

# The choice is really made by the majority of people!

## Belarus has hosted elections of deputies to the House of Representatives

The elections to the House of Representatives of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus of the fifth calling have seen an average of 74.3 percent of voters take part.

In the Brest Region, 74.2 percent of voters turned out. There was an impressive result in the Vitebsk Region of 81.1 percent and in the Grodno Region, which saw 79.2 percent. Similarly, the Minsk Region boasted 76.1 percent turn out while the Mogilev Region saw 79.9 percent and there was 76.6 percent in the Gomel Region. Minsk experienced a more modest 59.2 percent of eligible voters taking part.

Observers noted the professionalism and competence of district electoral commissions, while a team of international observers visited 14 polling stations in Polotsk, the Shumilino District and Vitebsk. In both the city and countryside, everyone was found to be professional and competent, according to CIS observer Anatoly Pevnev. Having chatted to voters, Mr. Pevnev believes that each candidate had supporters and opponents. However, the election campaign was calm and well-organised, without any violations of the Electoral Code seen.

The President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, cast his own vote at polling station #476, in Starovilensky polling district 105 — located in the Belarusian State University of Physical Culture. He chatted to foreign observers present, seeing how the electoral process was organised. Following tradition, he then answered questions from representatives of Belarusian and foreign media and underlined that the parliamentary elections are held primarily for the benefit of all Belarusian people — not for the West.

Replying to the question as to whether he expected the elections to be recognised by the West, Mr. Lukashenko noted that we 'should al-

ways hope for the best'. He explained, "Once again, I'd like to repeat that we are holding elections today not for the West. The main author of the elections in Belarus is the Belarusian people. We hope for the best, but as for what will happen ... we'll have to wait and see."

The President believes that the election campaign saw nothing untoward. "If anyone doubts the choice of the Belarusian people this time, then I know not how to conduct elections, and according to what standards or laws," he said. Regarding comments that the election campaign had been boring and uneventful, the President said, "Others should envy us if the elections are boring! Elections which are boring and quiet are happy for the people, not to mention the Government. Elections in any civilised state should be held this way. We do not need revolution, upheaval, fighting, explosions or fist fights."

The Head of State noted that the Belarusian parliament needs people who are educated and literate to make laws, which is their main task. He suggested that those accusing Belarus of dishonest elections use our country as a model of honesty, principles and dignity, where elections are held in the people's interests. "Where is the dishonesty in our Belarusian elections?" he asked one Polish journalist. "Tell those Polish observers who criticise us, and all those conducting elections, that they should learn from Belarus how to hold elections honestly, with principles and dignity, in the interests of the people. This is my advice."

He continued, "It's not right to apply your own charter to someone else's garden. Tell this to the Polish politicians. We'll make our own decisions on how to organise our life. In my opinion, we don't create problems for you." Mr. Lukashenko believes that the good turnout at polling stations to be an indicator of public



trust in the authorities. Answering a question from a Finnish journalist as to what a smaller turnout would indicate, the President said, "If only a small number of people vote, they mustn't believe in the political system

or the authorities of a particular state. Here, twice as many people vote as in Finland, for example. Draw your own conclusions."

The President believes that a large number of Belarusian voters are an

indicator that 'our society is more conscious' and that 'we have more people who believe in their future and the authorities, who conduct the elections'. He added that they must believe, at least, in 'the agency elected'.

At the request of a German journalist, the Head of State commented on the decision of some candidates to retire from participating in the election campaign. According to the President, the decision indicates their complete inability to become politicians. Mr. Lukashenko suggested that such a situation would be virtually impossible to imagine in Germany. He added, "They dropped out, as was their choice. Many remained from this 'fifth column' and, if they win, they'll join Parliament; if they don't, they'll go to Germany or Poland to ask for money to buy bread and salt."

Speaking of those who decided to boycott the elections, Mr. Lukashenko said, "They are just cowards who have nothing to say to the people. The political battle is held according to certain laws, as everyone knows. If you recognise this, then why become involved?" Mr. Lukashenko believes that, if a politician joins the political struggle, he should fight; if he refuses, he must be scared and is showing failure.

One representative of the foreign media asked the President about the future of his young sons. Mr. Lukashenko replied, "Do you have children? How do you see their future? Rosy... yes? I'd also like to see my sons enjoy good prospects. They rely on the future development of our country."

"I'm all for good prospects, especially for children," the President continued. "You know my attitude towards children; there is absolutely no policy here. I want my and your children, and all those in Finland and all over the world, to live well, with good prospects. To this end, we'll continue working."

## Algorithm of relations is constructive and trustworthy

By Larisa Rakovskaya

**Negotiations between Belarusian Foreign Minister Vladimir Makei and Russian colleague Sergey Lavrov continue those of Vladimir Putin and Alexander Lukashenko, after recent Sochi meeting**

The meeting was hosted by the Reception House of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, in Spiridonovka, not only continuing the recent presidential conversations but translating these into joint answers to questions set by the leaders. "We have much to discuss," said Mr. Lavrov, explaining that, in

Sochi, the presidents of Belarus and Russia agreed key areas of partnership for our two countries.

Experienced diplomat and negotiator Mr. Makei was appointed to the position of Foreign Affairs Minister not long ago. The fact that one of his first visits in his new position has been to Moscow shows the importance of Russia for Minsk; the relationship continues to be strategic and is developing dynamically. He notes, "Belarus enjoys constructive and confidential relations with Russia. Its traditional for ministers to meet and we intend to extend this tradition."

Recent talks in Spiridonovka were a political debut for the newly appointed Ambassador of the Re-

public of Belarus to the Russian Federation, H.E. Mr. Igor Petrishenko. He has many years of experience of Belarusian-Russian relations, so is no stranger to this work, but his new status brings with it major tasks in extending bilateral relations between Moscow and Minsk. Additionally, he'll be promoting the State Union processes, Eurasian security and economic integration. The Belarusian Embassy to Moscow is 'a small ministry', with new powers discussed by Mr. Makei and Mr. Petrishenko in Maroseika.

Judging by recent negotiations, the new political season, which traditionally begins in autumn, will be filled with important work.

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