusian Green Party	0.9	1.6
18.	Belarusian Humanitarian Party	0.1	1.1
19.	Belarusian Republican Party	0.4	1.0
20-21.	Liberal Democratic Party	0.2	0.9
20-21.	Belarusian United Social Party	0.1	0.9
22.	Belarusian Scientific and Industrial Congress	0.5	0.8
23-25.	Republican Party	1.0	0.7
23-25.	Belarusian Party «Green World»	1.3	0.7
23-25.	National Democratic Party of the Belarusians	0.1	0.7
26.	Party «Ochischeniye»	-	0.6
27-28.	Belarusian Patriotic Movement	-	0.5
27-28.	Christian Democratic Choice	0.5	0.5
29-30.	Belarusian National Party	0.9	0.3
29-30.	Belarusian Socialist Party	1.6	0.3
31-32.	Belarusian Social and Sports Party	0.2	0.2
31-32.	Belarusian Christian Democratic Party	0.2	0.2
33.	Belarusian Christian Democratic Union	0.6	-

Table 5.5
Ratings of political parties

tually ceased to exist, and will not return into politics at least for the next five years. Although political parties still have some political weight, their present role in society is declining. Not all political organisations participate in the efforts to resolve the problems faced by the Republic and to achieve social cohesion, thereby helping the advancement of Belarus. Political parties will have a role in society only when they receive support from the people. Only then could the crisis of the multi-party system be overcome.