

# Conversation on the given topic

At a meeting with students of the Mogilev State A. Kuleshov University, President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko believes that, in order to preserve the Belarusian nation and its sovereignty, the country needs to follow its own way, patiently building policies to improve the standard of living of Belarusians and their children

By Vladimir Khromov

The President, despite his busy schedule, found time to visit his alma mater and to talk with students. The reason was more than an important one — the 100th anniversary of the university. Alexander Lukashenko, and those graduates who studied with him, came to celebrate this date.

The President began his visit of the university by recollecting his years of study, how he entered the university and how he passed his exams. He visited the exhibition dedicated to the history of the university that displayed modern developments and research papers of the university teachers.

As the meeting was organised as a workshop, we got a frank and lively exchange of views between the Head of State and the assembled youth. The Head of State touched upon a wide range of issues, such as foreign policy, relations with other countries, the development of Belarus' economy, the history of Belarus, its independence and sovereignty, demographic problems, attitude to work and education.

Alexander Lukashenko plunged into the atmosphere of his studentship, explaining with pleasure how he studied, grew up and the relationships with his teachers. Perhaps the President shared some information for the first time, such as the relaxed and frank atmosphere of his native university.

"I would like it if our meeting was not overly organised, but more open style. I just want to talk to you," said the Head of State. "You and I, all of us, are very different regarding age, experience, tastes and habits. It is natural that we can

see individual issues that life brings to us, differently. But we all are united in the one thing — we are all citizens of one state — our Belarus. I think that everybody, as I, connects his personal destiny with our country, and therefore we are not indifferent to its future."

The President remarked that, at the meeting, he would like to discuss goals and prospects of Belarus' development in the context of modern civilisation. "What is Belarus, and what role does it play in the modern world? What have we gained and what have we lost? What is our Belarusian way, and where will we go next?"

Alexander Lukashenko began his speech with reflections on what should be the Belarusian idea in the 21st century.



Alexander Lukashenko noted that the path of Belarusians towards statehood was long. "This independent state of ours gives us freedom, and freedom is what every person and every nation strives for, freedom to live in our own God-given land, freedom to choose our own way, freedom to value our own traditions, our past, freedom to control our present and build our future," said the Head of State.

Alexander Lukashenko

noted that 'even in the so-called united Europe, the desire of nations to attain self-determination is not dying away'. As an example, he mentioned Scotland, Belgium, and Spanish Catalonia. "Virtually no European country is satisfied with the results of the construction of the common European home, which, as everyone knows, is bursting at the seams. It is Germany which helped this common European Union to not collapse," said the President.

"This is why, from the point of view of individual nations and sovereign states, I may call myself a historical optimist," said Alexander Lukashenko. "Despite all kinds of globalisation, the notions of Motherland, Fatherland, the

independence of one's own land is still strong, from my point of view," he added.

"Belarus has existed at the crossroads of Eastern and Western traditions for centuries, and has stored a unique spiritual experience. Our national idea is peace, accord, mutual aid in our large united family called the Belarusian people. This is our habit, to earn our own living in our own land. There is kind-heartedness to everyone, who lives



alongside us and who comes in peace," said the President.

At the same time, Alexander Lukashenko noted with regret that the national idea has not been formed still. The President suggested that those in the hall think about this issue. "Maybe our meeting today will be historic, and this national idea will appear here," the Head of State suggested.

Alexander Lukashenko is convinced that understanding this is very important for the younger generation, which will have an independent Belarus, to be the people who preserve and enhance tradition, which for centuries has been nourishing the people of Belarus with vitality.

The President asked the audience their opinion about the fate of sovereign states and nations in a historical perspective. Students and teachers willingly communicated with the Head of State and defended their point of view. Speaking about the importance of remembering past generations, students raised the issue about restoration of historical and cultural monuments.

During the conversation, they talked about the presentation and positioning of Belarus in the world. Alexander Lukashenko noted that it is a very complex process. "Today we are often criticised for the Palace of

Independence. But look at this centre — the Flag Square, the restored BelExpo, where we place the highest achievements of our people, and the Palace of Independence," said the President. "They do not even know how much does it cost. There is no budget money. So what? Is it bad that all these were built? It is a symbol for the country and for every person, it is very important. Especially now, when we want to present ourselves," the President remarked. He also noted that the Palace of Independence will be opened for people. "It is not the President's residence. However, there is one private office for the President, no more than one," said the Head of State. He added that the Palace will display all the Presidential gifts and paintings, which he had brought from countries that he visited. "With the help of this centre, we enforce the fact that we have created our own state," said the Belarusian leader.

The President stressed that the government must build the state patiently in order to make safe life for Belarusians and their children. "We live as we live. However we have not yet achieved what we need," said the Head of State. According to him, there are both objective and subjective reasons. Among the objective is a deep crisis, which is currently in the

whole world. Many subjective reasons are directly in us. "We should patiently undergo the construction of our home, no matter what we need for this. I'm ready for this. It is no easier for me than for you. Are you ready? Each one of you should think, make your choice and decide," said Alexander Lukashenko.

"Our fate is to live on this earth, pursue the policy which is in our best interests, without creating trouble for our neighbours, and to see our future. And every generation has to go towards its future. It is better done quietly, but if somebody starts disturbing us, it is necessary to answer without excess," said Alexander Lukashenko.

"Come to us, live here, buy apartments, invest, but do not infringe on our piece of land which the Lord gave us. This is Belarusian land," said the Head of State. "We're not going to run to NATO, or the European Union, but we and our Russian brother also say 'yes, you are our people, we all look the same, you are our fellow Russians, but this land — is Belarus,'" the President said.

In conclusion, the President noted that among such a group of students, there are always those ones, who later build if not global politics, earth and bright politics.

## The key aspect of Belarusian chairmanship

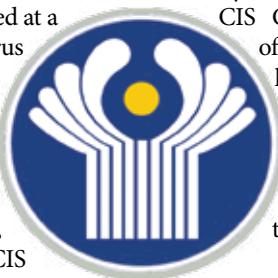
By Vladimir Mikheev

**In late October, Minsk will be hosting several top level events: sessions of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council and the CIS Council of Heads of State**

Simultaneously, consultations with the Ukrainian delegation, headed by the country's President and Prime Minister, will be held jointly with colleagues from the Single Economic Space.

No doubt, all these events will be arranged at a high level. Belarus chairs the CIS this year and all the landmark decisions of the CIS have been made in Minsk, where the CIS headquarters is located.

Belarus has proposed a range of constructive initiatives, and is already implementing some of them. With this in mind, Alexander Lukashenko noted



recently that hosting of the CIS Council of Heads of State session is a key aspect of the Belarusian chairmanship and our country attributes a significant attention to this event.

All CIS heads have already confirmed their participation in the Minsk summit, which is to be held at the Palace of Independence to ensure all possible comfort for the guests' work.

In his talk, the President attracted attention to the fact that all organisational issues, related to the hosting of the forthcoming events, need thorough control. According to him, delegation heads and members, as well as plane crews, should enjoy their accommodation. "Everything matters here. All aspects must be at a high level for people (who leave Minsk) to be in a good mood and take away the best impression of our capital and our nation.

We need to think about everything," he said.

Mr. Lukashenko requested reports on the work which is being done in this respect, including advertising on the Internet and other mass media. With regard to image matters, the President stressed that these are overseen by the Minsk City Executive Committee. "I'm not demanding, or to be more correct, I'm extremely against the thoughtless spending of money and placing posters or flags on

every building. Everything must be stylish, beautiful and convenient, covering only the places where these are truly needed," he added.

The Foreign Minister, Vladimir Makei, informed everyone about the preparation of an agenda of these integration events, and the formation of Belarus' position on the planned issues for discussion. Other meeting participants reported on other aspects of Minsk's readiness for the coming events.