



parts themselves. Besides, nobody needs the volume of products Ukraine used to manufacture.

The worst thing in our situation is that we've been doing nothing. We continue to be dying slowly. If we don't take decisive steps today, we'll be struggling with the very same problems in a year or in five years from now.

*Q: Our national patriots were alarmed by a new term you used in your inauguration speech - "Eurasian space":*

A: I would like this space to include both Eastern Europe and the Baltics, that is, the former Comecon countries. For all of us the road to Western Europe is still very long. At the same time, I would like to cooperate with Japan, South Korea, and Vietnam, where we also have strategic interests. And what about the countries of the Persian Gulf? That's where the free money is. Europe doesn't have it, while Asia has. And what an important region Central Asia is for us. Deposits of oil, gold. In our time we received quite a few proposals for cooperation.

*Q: Hence the slogan of the day: "First the Economic Union, and then the European Union!" Isn't that so?*

A: Indeed. If I am not mistaken, we were promised that the question of Ukraine's entry into the European Union would be considered only in 1997. We cannot just be waiting all this time and looking in one direction.

All those reflections in which direction Ukraine will be going - to the West or to the East - are just inventions. Ukraine isn't going anywhere. Its geographic location has been determined. It's at a crossroads. And this must be availed of.

*Q: In what way will Ukraine's full membership of the Economic Union, to which we are obviously heading, be expressed?*

A: Full of associated membership - that's more a question of politics

than economics. Nobody will sell us anything cheaper anyway. When the three of us - Ukraine, Russia and Belarus - signed the economic agreement, it foresaw that the prices of energy sources for manufacturers in these countries would be the same. That is, Russia, for us and for herself, will raise prices to world level and in this manner our products will become competitive. And we would have preserved our markets.

Now the situation has changed. No allowances will be made for anyone. I've said it before and I will say it again: it's better to lay down the rules of the game yourself than have it done for you by somebody else, when you'll have to "play" by these rules. What can we do anyway, when 80% of everything we produce goes to the CIS market.

*Q: Lately, work on the completion of an agreement on friendship and cooperation with Russia has been going on rather actively...*

A: That's yet another paradox: we concluded such agreements with all the former republics of the Soviet Union. But not with Russia.

*Q: What can you say about the Black Sea Fleet?*

A: Its fate, so to speak, was decided before me. President Kravchuk signed the documents on giving it away to Russia. Not all the questions have been agreed upon as to basing the fleet. We should consider them above all from the viewpoint of Ukraine's interests. But there cannot be two opinions that the problem has to be resolved as quickly as possible. I think everybody understands this today.

