His Holiness Patriarch Kirill meets with Byelorussian President Lukashenko



On 20 June 2015, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia met with the President of the Republic of Belarus, Mr. Alexander Lukashenko.

Taking part in the meeting, which was held at the Palace of Independence in Minsk, were Metropolitan Pavel of Minsk and Zaslavl, Patriarchal Exarch of All Belarus; Metropolitan Hilarion, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations (DECR), Bishop Sergy of Solnechnogorsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's Administrative Secretariat; Byelorussian Deputy Prime Minister Ms. Kochanova; deputy head of the Byelorussian Presidential Administration Mr. Buzovsky; and Commissioner for Religious and Ethnic Affairs of Belarus Mr. Gulyako.

President Lukashenko noted that people in the Republic of Belarus appreciate the fact that representatives of different confessions in Belarus have no problems in their relationship and thanked

His Holiness for everything he is doing for Belarus as Patriarch and as a Russia. He added that as His Holiness had visited Belarus many times he could see that the Byelorussians are committed to spiritual values.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill said: 'Any time I visit Byelorussia I experience warm feelings as people here are courageous, calm and peaceful and easy to communicate.

'Also, when coming here one always recalls a special contribution of Byelorussia to the defence of the Fatherland in the last great war. I wanted to come here in the year when we celebrate the 70th anniversary of the Victory. Today, as I was laying a wreath to the Monument to the Fallen Heroes, I said that Byelorussia had been the first to meet the enemies and done anything to defer their advance and after the strategic upset the the first to meet the enemies anderoesr. re calm, peaceful and courageous. ed to theur roots and main axis of attack went through Byelorussia, which played a special part in the victory thanks to the regular troops and partisans. I deemed it may duty to come here to pay respect to the heroes who had fallen for freedom and independence of our Fatherland.

'I am grateful for the opportunity to visit Brest. My uncle defended the Fortress and was considered missing in action during many years, but finally it became clear that he had been killed. I would like to pay respect to the holy place where heroism and courage had been shown by people who had remained loyal to the oath given to the Fatherland.'

His Holiness thanked President Lukashenko for arranging the talks on the settlement in Ukraine. 'I am deeply grieved over events in the fraternal country. This is a wound in my heart. As you know, the canonical Orthodox Church has people from both east and west among its flock. This places special responsibility on us,' His Holiness aid and added:

'Today our Church is the only power in Ukraine that has kept its peacekeeping potential because it has not identified itself with either side. Why? Because Orthodox Christians suffer and die on both sides. It is impossible to divide our flock on political principle. In the early 1990s, when the well-known events were happening in the Soviet Union, many people asked us to take a certain position, but we answered that we will not do it as our flock is everywhere. At present we are engaged in peace mission and do not take sides thus keeping our peacemaking potential.'

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia awarded President of the Republic of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko with the Order of St. Seraphim, 1st class, in consideration of help he renders to the Russian Orthodox Church and in connection with his 60th birthday and presented him an icon of St. Prince Vladimir Equal-to-the-Apostles.

President Lukashenko presented a silver icon of the guardian angel to His Holiness and gave him a tour of the Palace of Independence.

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