

"THE NEXT MUST BE NAKHIJEVAN"

An exclusive interview with Jirair Sefilian

- "Jarangutyun" party recently put into circulation the draft law of recognition of Nagorno Karabakh independence. What can you say on this occasion?

- If the issue is settled only with the recognition of NKR independence, I am against it. I will agree with it, if it has a logical continuation, mainly, if after it NKR unites the Republic of Armenia turning into two or more provinces of it. Besides, parallel with this we must correct our mistake of 1988 and lay claim to joining Nakhijevan to Armenia. If it is not logical continuation of the proposal of "Jarangutyun", then I am against it. Without the mentioned steps it seems that NKR becomes independent not from Azerbaijan, but Armenia, and it will do a big harm to our national unity. Before that proposal, the authorities of NKR took seriously the "fact" of being independent. By the way, it is one of the main reasons of contradictions between the citizens of Armenia and Karabakh, when Armenians being citizens of different states forget that Artsakh is part of Armenia. The creators of NKR at that time thought that they would have chances to maneuver in international political sphere. In reality, we lie to ourselves, while the so-called international society continues to regard it as an Armenian-Azerbaijani issue and does not see Artsakh as a separate side of the conflict. We must stop this clownery and organize a new referendum to unite NKR with Armenia.

- Nevertheless, according to recent Gall polls 2/3 of the questioned are for the independence of NKR.

- I don't think that Gall polls show the real picture. The Gall polls are not for the clarification of the people's approaches, but for the compulsion of other viewpoints. The results of that Gall poll are not only incorrect, but also very dangerous because of the advocating effect.

- Do you think that it's the correct time to speak of not only the joining of NKR and Armenia, but also to raise the issue of Nakhijevan parallel?

- Until today, it's not understandable for me why the Karabakh movement didn't demand for joining Nakhijevan. Didn't the members of Karabakh committee know that Nakhijevan was banished at the same time with Artsakh? Didn't they know that if Garegin Njdeh did not organize the resistance of Syunik, it would also have the same fate? I have heard many explanations, which remind me justifications. But now the most important thing is not to know the real reasons of it, and not to blame the political figures of that time, but to correct the mistake, and it's the real time and even late. The issue of Artsakh we may consider as settled by 80 percent. Nevertheless, we must not forget of the rest 20 percent: the regions of Shahumian and Getashen. We must also start the process of Nakhijevan today, though we are pretty late to start it. The moment was served two years ago by the scream of Nor Jugha's crossstones. The Azerbaijani army's leaders of Nakhijevan must answer for that barbaric crime. Nakhijevan must become the main issue of RA foreign policy. Diaspora must also buckle down to it, having it in the foreground instead of the recognition of the Armenian genocide.

- But Armenians were majority in Artsakh, while the Azerbaijani live in Nakhijevan.

- We are not going to force the population of Nakhijevan, Tatars by origin, to leave their homes. They must understand that they are new comers. I am sure that the population living there is very dissatisfied with its barrack-like form of life. Armenians are ready to live in peace with them, not to be rancorous. Armenia must recommend their security and provide educational, cultural and economic freedom, and roads, but the Armenian authorities must rule the region. The necessity of joining Nakhijevan to Armenia is not conditioned only with the rehabilitation of historical justice. It has also geopolitical and economic importance for nowadays Armenia's strategy. The Azerbaijani army must leave that region, but the Armenian armed forces will not allocate there, as Nakhijevan will become an anti-military region creating the best conditions for the free market between Armenia and Iran.

- Don't you think that it will bring to a new war, a new instability and economic collapse?

- The means of pretension must be legal, diplomatic, public, scientific-cultural, etc. All those means must serve the only goal – manifestation of the national will to re-possess Nakhijevan. The authorities of the provinces of Syunik, Vayots Dzor and Ararat must have contact in connection with it. It doesn't mean that we rouse a war. If our enemy wants a war and is ready for it, it will not ask our opinion. It's a well-known truth that only the weak are attacked. Iran may be a good means to settle the issue and not to re-start the war, as it is a highly respected country for both sides.

- What about the economy, I am sure that the main reason that impedes the progress of the Armenian economy is the present infirm regime of Armenia, and not the Karabakh conflict.

- The transport network, which has a big role in the economy, is insufficiently developed in Armenia. With the help of Nakhijevan we could recover the railway communication with Syunik and Artsakh, and also make a railway connection with Iran, which has a strategic importance for Armenia. The gas and oil pipelines could easily go to North within the territory of Nakhijevan. It would be also possible to create an oil refining industry. Being the continuation of the Ararat valley and a significant granary of wheat, Nakhijevan could transfer Armenia from an importer of wheat to an exporter of it, and to multiply the export of other agronomical cultures. A new opportunity would be given to build a hydroelectric power station on Arax River. The benefits are evident also in the sphere of defense: instead of 150 km we would protect only 8 km border after the join of Nakhijevan. With this, we would make more invulnerable "the Armenian wedge" and will protect and develop the Northern-Southern strategy of our country.

- Do you think that it is realistic to carry out this program?

- Unfortunately, it's not possible to carry out national programs of strategic importance under the present-day regime. Nevertheless, I think that it's time to speak and discuss these kind of programs, in order to realize it without delay under the future national government.

Translated by L. H.