



INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT
ILSUR METSHIN,
MAYOR OF KAZAN
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UNITED WORLD (UW): Having been Mayor of Nizhnekamsk, the city at the heart of Tatarstan's petrochemical industry, you bring to your position as Mayor of Kazan a wealth of experience ranging back seven years. Please introduce us to your background and how it has influenced your priorities for Kazan.

ILSUR METSHIN (IM): The city of Nizhnekamsk is the third largest city in the Republic of Tatarstan and a point of growth for the Republic; by 2010 the investment in industrial production is expected to be approximately 5 to 5.5 billion euros. As a member of the Board of Directors "Nizhnekamskneftekhim", I have had a lot of contact with western investors.

With the dawning of the new millennium, and especially with the city of Kazan, it was important for us to realize new opportunities in the form of investment in the capital of the Republic of Tatarstan. Apparently, the leadership of the Republic felt my work and my team were quite successful in Nizhnekamsk, so I was invited to Kazan.

The team we have in Kazan is fairly young and has received education beyond the Russian Federation. For instance, my Deputy Finance Director was educated at the London School of Economics LSE. We also have graduates who have received education in the best universities of Moscow. In Kazan City Administration we can use this educational background and command of knowledge to plot out future success, as well as using those competitive advantages that are available to Kazan thanks to the work of domestic investors in the Republic and Russia, as well as that of foreign investors. Accordingly, the younger generation that has received education should build upon our current success and create an even better future for the capital. The local authorities assist in making the city transparent and understandable, not only to the residents of Kazan, but also to any investor in Russia and abroad; we are very keen that people who do not know Kazan understand that this is a successful and forward-looking city.

UW: Kazan is one of Russia's preeminent cultural centers boasting a medieval Kremlin that is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The city's renowned educational institutions such as Kazan University and the Kazan Scientific Center have been host to a number of prominent Russian personalities, and the flagship status of Kazan as a symbol of tolerance and brotherhood between different religions and ethnic backgrounds is enviable. What are the main cultural aspects of Kazan that you would highlight?

IM: Speaking of culture, it should be noted that Kazan is the birthplace of Shalyapin and Nuriev. We also have the second oldest university in Russia, which was created by a decree of Tsar Alexander. The university has played a fundamental role in the development of Kazan; thanks to its presence over the last two centuries, education has been greatly promoted. Based on its outstanding work great institutions were formed such as the Chemical School,



Medical School, Aeronautical School, the School of Construction and Architecture, and so forth. Over the years, the university has produced many eminent scientists: the great mathematician Lobachevsky, the great physicist Zawojky, Vishnevsky, Bekhterev, Ulyanov-Lenin and many other people who have left an indelible mark through their historic contribution to humanity. The universities of Kazan have played and continue to play a decisive role in the life of the capital and we associate our future with the role of our educational centers.

It's no secret that Russia, like many countries in Europe has a 'demographic issue'. Our development of the economy exceeds the average national rate, we create many new jobs – but the question arises, who will work at these enterprises for the next thirty to fifty years? And in this regard we have a competitive edge to become a magnet city; people could flock here from all the neighboring regions for a number of reasons, ie education, we are one of the safest cities of Russia, we are a city in which all religions coexist peacefully. We believe that because we have a beautiful, historic city, which has a great cultural heritage, magnificent architecture, theaters, etc. In fact, after Moscow, we have many premier clubs that have achieved some of the highest sporting standards. Our ice hockey team, Ak Bars, is the champion of Russia and the European Champions Cup Champion. UNICS are one of the best basketball teams in Russia, and we have a strong football team "Rubin", as well as having the champion Russian water polo team, and the list goes on. Therefore, we have all that is needed to make people who come to Kazan say: "I want to live here, I want to take root here." Those future families and their children will create businesses.

The city of Kazan is third after Moscow and St. Petersburg, and between the second and third city there is little difference, but between the third and fourth the difference is generally an abyss. We want to use our competitive advantages one hundred per cent to our interest. Considering our strategic objectives, we now have a clear program for the construction of houses; we are constructing new neighborhoods with some of the world's most prominent architects, such as Jose Maen Asibilo from Spain and Erick van Gerad from the Netherlands, whom is leading three projects. We are also working with the renowned American architectural bureau NBBG and the London bureau of architecture "Atkins". All this is aimed at creating a modern city while retaining its unique historical look. We are a city with excellent higher education, history, culture, the whole line of higher sporting achievements, and the Kazanka and Volga rivers, which even Moscow cannot boast. We want people to come to us. In the next 10 years we would like to see our current population grow from 1.2 million, to 1.5 million thanks to the implementation of these programs, and to later grow to 2 million people.

UW: Having been looked over to host the Universiade-2011, Kazan is again entering a bidding campaign to become the home of the Universiade-2013. What are your thoughts on Kazan's potential as a



sporting hub and what are your expectations on winning the Universiade-2013 venue?

IM: The Ministry of Sport of Russia decided to declare Kazan a candidate to participate in 2011, and we had less than six months to process an application. We competed with 5 cities, which were competing for the second or third time. The Federal Government's application once again emphasized the Russian Federation's respect for Kazan and its capacity to meet global competition standards. In the hard struggle, we took second place with 10 votes, whilst the Chinese city of Shen Zhen scored 12. We now have a renewed desire to win the right for Universiade 2013. It also fits in with the program for Kazan to move on to the international scene. Events like these allow for a huge influx of investment in urban infrastructure. The government of Russia has allocated \$12 billion for the Olympics in Sochi, and this figure does not include private investors. The President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, said that Kazan will also be supported in the event of victory. And so, we have high expectations, and through your esteemed publication we hope to get to the President of the FISU, our friend George Gilona, and win!

UW: As a cultural center of interest that is relatively close to Moscow and St. Petersburg (considering the size of the Russian Federation), Kazan is in a position to capitalize from tourist inflows coming from the west. What strategies are being implemented to raise Kazan's profile as a tourist destination of great potential?

IM: Incoming tours are one of the most important directions for the city. We have the important recognition of an organization such as UNESCO, in respect of monuments such as the Kazan Kremlin. We have the largest mosque in Europe, the Kul-Sharif, beautiful Orthodox churches, museums, and one of the most revered shrines of Orthodox and Catholic-Icons, Kazan Mother of the Lord, that was given by John Paul the Second on the millennium anniversary of Kazan, thus restoring it and gaining it a seat here. This much is for certain, it was one of the most favored and venerated icons and he believed that it saved his life during the assassination attempt. This is a small list of what should attract tourists to Kazan. We develop hotels and we have plans for the reconstruction of the airport. Tourism is one of our priorities.

UW: Kazan is already beginning to position itself as Russia's third city, behind Moscow and St. Petersburg. In this sense, Kazan is at the heart of Tatarstan's booming economy, which has shown 7.2% GRP growth year on year. Furthermore, Kazan has the added value of lying at a strategic crossroads of rail, road, water and air transport networks, an asset that could be of huge benefit for those looking to expand their business to the Far East. What do you believe are the main features U.S. investors should bear in mind about Kazan when selecting where to invest in the Russian Federation?



IM: In terms of markets, this is one of the most promising in the world, and so we need to open the door. Today, Tatarstan is a door through which you can confidently and safely enter and do business in the Russian Federation. Enter the Russian market via Tatarstan, and everyone will prosper through the investments. We have political stability, inter-ethnic peace, a growing economy, we know the meaning of the word 'partner' and the responsibility and potential that comes from working with others. This is the shortest and most efficient way of entering the Russian market. That is our advantage.

UW: What is the main message you would send to a U.S. audience regarding Kazan?

IM: Details of our prosperity and wellbeing are published in America are thanks to initiatives such as that of "United World". A bridge of friendship and partnership between the two great powers can only further be improved by a project such as this.