

Inauguration draws line under election campaign

By Igor Slavinsky

With his right hand on the Constitution, Alexander Lukashenko declared his oath: 'Assuming the office of the President of the Republic of Belarus, I hereby solemnly swear to serve loyally the people of the Republic of Belarus, to respect and protect the rights and freedoms of all citizens, to observe and defend the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus, unswervingly, and to rigorously fulfil my high duties.'

After this, the Chair of the Central Commission for Elections and National Referenda, Lidia Yermoshina, presented his certificate naming Alexander Lukashenko as the President of the Republic of Belarus, officially commencing his fourth presidential term.

The Head of State noted that, on taking his oath of faithfulness to the nation, he primarily felt huge gratitude for the trust and support of its citizens, in addition to the great responsibility he holds for our common fate. "The voices of millions of honest and faithful people, with whom we've recently held out against the steepest historical events, inspire me and give me new strength," the President said.

According to Mr. Lukashenko, the issue was not to choose a President but, in fact, to decide the fate of the country: to choose between independence and strength or falling into enslaving dependence; to decide whether the Belarusian nation would independently define its



Solemn ceremony of newly elected President of Belarus taking office held at Palace of the Republic's Main Hall

path of development or farm out the situation to those who are ready to sell their native land cheaply and destroy our common home. "The nation's trust brings with it special demands and obligations. It pushes me to be a fair and responsible leader regarding my allies and those with alternative views. True democracy is based not only on the confirmation of the will of the majority but also on the protection of the rights of the minority," he stressed.

Speaking about the prospects of the country's economic development, the President noted that the strategic goal is to place Belarus among the global leaders regarding technological and intellectual development, enhancing the image of the Be-

larusian economy via modernisation of industry and agriculture, using the most advanced facilities and technologies, to inspire domestic and foreign investments.

"Recognising Belarus' geopolitical role as a connecting link between West and East, as an integral part of Europe and the post-Soviet space, we'll continue to realise our multi-vector foreign policy (based on the priority of national interests), while building our Union State, strengthening ties of integration within the Single Economic Space, EurAsEC and other inter-state associations," the Belarusian President noted. He stressed that Belarus aims to gain the highest possible results from its co-operation with Rus-

sia, Ukraine, China, Venezuela and other strategic partners, in addition to the European Union, the United States of America and all states of the global community.

The Chairman of the Council of the Republic of the National Assembly, Anatoly Rubinov, was first to congratulate Mr. Lukashenko. "The elections have shown that the overwhelming majority of our people trust you as their national leader, approving of the policies you've proposed, alongside your model for the country's development," he said.

Unlike his previous inauguration, the ceremony took place at the Palace of the Republic (rather than on Oktyabrskaya Square), with state officials, fa-

mous sportsmen, artistes, veterans, deputies, heads of the largest enterprises, universities and mass media in attendance. Belarus has no tradition of inviting foreign leaders to such events but some guests were present. "I always arrive in Belarus in good spirits," smiled the CIS Executive Secretary, Sergei Lebedev. "I receive a cordial welcome. From the point of view of my job, I'm especially pleased that Belarus is an active participant of the integration processes taking place within the post-Soviet space, as approved by the Belarusian leadership."

On behalf of the religious communities, the Head of the Belarusian Orthodox Church, Metropolitan of Minsk and Slutsk Filaret, congratulated

the President publicly, saying, "The people of Belarus associate your name with their hopes for civil wellbeing and with continued state building within a community of diverse nationalities."

Before the inauguration began, I talked to the Mufti of the Muslim Religious Association in Belarus, Abu-Bekir Shabanovich. He said, "The unique nature of our country is that we have been forming a commonwealth of nations for centuries. If it had been otherwise, with a lack of concord between nations, resulting in internal conflict, history would have eradicated us long ago, and assimilation would have taken place. About 200 nationalities live in Belarus. I speak for all Muslims in the Republic in saying that Belarus is our home. We are sincerely happy that it remains a place of peace, harmony and wellbeing."

Prime Minister Mikhail Myasnikovich spoke of the position of the EU and the USA, which have criticised past elections. "Of course, we should reflect on what is said about us sometimes. However, it seems to me that the current attacks lack objectivity. We are a civilised nation able to solve all matters — both political and economic — independently."

The Economic University's Rector, Vladimir Shimov, noted that Belarus' major resource is its intellect, which is the foundation of future development for the economy and the country in general. The President's programme for the coming five years is based on an innovative path of development.

European Parliament's resolution causes regret among Belarusian parliamentarians

Joint statement by Presidium of the Council of the Republic and the Council of the House of Representatives of the National Assembly is passed in response to European Parliament resolution on the situation in Belarus, stating that the European Parliament, as a representative body, should not initiate confrontation between the European Union and its neighbours

The statement comments: "The resolution of the European Parliament, of January 20th, 2011, has caused deep regret among Belarusian parliamentarians, showing once again that the European Parliament ignores objective facts when creating its stance towards the Republic of Belarus." Belarusian MPs stress that the presidential elections in Belarus were conducted in strict accordance with national legislation and, accordingly,

their results are undisputed, reflecting the will of the Belarusian people. Any speculation on the issue is groundless and unacceptable.

It continues: "It is regrettable that, rather than giving a thorough evaluation of the events seen in Minsk late on December 19th, 2010, looking at the cause, some western colleagues ignored facts and reality, giving an emotional criticism of the action taken by the state." Belarus'

parliamentarians argue that law enforcement officers 'exercised maximum restraint and did not interfere with the unsanctioned rally until its leaders and participants turned openly violent'. The statement adds: "The actions of law enforcement officers were lawful and proportionate to the force of provocation from protesters. It is known that 'dialogue' between the police and demonstrators in many EU countries is far less restrained, with a whole arsenal of special equipment used in 'argument'. We'd like to hope that, one day, the European Parliament will abandon its double standards."

The MPs believe that the character and the tone adopted by the European

Parliament resolution demonstrate that 'common sense, unfortunately, has once again been sacrificed to emotions, and dialogue to pressure'. Of course, it has long been evident that using the language of ultimatum with a sovereign state is futile and unlikely to meet the interests of the EU.

However, the National Assembly reaffirms its willingness 'to engage in constructive dialogue with international parliamentary organisations and national parliaments of foreign countries, based solely on mutual respect and equality'. The statement notes: 'Mutual understanding and co-operation, rather than restrictive measures, will be true and reliable instruments in solving problems.'

NEW DIMENSION

ASÍ ES LA REALIDAD GEOMÉTRICA

Das Wort, das Buch, Belaja Weshia

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