

## **Kazakhstan-Belarus from the memory in history to community**

Interview with Anatoly Ivanovich NICHKASSOV, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Belarus

- You have been working as an Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Belarus to the Republic of Kazakhstan for a long time. How would you assess current status of the country?

- Today Kazakhstan is a fast developing, modern state with stable political system, which has preserved interethnic and interreligious peace.

The tasks set by the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Nursultan Abishevich Nazarbayev, implemented reforms and adopted programs are designed to strengthen socio-economical potential of Kazakhstan and make a major breakthrough in the country's development. All necessary conditions have been provided. I am sure that further economic diversification and transition from resource economy to innovative one, will ensure Kazakhstan's entry into the group of most competitive countries in the world.

- This year Kazakhstan entered into new kind of relations with Belarus; warm and friendly relations are not the only factors, uniting our countries.

The Intergovernmental Kazakhstan-Belarusian commission on trade and economic cooperation which has been functioning since 1996 is a significant element of collaboration among two friendly states. An agreement on friendship and cooperation, agreement on long-term economic cooperation for the period of 2009-2016, agreement on free trade, etc. are among fundamental agreements of the commission.

Diplomatic relations between the Republic of Belarus and the Republic of Kazakhstan were opened on September 16 1992. Altogether, more than 70 agreements are in force today.

An agreement on EAEU is in force from this year as well. How actual the signed agreements are in keeping with modern economy?

- Thousands of kilometres separate Belarus from Kazakhstan, but our nations are united by millions of threads, which have intertwined stories with fates of infinite number of people. That is why our countries possess a solid base for further development of collaboration in all spheres of life, including politics, economy, culture, education and science. A contractual legal framework between our countries favours all activities in this direction. It is a basis of our collaboration. Intergovernmental Kazakhstan-Belarusian commission on trade and economic cooperation successfully functions. Largescale joint projects in the sphere of mechanical engineering are being implemented. There is a number of directions which are promising for cooperation in such spheres as industry, construction, medicine, science and education.

As a sovereign state, the Republic of Belarus has always been a supporter of integration processes' development in the Eurasian space, of forming ideology of a stable, multipolar world; we have declared at different levels that Eurasian integration is a priority of our external policy.

Over the past two decades our countries have been searching for forms and mechanisms of cooperation, which would satisfy interests of all the parties concerned, and above all they would work for the benefit of our nations. Establishment of the Customs Union and Unified Economic

Space were the first steps in our endeavours to create cooperation mechanisms. The history has already demonstrated advantages of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia's integration activities

From the start of the Customs Union functioning, trade turnover between Belarus and Kazakhstan increased 2,5 times, having reached the \$1 billionth mark. That is why Belarus considers deep economic integration with brotherly Kazakhstan as an important factor of our states' dynamic socio-economic development and growth in prosperity of our nations. Potential of such collaboration is huge.

Actuation of the Eurasian economic union from January 1, 2015 marked raise of Eurasian integration to a whole new level. Our presidents demonstrated an ability to conduct consolidated and mutually agreed foreign-economic policy intended for solving common problems. A fundamental condition for further development of this process is respect for sovereignty, observance of equality and consideration for the interests of the contracting parties.

At this stage it is important not to lose dynamics of integration processes' development, to shift to concerted industrial and agricultural policy as quick as possible, to implement innovative and technological projects which will raise our economies' competitiveness and let us join efforts in foreign markets. One of possible elements of this work is creation of so called Eurasian transnational corporations which will combine assets of participants of the integration community for implementing industrial and infrastructural projects within the EAEU space.

- This year our state is going to commemorate several remarkable dates. One of the most significant dates is the 550th anniversary of the Kazakh khanate. Formation of Kazakh statehood used to provoke points of controversy. We would like to know your opinion on this matter...

- Both the Republic of Belarus and the Republic of Kazakhstan are relatively "young" states in contemporary history. We happened to become witnesses of their establishment.

At the same time, speaking of Kazakhstan statehood in a historical context, it should be noted that it is traced back to the moment of first Kazakh khanate's formation.

History of any nation can not arise out of nowhere. Belarusian nation, just like that of Kazakhstan is an heir to all historical events which took place over the last centuries in our lands. By and large, modern essence of any nation is in a way an embodiment of everything that has been accumulated by the nation over the millennia of its existence, i.e. its culture, traditions, self-conscience and historical identity. Kazakhstan has a lot in its history and origin to be proud of.

We attach great importance to development of cultural interaction between our countries. I am glad that this year Days of Kazakhs culture will be held in Belarus.

- Anatoly Ivanovich, the territory of Belarus was directly affected by the World War II, i.e. 260 death camps and ghetto for Jews were located in your country, more than 5295 inhabited localities were ruined by Germans, the number of deceased citizens amounts to 3 million, more than 500 thousand people were deported to Germany.

What commemorative events have been developed by your state in the light of commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the Great Victory?

Will Belarussian party participate in commemorative events in Kazakhstan?

- In 2014 the Republic of Belarus which had been presiding in the Commonwealth of Independent States, commemorated the 70th anniversary of liberation from Nazi-fascist aggressors.

Belarus and Kazakhstan treasure the memory of soldiers and officers' outstanding feats, selfless home-front workers, partisans and members of underground organizations, all those who forged Great Victory for us and saved the humankind from fascism.

In July 2014 a delegation from the Republic of Kazakhstan, which included Kazakhstani veterans, was among multiple delegations from CIS member-states, neighbouring countries and beyond, who took part in ceremonial events dedicated to the 70th anniversary of Belarus liberation and Independence Day.

By the decree of the President of the Republic of Belarus, a jubilee medal "The 70th anniversary of the Republic of Belarus liberation from German-fascist occupants" was established. The embassy together with public authorities and veterans' organizations of the Republic of Kazakhstan organized presentation of decorations and letters of congratulation (triangular war letters) in the name of the President of the Republic of Belarus Alexander Grigorievich Lukashenko in all regions and cities.

More than one thousand Kazakhstanis received jubilee medals, war letters and presents.

A great number of Kazakhstani families whose family members and dear ones died like heroes in battles for Brest fortress, battles with enemy in partisan units and in battles for liberation of Belarus during the years of Great Patriotic War. Had a chance to visit Memorials and Common graves where their relatives are buried.

By decision of the Council of CIS leaders dated October 25, 2013, in member-states of the Commonwealth the 2015th is announced the Year of Great Patriotic war veterans; and a common jubilee medal "The 70th anniversary of Victory in the Great Patriotic war of 1941-1945" was established. This decoration is to be awarded in compliance with national legislation to veterans of the Great Patriotic war of 1941-1945, to persons equated to them as well as to other persons by resolution of member-states of the CIS.

On the resolution of Council of CIS leaders a plan of major events on preparation and commemoration of the 70th anniversary of Victory in Great Patriotic war of the CIS member-states, was adopted.

The plan suggests following memorial events: preparation of project of Heads of states' message to nations of the Commonwealth and to world public, conduction of military parades in capitals and hero-cities, participation of official delegations from CIS, neighbouring and beyond countries, distribution of awards, celebrations in veterans' honour, holding meetings of veterans, etc. During commemorative events veterans will be able to use international and inter-city telephone service for free; also they will be granted a right of free ride by all modes of transport (except taxi) in the CIS territory.

By resolution of the CIS leaders dated October 10, 2014, the CIS chairmanship is to be taken over by Kazakhstan from Belarus starting from 2015.

Kazakhstan's chairmanship will place a major emphasis on implementation of Plan of main events on preparation and commemoration of the 70th anniversary of Victory in Great Patriotic war and coordination of actions for commemoration of this unforgettable date.

The Republic of Belarus is preparing to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Great Victory. Conduction of military parade and ceremonial procession with participation of veterans and home-front workers is planned in Belorussian capital, hero-city Minsk. Participation of Belarus representatives in ceremonial and other events in Kazakhstan is expected, while participation of Kazakhstan representatives on the official delegations in ceremonial and other events, which are to be held in Belarus is expected as well.

The programme for immortalization of memory of the Motherland defenders is of special importance to Belarus; works for searching and burying soldiers' remains were organized within the framework of this programme; later on restoration works will be done on monuments, memorials and soldiers' burials.

International conferences, youth gatherings, memorial vigils, different contests, documentary and arts exhibitions, film festivals, concerts, performances, art meetings, tele- and radioconference bridges, and many other memorial events will be held within the framework of Republican events.

Publication of memoirs and collections of archival documents, as well as works of fiction and journalistic materials on the subject of Great Patriotic war, is planned in Belarus.

A number of joint Belarusian-Kazakhstan projects are being realized. In particular, detection of materials on participation of native Kazakhstanis in partisan movement in the territory of Belarus, which is being carried out in Kazakhstan and Belarus archives, is near completion; publication of collective digest of documents "Participation of Kazakhstanis in partisan movement in the territory of Belarus" is being prepared. Exchange of exhibitions is stipulated within the framework of agreements and memoranda on cooperation among museums of Belarus and Kazakhstan. Thus, exhibition "Severe, military, simple..." (letters from the front and back, pictures and photographs addressed to family members) from the collection of National historical museum of the Republic of Belarus is planned to be held in May 2015 in National Museum of the Republic of Kazakhstan in Astana.

- Anatoly Ivanovich, what do You associate with the concept of Motherland...

- Belorussian land, but of course. When representing interests of your state in a friendly country, you start comprehending that you and Motherland are a single whole.

Rodina, rod, rodovity, rodnya is one root with different branches. Motherland is a given. Once a famous journalist noted that "Motherland is not a birthplace, but a place where you are of use". What do you think of this definition of Motherland?

"Men love their country not because it is great, but because it is their own" Seneca uttered and that is pretty much it. Land is the guarantor of any state's independence. It is known from history that Modu Chanyu, living in IV B.C. would have given his wife and horse to enemies, provoking him, but not an inch of ground, which nobody was even asking for. "Land is Motherland, eternal heritage of the nation, and you should defend it, fighting up to the last-ditch", - that is what the wise ruler said.

One can be infinitely astonished by deep patriotism of Belorussians: every inch of their ground cries for it. The Republic was the first place subjected to the attack of the German Army Group Centre.

Mass executions were taking place all over the territory under completely occupation regime. In total, more than 2 million civilian residents and war prisoner at death camps were executed; hundreds of thousands were transported to Germany for penal servitude. Belarus withstood. Brest, which became a symbol of courage and infinite loyalty to the Motherland, withstood and survived as well.

It is a supreme demonstration of patriotism by sons, who fulfilled their duty before Motherland. Nation's unity and land power consist in Motherland.

- Anatoly Ivanovich, thank You for such an informative conversation.

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