

## Disinformation about Karabakh

Up to now, the Turkish and Azeri leadership have run up against a sizable obstacle: Public opinion was more favorable toward the Armenians, less out of respect for their right to self-determination than because of the regular massacres of Armenians by Azeris, with the complicity and, often, instigation and participation of Moscow. In order to change this perception, the Turkish secret services and the Azeri leadership have played up the pseudo-massacre of Khodjalou, attributed to Armenians, with tortures and mutilations. Every-

thing points to this incident as being staged (see box p. 43).

The diaspora Armenians did not react, thinking that a madman had done it. And the success of the Turkish plot surpassed what its authors expected—hardly surprising, is it? The West, embarrassed, wanted a favorable solution for Turkey. These “massacres” fell into their laps, especially at a time when the Armenians of Karabakh were racking up victory after victory. This could have weakened their position of strength, stopped their advance, and opened up arguments opposing their declaration of independence. It's under these

## Armenians are determined to win

The assassination of the president of the Parliament of Nagorno-Karabakh and more or less intense sporadic fighting throughout the territory of the Armenian enclave are continuing signs of the great fragility of the cease-fire negotiated a few weeks ago through the mediation of the Iranian government. As of this writing, there are reports of renewed tension, with seven killed north of Choumian, whereas battles are raging around Shousha, which could be one terminus for a corridor between Armenia and Karabakh. Meantime, none of the fundamental problems have been resolved. The threat of genocide continues to weigh heavily on the people of Nagorno-Karabakh. It is in this context that we publish this special supplement on Armenia.

On the ground, the situation is more than precarious. The economic blockade imposed by Azerbaidzhan on Armenia and Karabakh is deeply felt by the population. Entirely dependent on Azerbaidzhan for all energy supplies, the population of Nagorno-Karabakh has lived for over a month without gasoline or electricity. Only natural gas is available, because, constrained to supply the Azeri province of Nakhichevan situated inside Armenia, the Azeri lines must cross Nagorno-Karabakh.

The war has forced half the population of Nagorno-Karabakh to live in caves. The people are crowded together underground, reported a source who recently returned from Karabakh. There physicians treat the ill, the wounded die, and others simply try to scrape by day and night. They try to survive, by the weak glimmer of a gas lamp.

While everyone is arrayed against them, the inhabitants of Nagorno-Karabakh show a determination and a will of iron. Like General Aoun in Lebanon, like the Lithuanians, like the forces of Croatia, it is now the turn

of tiny Armenia and the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh to defy the dictates of the new world order which everywhere applies the law of the strongest. For—it is an open secret—when Turkey's President Özal threatened Armenia with military intervention should it attempt to break the Azeri blockade of Nagorno-Karabakh, it was with the approval of Washington. Everywhere it is said that if Turkey hopes to extend its sphere of influence toward the Caucasus—going so far as to relieve itself of the problem of Nagorno-Karabakh with the help of the Azeris—and the republics of Central Asia, it will be with the support of the United States, as a way of thanking Turkey for its good offices during the Gulf war.

The Armenians no longer expect western aid, but the residents of this tiny Armenian enclave are determined to persevere. But the fact that there is no dearth of courage cannot be an excuse for not rendering aid. The 150,000 Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh are being massacred by a crushing majority of Azeris. Yet France, which has perhaps the largest Armenian diaspora community of any country except the United States, has only given crumbs. Whereas the United States sent Secretary of State James Baker for an official visit, and Margaret Thatcher went there herself while prime minister, France—Armenia's old friend—only sent Secretary of State for Humanitarian Affairs Bernard Kouchner. For a handful of medicines—two truckloads total, one of which remained with the Azeris—the official media set about trumpeting as if France, all alone, had saved the Armenian people from a second massacre!

France and the European Community have every means to persuade Turkey to withdraw its support from Azerbaidzhan and make the Azeris lift the economic blockade. Always trying to become integrated into the EC, Turkey is quite vulnerable to European pressure. That pressure must be brought to bear and, moreover, economic aid must be delivered to Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh, within the framework of a new Marshall Plan for reconstructing the new democracies in the East.

—Christine Bierre