

Co-operation proposed in wide variety of different avenues

By Vladimir Vasiliev

Belarus-EU relations form foundation of interview with European media representatives

Western journalists often interview Alexander Lukashenko. This time, German and Austrian well-known media arrived at the Presidential Residence, at 15 Frunze Street, representing the WAZ Media Group and ZDF Television Company, as well as the newspapers *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Berliner Zeitung*, *Die Welt*, *Financial Times Deutschland*, *Die Welt am Sonntag*, *Die Bild* and *Die Presse*. The interview with Mr. Lukashenko covered almost every topical issue: from the forthcoming presidential elections to BATE's success in the Europa League and preparations for the 2014 IIHF World Championship. For the ZDF Television journalists, particularly keen on the sporting topic, the conversation continued... on ice. The enthusiasts were invited by Mr. Lukashenko to join him at his evening training.

Of course, relations between Belarus and the EU were a key-note of the conversation. "There's no doubt that we should move towards co-operation," the President stressed. The Head of State

called attempts by EU states, including Germany, to isolate Minsk counter-productive. "We should liaise. We live in a close, inter-dependant world. We share a common home, called Europe," the Belarusian leader noted metaphorically.

Speaking of Belarus' interest in the *Eastern Partnership* programme, Mr. Lukashenko asserted, "We're ready to become the most active player in the *Eastern Partnership* if the European Union wishes it." He explained that Minsk has offered the EU concrete proposals, which are 'very beneficial, including for Germany, and for the north and south of Europe'. "We're ready for the whole of Europe to take advantage of our opportunities," Mr. Lukashenko emphasised, showing Belarus' openness towards co-operation.

Much time was dedicated to investment relations and prospects for German companies to participate in the privatisation of Belarusian enterprises. The President noted that Minsk is keen to consider any economic or investment initiatives from Germany and would like to see German partners become more dynamic. Mr. Lukashenko here noted the example of Venezuela, co-operation with which is rapidly developing, with joint projects expanding in scale.



Alexander Lukashenko hands one of the main awards of the *Listapad* Film Festival to Emir Kusturica

Speaking of more than culture alone

President Alexander Lukashenko welcomes world famous film director Emir Kusturica to his working residence in Minsk

"This might be called a meeting of like-minds, since we share almost the same views on so many issues," noted Mr. Lukashenko, choosing to speak informally. Emir Kusturica has Serbian citizenship but still calls himself Yugoslavian, although Yugoslavia hasn't existed on the political map for quite a few years. The film director was against the division of his country, as we see from his vividly depicted films on the Balkan War: *Underground* and *Life Is a Miracle*. "I'm glad that you are Yugoslavian and always will be ... I'm happy to meet you,"

Mr. Lukashenko welcomed his guest.

Mr. Kusturica didn't conceal that the meeting touched him. He likes Belarus and believes that our country has managed to avoid the destructive influence of large corporations, which 'bring jobs but take away profit'. Mr. Kusturica shared his own assessment of Mr. Lukashenko's activities, saying, "You rule the country in such a way that acquired profits are passed on to people and the country. You wish to preserve independence and I'm aware that this has its own high price."

Of course, the meeting tackled political and economic issues, as well as culture. The President awarded Mr. Kusturica a major award of Minsk's International *Listapad* Film Festival — a special prize 'For Preserving and Developing Spiritual Traditions in Cinema Art'. Mr. Lukashenko noted that this acknowledges the guest's exceptional merits and hopes that the famous film director will visit Minsk many times again. "We would consider your co-operation with our country as a great honour," underlined the Head of State.

Criteria for selecting partners

Belarus considering inviting Japan to participate in energy projects

By Tatiana Polezhay

"In the near future, we plan to spend huge amounts of money on ensuring our energy security. We're aware of your possibilities, which are great in all spheres, and would like Japan to take part in implementing these projects," noted the President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, on meeting representatives of Mitsubishi Heavy Industries.

Belarus understands the immense importance of expanding co-operation and business contacts with foreign countries and with leading companies operating in various business areas. "Raising the country's energy potential is of paramount importance for us. Energy security directly influences the dynamics of our social and economic development and the protection of national sovereignty," explained the President. Mr. Lukashenko admitted that



Guests from Japan at meeting in Minsk

Belarus' fuel-energy balance structure is unsatisfying. Natural gas fuels 95 percent of electricity generated. According to the President, this was once a positive factor, "However, with prices now skyrocketing, dependence on a single source is a danger to economic and political security." Accordingly, Belarus needs to find alternative paths for its energy industry, inviting new partners to accomplish strategic goals.

Mr. Lukashenko believes

that building our own nuclear power station is the best solution, looking at international experience and the importance of diversifying energy sources. He adds that there are also plans to build power plants and hydropower plants in Belarus, fuelled by coal, peat, firewood and other alternative sources.

On addressing the delegation from Japan's Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, Mr. Lukashenko explained that the company's lack of pres-

ence on the Belarusian market is a disadvantage which can soon be remedied, "We're ready to change the situation, creating the most favourable conditions for your operation in Belarus, if you decide to accept them. We appreciate your comprehensive experience in matters of nuclear energy: from research, development and design to the construction of very successful power plants. You manufacture a wide range of products for this industry, including new generation products and nuclear power plants," stressed the President.

He added that Belarus is keen to learn from Japan's experience in alleviating the consequences of radiation exposure and overcoming psychological prejudices. Mr. Lukashenko noted that Belarus has already advanced much by co-operating with Japan in dealing with the results of the Chernobyl catastrophe.

NEW

DIMENSION

www.belarus-magazine.by

Magazine for those who want to know more