



Photos recall final joint meeting of Council of the Republic and House of Representatives of fourth calling

Lawmakers pass on baton

The National Assembly of the fourth calling has completed its work, with members of the House of Representatives and the Council of the Republic gathering for a final meeting in the Oval Hall of the House of Government. President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko was also in attendance.

By Kirill Dovlatov

What has Parliament achieved over the past four years? Mr. Lukashenko noted in his speech that these years have been trying for the whole country, largely due to the world crisis. External and internal enemies tried to shatter the stability, peace and tranquillity of society but together we've managed to cope with many challenges and continue the ongoing development of the economy. Mr. Lukashenko is convinced that the National Assembly can take some credit for this.

He made a number of judgments, first of all noting, "The scope of Parliament's power is defined by the Constitution of the country, adopted at the nationwide referendum. Belarusian people made a principal choice in favour of strong government and time has confirmed the correctness of this choice. Personal ambitions are irrelevant. The whole history of humanity — including that of Western countries — shows that young nations' construction is possible only with

strong, centralised power."

Mr. Lukashenko's views are confirmed by the examples of the state formation of the UK, France and Germany. He also recalled our recent past, saying, "Belarus still remembers its own experience of the early 1990s, which were years of noisy parliamentary farce. Supreme Council sessions were disorderly and lively but was that endless talk amusing to our people, who, for months, did not receive wages or pensions, froze in their houses and were uncertain for the future. The Government's task is not to entertain! It must protect people, giving them opportunities to earn a living. Action is more important than words!"

The President outlined an important new landmark, noting, "The current model of Belarusian statehood has not yet exhausted its possibilities. It has helped us create the first independent Belarusian state. The next colossal historical task is to modernise the country, allowing us to break into the elite club of highly developed nations."

Short term, Mr. Lukashenko does not exclude some change within the political system, asserting, "I'm absolutely sure that, historically, the role of Parliament will be strengthened. I'm a supporter of this and would like the current Parliament of the fifth calling to achieve some modernisation of our politi-

“I'm absolutely sure that, historically, the role of Parliament will be strengthened. I'm a supporter of this and would like the current Parliament of the fifth calling to achieve some modernisation of our political system. This will depend not only on the domestic environment but, foremost, on the foreign political system in which we exist.

cal system. This will depend not only on the domestic environment but, foremost, on the foreign political system in which we exist. Under tough pressure from outside, when the independence of the country is at stake, we'll mass around some personality like other Slavic people would do, in order to protect ourselves, defend our piece of land, preserve the country for our children, and keep existing as a state, as a nation. Therefore, we need to assert ourselves as

an independent state and nation. We'll keep striving until others accept us as independent Belarusians. At present, none wants to accept this."

The President disagrees that the Belarusian Parliament has no power to its voice, saying it's a superficial judgment. Meetings in the Oval Hall are always calm but

emphasises, "Ask yourself, how many and which parties does our country have? How do they differ from one another? Who will answer? They will name the Communist Party and BPF [Belarusian Popular Front] but that's all. If we had the Communist Party, the Belarusian Popular Front and, probably, a centrist party (there were attempts to set up it), there would be three parties and people would understand what's is meant."

Such a system has been absent in recent years, with little authoritative standing for parties in total. Accordingly, it's premature to introduce the formation of the Parliament using party lists. The parties need to develop more, evolving gradually. Mr. Lukashenko gives the example of Belaya Rus, noting, "I often hear that Belaya Rus is ready to become a party. If it is ready, then it should go ahead. I would not advise them to hurry; they could really become a centrist force, like the Socialist Party in France, or the social democratic party."

His conclusion, based

on the current situation, is, "Time is required for parties to develop. They should be associated with certain programmes and policies. We'd then be able to form Parliament using party lists. It would be unwise to hurry the situation now, since time and people should guide the process. The next Parliamentary elections are to be held in four years' time, which gives plenty of scope for consideration of the electoral system. To my mind, all our social forces should take part, everyone who wants to — including opponents of the current power."

Mr. Lukashenko emphasised the importance of hard work and coherence of action between the two chambers. Deputies and members of the Council of the Republic should talk to people, so they can reflect their opinions, to ensure correct representation. Lawmaking cannot lag behind the times and, most importantly, should ensure the implementation of the tasks defined by the Social and Economic Development Programme for 2011-2015.

Tradition of meeting on merry occasion

By Victoria Popova

Professional holidays are an amazing tradition. In the middle of grey working days, we suddenly have a significant reason to feel involved with others, seeing that we are not alone in our thoughts, hopes and doubts.

Nesvizh Castle recently hosted an official ceremony to mark the Day of Cultural Workers, although this actually falls on October 14th this year. The exquisite castle is the perfect meeting place for such an event, being a beautiful setting for

evening dress.

The event was opened by the First Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration, Alexander Radkov, who delivered a message from Mr. Lukashenko to cultural workers: "In recent years, our culture has been developed more actively than ever before, gaining worldwide recognition. We will always support those who create masterpieces worthy of our time, by their talent and skills. I hope that, on this special day, you receive a sea of flowers and applause. Accept our sincere recognition for your dedicated service to the

motherland."

In one of the most magnificent halls of the palace — the Theatre Hall — Mr. Radkov delivered thanks from the President's Administration to cultural workers. Awards were bestowed from the Ministry of Culture and Culture Minister Pavel Latushko announced some interesting forthcoming events: *BelExpo*, held in Minsk in late November, will include a triennial of contemporary art.

Representatives of the film industry agreed that, over the last year, they've achieved a great deal. Meanwhile, museum workers had

working groups discussing draft bills often enjoy heated debate, although the public rarely hear of this, since the result is all.

The system of parliamentary elections is also under focus. We currently use the majority system but mixed legislature is being discussed, including relating to party lists. The President is not against such an approach, but believes that such a transformation is possible only where authoritative parties exist. He



Honouring the best cultural workers

their *Museums of Belarus International Forum*. A major priority of the Ministry of Culture is legislative reform next year, notes Mr. Latushko, "We're initiating changes to the law regarding libraries and librarianship, and folk art and crafts, drafting a Code of Culture."

A concert of classical music closed the pleasant ceremony, followed by informal chatting and many photos were taken against the background of the palace's magnificent interiors. When next will they witness such a pleasant occasion?