

Sincere report on important events countrywide and globally

The President of Belarus has told the British *Independent* newspaper and BBC TV Channel in an interview that democracy is simply a front for setting alight the Arabic arc

By Vladimir Khromov

The conversation touched upon various aspects of the country's life, including foreign and domestic policy, the economy and social development. Mr. Lukashenko answered several personal questions, with considerable attention paid to public progress and democratic development. In total, he spent almost four hours answering over 60 questions.

Mr. Lukashenko has a long standing relationship with journalists, having always impressed Western guests with his sincerity and emotionality. On this occasion, the owner of the paper and one of its major journalists, Russian Yevgeny Lebedev, arrived in Minsk personally to conduct the interview (several years ago, his father — famous businessman Alexander Lebedev — bought the debt-laden *Independent* for just one pound). He seemed to be searching for answers to many questions personally, treating the interview as more of a discussion, tackling domestic and foreign policy, assessments of vital events worldwide and personal issues.

Speaking of the Arab world, Mr. Lukashenko asserted, "They bombed Iraq. Why? They killed thousands of innocent people, including children. They aren't guilty of anything. What democracy did they bring?"

Mr. Lebedev made an at-



During an interview with *Independent*

tempt to parry, saying, "I don't defend the war in Iraq. However, there are two opinions. Some say that the war was wrong while others approve, since a true dictator was unseated."

"Yes, you've strung up Hussein but you've killed around a million people to do so."

The whole conversation was filled with similarly sharp but succinct speeches. The President of Belarus continued to develop his position, saying, "Someone wanted to set the Arabic arc alight. In the very first days, when the revo-

lutions began, I said that the West should be condemned for interference. However, there was even worse to come! Now, we see where it has ended: the entire arc is alight. It's hot everywhere. Surprisingly, some countries — those which maintain the closest relations with the USA — have not been affected. Aren't you concerned? It was obvious to anyone that an overseas scenario was in progress. Once the situation began unfolding in a way the script writers didn't like, they started barefaced bombing."

Curiously, the guest even-

tually agreed that the export of revolutions hasn't been the most successful path for the West. Mr. Lukashenko responded, "We don't need to export revolutions. Why then do they export democracy? I mean democracy as they view it. What kind of democracy does Iraq have today when bombs explode and hundreds of people die? Even worse, thousands are crippled. How many people have been killed to date? Who needs such democracy? Truly, the issue isn't democracy. They needed to split Iraq; they needed oil. Is

there anyone who doesn't now understand this? 'Democracy' was just a front for robbery."

The Belarusian President also commented on attempts to play out a similar scenario in Belarus. "Each day, I'm democratised by the West with a truncheon, roughly speaking. Who needs such 'democracy'? Which democracy? These are double standards. For example, the Americans want to 'democratise' us. Fine! However, go first to Saudi Arabia and democratise there. They've democratized Egypt even though it had a more democratic re-

gime than Saudi Arabia."

Such 'democracy' is unacceptable to us. This 'democracy' kills millions of innocent people beyond the country's borders. I'm accused of signing a decree to execute two terrorists; millions of people were killed at that time."

Manipulation of elections is another popular legend about Belarus in the West. Mr. Lukashenko tackled this topic, saying, "Why do you interfere in our traditions and our legislation? We want our president to be elected by the majority of voters. Do you throw doubt upon this? Name facts! You say we've fabricated results. Name concrete facts! How many organisations and independent observers saw differently? How can you explain the fact that a month before the presidential elections, an OSCE report on the results of elections in Belarus lay on my table. When the elections took place, it was published one-to-one, as happened this time. A week before the elections, they came with a ready-made 'billet' of assessment. Everything was outlined in advance, as we knew."

Mr. Lukashenko is always eager to explain his position openly to journalists from any country. It seemed that Mr. Lebedev and Natalia Antelava, a BBC correspondent who also took part in the conversation, brought much speculation with them.

Alexander Lukashenko congratulates Hugo Chávez on his victory in Venezuelan presidential elections

President of Belarus orders Presidential Administration to enhance Belarus-Venezuela co-operation across all avenues

"I don't know about you but I had a sleepless night because of the elections in Venezuela. I'm very happy to hear of the victory of our friend, Hugo Chávez. I should say that he has done a great job. There are some things even we can learn from these elections. This was an undisputed victory, with the chief alternative candidate admitting his defeat; this is worth its weight in gold, as it demonstrates his dignity," the President notes. "I think we'll need to step up our activities in Venezuela — across all areas of co-operation. We should help Hugo Chávez demonstrate his appreciation to the Venezuelan people. It's a major

task, with certain benefits, so the Presidential Administration should focus on this," the Head of State adds.

The President's congratulation to Mr. Chávez reads: 'People in Belarus closely watched the presidential election campaign in Venezuela. We whole-heartedly supported you and your followers and we had no doubt of your victory. We believed that the Venezuelan people would make the right choice to support the sustainable development of the country and efforts to raise standards of living. This sincere support from those who have the right to evaluate your personal contribution in building an independent, successful and prosperous state is the best testimony to your correct choice of policy, encouraging comprehensive changes to the economy and

society. The rapid development of today's Venezuela rests upon these changes.'

"Let's do together everything possible to stop anyone from regretting their choice, believing that you are the true national leader, who prioritises public interests. We are ready for this!" Mr. Lukashenko underlines.

Mr. Lukashenko stresses that Hugo Chávez can always rely on 'the fraternal shoulder of Belarus in ensuring the consistent development of Venezuela in all areas: oil extraction, industry, science and agriculture'. He wishes the Venezuelan leader health, creativity and unflinching energy to continue working in the best interests of the brotherly Venezuelan nation.

A telephone conversation took place between the Presi-

dent of Belarus and the President of Venezuela during which Mr. Lukashenko congratulated his colleague on his convincing victory during the presidential elections. "I devote this victory to you and our Belarusian nation," responded Hugo Chávez, welcoming the congratulations of his friend, Alexander Lukashenko.

The Venezuelan President expressed great gratitude to the Belarusian President and to the whole Belarusian nation for its invaluable assistance in Venezuela's socio-economic development and in helping construct major enterprises and infrastructure, as well as its constant political support. The two heads of state have agreed to meet soon, outlining a joint agenda of further bilateral relationships in various spheres of co-operation.

NEW DIMENSION

BELARUS
Das Wort, das Buch, Belaja Weshha

www.belarus-magazine.by