Discussion. “Belarusian *Uchodi*. The nation of the unwanted”

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On 18 May 2021, in the virtual walls of the Institute of Political Science and Security Studies of the University of Szczecin, a discussion “Belarusian *Uchodi*. The nation of the unwanted” was held. The discussion focused on the situation in Belarus after the 2020 election and also on the situation of persons who were forced to leave Belarus and who settled in Poland, i.a. in Szczecin. The reference point was the making of the movie “*Uchodi*. The nation of the unwanted”. The film’s creators and characters were the main participants in the discussion: Miłosz Gocłowski – Radio Zet’s journalist, Tomasz Chaciński – journalist and former editor-in-chief of Radio Szczecin, and Maksim Novikau, Denis Shamruk and Roman Bohush. As the authors of the film themselves declare: “We have shown stories of regular people who went to anti-government protests in Belarus and turned out to be public enemies. They were beaten, tortured and became unwanted. The strongest emotions were triggered by the fact that in the 21st century, in a neighbouring country, Belarusians face terrorism and cruelty on

the part of the authorities only because they do not consent to electoral fraud”. The film’s authors point out that for the Belarusians it is a state of hope and of waiting for changes. “Everyone is waiting for protests to re-ignite on the streets of Belarus”.

The film’s characters, many of whom live in Szczecin, also pointed to a different side of their fate – current life in Poland. On the one hand, they point to security guaranteed here and they believe the city to be beautiful and pleasant to live in. On the other, they face various problems - i.a. they complain about the great and slow bureaucratic machine which means that their status is still marked with some degree of uncertainty. This is made no easier by contact with dishonest employers, who in certain cases try to abuse their language problems and lack of legal awareness or uncertainty about their status.

Dr Dorota Kowalewska, researcher at the Chair of Research on Migration and Social Movements of the Institute of Political Science pointed out that “support

for Belarus may be given inter alia by aiding persons seeking international protection in Poland, students at universities in Poland, employees and non-governmental organizations that provide aid in and for Belarus". The so-called "House of Peace – *Mirnyj Dom*" established in Warsaw is an interesting bottom-up initiative that deserves credit. Especially if one can see clear reflections of the Polish history in the Belarusian experience. As dr Kowalewska put it: "Our duty is to support our neighbours in any possible way, all the more so since the Poles know the taste of victory in the fight against an unfair system".

The discussion closed with many questions from the listeners, including many of the Institute's staff. One of them was left

without a clear answer – whether there will be part two of the movie.

The discussion was chaired by dr hab. Tomasz Czapiewski, director of the Institute of Political Science and Security Studies and mgr Kaciaryna Bychak, a Belarusian, doctoral student at the University of Szczecin's doctoral school, who, as the makers remind us, gave the idea for the film and immense support in the making of it.

The Chair of Research on Migration and Social Movements of the Institute of Political Science and Security Studies and the Polish Political Science Association, Szczecin branch, were the organizers of the event. The planning and management of the event was supported by the Interdisciplinary Association of Doctoral Students of the University of Szczecin.