

Was tun Sie,

Frau X?

As a Belarusian, I have been through the whole spectrum of emotions these past two months. At first, before the presidential elections, there was hope. It was clear that most people would vote for Tikhonovskaya, after most of the other candidates were imprisoned or not allowed to register. Then, right after the elections, I felt despair. I couldn't believe Lukashenko would dare to falsify the results with such close attention from the rest of the world.

After that, there was anger, hopelessness and outrage. I was suffocating from powerlessness after seeing how people were brutally beaten, detained and tortured. Looking at the injustices happening on the streets, in prisons and in all the institutions, I felt hatred for the entire political system of Belarus. I wanted to do something destructive; to break something or hurt somebody.

After a while, my feelings started to change. I began to admire the Belarusian people. It's commonly believed that Belarusians are quiet, peaceful and very moderate in their actions. Take a look at them now. How stubborn they are in their struggle. They take to the streets every day. I felt a cheerful anger. I love the creativity with which people oppose the system. Their posters, art and local concerts are amazing. There's no fear; they're past fear. As my brother, who lives in Minsk, said; when you're afraid, but you go anyway, you win twice!

Seeing events unfold from afar

Living in Luxembourg, I have an ambivalent attitude to the situation in Belarus. Of course, I'm happy here and feel lucky to be in a country that's safe and calm. But in my thoughts, I'm usually in Belarus, which isn't surprising; I lived there for almost 30 years. I worry that my friends or family members will lose their jobs or end up in prison. I worry that the financial system will collapse. I worry that I'm not doing anything to help. I also feel a bit guilty. I left Belarus long before the protests, but living a comfortable life here when my classmate, who has a small child, goes to protest actions in Minsk every week seems wrong somehow.

Like other Belarusians living in Luxembourg, I sent a letter to the Luxembourgish Minister for Foreign Affairs asking him to not recognise Lukashenko as the legitimate president of Belarus and to introduce

Photo by Andrew Keymaster on Unsplash



March of Justice, Minsk, Belarus, 20 September 2020

“There’s no fear; the Belarusians are past fear.”

sanctions against his regime. I didn't take part in local protests though. I thought about it, but after talking to another girl from Belarus who lives here, I decided not to. I remembered how annoyed I was with protests like that after the elections when I lived in Belarus. You live in Minsk, there are armed forces everywhere and your classmates are being detained. And then you see photos of happy people with Belarusian flags posing on the sunny streets of San Francisco and in front of boutiques in Paris. At the same time, I also understand the Belarusian diaspora in Luxembourg. It's hard to stay at home when this is happening in your country.

Hopes for the future

Nobody expected the brutal cruelty of the authorities on 9 and 10 August. Nobody expected that people would be so outraged by these actions and that hundreds of thousands of people would take to the streets. Nobody expected the protests to be 100 % peaceful. Nobody expected that they would go on for months. Now everyone takes part in the protests; students, women, pensioners. I believe something will happen in the days to come. Perhaps the Coordinating Committee has a plan that will tip the situation in their favour. Perhaps the workers and the military join the protesters. Perhaps the protests will go on for another month. All of these scenarios are possible.

My hopes are the same as those of most Belarusians now; Lukashenko should step down. He has to leave, and the country must hold new democratic elections. What will happen after that is another question. I'm not a politician or an economic expert, but I understand that it will be a difficult time for Belarus. However, no one can harm the country more than Lukashenko in these 26 years. I believe there are many competent and intelligent professionals who know what to do. I don't know if Belarus will be alone in this process of transformation, or receive help from Russia or Europe, but in any case, it will be a new world, without a dictator's regime. ♦

This is a response to the political climate in Belarus. The author comes from Minsk and lives in Luxembourg.