
Interview: Mr. Krikorian

The people of Nagorno-Karabakh must participate in peace negotiations

On March 16 more than 1,000 people attended a support meeting for the people of Nagorno-Karabakh at Paris's Hotel PLM St-Jacques. Major figures of the Armenian community, including Mr. Krikorian, a Karabakh spokesman in France, Mr. Papazian, a leader of the Armenia-Karabakh Committee, and other well-known individuals such as Yelena Bonner, the widow of Soviet scientist and dissident Andrei Sakharov, spoke.

The Armenian leaders straightway adopted an offensive tone. While completely denouncing the disinformation campaign run by the media against them, presenting them as virtual butchers of Azeris, they forcefully underlined that, contrary to the situation a few years ago, today, Nagorno-Karabakh was fighting with equal arms (in quality if not quantity) against the Azeris.

Yelena Bonner, however, was the true star of the evening. Although she appeared to be frail, the authority that many hard years of struggle against the communist system had conferred upon her quickly imposed itself throughout the room. With one gesture, she demanded the public stop the applause in her honor—she had seen too many ovations for Stalin! Aware of the dangers in the former communist bloc from the threatened outbreak of ethnic and religious conflicts, Bonner wished above all to situate the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh in the context of the struggle for human rights. Ideological battles, she underscored, divide people. By contrast, the struggle for human rights unites them. The conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh is located in the latter category, she said, insisting on the fact that the solution is found in the recognition of Nagorno-Karabakh's independence, through negotiations between the authorities in Azerbaidzhan and Nagorno-Karabakh.

Mr. Krikorian was interviewed by Christine Bierre in French.

EIR: You represent Nagorno-Karabakh in France and other European countries. Can you tell us what the present situation is, since disinformation is dominating discussion of the subject?

Krikorian: The situation is very clear. Because of the

blockade of Karabakh, the only images we are able to get over the past days are those taken by the Azeri camp. They show the advance of Armenian fighters who are liberating land that the Azeris had occupied since April-May 1991. It is evident that with the aid brought to Karabakh by the [Armenian] diaspora, today, the means for Karabakh's self-defense have been developed, and thus we are reaching an equilibrium in the level of armaments, although the quantity is insufficient. When the Armenian villages are liberated, the advance of the Armenian troops will stop at the border of Karabakh.

EIR: You mean we are currently looking at nearly total war?

Krikorian: Effectively today there is total war, with the most sophisticated means, since we are no longer using outmoded hunting rifles as we saw three or four years ago. Today we are in a different ballgame: the Kalashnikov rifle is almost a pocket toy; we are using heavy machineguns, cannon, Stinger missiles, tanks, and certainly, tomorrow, helicopters. So, for the moment the war is total, but it is to be hoped that it will cease soon enough, because there have already been too many deaths, both on the Armenian side and the Azeri side.

For that, there must be negotiations between the Azerbaidzhani authorities and the authorities of Karabakh, because without the agreement of and participation by the authorities from Karabakh in whatever negotiations take place, no accord will be respected, as we already made clear today. Mr. Velayati [Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati] met with Armenian and Azeri officials, but it is not they—the Azeris or the Armenians from Armenia—who can decide the fate of the people of Karabakh.

EIR: The people of Karabakh have never been represented in these negotiations?

Krikorian: Absolutely not! Karabakh has never participated in even one negotiation. It is for this reason that France's position today is a great step ahead which renews our hope, because, for the first time, thanks to international pressure, we are witnessing the appearance of a new attitude that

says that the authorities of Karabakh should participate in negotiations.

EIR: Would French mediation be a plus, then?

Krikorian: We are hoping that France would do more than just mediate, but serve as an engine to have negotiations be undertaken quickly; to have the intervention troops and humanitarian corridors of Mr. Kouchner [French Secretary for Humanitarian Affairs Dr. Bernard Kouchner] be rapidly put in place in order to have all conditions come together for peace in this part of the world.*

EIR: What is Turkey's role in this war? Some are saying that the Azerbaïdzhani coup d'état which ousted President Ayaz Mutalibov was provoked by Turkey in order to strengthen Azerbaïdzhani's position in the conflict.

Krikorian: That's quite possible. I will tell you that Turkey, in this state of war, bears a heavy responsibility, for we know that it is militarily aiding and supporting Azerbaïdzhani. That's why, when Turkey wants to play a role as mediator in the conflict, we cannot agree to it, because it is a very partial mediator. We need to have honest mediators.

EIR: According to some sources, Turkey would like to reconstitute the Ottoman Empire. The Americans might have tacitly agreed to a growing Turkish role in the region in exchange for Turkey's support in the Gulf war.

Krikorian: No, I don't think that Turkey will try to reconstitute the Ottoman Empire. However, it has always had this old pan-Turkish project, which it seeks to accomplish by trying to include the Muslim countries of the ex-Soviet Union, of the CIS, going by way, of course, of Azerbaïdzhani. For this, its sole obstacle is Armenia. How should they go about getting rid of it? Every opportunity is worth exploiting. Today, it's Nagorno-Karabakh; the day after it will be all of Armenia.

EIR: What role does the United States play in this war? Are you surprised by the way it gave unconditional diplomatic recognition to Azerbaïdzhani, whereas Croatia had to wait for recognition and some other nations still do?

Krikorian: The conflict in ex-Yugoslavia has been perfectly shameful. The meaning of history demands that all countries aspiring to freedom, to the right of self-determination, should have expression. The attitude of the European countries, the Americans, and all those who only decided to intervene after thousands upon thousands were dead, was scandalous.

Unfortunately, such will be the case for Karabakh: It is a longstanding policy. We were thinking that with the Gulf war, a new era had been begun, to defend liberty, the rights of man. But unfortunately, these human rights, these liberties are only to be brought into play in regions that produce oil or other wealth before the great powers take notice.

EIR: What about the role of Iran? Is Iran as neutral as they say?

Krikorian: The role of Iran is less suspect than that of Turkey, because it doesn't have a pan-Ottomanism project. Moreover, Iran has an Azerbaïdzhani problem at home and could play a mediating role in this operation, for at no time did Iran have the ambition to eliminate Armenia. But it is evident that the Iran-Turkey enmity is going to last and we will have many hypotheses to erect before peace is established in this region.

EIR: Right now you are launching a large-scale support operation for Karabakh. What are some of the things you are doing?

Krikorian: First of all, we are conducting financial operations to help Nagorno-Karabakh ensure its self-defense. Second, we are going to organize demonstrations and ask political figures in the countries we are in to take a stand, in France, in the United States. . . . We are going to become politically active because, for us, the only solution is political. It's not necessary to have a military solution in this part of the world or in other conflicts. Unfortunately, we are obliged to launch conflicts, to spill blood, so that politics can take place around the negotiating table. Support demonstrations were held last week in the Lyons area. They took place three times a week and we will not weaken. We have decided, as Karabakhis, to go all the way.

EIR: Today you met with government officials and others: Prime Minister Edith Cresson, Mr. Kouchner, Mrs. Daniele Mitterrand?

Krikorian: Mrs. Mitterrand lent a very attentive ear to the people of Karabakh and is awaiting our proposals in order to effectively intervene: She is acting with great solidarity in this situation, and has already been to Armenia. Eventually, as her time allows, she will try and see what she can do for Karabakh, that is, to go there. Mrs. Cresson listened attentively to a briefing on the situation. She was well aware of what was happening there. She was accompanied by Mr. Kouchner, who is leaving tomorrow to establish his humanitarian corridor in order to create the conditions for dialogue and cease-fire. France's position is very advanced in this conflict; it gives us a sense of the work we have to do, since, for the first time, thanks to France's intervention, there is a chance to have the people of Nagorno-Karabakh participate in the negotiations.

**EIR's* editors do not share Mr. Krikorian's confidence in France's Secretary for Humanitarian Affairs. Dr. Kouchner's role has been to help the Anglo-Americans ride roughshod over national sovereignty under cover of "the right of humanitarian intervention." A case in point is his so-called humanitarian corridors in Nagorno-Karabakh, the first of which was established about the time this interview was taking place, between Karabakh—and Baku!