

Bosnia gives ultimatum to Serb forces

Ian Traynor in Belgrade

PRESIDENT Alija Izetbegovic of Bosnia-Herzegovina last night ordered an assault on Yugoslav army forces unless they withdrew promptly as demanded by the European Community and the United Nations.

He ruled out further talks on the crisis with either President Slobodan Milosevic of Serbia or Radovan Karadzic, the extremist Bosnian Serb leader, while Sarajevo remained under Serbian siege.

Mr Izetbegovic, leader of Bosnia's Slav Muslims, said he would authorise the use of all the forces at his disposal against army units still in Bosnia.

Belgrade had set yesterday as the deadline for withdrawing Yugoslav troops from Bosnia, but only a fifth are being pulled out; the rest are being transformed into a Bosnian Serb fighting force.

The ultimatum appeared to presage an escalation of the conflict despite the signing of a truce on Monday night by all warring parties.

The truce was in any case ignored, and the UN peace plan for Croatia was dealt a severe blow when it emerged that militant Serbs controlling the one third of Croatia seized in last year's war are establishing their own army in Croatia.

Pointing to the parallel moves by Serb militants in both republics, western diplomats in Belgrade predicted even worse times ahead in what was Yugoslavia, with a probable resumption of the war in Croatia running in tandem with the bloodletting in Bosnia.

"The whole thing is unraveling. We are facing a dead end," said a diplomat. "The creation of the Serb army is absolutely against the [UN envoy Cyrus] Vance plan."

That plan moved into high gear at the weekend when some of the projected 14,000 peacekeepers started overseeing the withdrawal of the Yugoslav army from the Serb-controlled enclaves of Croatia and the disarming and disbanding of militias and paramilitary units.

Three days after the demilitarisation began Serb radicals meeting in Knin, the Serb stronghold in south-west Croatia, pledged that their areas

would never again become part of Croatia and decided to transform their local territorial forces into the "Serbian army of the Serbian republic of Krajina," the Belgrade newspaper Borna reported yesterday.

The meeting rejected any notion of the enclaves acquiring some "special status" inside Croatia.

The moves defy European Community and UN calls for a full army pull-out from Bosnia and Croatia.

Before Mr Izetbegovic's ultimatum, the EC bowed to Serbian pressure by calling for a resumption of talks in Lisbon today between the parties to the Bosnian conflict. Diplomats in Belgrade held out little hope that the Lisbon talks, if convened, would get anywhere, suggesting that they would confer political legitimacy on Serbian territorial conquests.

It was not clear whether the Bosnian officials would be able to leave the city, which has been under sustained bombardment from Serb forces.

The talks were suspended by the Portuguese a couple of weeks ago because the Serbian side was reneging on its pledges to the negotiations. Since then the Serbian government and Mr Karadzic have been demanding a resumption of talks while consolidating their hold on two-thirds of Bosnia.

A senior International Red Cross worker, Frederique Maurice, died in a Sarajevo hospital yesterday of injuries sustained in a rocket attack on Monday while trying to transport relief supplies into the Slav Muslim quarter.

The ICRC president, Cornelio Sommaruga, said the Red Cross convoy was singled out for deliberate attack. Survivors said the fire came from Serbian positions. Last night the ICRC led back on the national school curriculum.

A recent opinion poll showed that the church ties with the army as the most popular national institution. But tensions are surfacing. Young clergymen complain that their training is too dogmatic. More radical elements say the church is out of touch with the common people, and there are arguments about the retention of priests compromised in the years of communism.

Now the church has been drawn into a dispute over the ownership of buildings confiscated from the Greek Catholic Church and given to it by the communists in 1948. Greek Catholics want their churches back.

This has led to chaos. Priests have been locked out of churches, sacraments stolen, and fighting has broken out between rival congregations with the police often refusing to intervene.

A World Council of Churches team visited Romania in March but was unable to produce a solution. The Orthodox Church has suggested that where Greek Catholics outnumber the Orthodox, the churches be given back. But the Greek Catholic authorities insist all their property must be returned.

Romanians return to church fold

Chris Stephen in Ploesti

THE parishioners of the Sfantul Vasile Church in Romania's oil town of Ploesti have a difficult time finding God — their church is walled in by blocks of flats on every side, a victim of the official communist policy of discouraging worship by blocking church buildings from view.

But this has not stopped worshippers, who file through a narrow gap between two crumbling concrete buildings each Sunday in ever increasing numbers.

This is despite widespread anger at the conduct of the church's hierarchy during the years of communism. The Orthodox Patriarch, Teoctist, is blamed for allowing priests to read communist proclamations at mass, for falling to stand up for human rights, and for a telegram said to have praised Nicolae Ceausescu at the time that the dictator was putting down revolutionary fighting.

"I don't think there's a Romanian who respects Teoctist," said Andrea, a student parishioner, aged 20, at Sfantul. But she draws a distinction between worship and support of the hierarchy. "We respect God, not Teoctist," she said.

While western European churches are closing their doors or becoming bingo halls, Romania has begun building new ones — 30 in

Bucharest alone. Some villages are reporting 80 per cent attendance rates, monasteries are being re-opened, and religious education is back on the national school curriculum.

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Two doctors who did the autopsy on John F. Kennedy

broke a 29-year silence yesterday to reiterate that the US president was killed by two bullets fired from above and behind by a lone gunman, as originally concluded by the Warren commission. — Reuter.

Torture in Tibet
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German pay deal
Germany's 1.5 million construction workers yesterday followed metal workers in accepting a 5.8 per cent pay rise. *Anna Tomford in Bonn writes.*

LA killing mistrial
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Nigerian deaths soar
Up to 300 people are now believed to have died in the religious rioting in Kaduna. Nigerian security forces regained control of most of Kaduna town yesterday, and the government banned political groupings on ethnic and religious lines. *Mark Huband in Lagos writes.*

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Routed Azeris call up all men between 18 and 45 • Key town of Lachin falls • Turkey issues stern warnings

Armenians open corridor to Karabakh

David Meeser in Baku and Jonathan Rugman in Ankara

AFTER two weeks of intense fighting, Armenian forces yesterday broke through Azeri lines, opening up a land corridor into the disputed enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh and capturing the strategic town of Lachin.

As the first convoy of relief supplies set off from Yerevan, the Armenian capital, to Stepanakert, the capital of the enclave, the rout of Azerbaijani forces caused the defence ministry in Baku to issue an immediate call-up of all men aged between 18 and 45.

The Armenian victory ends the long siege of Stepanakert and will allow thousands of civilians in the beleaguered city to come out of the basements where they have been sleeping to avoid constant bombard-

ment. The wounded will be able to leave overland and the city will get medicine and food.

The Azeris have now lost almost the whole of Nagorno-Karabakh, which lies inside Azerbaijan but is populated mainly by ethnic Armenians. The historic city of Shusha was engulfed in the Armenian advance and 60,000 Azeris have fled from the enclave.

The Azeris claim Armenia has opened up a second front by attacking the Azeri enclave of Nakhichevan on the border with Iran and Turkey, which is far away from the main scene of the fighting. Turkey warned yesterday of dire consequences, and Iran denounced Armenia's "flagrant aggression".

The war now shows the first signs of spreading through Transcaucasia.

Azeri sources said a big battle was going on yesterday for control of Sadarak, which controls a strategic bridge crossing into

Turkey. Five Azeris were killed and 54 injured when the town was attacked with tanks, artillery and rockets.

Armenia denied that its forces had entered the Azeri enclave. But the region's president, Gaidar Aliyev, said Armenian forces backed by tanks had seized three hills near Sadarak. Armenian sources acknowledge that the bridge at Sadarak was blown up as a warning to Turkey not to put any troops into Nakhichevan, or try to activate the 1921 Turkish-Russian treaty guaranteeing the territory.

Turkey issued a statement describing Armenia's actions in Nagorno-Karabakh as "expansionism". President Turgut Ozal was quoted as saying that troops should be sent in. He is fond of shooting comments from the hip, and reflects popular feeling, but he has lost much of his grip on foreign policy since last year's general

election. The prime minister, Suleyman Demirel, emphasised that peace should be achieved by peaceful means.

Nakhichevan's foreign minister, Reza Ibadov, told the Itar-Tass news agency: "Armenians do not react to diplomatic pressure. It's vital to speak to them in a language they do understand." He appealed to Turkey to provide the enclave with arms.

The Armenian offensive appears to be hardening the will of ordinary Azeris to fight and is consolidating support for the new Popular Front regime. While the centuries-old dispute over the ownership and ethnicity of Nagorno-Karabakh started this war, the conflict is now being seen increasingly in Baku as a fight to save national territory and the homes of Azeris cut off from Baku.

Attitudes are hardening in Baku and the view that the Armenian offensive could not

have been possible without the support of the Russian army is taking hold.

Russia officially remains neutral but Moscow has a long history of helping both sides against each other with the purpose of neutering nationalist independence movements.

Evidence of overt Russian military involvement came from the testimony of two Russian soldiers, Yuri Babkin and Andrei Koptsev, who appeared in Baku this week. They were members of a Spetsnaz special forces unit based in Lagaged, Georgia. On May 8, they were part of a unit of 30 soldiers sent in to storm the town of Shusha just before it fell.

The two soldiers refused and escaped to Baku but they said their division was acting on the orders of the GRU army intelligence and received its orders directly from Moscow.

Meanwhile, on the political front, the nationalist Popular

Front which last week ousted the communist president, Ayaz Mutalibov, yesterday reinforced its grip on power. Their deputy leader, Isa Gambaurov, was voted in by parliament as the republic's acting president, and chairman of the Azerbaijan Supreme Soviet.

He defeated a former head of the KGB in Baku and a Soviet politburo member, Gaidar Aliyev, who now heads the government in Nakhichevan. The previous acting president, Yagub Mamedov, resigned.

The atmosphere in Baku remains tense as Azeris grow used to the idea that they will have to fight for their country. Roadblocks manned by soldiers and policemen were thrown up all over the city stopping cars and searching for arms.

One man in Baku said yesterday: "If they call me up, I'll fight. I may not have done this for the other regime, but I'll fight for my country."



Last defenders... Wounded Azeri soldiers are evacuated by helicopter from Lachin

Enclave waits for the big assault

Jonathan Rugman, recently in besieged Sadarak, describes the town's fears

IN THE cellar of Sadarak's schoolhouse, unshaven Azeri militiamen took their lunch sitting on children's desks and boxes of ammunition. Life was tense but leisurely; they smoked, looked at their rifles, filled up the gaps in their stomachs with crunchy nut health bars — American food flown in from Turkey.

The militiamen protecting the town of 14,000 people seemed to be an irregular bunch of Azeri patriots. Like their cousins in Nagorno-Karabakh, they were handicapped by bad organisation and inferior weapons. The home guard kept their numbers secret "in the interests of national security" but in reality there were few of them — even fewer now.

Sadarak has come under heavy bombardment from Armenia just a mile away in the second attack this month. It lies in a thin strip of land called Nakhichevan, sandwiched between Turkey, Armenia and Iran. The history of the territory, now home to around 300,000 Azeris, is just as bizarre as that of Karabakh.

Earlier this century Turkish Tatars, Armenians and Kurds lived here, but in 1921 Turkey signed a treaty with Russia ceding the fertile plains of Nakhichevan to Azerbaijan. A fragile Azeri state was born, cut off from the rest of Azerbaijan by Armenian territory.

The Nakhichevanis fear they are next in line in an Armenian attempt to re-draw the map of the Caucasus before the world sits up and takes notice.

"The Armenians want our territory just like they want Karabakh," said Hajir Hassan in his hospital bed, fingering the remains of the Armenian rocket which maimed him. "The Christian world should come and see and stop Armenia," his doctor added.

The Azeris of Nakhichevan say they are under siege. There is no road link to Azerbaijan, the railway was cut at the end of March, and the Nakhichevan leader, Gaidar Aliyev, says he has received an Armenian warning that Nakhichevani aircraft are no longer safe.

"They promised to stop the shelling [of Sadarak] but it took intense telephone conversations with President Petrosian before they did," Mr Aliyev

said of the first attack. "Our economy is suffering, it's getting difficult to survive."

Outside Mr Aliyev's office a workman is dismantling a statue of Lenin, while the museum to the Bolshevik leader is being converted into an investment bank. Communism may be on the way out in Nakhichevan, but its chief administrator was once one of the most powerful communists of them all.

Gaidar Aliyev, former KGB career officer, head of Azerbaijan's Communist Party and deputy prime minister of the Soviet Union, is proof that anti-Armenian nationalist credentials matter more here than a Moscow past.

Mr Aliyev has eight telephones on his desk but none of the lines stretch to Europe. Instead he talks daily to government officials in Ankara, calling for Turkey's help in stopping his land from becoming a new battleground.

In the Turkish border town of Aralik, just a few miles from besieged Sadarak, people cluster round the television news in

tea shops and tut tut at recent events. "Turkey should intervene," said Ismail Isik, one of thousands of Azeris who live along the border. "I would like to go and fight on the front because I have relatives there."

Under the 1921 treaty Ankara is a guarantor of the status of the republic, but despite outrage in the Turkish press, it has been reluctant to move against Armenia on its own.

To do so would test Turkey's ability to stand up for ethnic Turks without Western support, a policy employed disastrously in Cyprus.

Military action would also pitch former Muslim and Christian enemies against one another, re-awakening memories of the hundreds of thousands of Turks and Armenians who died during the first world war.

With Mr Forlani out of the race, the DC may now field the moderate Oscar Scaferro as having some hope of reaping votes among the opposition. Another moderate is waiting in the wings, the Republican Giovanni Spadolini, but the Socialist leader Bettino Craxi and others in the establishment have said they will not accept him.

The Milan scandal has turned on the ex-communist PDS, with the arrest over the weekend of the Milan party secretary, Roberto Capellini, and the PDS vice-president of the city's metro, Luigi Carnevale. Mr Carnevale, arrested at Linate airport, had been wanted for two weeks, fugitive in France and the US.

Mr Carnevale is being held separately from all the other detainees, at Lodi prison. Judges deny he is a "supergrass", but sources said yesterday that he is volunteering material relating to money paid to him by winners of contracts for the metro and carefully divided between the then Communist Party and the Socialists in what came to be jokingly called the "Red Line".

Picasso family angered by decision to move Guernica

Jane Walker in Madrid

GUERNICA, Picasso's protest against war and possibly his most moving painting, will next month move from an annex to Madrid's Prado to the city's Queen Sofia Art Centre.

The move has angered Picasso's family. The painter attached two conditions to the return of the painting to Spain from New York, where it was shipped at the start of the second world war. Guernica should not come to Spain until the republic was restored, and then it should hang in the Prado, alongside the works of Goya and Velazquez.

In 1981, after bitter negotiations, the Picasso family agreed that since a stable democracy and

accepted monarchy had been established they were prepared to overlook Picasso's "republic" demand. But they insisted on its hanging in the Prado.

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News in brief

Imelda Marcos arrest ordered
A Manila judge ordered the arrest of Imelda Marcos yesterday for failing to appear in court on currency violation charges. She had announced a boycott of court proceedings in protest against "massive, systematic cheating" in the recent elections, in which she stood for president. — Reuter.

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Italy's grand electors fail to deliver

Parties wheel and deal but cannot agree on a president, writes Ed Vulliamy in Rome

AFTER a week of scheming and squabbling, Italy's "grand electors" — senators, deputies and regional representatives — had by last night failed to elect a president.

They have returned to the starting post with the strategy of every main party torn to ribbons.

Parties are now scrambling to find candidates acceptable to other parties, and were yesterday proposing legal and political figures most Italians have barely heard of.

Last night there was an eleventh inconclusive vote with the ex-communist PDS candidate Francesco De Martino on 235 votes, ahead of the Socialist former justice minister, Giuliano Vassalli, on 188. Both were well short of the 508 needed. The Christian Democrats again abstained.

The parties are lurching from one failed manoeuvre to another, and the unfolding farce adds to the already acute political crisis; it was in protest against exactly this conduct

that Francesco Cossiga resigned as president, and against which the northern Italian electorate voted in last month's elections. Mr Cossiga was elected on the first vote.

Live television coverage of the voting has been abandoned, and yet the grand electors continue filing past the ballot box and the president of the senate solemnly reads out every voting paper in elections usually designed to produce no victor.

The first three votes were fought by "flag" candidates — no-hopers designed to test opinion.

Last Friday, the fight was due to begin in earnest, but the two main government parties, Christian Democrats and Socialists, suddenly abstained because they wanted to see how many followers of the young reformist Christian Democrat Mario Segni would defy the line. About 70 did so by casting their votes, for a variety of candidates.

Mr Segni, who heads the cross-party Reform Pact, had

said that none of the pact's 247 signatories would vote for an "old guard" president.

Meanwhile, there was furious wrangling in the Christian Democratic (DC) camp between candidates who refused to stand down. But on Saturday, the establishment fielded its man in the first real bout — Arnaldo Forlani, the DC party secretary. He was beaten twice, with five forged votes cast.

After a profitless Sunday's voting, the left had its turn on Monday, ditching the communist ex-president of the senate, Nilde Iotti, and trying to find a candidate palatable to the Socialists.

But the attempted display of leftwing unity dissolved into vicious polemic between Socialists and the leaders of the ex-communist PDS, bringing their relations to an all-time low and sending the Socialists back to work alongside the Christian Democrats.

The votes were so dispersed that the Lombard League's Gianfranco Miglio polled highest, and voices at parliament yesterday were saying that the League's votes were now decisive to a victory for the government side.

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