

Broad prospects open today

Minsk and Dushanbe have long enjoyed mutual understanding in the political arena, supporting each other within international organisations such as the UN and CSTO.

Now, it has been decided to strengthen economic interaction. The assembly of Belarusian tractors in the south of this Central Asian republic is set to become a landmark project, as discussed closely during the meeting in Dushanbe by the heads of state. Tajikistan needs to 'lift' its agriculture while updating its fleet and Belarus is keen to supply the neighbouring states of Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran and China.

Minsk is keen to enjoy good relations with Dushanbe for many years to come, and is eager to extend its liaisons across Central Asia. Successful visits by President Alexander Lukashenko to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan in recent times show Belarus' long-term intentions in this complex, rather problematic, region. However, efforts are worthwhile, as Eurasia boasts untold resources in its mountains; their mastery opens up attractive prospects.

Mr. Lukashenko's visit coincided with heavy rains in the Gissarskaya Dolina (valley), which led to the River Dushanbinka 'growing in strength' and dividing the city into eastern and western sections. Meeting Mr. Lukashenko at his Kasri Millat (Palace of the Nation) State Residence, which shines with



Alexander Lukashenko and Emomali Rahmon sign treaty on long-term co-operation until 2020

an abundance of mirrors and crystal, Mr. Rahmon thanked him for a 'long-awaited gift': the rain! The downpour has been awaited in Dushanbe — and especially in outlying rural areas — since last winter.

Tajikistan is a country of sun-burnt fields yet it is blessed with valuable mountain rivers which the Tajik authorities are keen to harness via hydroelectric generators. Tajikistan, with a population of 8m, already boasts a great number of these, being ranked eighth worldwide. The arrival of cheap electricity provides impetus for economic devel-

opment, so the construction of the gigantic Rogunskaya Hydro Power Station, with the world's highest dam, is eagerly awaited.

Unfortunately, neighbouring Uzbekistan is concerned that the dam will have long-term effects on its environment and the World Bank is currently assessing the situation. If Tajikistan gains a positive outcome, it will promptly need hundreds of heavy-duty dump trucks and other vehicles currently manufactured in Zhodino, Minsk and Mogilev.

In fact, demand for Belarusian technology in Tajikistan is guaranteed by its

gold and aluminium deposits, which are currently being actively developed. 'Belarus' tractors are also sought after for Tajik fields: around 6,000 are already operational but most (nine out of ten) need updating. Meanwhile, 'Made in Belarus' construction vehicles are useful for major transport projects — such as the railway route laid from China through Tajik territory to the Pakistani port of Gwadar last year.

Road construction is of no less importance than hydroelectric power to Tajikistan. Few roads were built following the withdrawal of Russian and Brit-

ish influence; the two competing empires, sometimes fighting through the 19th century, had no need of easing communications. Now, Dushanbe is calling its road-building scheme a 'revival of the Great Silk Road'.

Dushanbe was once famed for its busy eastern market on Mondays (the name of the Tajik capital derives from the Tajik word for Monday). Its geopolitical importance is extending once more, but rather for its proximity to Afghanistan than for its significance as a trade route.

Barack Obama has promised to withdraw Ameri-

can troops from the Hindu Kush by 2013, planning the procedure carefully; the recent visit to Dushanbe by the US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, must have been dedicated to this topic. When NATO pulls out completely, a heavy burden will fall on neighbouring states, with no one expecting peace to be enjoyed in a nation which has been at war for the past three decades. Many fear that drug trafficking will escalate also.

The USA seems less concerned by the opium fields of Afghanistan than Columbia's cocaine growing, where it battles South America's drug lords. Afghan heroin is primarily sold to Russia and on into Europe, so is of much lesser concern to the American continent. At a recent CSTO meeting in Minsk, terrible figures were announced: 30,000 tonnes of heroin have been confiscated over the last five years by Tajik border guards. According to CSTO data, the inflow of drugs has increased many-fold during these recent years of anti-terrorist operations.

Evidently, Tajikistan won't be able to cope with this situation alone. Belarus is aware that rising volumes of drug trafficking could affect its own territory, so collaboration of law enforcement agencies is vital. Belarus is ready to help modernise Tajik industry and agriculture, as the prosperity of one nation undoubtedly leads to prosperity in others. This is beneficial to both our states.

Interesting proposals available

UFS Investment Company authorised to represent Belarus' interests in attracting investments

In line with the Council of Ministers' resolution, UFS is to represent Belarus until January 1st, 2017, liaising with the Economy Ministry.

UFS is an international investment company providing a full range of up-to-date reliable financial solutions. It was founded in 1999 in Geneva (Switzerland), and is among the top three companies regarding its number of Eurobond deals (over \$50m of transactions daily). Its interests are represented all over the globe: from London to Moscow, Kiev, Riga, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Cyprus. This year, UFS opened a branch in Belarus.

Visa-free visits definitely benefit the two countries



Tourists from Belarus to be heartily welcomed in Turkey

By Yevgeny Semiletov

When will Belarusian residents be able to visit Turkey without a visa?

The Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Turkey to Belarus, H.E. Mr. Cevat Nezihi Ozkaya, has noted at a press

conference that this may occur next year.

According to the diplomat, an agreement on mutual visa-free trips is almost ready for signing. "I hope that, by mid-2012, Belarusian residents will be able to freely visit Turkey and stay there as long as they wish. Turkish

citizens will enjoy the same freedom, encouraging significant inflow of currency into Belarus," added the Ambassador.

In view of the planned abolishment of visas, our two states' airlines are now discussing how best to increase the number of flights between Belarus and Turkey, leading to lower ticket prices. The Ambassador noted that, in its move to join the EU, Turkey is keen to follow EU foreign policy, yet makes an exception regarding Belarus.

"We don't believe that the application of sanctions and isolation of a country will benefit the development of our relations. We're convinced of the need to develop collaboration and dialogue," he notes, underlining that Turkey always speaks openly regarding this issue. It's a position which finds understanding in Europe.

NEW DIMENSION

ASÍ ES LA REALIDAD GEOPOLÍTICA

BELARUS

Das Wort, das Buch, Belaja Wesha

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