

# — evolutionary and calm'

Mr. Lukashenko eagerly welcomes them, answering all questions in his usual sincere manner.

like to process 23m tonnes next year. We received 21m tonnes for this purpose this year, which is within our capacity. We've modernised our enterprises and their processing depth is much higher than that of Russia, which is our advantage. We offer European level quality, so Europe is pleased to buy from us.

Many world level automobiles are found in the Russian Federation but they lack high quality petrol and insistently ask us to supply them with 2-3m tonnes of this grade. We're ready and are negotiating to receive deficient 4-5m tonnes of oil. I believe we'll eventually agree, as Russia has plenty of oil. Of course, there should be no barriers to trade within the Single Economic Space and oil is a commodity, so I think we'll agree soon on oil supplies and processing.

## Closeness of the world

We are mutually dependent and we depend greatly on the Russian Federation. Russia is also very interested in Belarus, shaping its economic, political, military and strategic policies accordingly. We depend on each other in the world arena. In fact, Europe is also dependent on Belarus although sanctions have been introduced against us.

Is the European Union worried about illegal immigration? Yes — very much! Who is battling this...? Belarus! We've seen 120,000

Afghans enter and many remain, alongside those from Asia and the Caucasus. They wish to enter the European Union but we detain them at the border, defending Europe. What do we gain? Are we paid? No! Rather, they've started to strangle us.

You introduce sanctions against us yet we can't hold immigrants at our own expense, as we've done before! Additionally, how many explosives and radioactive substances are we detaining at the border? We can't close our eyes to the fact that people are trying to bring such materials into Europe, so we warn you, saying, "Stop strangling us! Do not pressurise us or impose sanctions."

## Prospects of European vector

At the request of the EU and some of its politicians, we've already taken steps toward but are yet to receive the promised steps in return. You can draw your own conclusions...

Being more positive, we need to sit at a table together and look into each other's eyes to determine how we should live. What are your claims and what are mine? Don't push the situation into a dead end with sanctions...

Decide who should take these steps. We're ready so you shouldn't come to negotiations setting conditions for us. We've already fulfilled dozens of conditions and I've personally fulfilled those set before me. In response, we've received stronger sanctions...



## Modernisation

This is the primary question for the economy. For example, we've been focusing on agriculture, rebuilding villages. We've been modernising over two five-year plans. The result is that, this year, we've exported food worth \$5bn. By 2015, this should reach \$7bn. Ten years ago, we couldn't even feed our own population.

Another example is the wood processing industry, including paper and wall-paper production. Paper is in great deficit worldwide so we've built a new factory and have plans for another. We have the raw material needed: wood.

We've been modernising for a long time but, this year, have set the task of ensuring that every enterprise, even those producing stools, chairs and tables, has its own plan of modernisation. Each

must decide what it will produce and to which markets it will sell, producing its own modernisation plan by the end of the year. This is our primary strategy to ensure that we can compete with the West and in Russia, which has joined the WTO.

## Political modernisation

In what direction are we developing? There are many variants but we use the majority system: each deputy is elected from a set territory where they campaign and are known. You have a party system, selecting parliamentarians according to party lists. From any given party, only the leader is known or a few members near the top of the list. You vote but, afterwards, nobody knows anyone or sees anyone. Do you consider this normal?

We don't have an acute

need to change from our majority system to proportional. Why should we get ahead of ourselves? Some claim that it's necessary and is the best and most progressive system. I don't deny this, which is why I say that all things are possible. We lack strong parties, except the Communist Party and the Nationalist party (a wing of the BPF nationalists). Our people don't know any other parties. Some are splinters of the BPF or Communist Party but people are not interested.

We'll push to see more parties, encouraging people to unite in groups and express their opinions. When these parties are formed, with genuine party members rather than 'dead souls', we can introduce some form of proportional elections.

## Probability of Middle East-style revolution in Belarus

In your dreams! Belarus is not the Middle East. The policy of the Belarusian leadership and the policy of the Middle Eastern leadership differ cardinally. We do not share the same policy. I've been elected by ordinary people — teachers, doctors, workers and agricultural labourers. I work hard and have never deviated from my promised policy yet I'm criticised. They say: 'Mr. Lukashenko is a populist, which is at odds with running an economy'. I try not to violate economic laws. I graduated from an economy

faculty. Life is more complex than the law can sometimes comprehend, so we try to be flexible, to benefit people; we sometimes subsidise more than we should but, in honesty, I've only acted for the benefit of the people.

This is why we shouldn't compare policy in Belarus and in the Middle East. Some have tried to provoke a situation via social networks, as in the East... but have failed.

## Changes

Every day, change is occurring but not revolutionary change. The limit of revolution for Belarus has been exhausted. We should be reserved and make change calmly — for the best and for our people. Such change is evolutionary, calm and welcomed. There won't be a revolution here!

## Human rights

The most important human right is that to life. What claim do you have on the life of Belarusians? Our main problem is a lack of people. We are worried for each person. We have a wonderful health service and our infant mortality level is lower than yours. In general, our health service is free. Our secondary education is absolutely free. Higher education is about fifty-fifty. We prepare people for work, as is necessary. If someone wants to pay for their own education that's fine; it's quite cheap. We educate a lot of people and I don't see any serious problems in doing so. Everything we do is for the people.

# Reform could have great impact on TV broadcast

President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, tells Chairman of the National State TV and Radio Company, Gennady Davydko, that, in 2013, state support for the Belarusian TV channel may fall significantly

By Vladimir Khromov

"Everyone — you and other channels supported from the state budget, need to understand that, next year, funding will be reduced considerably. This is not because the state budget has run out of money but because you are an enterprise and should make yourself profitable," stresses the President.

"I'd like to warn you that we're going to reform all structures which receive state budgetary funds, as there are so many, including the Belarusian State

TV and Radio Company. I want to see a 25-30 percent reduction and more effectiveness," notes the Head of State. "Modernisation and reformation are vital to all, including your enterprise."

Mr. Lukashenko believes that reform is needed in many areas and all structures, in both the production sector and ideology. He sees the Belarusian State TV and Radio Company as an enterprise like any other which receives some funding from the state budget; it must earn part of its funding independently.

"It should be borne in

mind that, next year, little by little, we'll reduce support to our main channels, to encourage you to earn money on your own. Good TV programmes are required to achieve this; you need to come up with some original ideas if you wish to win viewers," believes the President.

"As far as I know, ONT TV Channel receives little or nothing from state budgetary funds but is as popular as your channel," notes Mr. Lukashenko. "I like your channel more in some respects, as you do some things better, but this

is a matter of taste. I'm not here to judge. That will be the job of an appraisal body which we plan to set up to provide objective feedback."

Speaking about international TV broadcasting, Mr. Davydko asserts that, at present, this is undertaken by Belarus-TV Channel via three satellites, allowing viewing across Europe and North Africa. It's thought that TV viewers number around 220 million and Mr. Lukashenko hopes to see this figure grow in future, as the quality of programming is improved.

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