

Yerevan is Ready to Review Energetic Priorities.

Pan Armenian ; 25/01/2006

The press secretary of President Robert Kocharyan does not exclude the possibility of Iran-Europe gas-main pipeline construction through the territory of Armenia.

If gas entrance to Armenia is not resumed before Friday, it will cause interruptions in the supply of gas to the population. While official Tbilisi is still accusing Russia of predetermined actions against Georgia, Russian gas goes on reaching the country through the territory of Azerbaijan. Georgia found an alternative to Russian and Armenian electricity with no difficulty, whereas Armenia has no way out. In the situation formed, it is getting fairly obvious that in reality, it is Armenia that has become a victim of the diversion. And if the information that the incident was a terrorist act is confirmed, it will become clear that it was supported by forces which are interested in creating problems first of all for Armenia. /PanARMENIAN.Net/ Both in Yerevan and in Moscow, many people suppose that the explosions on the gas pipeline and the negotiations between Robert Kocharyan and Vladimir Putin on gas tariffs coincided not just by a pure accident. Political technologists, protecting the interests of «Gasprom» right away started developing versions proving that the diversion was aimed at convincing Armenians in the unreliability of the Russian route of gas supply and in the necessity to think of creating an alternative to the Northern route. And since the hopes which Armenians pin on Iranian gas damage the interests of Moscow, it is natural that the action is supported not by anti-Armenian, but anti-Russian forces. This is the logic on which the authors of the version base.

Somehow or other, Yerevan really has grounds to be dissatisfied with the position of Moscow in the situation over gas supplies. And that dissatisfaction was distinctly expressed during the recent press conference of the Armenian President's press secretary Victor Soghomonyan. «The story of Russian gas supply to Armenia really arouses regret. Taking into account the strategic partnership between Armenia and Russia the problem was to be solved quickly and without lengthy negotiations», Soghomonyan said. Diplomatically put phrases nevertheless allow to note the serious confrontation which has occurred between the allies. Through the press secretary, Robert Kocharyan expressed the intention of Armenian political leadership to review certain principal approaches to priorities in the energetic sphere. But for all that, he of course stressed that it does not mean readiness to review political priorities too. Anyway, he made it clear that in Armenia the attitude towards Russia is changing at a speed which could alarm Moscow. «The thing which alarms us most is that as a result of this story, public opinion in Armenia forms not in favor of Russia and this can play its role in long-term outlook». This statement of Victor Soghomonyan is already purely political. And there is no need to decode what was said. Things are as clear as noonday...

During the same press conference there was still another statement which was more unexpected than the previous one. The press secretary actually assumed that already at the beginning of 2007 Armenia will be ready to make a decision on the construction of a new pipe with a diameter of 1.5 meters which can be a part of Iran-Europe gas-main pipeline. (Answering the question whether Armenian party undertakes any actions for widening the diameter of Iran-Armenia gas pipeline? Soghomonyan said: «The gas pipeline will start operating at the end of 2006. We shall be able to answer that question after a month».) We suppose that the responsible statement was not casual and pursued quite concrete aims. And it is quite easy to guess that in Moscow many will treat it as a demarche. The statement is really unprecedented. Until recently Armenian officials did not afford even to say aloud that the gas pipeline under construction may also be used for the

demands of local consumers. (As it is known, Moscow is not against the pipeline construction, only in case it is used for transporting gas to thermoelectric power stations and converting it to electricity which will be supplied back to Iran.) Only recently high-ranking officials started stating that the Iranian gas may become an alternative to Russian gas.

The announced new approaches of Armenian political leadership confirm the fact that Yerevan is not ready to agree with the conditions proposed by Moscow in the sphere of energy. The President's spokesman unambiguously denied the information published by Moscow «Comersant» newspaper which said that «The President of Armenia has accepted the ultimatum and is ready to give 45% of Iran-Armenia pipeline stocks to Russia». However he did not deny the fact of that ultimatum's existence. To all appearances, the issue of control over the gas pipeline and the destiny of the 5th block of Hrazdan heat power plant was really one of the centrals in the course of negotiations between Kocharyan and Putin. The statements chosen by Soghomonyan allow to suppose that Yerevan is not going to compromise in this issue. Now, there are little doubts that Armenia will prefer to agree to gas prices dictated by Russia but will not give up the right of partial control over Iran-Armenia gas pipeline.

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