

**TESTIMONIALS** 

## Armenia, they fight with faith, conversions under the bombs



Frigerio



After the third truce broken by Azerbaijan, Catholicos Karekin II, the supreme patriarch of the Armenian Apostolic Church, launched an appeal, speaking openly about "the war imposed upon us by Azerbaijan", its negative attitude towards any effort to support a

humanitarian cease fire, its ultimatums blocking any negotiations, the shelling of the Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh,) region and the people living there, the considerable casualties caused, its resolve to settle the issue of Artsakh through recourse to weapons, as the history of Artsakh has witnessed over the last few decades".. The patriarch then evoked "the sacrifice of our sons and daughters. . .our brave soldiers", who "continue their courageous resistance, constantly repelling the enemy with their absolute conviction that victory guarantees the safety and the stability of the Republic of Artsakh".

smiling on the front lines in the picture below, who, as B soon as they turn eighteen, leave for war, paint crosses on their helmets and uniforms, and ask priests to pray with them before combat begins? "Vahe and Edgar were born together and died together", said the mother of these Armenian twins, who left their own pursuits to defend the homeland. "They were studying music and just loved playing their instruments together. Wherever they were, there was music and joy". In the video recorded by their mother a few days after their death on the Armenian border, she says, "they happily left for the front, bringing with them their instruments, and when there was a short 10 minute break, they would play for their fellow soldiers".

This is the grit, the makings of the Armenian soldiers we saw singing their love for the homeland and the faith, and whom we admired as they bore witness to a real sense for which to give their life. That's why whenever Vahe and Edgar were able to call home, they urged their loved ones "not to be worry about us; just tell us how you're doing". Some of their friends said "they are heroes of the homeland.

T Armenians: Hamlet Badalyan (in the picture on the eight), a 23 year old future director, w<mark>ho volunteered as of the first day the Azeri launche</mark>d their attack (27 September), explained to the Daily Compass that "he and his friends enlisted as volunteers and immediately left for the front. We were in Mataghis, a village in Nerkin Horatagh...we me under artillery fire and twas wounded. This happened on October 1st: we were Cđ front line, and had just arrived. We were setting up our weapons to h ading to post when the shells began to fa<mark>ll". D</mark>uring that first artillery barrage, d a gua n acted as a human shield for a friend of his, "to defend him, and then, during B lling, s tł e sec

the mettle of these young heapnel sliced into my heel, with more shrapnel lodging

in my back, my lung, and my intestine".

He was taken to the hospital where he had to have four operations, but he did not regret having enlisted: "I knew exactly what I was doing when I volunteered for the call to arms. The only thing I'm sorry about is that I was wounded and lost my best

friend, a childhood friend. So, once I'm back on my feet, I'll go right back to the front to defend my homeland and continue the my friend's unfinished battle. . .I'm not afraid".

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to recover and praying to God

s comrades-in-arms, the wellspring of this courage becomes clear. Karekin II for h explained this in his appeal when speaking about the Armenian forefathers, who burageously rejected fear and despair, and defeated death with the Resurrection of C nd their faith. This is how they wrought glorious victories for our homeland. In ith, those who are courageous always generate courage!". Luise Ghahramayan, the tr rector of Armen Tour, explains to the Nuova Bussola Quotidiana that, "the fact that the d C urch is at the front with the soldiers certainly makes them feel they are accompanied. me of them are even baptized (see here) on the battlefield by priests. These are the S born under the Soviet regime that imposed state atheism. Many priests have left 0 their rectories and churches to assist those defending our homeland".

Also narrating the moral strength of the Armenians, however, is a Russian war correspondent seriously wounded during the dual shelling of the cathedral of Ghazanchetsots (San Salvatore) in the town of Shushi.. Interviewed while in convalescence, Levon Arzanov (in the picture below, to the right) explained that on that same day the Azeri had bombed "a hospital, a local cultural center, and a church. . .the main places for inflicting a moral and psychological blow to the population. That's the target, the aim. That's to say, more or less, culture, health and faith". Not by chance, in addition to the cathedral there are two renovated mosques in Shushi, , and no one destroyed them".

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started washing our hands. . .this was done by a small girl around 8 years old. She cleaned us up with water and said something in Armenian . . .with tones of resoluteness and trust. . .at that moment I almost cried over the fact that a little girl was sitting there in this basement helping the wounded".

**prising** feature of this war: "there is en many wars, and I've often seen what happened to stores shops: windows shattered th stones, and all the food looted. But quite different a arabakh. We had a Lexus, and when we reached the he behavior of th is e car windows. We thought we were only going to be rch we hadn't even closed cł e for five minutes or so. E the car sat there with open windows for three days, and tł Even if "the shops rith shattered windows were full of goods, no n s missing". ught of taking anything". 0

**Solution in a church bombarded, the elicity me**n helping him, a little girl who attended to his wounds, a people that does not succumb to desperate immoral behavior even during warfare and pangs of hunger led this journalist to say, "quite honestly, I am an atheist… I didn't believe in God before. Before. Until the day before when God in a church protected us with His heavenly shield. After all this, it's difficult not to believe. . . my baseball cap was left behind in the Church, and it's full of holes".

In that same bombarded church a soldier and his fiancée were married on October 24th. They hadn't seen one another for a month because he had been on the front lines. The priest explained to this couple that matrimony is the sign of victory in the sense that life continues. In the background the voice of the journalist present at the wedding: "We must be victorious with love, and believe".