

However, Belarus is significantly lagging behind in its indicators of development of small and medium businesses, compared to other countries. Thus, Belarus has 3 small businesses per 1,000 persons; in Russia this indicator is 6, and in Tajikistan 5. As a result, the share of products manufactured by small enterprises makes in Belarus 9%, compared to 36% in Uzbekistan, 50% in France, and 54% in Sweden.

According to experts of the IFC, qualitative and quantitative growth of small and medium businesses in Belarus is hindered by complicated administrative procedures and their high costs. During the survey among 1,200 Belarusian small enterprises and private entrepreneurs, organized in all regions of the country, the surveyors identified that the complexity of procedures is explained, primarily, by a great number of required documents, the protracted procedure and lack of clear interpretation of the requirements. This answer was given by 88% of the respondents from small and medium businesses. It was also identified that almost 70% of entrepreneurs think that personal relations and acquaintances are the best way to settle disputes with state authorities, and 64% of them indicated that unofficial payments are the best solution. According to experts of the IFC, in 2004, small and medium businesses spent, on the average, \$3,800 for registration, licensing and obtaining permits and certifications. In doing so, 17% of entrepreneurs indicated to forced unofficial payments during administrative procedures. The average amount of bribes was \$665.

Analyzing the conditions for registration of small businesses, the authors of the survey indicated that two-thirds of all small businesses registered in 2004 called this procedure complicated. On the average, the registration process takes three months, and to do this, it is necessary to visit, at least, 10 organizations and collect 13 packages of documents. 80% of the small and medium businesses indicated that registration expenses are very high, making on the average \$746. The high cost of registration is related to the fact that more than 80% of these expenses relate to notary certification of the documents.

Vadim Ignatenko. 09.02.06.

THE GREATEST FRIEND

Belarus is able, in some measure, to set off adverse implications of the ban on supplying the latest models of Western weapons developments to China

When making an official visit to China in early December of last year, President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko had in advance announced the trip objectives through Belarusian and Chinese mass media. He declared that he intended to use the continuously growing potential of the People's Republic of China as an «accelerator» for imparting new dynamics to the national economy of Belarus. The Belarusian President reiterated the same thesis when summarizing the results of the Belarus-China summit in Beijing. To quote him, the major success of the visit can be clearly seen from over a dozen of signed interagency and intergovernmental

documents and by 20 negotiated contracts between economic agents of the two countries to the amount of USD 0.5 billion.

Belarus and China managed to expand the nomenclature of export deliveries. The objective is to increase mutual trade volume up to USD 2 billion. But it is most essential that Beijing confirmed its willingness to accommodate Minsk with cheap loans for implementing concrete projects in the field of telecommunications and high-end technologies. It is expected that the lending ceiling will be about USD 1 billion. As the Belarusian leader believes, «Some projects, which the Chinese side has asked to implement in Belarus, have no analogies in the world. China is willing to fund them and designates vast sums of money. Belarus will surely actualize these projects, since we have high-end technologies, science, and specialists. It is very important for us.»

In order to understand what kinds of projects are in question, it is apparently necessary to pay attention to Alexander Lukashenko's acknowledgement of China's good progress in the field of space exploration. But it is of most importance that China «hooked up» Belarusian enterprises and «hitched» them to develop space technologies. Thus, there appears a possibility to save Belarusian research schools. The degree of cooperation between the two countries in the space domain can be supported by the evidence of an unprecedented move of the Chinese authorities — allowing the Belarusian delegation, headed by President Lukashenko, access to a most important strategic site of China, the Academy for Space Technology. In a word, the Belarusian leader recapped that «in the history of our nation there has been no case of a visit paying such substantial dividends». However, with regard to how Beijing expects to profit from its rapprochement with Minsk, the interested party itself fails to provide an intelligible and clear answer.

BELARUS AND BEIJING'S PLANS

Answering this question instead of the rulers of the Heavenly Empire, some political analysts tend to see the reason behind the keen interest of gigantic China to Belarus, which is quite small in comparison to it, in the recently heightened full-fledged super power claims of the People's Republic of China. And, in the opinion of the Chinese government, this is impossible without their country attaining proper military might and creating modern military forces that can be deployed abroad. So far, solving of this problem is hindered by the remaining backwardness of the Heavenly Empire in the field of defense technologies compared to the most militarily advanced nations. The US impedes elimination of this gap in every possible way, prohibiting their allies to supply advanced weapons and break-through dual-use technologies to Beijing, as they are apprehensive of appearance of a real global competitor, though it may be in a long-term perspective. As for the near future, they are afraid of China's attempts to occupy Taiwan. Nevertheless, Ivan Medeiros, analyst of Washington D.C.-based RAND Corporation, believes that China managed to make two achievements in the field of military construction over a surprisingly short period of time. First, it concentrated its energy and resources to create an army within the army. Enormous monetary funds were allocated to create few high-technology military units as part of the former 2.2-million People's Liberation Army of China, which mainly consists of boot-wearing soldiers armed with rifles. The objective of these advanced

forces that make about 15% of the total PLA is to perform a time-urgent attack on weaker adversaries, using destructive missile saturation, which is supposed to paralyze the enemy, and modern naval and air forces coordinated by means of high-technology communications and tactical control systems. Virtually all Western experts are confident that these new advanced military forces are created with a view to attack Taiwan.

As of today, China has more intercontinental ballistic missiles than before, a great variety of ground- and air-launched cruise missiles, and about 400 Russian-made jet fighters SU-27 and SU-30, designed both for gaining the air supremacy and hitting surface and sea targets with precision weapons. Beijing seeks to change from importing finished models to importing and adapting most advanced military and dual-use technologies. Therefore, American analysts regard China's painful but successful steps toward creating a «defense industrial base,» i.e. its ability to produce modern weaponry, as «Achievement No. 2».

But, as James Mulvenon of the Center for Intelligence Research and Analysis believes, the genuine revolution made by the PLA in the field of communications and military administration media is what impresses most. To quote him, within the life-span of one generation, they took a step from rags to the world of wireless technologies. And they are not going to call it a day, attracting the latest foreign R&D achievements on an increasingly larger scale.

DEBATE IN THE WEST

However, the PLA is hindered faces particular difficulties in re-equipment process due to the ban on weapon and military technology deliveries to China, which was imposed after the cruel massacre of the protesters at Tiananmen Square in 1989. Over 15 years has passed since then, and for at least five of them there has been an on-going struggle in the West, intensifying and subsiding at intervals, for lifting the ban on supply of the latest armaments systems to China by NATO countries. At present, removal of this ban is opposed by rights advocates, who claim that China remains a repressive state, as well as by the Americans, who fear that the PLA gets hold of modern weapons through companies of states, possessing advanced military technologies, and may use them for attacking Taiwan. Removal of the ban is advocated primarily by representatives of the European military industrial complex. In their opinion, such receptive and solvent markets as that of China are vitally important for Europe, which needs to create a top-notch armaments industry independent of the US. As for retaining the embargo on supplying latest military technologies to China, it is basically impossible in the long-term outlook. Those not available in Russia, a power friendly to the Chinese, quite possibly can be sold to them by Israel, which is privy to all military secrets.

ASSISTANCE TO THE CHINESE COMRADES

In view of the above, the overt attempts of China's government to at least partially set off adverse implications of the ban on deliveries of the latest models of Western weapons developments by means of importing more or less advanced military and dual-purpose technologies from alternative sources appears quite reasonable. And, as suggested by evidence, Belarus by no means comes last in these designs.

In response to statements by non-believers, who claim that Belarus is hardly able to provide to China equal quality substitutes for European and Israeli high technology products (all the more so that Moscow has long and successfully been taking advantage of the US embargo on weapons exports to China), we would like to cite the interview of September 4, 2005 given by Piotr Rogozhevski, first deputy of the chair of the State Defense Industrial Committee of the RB, to *Vo slavu* Rodiny newspaper of the national Ministry of Defense. To quote him, the defense industrial complex of Belarus is ready to offer the following to potential partners: automated troop and weapons control systems; wire, fiber-optics, and radio communications systems for mobile and fixed automated control systems; aerospace optoelectronic equipment and photogrammetric facilities for receiving digital electronic Earth surface maps and navigation support of precision weapons; application suites for control of radar, laser-optic and information ballistic missile defense systems, missile warning stations, and space monitoring systems. It should be also noted here that military technology deliveries from the RB to China are in process and they did not commence as of yesterday. After the information publicized last year by General Chen Binde, head of the Ordnance Directorate of the PLA, Belarus and China had been successfully developing links in 126 lines of military technical cooperation over a period of almost 10 years. The completed contracts make a total of over USD 200 million.

However, our greatest friend's sphere of interest is by no means limited to present-day achievements of Belarus. The Chinese counterparts develop an increasingly stronger interest in break-through R&D areas of tomorrow. As it appears from a recent piece of information by *Sinhua* Information Agency, a national base for R&D cooperation between China and Belarus, Russia, Ukraine, and other countries of the former USSR was founded in the city of Chanchun in north-east Tziling province. It focuses on contacts in the fields of optoelectronics, materials science, biotechnologies, and other branches of research.

Some time earlier, a cooperation agreement was signed between the Belarusian State University and the Harbin Polytechnic Institute (HPI), pursuant to with the parties founded a Center for Scientific and Technological Cooperation for carrying out joint research and developing new technologies. To quote Zhao Zi, President of the HPI, cooperation with the BSU seeks to foster research at the Institute in such advanced areas as nano-technologies, laser technologies, etc.

Many analysts believe that the Chinese, who are famous for their pragmatism, are hardly interested in research for its own sake. Beijing needs its achievements primarily for creating dual-use and military technologies, including those in the field of space exploration and rocket production. And Belarus, which is eager to secure a footing in China and attract Chinese investments, is willing in return to sell military technologies to that country.

PEACEFUL «BELKA»

At that, it is by no means impossible for Belarus and Russia to share with their Chinese brothers the benefit of their joint project on creating space vehicles of «BelKA» type. Despite the fact that, following an inveterate Soviet tradition, the officially publicized functions of the BelKa satellite look absolutely peaceful, it is certainly a dual-use vehicle, in accordance with the same traditional practice.

It is expected that the satellite will be carried to the orbit from the Baikonur spaceport by means of the Dnepr launcher (converted version of the famous Satan missile) together with 5–6 other satellites, which will allow for significantly reducing the cost of the entire project. Experts believe that the BelKA satellite will be possibly furnished with Belarusian-made polyzonal MK-4 equipment, designed to take photos of the Earth's surface, as well as with a topographic camera TK-350, intended for receiving measuring photos from satellites used for drawing precise topographic maps and exploring the Earth's natural resources. During the satellite flight time, the camera provides photos of 25–30% of the total Earth's surface with the positioning error of 10 m.

According to the official version, the BelKA will be used mainly for receiving cartographical, geological, and environmental information. For instance, up to 30% of all the information received from the satellite will be used for map-making, 20–25% — in agriculture and forest management, 10–15% — in geology, 15% — for environmental research, and 10% — for monitoring urbanization processes. At first sight, such a ratio seems somewhat strange. Belarus is a small country and people have long traveled though its length and breadth. Why the so formidable need for cartographic information then? As a number of experts believe, the answer is quite simple: digital ground maps are used for directing precision weapons systems, for instance, cruise or aeroballistic missiles, to the target. As for receiving digital maps for missile guidance systems, they can be produced on the basis of aerial and space photos by the Automated Cartographic System for Creating, Upgrading, Storing, and Displaying Maps and Horizontal Plans in Digital and Graphic Form, created in Belarus. However, the list of high-end technologies, available in Belarus since the Soviet times, is by no means limited to the fore-quoted ones. It is another thing that official sources are in no hurry to publicize them.

Alexander Alesin. 13.02.06.

RUSSIA'S OUTPOST IN BELARUS

The space monitoring station, located in the territory of Belarus, may soon remain the only similar site situated outside of Russia

According to the statement by Sergey Ivanov, Russia's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense, Russia will gradually abandon the missile warning system radars, owned by the RF, which are currently stationed in the territory of the countries of the former USSR. Nevertheless, the command of the Gantsevichi-based radar station (Brest oblast) believe that operation of the site named «Baranovichi Node» will be continued for sufficiently long time.

AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY

The Belarus-RF government-to-government agreement on the operation in Belarus of the missile warning system radar was signed in 1995 for the period of 25 years. In return for the operation of the radar, the armed forces of Belarus are entitled to conduct air defense exercises with operational missile launches at Russian training ranges. Pursuant to the same agree-