
Lukashenko Told Armenia A Secret

By Naira Hayrumyan

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The leaders of the Customs Union member states rushed to accept Armenia's application for membership to the Customs Union and the Common Economic Area, the statement on the participation of the Republic of Armenia in the process of Eurasian integration and the Memorandum on Deepening Cooperation between the Republic of Armenia and the Eurasian Economic Commission. "We agreed to set up a working group which will prepare the road map within the shortest possible time," said the Russian President Putin.

Interestingly, the president of the country which submitted the application did not show up to the journalists to hail this occasion.

Either he was not happy, or the application has been accepted without Serzh Sargsyan or yet he was not allowed to show up in public in case he utters something divergent.

The participants of the Second Eurasian Economic Council confirmed their intention to sign the agreement on the establishment of the Eurasian Economic Union which is supposed to be launched on 1 January 2015.

At first sight, everything is going well, especially that quarrels and objections were expected. Lukashenko even confessed that he did not expect such success. "I would not say that this is a breakthrough but this is a leap that we took during our meeting today," Lukashenko said.

In brief, there is no breakthrough, and some issues are pending. For example, Nursultan Nazarbayev expressed concerns. He proposed accepting Turkey to the Customs Union explaining it by concerns which people often express whether "we are creating a USSR or something else under Russia". "Rumors might end if we accept Turkey," Nazarbayev said.

This means that neither Nazarbayev, nor Lukashenko are going to obey Russia, and the Customs Union will exist as long as Russia offers customs preferences to its two big members. Lukashenko, for example, demanded to exempt petrol from taxes otherwise he will leave the Customs Union.

In addition, Lukashenko made a sensational statement. He confessed that on entering the Eurasian Union the countries partly lose their sovereignty. However, he said there is no need to be afraid of delegating additional powers to the supranational level. "Sovereignty is not an icon. Everything has a price, and we need to sacrifice something to live better," Lukashenko said.

So what next? Does the parliament, the Constitution empower Serzh Sargsyan to delegate state powers to a supranational organization? Or are the Constitutional reforms initiated to this aim?

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Belarus Leader's "game Of Thrones" Against Armenia Ineffective

By Karine Ter-Sahakian
PanARMENIAN.Net - 25/10/2013

Belarus President's strange statements may take some getting used to, with Alexander Lukashenko's remarks being more in the vein of what Russian leader Vladimir Putin could say.

A while ago, Azerbaijan's Ilham Aliyev gave Lukashenko \$200 million for gas payments. Seems like Lukashenko decided it's time to pay his dues by speaking against Armenia.

As Lukashenko recently told CIS media leaders, Azerbaijan's opinion needs to be considered in admitting Armenia to the Russia-led Customs Union. "Armenia has an unresolved territorial issue with Azerbaijan, so we have to consider the latter's opinion," he said.

Lukashenko must be confusing things: first, it's Russia, not Azerbaijan who decides the CU accession issues; second, the CU is not NATO which does not admit countries with unresolved conflicts. And finally: trying to play the first violin in all of the CIS organizations may turn out badly for Belarus.

Lukashenko's long-term presidency seems to be affecting his sense of reality. After all, his policy of pressuring Moscow and trying to gain leadership in CSTO and CU to demonstrate his irreplaceability may fall through. However, Belarus may prove to be not-so-irreplaceable: it's even possible for Armenia to take its place in the CU hierarchy, being of more strategic importance to Moscow in the latter's attempt to reaffirm its presence in the Caucasus and Near East.

Lukashenko might have wanted to make some eccentric statement at a summit of CIS leaders in Moscow, but it's unlikely he will. The summit is headed by Putin who cannot stand any statements aimed to undermine his leadership in the CIS.

And once again: it's not Baku's business to decide on Armenia-related issues. Azerbaijan had better take care of its rigged elections and "caviar diplomacy" everyone is sick and tired of.

Sovereignty Or "Appendix"?: Statement In Minsk Adds To Controversy Over Armenia In Customs Union

By SIRANUYSH GEVORGYAN
ArmeniaNow - 25/10/2013

In reference to the statement made by the Customs Union member-country leaders in Minsk, the Armenian authorities keep claiming that Armenia will not lose its sovereignty by joining that structure.

"We are not going to become an appendix of some country, but rather going to create favorable situations," says vice-chairman of the ruling Republican party Galust Sahakyan, claiming that whatever is not beneficial

for Armenia, will not be accepted.

On Thursday, at the session of the Customs Union (CU) executive body - the Eurasian Highest Economic Council - Belarus president Alexander Lukashenko said that Armenia should cross the same integration path as Kazakhstan, Belarus and Russia and make all the commitments without exceptions. This statement has stirred controversy because Armenia has no direct borders with any of the CU member-countries, hence its membership has to be in a different format.

Lukashenko said at the same time that by joining the CU countries lose part of their sovereignty.

Political analyst, Caucasus Institute deputy director Sergey Minasyan told ArmeniaNow that the contradictory and vague statements by the CU member-country presidents do not refer directly to Armenia, but rather to the ambiguity of that structure.

"Lukashenko says Armenia should assume all the liabilities without exception, which is absolutely impossible. The same format of membership for Armenia with Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan is simply impossible because the three are exporter countries, while Armenia is an importer. Armenia cannot adopt the same format for the lack of common border, and especially because that border passes through Georgia, which is going to be a part of the free comprehensive European economic area," says Minasyan.

As for the Armenian authorities' secrecy around the whole CU deal and its ambiguity, Minasyan says the country leadership does not know much about what is actually happening and is unwilling to accelerate the process.

"Because it is unclear whether the CU would actually become an economic and political reality, or whether it was just a project aimed at resisting the EU, etc," he says adding that forcing Armenia into the CU had one goal - to hamper the inking of the Association Agreement with the EU in Vilnius and show who is the 'chief' in the post-soviet area.

"The result is contrary to the expected: Russia appeared as a country whose forcing power was enough only for one country which wasn't even trying to sever relations with its strategic partner Russia as its security warrantor and had already been in great dependence from it in that very sphere," he says.

http://www.armenianow.com/news/49529/customs_union_galush_sahakyan_alexander_lukashenko
