

# Modern challenges require prompt and adequate reaction

By Igor Slavinsky

**Alexander Lukashenko — who chairs the CSTO — approves plan of action adopted at Moscow's December sitting of CSTO Collective Security Council**

The CSTO General Secretary, Nikolai Bordyuzha, brought the document to Minsk for signing. "We have a range of issues for discussion," noted the President, on meeting his guest. "Firstly, Belarus chairs our military-political organisation and, secondly, the background of today's talk is not very pleasant. I mean the situation in the world; we have a great deal of problems."

'We' here refers to the CSTO: seven republics of the former USSR which have agreed to ensure security via joint action. The Musketeers once said 'one for all and all for the one'; almost the same principle is laid in the North Atlantic Treaty, which founded NATO.

Naturally, much separates words from deeds — as confirmed by the situation in Kyrgyzstan.

The CSTO has its own Collective Rapid Reaction Force, in addition to peace keepers and a mechanism of political consultation. However, when a riot took place in this Central Asian country and ethnic collapse began, other members of the organisation failed to clearly formulate a common position with which to promptly react to the crisis.

Mr. Bordyuzha has just returned from Bishkek, so Mr. Lukashenko asked him in detail about the situation in the Central Asia. "We chatted about the general situation and trends, and the measures being taken by Kyrgyzstan's leadership to ensure stability and avoid repeated mass disorder, as

occurred in the south of the country," he told journalists. "We still have quite a few questions regarding extremist underground work and extremist organisations based in Afghanistan."

The events in Kyrgyzstan have inspired reform. "The main approach is to ensure the organisation functions properly and is ready to act in any crisis situation," said Mr. Bordyuzha. The plan brought to Minsk (prepared by the central office over a period of two months) includes not only the decisions of the Moscow summit but, also, a range of Belarusian initiatives.

Among other ideas, Minsk is proposing that the seven member states have their own peace keepers, who can be deployed at special request from the UN. This enhances the organisation's authority. Belarus also insists on the perfect training and equipment of these collective forces. Mr. Lukashenko believes the CSTO should be involved not only in counteracting foreign aggression and fighting terrorism but, for example, reacting to natural disasters and man-made catastrophes, which also affect security.

Mr. Bordyuzha often visits CSTO member states, speaking to their presidents. Mr. Lukashenko told him, "We'd like to know how our colleagues react to this." Additionally, the President discussed Belarusian-Russian relations with his guest, saying, "I'm interested in hearing your views on further prospects, including those of the Union State and its role within the CSTO." Mr. Lukashenko has noted Mr. Bordyuzha's importance within the Russian leadership; in the 1990s, he headed the Federal Border Service of Russia and was Secretary to the Russian Security Council.



President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, spends over three hours answering US journalists' questions

# The Washington Post journalists prepare exclusive interview

Alexander Lukashenko interviewed by USA leading daily

By Igor Slavinsky

The President of Belarus is continuing his practice of communicating with foreign journalists. In recent years, he has held dozens of sincere talks but this was the first interview with the American mass media after the presidential elections and after the White House again imposed sanctions on official Minsk. The Presidential Press Service

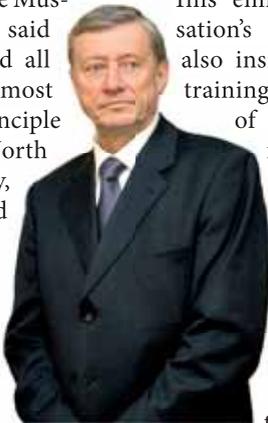
tells us that the talks lasted for three hours, covering bilateral relations and their prospects in the light of recent events, alongside Belarus' co-operation with other countries. Additionally, *The Washington Post* was interested in our domestic political and economic situation.

In honesty, the American printed media seldom refers to remote Belarus. Moreover, these rare articles primarily

cover only negative aspects. Mr. Lukashenko gave his opinion on events from the evening of December 19th and what followed, allowing American readers to form an objective view of reality. The interview published in *The Washington Post* is an exclusive.

For several decades, (probably since its journalists revealed Watergate), the newspaper has enjoyed huge

influence on public opinion in the USA. Its main rival is *The New York Times*, which supports the Democrats, while *The Washington Post* expresses sympathy with the Republicans. In this respect, the edition is like the 'opposition' — although no strict distinction is observed in the United States. *The Washington Post* is read by the White House and the Department of State.



Mr. Bordyuzha

## Local raw materials to yield evident fruit

**International Bank for Reconstruction and Development allocates \$80m to finance rehabilitation of Chernobyl-affected regions**

The Belarus-IBRD joint project has been running for several years and is to complete in two years' time, modernising social infrastructure. It aims to enhance

energy efficiency and lay gas pipelines, optimising the heat supply, installing additional energy efficient lamps and updating buildings' heating systems. All these measures are to ensure additional heating comfort, reducing greenhouse gas emissions while eliminating fluorescent lighting in old school lamps, harmful for eyesight.

## People won't be abandoned in difficulties

**Renovated temporary accommodation centre for migrants and refugees opened at Minsk National Airport**

The accommodation was initially designed for six people but now offers space for 16, with conditions considerably improved. To date, over 20 refugees and over 200 illegal migrants have stayed at the facility, with most hailing from



Minsk's National Airport hospitably welcomes visitors

Somali, Georgia, Bangladesh, Iran, Congo and Sudan.

"The Belarusian authorities are working hard to im-

prove conditions of stay," notes the UNHCR Representative in Belarus, Sholeh Safavi. "Facilities are available in Minsk,

Vitebsk and Gomel and we'll continue rendering assistance to the Belarusian authorities in this sphere."

The updated centre has opened as part of a joint project being realised by Belarus, the EU and the UNHCR, aiming to develop an efficient and complex system whereby those seeking asylum are offered an improved level of service.

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