

Solid foundations for further sustainable bilateral co-operation

Alexander Lukashenko meets Wu Bangguo, the Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress of China, to discuss points of contact between our two states

By Igor Kolchenko

Mr. Bangguo is the second most senior person in the official hierarchy of Chinese power, so his unprecedented four day visit to Minsk indicates China's degree of interest in Belarus. During his stay, he held numerous meetings in Parliament, talking to government officials, and visited Chinese sites in Minsk: the modernised TPP-2, the Beijing Hotel (under construction) and the Confucius Institute at the State Linguistic University.

He met Mr. Lukashenko at the Residence in 38 Karl Marx Street, attending a solemn dinner. Mr. Bangguo notes that his visit aimed to check up on progress made on agreements by our heads of state, and he certainly kept journalists busy. Moreover, new initiatives were announced, such as a Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park to be built in our country. Beijing is allocating a \$1bn loan on privileged terms to Minsk to finance joint projects. Mr. Lukashenko thanked the Chinese leadership for their 'immense support — both moral and material'. Both sides agreed that 'our relations are stronger than they have ever been before in our bilateral relations'.

On meeting his Chinese guest, Mr. Lukashenko stressed that, with each new top level meeting, 'our co-operation in all fields is developing even more dynamically, yielding better results'. The President has visited China six times, while Chinese leaders have regularly come to Minsk. In January, our two countries will celebrate their 20th anniversary of diplomatic rela-

tions, with turnover rising almost 70 times over that period — reaching \$2.3bn in 2010. Bilateral relations have now reached a strategic level.

In his speech, Mr. Lukashenko stressed, "We're grateful that, at a moment's notice, China is ready to offer its friendly shoulder of support. Belarus is hugely thankful to China for its assistance in developing our macroeconomic situation. In this respect, I'd like to thank the experts from the People's Bank of China for their efforts; the agreements and contracts signed over the past few days will drive forward some 'breakthrough' projects. I'm convinced that the launch of the first Belarusian communication satellite and the establishment of a Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park will create a solid foundation for long term partnership in the field of high technologies, while becoming a calling card for China in Europe."

This has been Mr. Bangguo's third visit to Belarus and, during his talks, it has been obvious that he is well aware of current events in our country and how Chinese projects are progressing. His last visit to Minsk took place in the last century. On meeting the President, Mr. Bangguo said, "14 years on, I'm again in Belarus. Huge positive changes have occurred in your country over this period of time. What I've seen over the past few days in Minsk is hardly comparable to the situation observed back in 1997. Importantly, all these successes have been achieved despite complex external conditions — including huge pressure from the USA and the West. In recent years,



Alexander Lukashenko and Wu Bangguo during their Minsk meeting

Belarus has faced certain difficulties as a consequence of the global financial-economic crisis, including increased gas prices and tougher sanctions from the West. We know that you've taken measures to counteract these challenges, as the results are already evident. Being your sincere friends, we're glad to observe the successes achieved under your leadership and are convinced that the country will overcome its temporary hardships, continuing its advancement."

China is a rare example of a country emerging from the global crisis as an even more

confident and strong state. China's GDP has not lost its momentum; last year, it demonstrated 10 percent growth, almost reaching \$3 trillion. Over half of its goods are sold abroad, generating foreign currency. Accordingly, its gold and currency reserves are the largest in the world — exceeding \$3 trillion. Its permanent production growth and huge savings have made China a major creditor. Without exaggeration, it is the hope of the global economy. It's enough to see how affable Washington is in its relations with Beijing. Similarly, various European

states feel no shame in asking China for financial assistance.

Belarus is keen to become China's foothold in Europe, with our diplomacy of recent years focusing on this. The top guest arrived in Minsk from Moscow, planning to travel on to Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. Mr. Bangguo believes that very favourable conditions for bilateral co-operation have been established, with our economies supplementing one another. "China boasts huge consumer and investment demand, with our companies increasingly investing in foreign nations. I've visited some Be-

larusian enterprises to see the strong industrial base present. Your country occupies leading positions worldwide in the spheres of micro-circuitry, quarry machinery and tractor production. Moreover, you boast huge deposits of potassium salt. We have great potential for co-operation in these branches. The Chinese Government will encourage our most powerful companies to invest in your country," he emphasised.

Mr. Lukashenko assured the top level guests that China can rely on Belarus as a foothold state in Europe, irrespective of other countries' reactions. Favourable business conditions are to be created for Chinese companies in Belarus, while our mutual relations will follow rules to ensure that each jointly realised project will serve as an example to other potential investors, inspiring further ideas and projects.

Mr. Bangguo visited TPP-2, which uses Chinese money and technologies, also signing several co-operative agreements. The China Development Bank is to allocate a loan worth almost \$200m for the construction of a 40MW hydroelectric station by 2015, on the Zapadnaya Dvina River. A framework agreement has been signed envisaging the financing of technical modernisation at the Dobrush Paper Mill's branch. Additionally, an investment project is due to be launched to build a facility to produce sodium carbonate. A national system of satellite communication is also to be created with Chinese participation. The list of initiatives is truly impressive.

More comfort at the border



New checkpoint at Belarusian-Polish border

Domachevo checkpoint opens on Belarusian-Polish border

The Chairman of Belarus' Customs Committee, Alexander Shpilevsky, announced at Domachevo's recent opening that the construction of border and customs infrastructure has been financed by the Republican budget, at a cost of Br50bn. The Domachevo-Slowatycze checkpoint is of international status, opening

in 1995 as a result of huge pressure faced by the Brest-Terespol checkpoint.

Initially, Domachevo — located 45km from Brest — aimed to service passenger cars and minibuses. In line with an intergovernmental agreement, registration of transport vehicles by border and customs services was conducted on the Polish side. The construction of border and

customs infrastructure on the Belarusian side has been conducted in line with a complex programme to develop car checkpoints along the state border. Comfortable conditions have been created for those crossing the border and for state border services, while the new building enjoys original architecture, the latest technology and high-speed information lines.

Domachevo can serve 2,250 vehicles a day — including passenger cars, vehicles of 3,500kg loading capacity and passenger minibuses seating up to nine people. Moreover, as Mr. Shpilevsky points out, the checkpoint has been built with further development in mind. It could process cargo trucks so, if Poland organises its own side similarly, Domachevo's services could be expanded.

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