
Clinton Presidential Records Mandatory Declassification Review

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Vyacheslav Frantsevich KEBICH
(Phonetic: KEHbeeche)

BELARUS

Prime Minister (since 1990)

Addressed as: Mr. Prime Minister



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A former senior official of the Communist party in Minsk under the Soviet regime, Vyacheslav Kebich remains an unrepentant Communist who holds most of the power in Belarus. Nevertheless, he is sensitive about his Communist image in the West [redacted] 1.4c, 1.4d and complains that Western leaders do not accept him as a reformer on a par with leaders of other countries that had been part of the Soviet Union. He has been slow to move toward reform and a market economy and has opposed further privatization of land ownership. Politically astute, Kebich has minimized the potential for widespread opposition by observing some of the rudiments of democracy, allowing demonstrations, a parliament, and limited freedom of the press [redacted] 3.5c

Kebich has sent mixed messages about the prospects for democratization in Belarus, although his vision clearly entails keeping Belarus within Russia's sphere of influence [redacted] 1.4c, 1.4d

[redacted]
[redacted] Indeed, his statements to the press [redacted]
[redacted] suggest he yearns for the rebirth of a Russian-ruled Slavic empire in which Belarus would be the most favored protectorate and in which he would play a role like that of past Communist Party first secretaries. Kebich has emphasized that Belarus's only hope lies in ever-closer ties to Russia, and he has strongly supported both an economic union with other CIS members and a CIS collective security treaty. (Kebich, nevertheless, dislikes and distrusts Russian President Boris Yelt'sin, whom he blames for provoking bloodshed during the October 1992 showdown with some members of the parliament.) Although Kebich has claimed that Western culture and institutions threaten the Belarusian soul, he has asked [redacted] 1.4c, 1.4d

[redacted] the principles of democratic institutions. He

[redacted] 1.4c, 1.4d, 3.5c

has said that China and South Korea are his models because they reformed their economies while their governments retained tight political control [redacted] 1.4c, 3.5c

[redacted] 1.4c, 3.5c

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Kebich must contend with a division of executive power between himself and popular Supreme Soviet Chairman Stanislav Shushkevich. Kebich controls the armed forces, the news media, all of the military, and most of the security forces except the KGB, and he has a strong power base among hardline conservatives. He therefore has the upper hand in a power struggle with Shushkevich, who opposes efforts to strengthen security ties to Moscow [redacted] 1.4c, 1.4d

[redacted] he resents what he perceives as Western attention paid to Shushkevich but denied to him. The Prime Minister's main vehicle of control in the Supreme Soviet is the "Belarus" faction, which has been working to sideline Shushkevich and favors impeaching him. [redacted] 3.5c

Kebich is trying to shape the ongoing parliamentary debate on a new constitution, including the division of powers between the legislature and the executive. If the new constitution establishes a strong presidency, Kebich aspires to the post, although he appears less concerned with holding a title than with retaining power [redacted] 3.5c

Career and Personal Data

Kebich was born on 10 June 1936 in the Minsk region. Trained as a mechanical engineer, he began working at the Kirov Rolling and Cutting

Machinery Production Association in Minsk, where he eventually became director. He worked in a variety of Communist Party jobs in Minsk in the early 1980s. At one point he headed the party's heavy industry department. In late 1985 Kebich was appointed deputy chairman of the Council of Ministers and chairman of its State Planning Committee (Gosplan). In 1991 he founded the Belarusian State Academy of Management, which he closely oversees [redacted] 3.5c

In March 1993 the media reported accusations— as yet unconfirmed—that a commercial enterprise owned by Kebich's wife, Elena, had received funds originally earmarked for badly needed medical supplies. Kebich has denied involvement in any questionable activities. He is a colonel in the reserves [redacted] 1.4c, 1.4d

the Prime Minister claimed that he had been assigned to the GRU while serving in the military. He enjoys fishing. He does not speak English. Kebich regularly visits the village where he was born to see his nonagenarian mother and work on her house and garden. He and his wife have at least one daughter. [redacted] 3.5c

20 December 1993