5 of 536 DOCUMENTS

The New York Times

January 27, 1994, Thursday, Late Edition - Final

Belarus Parliament Ousts Leader

BYLINE: Reuters

SECTION: Section A; Page 6; Column 1; Foreign Desk

LENGTH: 391 words

DATELINE: MINSK, Belarus, Jan. 26

Belarus's Parliament ousted its liberal leader today, further dampening prospects for rapid economic reform and an independent foreign policy.

Legislators voted 209 to 36 to dismiss the leader, Stanislav Shushkevich, who has almost single-handedly battled politicians and bureaucrats opposing free-market policies in Belarus.

His ouster came two weeks after he received strong backing of President Clinton, who stopped in Minsk after visiting Moscow.

Belarus's conservative Prime Minister, Vyacheslav Kebich, Shushkevich's constant rival, survived a vote to oust him. A total of 101 legislators voted for his dismissal and 175 against. Although Mr. Kebich survived the vote, some moderates argued that he was morally obligated to resign since more than 100 legislators had voted against him.

Members of the Parliament, which was elected when Belarus was still part of the Soviet Union, made it plain that their vote was intended as a reprisal for Mr. Shushkevich's support for market reforms and his resistance to aligning foreign policy with neighboring Russia.

"This is approval for the Government's policy," Mr. Kebich's top adviser, Valery Skorynin, said of the vote to oust Mr. Shushkevich. "Shushkevich is an idealist. You cannot reform and privatize any more quickly than our government has been doing."

Mr. Shushkevich's first deputy, Vyacheslav Kuznetsov, who served during the Soviet era, took over as acting Chairman of Parliament.

Advocates of reform, a small minority in Parliament, said the vote portended the end of Belarus as an independent entity, separate from Russia.

"Belarus's new pro-Russian leadership will conduct its affairs in such a way as to bring the country into the Russian empire," said Zenon Poznyak, leader of the Belarussian Popular Front. "This is a betrayal of Belarussian sovereignty."

Mr. Shushkevich came under fierce attack in the debate leading up to the vote and even his few reformist allies in Parliament gave him only lukewarm support and refused to take part in the vote.

Liberals have become disenchanted in recent months over Mr. Shushkevich's concessions, particularly his consent to

Belarussian membership in a Russian-led defense pact.

In contrast to Ukraine, **Belarus** did not seek independence as the Soviet Union crumbled, and its politics remain dominated by Communists.

LOAD-DATE: January 27, 1994

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

Copyright 1994 The New York Times Company