

The Road Map Of The Belarusian Revolution (abridged version)

Uladzimir Matskevich,
philosopher and methodologist
(Minsk, Belarus)

Introduction: about the necessity for planning

The Belarusian revolution began without any plans and strategies and - if it had led to the victory of democracy at once - we would have felt no need of them. However, the victory is being postponed and, probably, for a quite long period. It means it is necessary to transfer the spontaneous revolutionary protest energy to the form of a more organized task-oriented social movement. Here, the deficiency of strategies and plans becomes crucial, i.e. there is a need to fill the existing gap.

In contemporary methods of planning in business, in politics, and in military science, the rigid methods of planning gave place to their flexible analogs ("road maps", "scenarios", etc.). Unlike the rigid methods, the working-out of Road Maps presupposes the definition of purposes, intermediate stages, ways and techniques of their achievement, and there is a possibility of constantly reorganizing these ways and techniques, depending on the changing situation. The ultimate goal of a Road Map remains the same, while there are many ways to accomplish one's end. A Road Map also defines stages and points on the way to the ultimate goal, and they cannot be bypassed.

A Road Map includes at least five basic sections:

1. **Purpose.** A destination to arrive at; or an event to be prepared; or a condition an object has to be turned into; or a situation to be organized.
2. **Initial Condition.** It can be a place from which a movement begins; or an event which consequences are to be overcome; or a condition which an object ought to be evacuated from; or a situation which it is necessary to get out of.

3. **Path.** These are points and intermediate stages that must be passed or visited; these are events that can happen along the way; these are changes of conditions of an object in the course of movement; these are situations that will replace one another while one is taking this path; changing circumstances and conditions; stages and periods of the process.
4. **Means.** These are means of transportation in space; mechanisms that provide one's movement in time from one stage to another, from a situation to another situation; ways of changing an object's conditions; resources needed during the organization and creation of events.
5. **Identification of a subject.** It includes the comprehension, self-determination, and reflection of a subject that moves, changes, and develops.

Society, nation, state are complicated systems. Their movement and development can be influenced from the outside, or - on the contrary: society, nation, and state set their goals with the help of public dialogue, wide communication, discussions, and criticism. Here, I offer my version of a Road Map for public discussion and criticism, hoping that the results of this discussion will help us fill the existing strategic gap.

The Road Map of the revolution: basic provisions

1. Purpose. The purpose of our revolution is to RE-ESTABLISH THE STATE. Or to reboot it.

The state is established (constituted, stated) by a performative act - acceptance of the Constitution. All state institutions are organized and/or reconstructed according to the Constitution accepted by the whole nation. The reconstructed state institutions implement the principle of separation of powers (three branches of power and local self-government) and guarantee the observance of human rights and citizens' rights, as well as the implementation of basic freedoms. Historically, since 1991, the new Constitution establishes in Belarus the "Fourth Republic". The "First Republic" lived according to the Soviet Constitution of the Byelorussian SSR; the "Second Republic" was presidential according to the Constitution of 1994; the "Third Republic" appeared after the coup d'état in 1996.

Therefore, the purpose can be formulated as follows: Establishment of the Fourth Republic.

2. Initial Condition.

By 2020, the state institutions in the country had degraded; none of these institutions had performed their functions. The dependent courts, transformed into an appendage to the retaliatory bodies; not elected, but appointed deputies; servile science; out-of-date education; badly functioning economy; etc. If in 2019 the initial condition was also characterized by society's passivity and the regime's complete control, then in the spring of 2020 this situation changed. In May 2020 there appeared three presidential candidates whose popularity was explosive. Siarhei Tsikhanouski, Valery Tsepkalo, and Viktor Babaryka activated the social strata that had never been keen on any politics, being proud of their political apathy. The public-political mobilization resulted in the failure of "elections" rigged by the state and delegitimization of Alexander Lukashenko's power.

3. Path.

In the beginning of November 2020 the whole path or route can be described precisely enough, with several furcations:

I. The POLITICAL CRISIS STAGE. After the "stunning election" on August 9th, the political crisis burst in the country. The head of the regime is not the legitimate president any longer; his powers should end on November 5th. They ended de facto in September when he carried out his secret false "inauguration". Since that moment, there is no legitimate power in the country and there appear two power centers:

- a. Lukashenko who has lost his legitimacy, but who still controls the power structures and administrative vertical of the regime;
- b. alternative authorities and structures initiated by Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya.

II. The DIARCHY STAGE. The political crisis leads to diarchy when each of the power centers can control its supporters and has no control over the other party. Full-fledged and real diarchy can be achieved if there is an approximate equality of forces. In our situation, the forces are not equal, but asymmetric. The regime is supported by the coarse armed force;

Tsikhanouskaya and the Coordination Council (CC) - by public support of the majority. This asymmetry does not equalize forces, but does not allow any of the parties to dominate. At this stage of the long-drawn political crisis, everything is defined by the dynamics of forces. If public support grows, it moves the situation to full-fledged diarchy. The regime does not almost have resources to build up forces any more. The outcome of this stage will depend on the means (See: The Road Map, Section 4) that will be used by the alternative center of power.

III. The STAGE of NEGOTIATIONS. When the parity of forces is achieved, there is no other variant of surmounting the political crisis, except negotiations of the resisting parties. We have stopped at this stage of negotiations between the regime and the new authorities. If we cannot enter this stage of the revolution, the achievement of the ultimate goal is being postponed. And it will be necessary to re-write the whole Road Map and to work out a new route towards the ultimate goal. The transition from diarchy to negotiations is interfered by several circumstances:

- First, the regime does not recognize Tsikhanouskaya and the CC as a party of negotiations, and Tsikhanouskaya herself and the CC have not declared openly their exclusive power to enter any negotiations on behalf of the majority.
- Second, the regime is trying to substitute negotiations for a certain simulation in the form of “dialogue”, when it itself appoints interlocutors in this “dialogue”. There was an attempt to use political prisoners-hostages to imitate some “dialogue”, but right now it stakes on the marionette “All-Belarusan National Assembly”.
- Third, there is a substitution of the subject of negotiations. Tsikhanouskaya and the CC’s theses-requirements are formulated rather precisely: new elections. However, the regime is trying to change them - to postpone elections, having started “changes in the Constitution” at first.
- Fourth, the requirement of new elections is clear, but the position of Tsikhanouskaya and the CC is not concrete - they have not declared what elections they mean: presidential or parliamentary ones?; according to what norms and rules these elections must be carried out?; who will organize them: the old Central Electoral Committee or someone else?

In order to get rid of all obstacles to negotiations, it is necessary:

- All protest actions must be aimed at negotiations between the regime and Tsikhanouskaya/the CC; it is needed to provide the exclusive right of Tsikhanouskaya and the CC to represent society's interests during these negotiations;
- Tsikhanouskaya and the CC should publish and disseminate the Road Map and the program of actions that can be used by all participants of the revolutionary processes, according to which they themselves could plan their actions;
- The purpose of the first round of negotiations is to achieve a compromise anent the provisional government. The formation of the compromise provisional government opens a new stage of the revolution and is the fourth stage of the Road Map.

IV. The STAGE of the FORMATION of the PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT. Right now the regime controls the whole administrative vertical, all institutions of the state, but it has lost its control over society. There is no urgent need to change all the structures of the government. The ministries of the economic block and the National Bank can continue their functions as part of the provisional government (PG). The reforming of the ministries of education, culture, public health services, and sports can wait a little bit. Heads and top officials in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, KGB, Office of Public Prosecutor, Supreme and Constitutional Courts should be replaced. It is necessary to replace the whole structure of the Central Electoral Committee and territorial election committees. The illegitimate and incapacitated Parliament can be forgotten for some time - it did not decide anything before and it is possible to work without it during a transition period. All the necessary decisions can be accepted during negotiations of the two centers of power or by the provisional government.

The provisional government provides the functioning of all the systems of economy of finances, municipal sphere, trade, borders, etc. The term of tenure of the PG is equal to the duration of the transition period.

A furcation in the Road Map; two possible routes to the ultimate goal:

V-VI. NEW ELECTIONS. Depending on the speed with which we pass the transition period, there appear two variants of the further movement:

V-VIa. ELECTIONS to the CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY. During the transition period, there is moratorium on decisions, decrees, orders, and

laws limiting the basic democratic rights and freedoms. Economic and other laws are in force during the transition period and the PG tenure.

It is only possible to update all the laws within the framework of the new Constitution, according to which the state will be re-established and the Fourth Republic of Belarus will be created.

Therefore, the primary goal and care of the PG (the new Central Electoral Committee and all the public institutions) is the organization of elections to the Constituent Assembly.

The elections to the Constituent Assembly are only possible if the compromise during the negotiations anent the Provisional Government and the transition period is reached within several months, until the end of the spring of 2021.

If the political crisis is not solved during this time, there appears another variant of the route towards the ultimate goal:

V-VIb. LOCAL ELECTIONS. Local elections should be carried out until 18 January 2022. According to the current Electoral Code, pre-election events/actions begin three months prior to the election date. It means the maximum farthest date of the beginning of the election campaign is October 2021. Still, if till the spring, it will not be possible to reach the compromise during negotiations, it is necessary to begin preparations for elections to local councils.

Local communities' activity we have already been observing for a third month creates conditions and preconditions for us to win these local elections and to start the organization of local self-government that had not existed in Belarus since the establishment of the communistic dictatorship, i.e. for more than a century.

The victory during the local elections will mean a fundamental change in our revolution - it will be a revolution from below.

If Tsikhanouskaya and the CC do not cope with the task of the revolution from above (the presidential election and the elections to the Constituent Assembly), then the continuation of the revolution will be defined by local self-government. (It is necessary to speak about it separately within the ambit of this Road Map.)

VII. The STAGE of the WORK of the CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY. After the elections of delegates to the Constituent Assembly, in the country there appears legitimate representative power with limited legislative

functions. The Constituent Assembly can accept some operative decrees and orders, but these will be temporary substitutes of laws. The primary goal of the Constituent Assembly is to work out a new Constitution.

Our revolution is the first revolution of the information epoch in the 21st century. And the Constitution created as a result of this revolution will be the first Constitution of the 21st century, the best Constitution of the epoch, which will become a sample for other peoples and states. It is an additional challenge for our Constituent Assembly. And therefore, inter alia, we cannot be satisfied with the returning to the Constitution of 1994.

Having completed its work, the Constituent Assembly orders the Provisional Government to carry out a national referendum to accept the new Constitution. Then, according to the new Constitution, elections are organized, and the Constituent Assembly transfers its powers to the elected parliament.

This stage comes to an end with a symbolical act - the Council of the Belarusan People's Republic (1918) transfers its powers to the new parliament. This act will mean a full recognition of a new state system of Belarus, full sovereignty, and succession of this Fourth Republic of Belarus to the Belarusan People's Republic.

4. Means.

The Road Map is only a document declaring the direction and purpose of the movement, and the route is only a curve on a map, or a list of stages of the movement and possible obstacles on the way. If means of transportation or mechanisms of the developing process are not mentioned, the Road Map will not become a guide to action.

The driving force of our revolution is civil society. Having appeared in the 18th century, civil society has strongly changed by the 21st century. It is just necessary to remember that civil society's development in Belarus was interrupted in the 20th century and started to be formed anew only in the 1980s, i.e. during the current period. Also, it was formed from the zero cycle, without any existing institutions of the past, but also without errors and defects of the previous epochs. In this respect, the civil society of Belarus differs much from any analogs in the countries of advanced democracy.

The technological way of life makes the strongest impact on society as a whole, and on civil society as well. The birth and formation energy is

always higher and stronger than that of structures with the accumulated weariness and cargo of archaic habits. It is possible to consider it the energy of youth. Belarus' civil society is very young. It is both its force and its weakness.

For simplicity, it is possible to say that the movement of wide public forces can define the deployment of a revolutionary process, but only if there appear corresponding structures and proto-institutions. The power of masses is shapeless and not intentional - therefore it is subject to entropy; in due course the energy wanes. However, if it is structured, this energy makes useful work, allowing us to move towards the purpose.

In order to turn the public energy into revolutionary structures, it is necessary to launch additional processes: to design such structures and forms, training, logistics and support, and many other things, to facilitate communication between various groups of interests, etc.

All these things, anyhow, are being done, although very slowly. Still, it cannot be done faster because nobody in Belarus was ready for a revolution, and everybody should study in the process.

In the process of passing through the Road Map stages, the complexity of the tasks is increasing, which, in its turn, requires more complicated means of activity.

It is even more difficult because we cannot use somebody else's experience as we are making the first revolution of the 21st century, and nobody before us had done it. Any orientation on others' examples only hampers our movement and development. It is only necessary to rely on our own forces, resources, and means.

5. Identification of a subject.

Having the Road Map and the outlined route, having the movement means, it is necessary to define those who will walk this route and who can use the available means of transportation.

The identity and self-determination of subjects of our revolution is the most problem place.

Neither major candidates of this "election", nor their staffs had any concrete plan of taking power on August 9th and had not been preparing for it. The mass protest against the falsification of the "election" was predicted - It had

always happened during the previous “elections”. But nobody thought that this protest would be so wide and so long.

The regime was going to suppress the protest of any size if it had been concentrated in one place, in one conditional Maidan according to the Ukrainian sample. The alternative candidates’ staffs knew about this readiness of the regime and they built their further plans, proceeding from an assumption that the regime can suppress spontaneous protests.

None of the new leaders was going to take power in their hand. The leaders of the revolution had no self-determination, which became the major factor of prolonging the process and led to a long positional standoff.

Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya and the Coordination Council have not enough resources and forces. Still, even the resources and forces they have right now can be spent in vain. The accumulation of resources, concentration of forces, and acquisition of the political capital becomes possible if there are several organizational symbolical actions:

- Tsikhanouskaya and the CC self-determine themselves to be revolutionary power and a diarchy party in the country, the only plenipotentiary of a revolutionary society during negotiations with the regime;
- Tsikhanouskaya and the CC declare the ultimate goal of our revolution - when it is achieved, their powers and obligations come to an end;
- Tsikhanouskaya and the CC declare and demonstrate to the world the Road Map of the movement towards the ultimate goal.

Only the presence of such self-determination or the identification of the subject who moves towards the purpose and the presentation of a clear Road Map will make it possible to attract new resources, to accumulate and concentrate forces, and to become a political subject who is ready to take power from the regime.