

open and sincere format

work and that people over there are paid very low salaries!

I am fed up with private businessmen of that kind. They just want to grab their profits and hide them somewhere far away in Cyprus, in Switzerland or some other offshore area...

I'll tell you where to find money [to solve the problem of Berezni-ki]. You can take Uralkali's shares away from the scoundrels, who have acquired the shares in some incomprehensible ways, and give the shares to people in Berezni-ki. For \$20 billion that the company cost you could have built a blooming paradise there and take away people from this marsh, from the town which is today going underground...

Kerimov, Baumgartner and the like promised to bear social responsibility, take care of jobs and so on when they acquired the enterprise. I know: they guaranteed when they were taking away the enterprise. In your place I would have locked up Kerimov and his people for one night. The next day they would have sold all the assets at the top price. If they had failed, I would have found a buyer for them. It would have earned \$12-13 billion, and all this would have been sent to Berezni-ki.

You are wasting your time trying to find money in Baumgartner. What money does he have? One hundredth of what Kerimov people have, I'll have you know. He was an employee but he is guilty.

I've received a letter from Berezni-ki residents. You see that everyone uses Soviet methods, collecting signatures from those employed at the enterprise. I intended to travel there and tell the truth to people, to tell them how things happened. But I think they wouldn't understand me right. But we are preparing an answer for the people. I know how the signatures were collected. Ordinary workers don't care who the managers will be, they just need jobs. But the managers have ruined the enterprise!

The shares of our company have not collapsed. Yes, our budget has lost up to \$1.5 billion and the budget has lost something. However, you [Russia] have lost twice as much. One tonne of potash fertilisers cost \$900 and annually our country earned \$4 billion — golden years. But then some people approached Dmitry Rybolovlev [former owner of Uralkali], demanding his shares and threatening him with imprisonment or murder. I am not covering for him. But he was honest, he worked in the way we've agreed. I am not going to specify the sum he sold the shares for. It was a good price but nothing compared to what the company was worth. And he was thrown out.

Kerimov promised to take care of the development of potash fertilisers production. Later on he said he was quitting the Belarusian Potash Company, severing relations, going to sell merchandise on his own, focusing on volumes instead of prices. They were ready to of-

fer as much potash fertilisers as the market can take and damn the price. And by doing it they broke the market and damaged budgets of the states.

We could make the decision [in the Belarusian Potash Company] only together and they were unwilling to get the decision made. While we had chosen the new director, they just didn't want to hold the session of the Supervisory Board to approve this decision. Why? They said they wanted us out of the market in order to use the market for themselves.

Before that, there was an attempt to buy the Belarusian Potash Company. A person approached me offering \$10 billion as the state cut and \$5 billion as my cut. I told the

became President, I immediately told my children: you will never run a private business as long as I am President. I am carrying on...

On spread of market principles

This should be done very carefully and smoothly in order to prevent social tensions in society. Otherwise, these tensions will be very hard to defuse afterwards. Later, when gangsters will seize the economy, they will do anything to confront the state and preserve what they think is theirs. They already have their militants booted and spurred, and they have their deadly weapons — terrorism — that spread around the world. We cannot let it happen.



person: 'Tell him he will be imprisoned if he comes here. The attempts stopped. But still tension remained.'

On struggle against corruption

The most important is the following: if you have started fighting this hydra, fight till the end. Working by fits and starts is unacceptable. In our situation this is one of the most important issues the President should monitor every day. In our reality corruption can be compared to rust, while rust corrodes any metal. For example, we've created a good structure, but in a month or a year it is destroyed by rust. Therefore, if corruption is widespread in a country, no matter what you do, everything will fail...

However, there are several principal conditions. If you've said that you would fight corruption, you should have an impeccable reputation yourself. If there is a slightest suspicion that you have done something wrong, something that can be interpreted as corruption, your reputation will be ruined forever. You are no fighter. There can be mistakes, but it is better to avoid them. It is a very delicate work, delicate fight. It can be even compared to some self-sacrifice. You cannot be rich, you cannot even earn money. Your children cannot work at commercial or private companies where they will be able to make money in an honest way. Therefore, when I

No country can let it happen...

I tell them to purchase Belaruskali for \$30 billion. They say: 'we will give \$15 billion, of which \$10 billion will be transferred to the budget and the remaining \$5 billion will go to you. No way. We do not need this kind of market economy. Moreover, Russians don't need such market economy either.'

On interaction with Ukraine

Why are we blaming Ukraine that it's negotiating something [negotiations about association with the European Union]? I remind Kazakhstan and Russia that they are both holding such talks. We [Belarus] are not, because they do not want to talk to us at all. It is clear that Lukashenko is a dreadful enemy for them. Maybe, they will never talk to me. I will not give our companies to them, I will not let them hurt our people and they won't cross the border, as they like...

You are holding talks, they are holding talks. There is no drama about it. There is no drama either that they [Ukraine] will sign some agreement with the European Union. There is a risk, however, that these documents will block their way to us, to the Customs Union, the Single Economic Space and the Eurasian Economic Union

If the Ukraine-EU agreement provides for lower customs duties, this may do harm to the SES part-

ners, provided the borders are open. Therefore, you [Ukraine] can conduct talks and sign agreements with anyone you want, but if you want to join us, you will have to observe our arrangements. Otherwise, we will not be able to co-operate with you, especially in economy and trade. I told this Nikolai Azarov [Prime Minister of Ukraine] and repeated what I had said at the closed session. Putin upheld me on that. I talked to him recently and we touched upon this matter. He said: 'It is absolutely right, let them proceed with these talks, they are a sovereign and independent state; however, they might block their way to us and bring damage to us by signing some agreements.'

areas and ask for land, it is profitable for us. They work at construction sites. The best propagandists in Belarus are people that come to Belarus from places where life is difficult. They are pleased to become private businessmen, farmers, and work in the production sector. The fact that they come here is not important. Having a system in place, procedures for welcoming them is vital.

On alliance of MAZ-KamAZ and BelAZ JSC

I ask investors three questions: which investment are they ready to inject into development, which new technologies they will bring and which new markets they will open?

Considering these three parameters, they [the Russian side] have no money, their technologies are worse than those applied at MAZ, because MAZ produces competitive products whose sales would be the same as those of KamAZ if the two companies were in equal conditions... In what way are you going to take part in the modernisation? In no way. Then I have a question for you: can you guarantee that you will not try to buy the company for a song (you have no money to pay a fair price) and make sure that MAZ will not end up producing only wheel rims? Can you guarantee that? I am not sure. That is the answer to your question...

We won't give BelAZ to anyone. It is one of the country's brands, it is Belarus' pride, which accounts for 30 percent of the global market of trucks. The company was the world's first to produce the dump truck with the carrying capacity of 450 tonnes.

On the championship

I have warned everyone — both private traders and state-owned retail organisations — not to overprice their services during the IIHF World Championship. Usually, you know, prices are sky-high during big sports events; it's a shame. Ukraine is still criticised for the European Football Cup. People, arriving in the country, will pay in any case but they will leave the state with bad impressions. It's important which mood do people have when they leave the country.

On pride

I am proud to be the elected president of my people. It is sincere truth. The fact that we've created our own state is an accomplishment of me and my colleagues.

Belarus used to be a suburb, a province, well-developed and convenient. I cannot say that we had a bad republic during the Soviet times, although it had some drawbacks. We didn't have a state, and the people weren't even mentally prepared for one. We took over the country on the edge, and we've managed to preserve it, providing our people with food and clothing. We've modernised the country and the enterprises the best way we could. At the same time, we've created a sovereign and independent state. It was extremely difficult.

People are not to blame for anything. Even if Ukraine joins NATO tomorrow, we will have to maintain relations with them. There is no other option for us — our people are there.

This is quite a complex problem. But we should, without blaming each other, sit down and try to come to grips with the situation before Ukraine signs this agreement with the EU. We need to think what we will do in each of the possible developments.

On gambling business

When Russia prohibited gambling, its gamblers flocked to Belarus, especially from Moscow. Some in Belarus made proposals to prohibit this business as well, but I did not support the idea. I suggested we wait and see whether they would bring us harm or not. We supervise casinos very tightly but we are not planning to outlaw them. We do not want to drive them under-the-counter. Nevertheless, control is very tight. We want casinos play by the rules. I don't think that they won't be able to 'launder' something. Anyway, they haven't turned into criminal centres in our country...

On labour migrants

People from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and other countries, mainly families and people with kids, come to Belarus. We welcome them. If they settle down in rural