

they don't have a true idea of their policies: either the Communist Party or the BPF. This will be a deceit.

I think that the party system has yet to evolve. Parties should not be created when suggested by the authorities. It's clear what attitude a pro-government party will face, so I don't support this process in Belarus.

We aren't yet mature enough to have formed this party system, so let people elect their deputies in the districts following recommendations. Any party has the right to stand (even if it has no representatives in the district); the elections determine everything.

Maybe, we need to move further towards this party system. We certainly don't restrain the process. I've promised not to push the process of forming political parties artificially but I won't hamper it either; I'll support it.

Elections in Belarus and Russia

It's all big money and show there, but here, we had a holiday.

We were criticised for this, with people scoffing at the snack-bars we offered at voting stations. We had music and children, who seemed happy to be among adults. The Russians observing admired our choice of creating a festive atmosphere; Mr. Lukashenko had created a holiday for people, to our advantage. Of course, we endeavoured to make use of all that is beneficial.

Meanwhile, you [Russians] have borrowed a little from the West, with your party principles and spending money; the more important the election, the more money is spent. We don't waste money, as we wouldn't want to do that.

We've been accused of fraud but conducted this election extremely openly. There were 30,000 our observers, 1,000 from abroad. There were also 800 journalists, including about 500 from abroad. They were free in their actions, able to watch and check whatever they liked.

I know that a report about Belarus was prepared in advance, even before the elections had concluded. It remained almost without change and, recently, a decision was taken to extend sanctions against Belarus until October 30th 2013. For what reason? We understand why. They don't like Mr. Lukashenko and his politics.

Illegal smuggling

We've caught Afghan people that go through Russia: dozens of thousands of people annually. Additionally, there have been explosives, radioactive materials and drugs. We discover all these things, passing through Russia, via Belarus, on the way to the EU. We just don't need this situation!

We're constantly criticised, but we defend the EU at our own expense. I say: pay us some money and we'll continue to defend you. Without money, we lack the opportunities to prevent such smuggling.

Belarusian-Russian co-operation in foreign policy

I always bring an example of our foreign policy co-operative agencies of Mackey and Lavrov (before, Martynov and Lavrov). We've rarely had problems with mutual support and I hope that continues always. Co-operation is at a high level in comparison with the past. We realised (as I mentioned in my speech) that we didn't have a lot of friends. Unfortunately, competition is very strong, and we realised that no one needed us. If we stand side by side in this tough fight, battling together, we'll surely succeed. The Ministry of Defence and the Foreign Ministry are a model for co-operation between other ministries.

Interstate labour migration

We don't prevent this but I'd be fibbing if I said that I wasn't anxious, as we don't want to lose our experts. If the process is controlled and natural, we can consider it. There's nothing wrong with a thousand or two going to work abroad but we should consider carefully what to offer people to tempt them to stay.

If someone wants to go to Khabarovsk, there's nothing wrong in this. When it comes to economics and trade, we can rely on these people I think.

Dual citizenship in the Union State

As regards dual citizenship, why should we make an exception for Ukrainians, Poles or anyone else? It could be done but would be, from a legal point of view, contrary to humanitarian principles. I'm afraid to allow it, as I think that huge numbers may claim second citizenship. We feel this is likely, so we've been cautious in opening the door, only allowing it for particular examples — such as outstanding skiers. For example, there are 22 great athletes in Russia while the team can consist of just 6-8 people. There are some who'd love to perform at world championships, so we allow them to train here, representing Belarus. We often do this. Darya Domracheva, who is among the best in the world, was born to a Belarusian family, but is from Siberia. She was from Russia but we gave her dual citizenship. If a man or a woman marries a Belarusian and comes to live here, there is no problem.

We have an established procedure: you apply and the Commission considers before making an offer. Sometimes,

people gain their citizenship within a month or less, according to the principles of the law. We are not an empire, like Russia, so we are a little afraid, although the Russians have, in principle, almost the same rights as in Belarus, so there is less need for caution.

The Belarusian nuclear power plant

The vast majority of people now support this decision, although there have been many arguments. The main one was our experience of Chernobyl. However, a couple of nuclear power plants are found almost on the border of Belarus, along its perimeter.

Of what are we afraid? There is nothing to be afraid of. Of course, when the main impact has been felt personally, it infects people with a phobia. It's difficult to convince them but I've tried hard to do so and gain their understanding. I took a decision and have

no regrets. Now, the most modern plant is being built. It's greatly needed as it will provide not only cheap energy but less dependence on natural gas.

This is the latest technology, rivalling that of the space industry in its construction and operation; it's an area of the highest technology. We should be focused on this, as we can't escape it. If the nation wants to develop, being among the highest educated, we should train specialists.

Housing and public services

We subsidise housing and public services by 70 percent. The public only covers 30 percent. This is not so much in comparison with the full house reconstruction cost, for example. People don't want to understand this, which creates problems. We don't leave people at the mercy of management companies or private entities and, until we find a worthy substitution for these structures, we won't change our policy. I speak as President, saying we won't do that.

Why change if nothing better is being offered?

Style of management

We operate a tough policy, because we need to survive. Once or twice a year, or once every two years, we face a challenge. We need to unite, in order to overcome and survive. We'll lose if we are divided — as happened after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

We provide an independent policy but, at the same time, don't create problems for our neighbours to the east or to the west.



Staff

We have a reserve for each position. The Presidential Administration is responsible for this. It relies on good management to see things run smoothly. Without strong leadership, there is no enterprise, so we pay a lot of attention to this.

There is the President's personnel register, which includes over 900 people. The President controls key positions in the Government and in the economy. Each receives specific 'immunity' from the head of state, ensuring their safety. We have our own system of appointments from above: the same as for governors. Some dislike it, but it exists. We can explain more if you need to know.

As for the elderly, everyone has their place in society. If you have experience and professional skills, it doesn't matter how old you are; we need you. As long as you are healthy, you can work if you choose to. I'd encourage this. There's no question of putting aside older people to make way for the young. Age is not everything; fitness and a desire to work are most important. If you are a professional, then work. If you are ambitious, in a good sense, then work hard to do well and better yourself.

The number of Government agencies

We have halved the number of officials since Soviet times and have further plans to reduce by a quarter, so that civil servants' salaries can be raised. The public would disapprove of this increase in wages otherwise.

The Ministry of Internal

Affairs is being reformed, leading to significant reductions, making the system more streamlined. We've almost finished modernising and reforming the army. Of course, we lack enough money to maintain and upgrade equipment but hope for help from Russia since, in principle, it is the Russian army.

We also need to cut the number of officials by about a quarter, while reducing bureaucracy.

Privatisation

I am an opponent of the form of privatisation seen across our post-Soviet space — although some view it as 'normal'. I've seen only barbarian privatisation: 'grabbing' — as it always becomes.

Only that which has been created through your own hard work and brain power (or that of your family) is truly appreciated. Why should we sell an enterprise which has been created by the people and which functions properly, bringing in normal dividends to the state? This is especially the case when no one is even offering the market price. Everyone wants to buy at a lower price; the vast majority offer half-price or want something almost for free. Why should a properly functioning enterprise be privatised so? This is why I'm against privatisation.

Private property is something quite different, being the greatest asset of society. It should be purchased or acquired through effort. You might want to start up a new enterprise; just come to us for a piece of land, using your own money or a bank loan. We are not against private

property. There is nothing higher than private enterprise and initiative.

Social dependency

This has become a habit, as I often emphasise. I'm ashamed to discuss the amount of money spent on unemployment benefits. The last time the Government suggested raising these, I replied that I'd rather see a proposal balancing the needs of those employed with those unemployed. There are three times as many vacancies as those unemployed — so why should we support them?

If we lacked jobs, it would be another matter. Go and work. We should ask, as we did in Soviet times, why someone isn't working. Our people are very unhappy with people remaining unemployed, asking me to act. I have to respond that I don't know how to approach this in a market economy. We are studying the situation and I think that we'll use leverage to ensure everyone is working. In today's Belarus, those who are lazy can't expect to have the same income as those who work.

Preparations for the 2014 IIHF World Championship

We still need to complete some hotels but, overall, we'll be ready for the World Cup in 2014. The second arena will be completed in Chizhovka next year and the basic infrastructure for the hockey championship will be ready.

On November 30th, there's another inspection — one of the final ones. I'm sure that they'll assess our preparations positively, as Minsk is ready and Belarus is ready. It will be a memorable event.