Armenia chips away at last Azerbaijani bases in Karabakh

FROM ANATOL LIEVEN IN AGDAM

ON EVERY return to Agdam, Armenian bombardments have eroded the town a little further: a building destroyed here, a few windows blown out there. In the past two days, nine civilians have been killed. A constant stream of refugees is pouring out of the town.

Natik Talibov, the Azerbaijani deputy interior minister, passed through Agdam yesterday on his way to hold talks with Armenian leaders about a truce in the Nagorno-Karabakh region and an exchange of hostages. Also yesterday, Boutros Boutros Ghali, the United Nations secretarygeneral, announced that Cyrus Vance, the special envoy who arranged a peacekeeping operation in Croatia, is to make a fact-finding mission to the disputed enclave, marking the first direct UN

involvement in the four-year conflict.

Fresh violence between Azerbaijanis and Armenians yesterday shattered a brief ceasefire. Each side accused the former Soviet army, which is starting a pullout from the region, of helping its rival. The ceasefire, supposed to have been in effect since 7pm on Thursday, was reported to be holding in Stepanakert, regional centre of Nagorno-Karabakh.

In Agdam, four Armenian prisoners, two men and a woman with a baby, were being kept at the headquarters of the Popular Front. They had come from Azerbaijani prisons and were being held for exchange of the hundreds of Azerbaijani prisoners from Khodjaly being held by the Armenians.

One probable Armenian

KIEV NOTEBOOK by Peter Riddell

Harry Lime walks again in bribe city

Corry, no roubles. The sign Dat the foreign exchange centre in Kiev was blunt, and the dour lady behind the counter was even more uncompromising — which is how I became a black-market currency dealer. After more than 20 years of writing about economics, I was at last discovering what supply and demand mean in practice when three currencies

are in circulation. The declaration of Ukrainian independence last year has severely disrupted normal business. All that matters is cash. Moscow is restricting supplies of roubles and the republic's new coupons (being issued to Ukrainians ahead of its new currency) are only just starting to be used. The American dollar is the main currency for free-market deals. The official exchange centres quickly run out of roubles each

morning; hence the sign. Unfortunately, old bureaucratic habits do not die quickly. I had some surplus roubles which I had to sell since I was leaving the country. The counter lady, still a comrade rather than a capitalist lackey, refused to buy them back; it was the rule. A German businessman needed dollars, so in front of the counter lady we negotiated a black-market deal at the official rate with no profit to

It was absurd, and typical of the economic mess in Ukraine. Russia has suspended most supplies of petrol, so there are shortages. Petrol is obtained late at night in black-market deals, and not many cars are seen on the broad boulevards of

Tkraine is having to cre-U ate everything, since it has been a branch office of Moscow for more than 70 years. So its leaders — still mostly the old Communist apparatchiks presenting new faces — are having to struggle with the twin challenges of independence and of turning a command economy

into a free-market one. It is decolonisation on a huge scale for a country of nearly 52 million people. There is the advantage of a_f large Ukrainian diaspora, especially in Canada and the US but also in Britain, now keen to help rebuild the at 10.15pm today.

homeland. The process of transformation is not easy; aside from familiar political tensions with Moscow, the economic costs are large and parliament recently objected to pay curbs. Normal financial or legal structures do not yet exist, although legislation was approved this week to encourage an increase in for-

eign investment.

Neat blueprints and the off-the-peg schemes of overseas visitors — weekend warriors pontificating for two days — are not of much help when everything is in upheaval. What matters is practical experience, how to invoice properly or arrange an overseas loan, where foreign advisers can help. One Western lawyer said the foreign clients who adjusted best were South Americans. They asked the right question: Who do we bribe?

Cergei Mischenko, a local Deconomist turned entrepreneur, talks of "wild" privatisation in which enterprises are taken over according to the interests of the senior managers rather than by the rules. Conflicts of interest are rife. Investors have to learn "telephone law": the law is whatever the minister tells you it is on the phone.

That will change in time with the approval of laws and the gradual spread of Western business ethics and enterprise after decades of bureaucracy.

Meanwhile, the movement towards a free-market economy in Ukraine will be uneven. But the black market commodity exchanges which everything from petrol to clothing is bought — are signs of a latent entrepre-

neurial spirit. At present, with its blackmarket dealers, gangsters and bribery, Kiev may be more akin to the Vienna of Harry Lime and The Third Man in the late 1940s than any other contemporary European city. Like Chicago and San Francisco in the last century, such activity is a

Peter Riddell will chair a discussion on whether free-market theories work in practice in countries like Ukraine on Open Mind on BBC Radio 4

sign of vitality and hope.

prisoner will not see home again. Dumped in the grass at a cemetery in Agdam was the hideously burnt body of a man, the lower part of his face blown away by a bullet, his feet tied together by electric cable. The ground around the body was scorched, and there was a pool of blood. Azerbaijanis said that he was an Azerbaijani killed by the Armenians, but, four miles behind the lines, this seems unlikely. He was probably killed in revenge for the massacre by the Armenians of Azerbaijani refugees from Khodjaly.

The mood in Agdam is one of increasing nervousness as the Armenians overcome the last Azerbaijani positions in Nagorno-Karabakh. In an offensive nine miles northwest of Agdam on Thursday, the Armenians captured the villages of Surkhavent, Manikli and Bashkunepaya and two collective farm centres.

Majid Agayev, the commander of the local defence force at Surkhavent, said the Armenians had attacked at midday with about 20 armoured vehicles and more than 1,000 infantry in snow camouflage uniforms. He said that he saw Russian soldiers with them through his binoculars.

Russians

rule out

poll by

Tatars

FROM MARY DEJEVSKY

AND BRUCE CLARK

IN MOSCOW

THE Russian constitutional

court yesterday ruled that

plans for a referendum in

Tatarstan next Saturday

were unconstitutional. Al-

though the wording of the

referendum question makes

no mention of either indepen-

dence or secession, many

Russians believe that a "yes'

vote could herald break-up of

million people, 40 per cent of

them ethnic Tatars, declined

to send any representative to

defend its cause. The court

decided that Tatarstan's in-

tention to become "a subject

of international law" entailed

state system of Russia and

meant "that the republic of

Tatarstan is not within the

Mintimar Shaimiev, the

Tatar leader, yesterday

walked out of talks on a feder-

al treaty. But in an unexpect-

ed success for Moscow, heads

of 18 of the Russian Federa-

tion's 20 autonomous regions

and republics initialled the

treaty, which is the Russian

equivalent of former Presi-

dent Gorbachev's ill-fated

only dissenter was the self-

styled Chechen republic in

which declared its indepen-

dence last autumn but re-

mains without Russian, or

international, recognition.

The pact is due to to be signed

next week when President

Yeltsin returns from holiday.

former Soviet republics ex-

cept Azerbaijan also reduced

tensions between Russia and

Ukraine with an agreement

in principle on a raft of eco-

nomic issues, including a pro-

cedure for servicing foreign

debt. The new agreement

leaves Uzbekistan the only

member of the common-

wealth still with reservations

about the debt-servicing deal.

agreed on the creation of a

customs union, but adher-

ence to it will be voluntary

become a full member.

Yesterday's meeting also

Prime ministers of all the

Apart from Tatarstan, the

northern Caucasus,

union treaty.

Russian Federation".

unilateral change of the

Tatarstan, which has five

the Russian Federation.

In the battle, the Armenians lost five armoured vehicles to Azerbaijani mines, while the local force lost two of theirs before abandoning the village. Mr Agayev said that 20 Azerbaijanis were killed, including two women and three children, ten were missing and five have been taken prisoner. Yusif Abdiev, a lieutenant commanding an armoured personnel carrier guarding Agdam, said his unit had tried to break through to relieve Surkhavent but had been driven back by Armenian fire.

He and his crew are Lezghins, a Muslim people from the neighbouring autonomous republic of Dagestan. Also in Agdam was a man from Chechenia, a rebel region within Russia, and a Tajik from Central Asia. The



latter said he had come to Azerbaijan to fight because "all Muslims should defend each other's land against ag-

gression".

Helping Lieutenant Abdiev's unit were seven Russian soldiers, including two and the spread of stock or | officers, from the Soviet paratroop unit stationed at Ganja. wholesale auction houses in He said they were serving "out of sympathy for us", and not for pay, and that they do not join in the fighting but only repair equipment. Otherwise, he said, "half of our vehicles couldn't even move".

> News of Mr Vance's mission was in a message from Dr Boutros Ghali to Jiri Dienstbier, the Czech foreign minister and current president of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, who is trying to mediate an end to the fighting. The secretary-general emphasised that Mr Vance's trip was intended to support the CSCE peace effort and welcomed Mr Dienstbier's plan to visit the enclave himself.

German states fight to save powers from the Eurocrats

Blowing in the wind: a man holding a buffeted umbrella battles yesterday against the March elements in a Freiburg park near the

Black Forest in Germany. This week has brought driving winds, heavy showers and a layer of snow to the region

THE 16 German Länder are fighting to protect their sovereignty from the European Community. Worried that the federal government in Bonn is ready to hand over too much authority to Brussels in the wake of the Maastricht summit, the states are demanding a right of veto on any power transfer, and a seat at negotiations for the "Delors II package" — the community's five-year finan-

cial plan to cover 1993-1997. Although the states accept it will be impossible to renegotiate the Maastricht treaties on economic and political union, they have now put down clear markers that they will refuse to ratify them if

they do not get their way. The perceived threat from Brussels transcends party politics and has forged a grand coalition on the European issue among the 68 members of the Bundesrat. This is parliament's upper house, formed of representatives from the main party in each state, and which constitutionally has to ratify the treaties. The opposition Social Democrats (SPD) have a majority there, but on this issue they are at one with the Christian Democrats (CDU) and the Bavarian Christian

Social Union (CSU).

Yesterday the Bundesrat voted unanimously to require the government to include representatives from the states in the EC financial negotiations on the grounds that these would set the agenda for European policy in the years ahead. Thomas Goppel of the right-wing CSU said the Delors package would affect the competence and essential interests of the states in large measure. Florian Gerster of the SPD said that, since Germany currently had to provide 28 per cent of the EC's budget, it was time to have a close look at the lower contributions made by other countries and to question the British rebate.

On Thursday, the 16 state prime ministers, who between them control the Bundesrat, showed similar unanimity in demanding that the upper house be given a veto on the transfer of national power to a multinational institution. They said there was no question of the Maastricht treaties being ratified and Ukraine is unlikely to unless the constitution were changed to give this power.

Ian Murray reports from Bonn on

demands from the German states for a

protective right of veto in dealing with the post-Maastricht new Europe In a statement after their meeting, the prime ministers said that the Maastricht treaty on political union had fallen well short of their expectations. The Community was trying to obtain more powers at the expense of the states

while the powers of the European parliament were not being increased adequately and there was no agreement on raising the number of German members of the Strasbourg parliament.

The prime ministers are insisting that the government report back to them by 1996 on progress towards economic and monetary union. They want to see that all the countries wanting to join the economic union have fulfilled the preconditions and that safeguards are in place to control inflation and budget deficits. They will also be looking to

see what progress has been

made towards making the European institutions more accountable. Unless the government guarantees to prepare this report, the Bundesrat will block ratification.

Count Otto Lambsdorff, leader of the Free Democrats (FDP), wants to see "improvements" in the Maastricht treaties. The FDP has no seat in the Bundesrat, but it has a voice in cabinet as junior partner in the coalition.

In an interview with the business paper Handelsblatt yesterday, Count Lambsdorff said there had to be more discussion on the treaties "to remove the fear of the citizens about European monetary union". He said he was er. pleased that Helmut Kohl, the chancellor, had promised in recent government talks that there would be no "automatic" move to introduce a

common European currency.

Black film actor is honoured

PEOPLE

Sidney Poitier became the first black actor to receive the Life Achievement Award of the American Film Institute. Poitier, aged 68, said: "I am simply glad that you have chosen to pay me this great honour while I have still most of my hair."

Richard Moore, the American ambassador to Ireland, is to return home by August to help the campaign to re-elect President Bush. Mr Moore, a long-time Republican campaigner, has held the Irish posting since 1989.

Rod Stewart, the British rock star, has been summoned to appear in a Sydney court on March 30, accused of assaulting a newspaper photograph-



Tammy Faye Bakker, above, has been granted a divorce from Jim Bakker, the imprisoned American television evangelist. Bakker, aged 52, admitted in 1987 having had a sexual encounter with a church secretary. He is serving an 18-year jail term for fraud and embezzlement.

made a CBE on Thursday, £2,500 to the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims

Italy's MPs pledge to fight the mafia

FROM JOHN PHILLIPS IN ROME

CHRISTIAN Democrat party leaders vowed to continue the fight against organised crime yesterday as Palermo went into mourning for Salvatore Lima, the powerful Sicilian politician killed in a mafia-style ambush that has shaken the Italian political establishment.

"Once again obscure conspiracies threaten the path of democracy," Arnaldo Forlani, the Christian Democrat secretary, said. "But those who want to destroy should know that they will not win the game."

The killing has thrown into disarray the plans of Giulio Andreotti, the prime minister, to fight the campaign for the April 5 general election together with Signor Lima in key Sicilian constituencies.

Many political commentators described the attack as a personal warning to Signor Andreotti after the foundation by his government earli- | Brian Keenan, the former er this year of a national body | Beirut hostage, who was to co-ordinate police efforts against the mafia. The project was initiated mainly by Claudio Martelli, the Socialist justice minister.

of Torture. Poland's moral totalitarians target the smoking classes

FROM ROGER BOYES IN WARSAW

having crushed communism, are turning their attention to smokers, raising fears that Poland may take the Californian road to capitalism.

A draft non-smoking law, to be discussed in the Senate, goes much further even than European Community guidelines. All tobacco advertisements will be banned from television and actors will not be shown smoking on the screen. Smoking will be outlawed in pharmacies, public

transport, hospitals, schools - even staff common rooms — and anti-smoking classes are to be included in the school curriculum. Nobody will be allowed to smoke in an office if there are non-smokers present. In a clause that has stunned the libertarian wing of the Solidarity-based parties, the bill bans smoking in your own car. One leading member of the conservative Union for Realpolitik party said: "We seem to be moving quickly from a totalitarian state to a nanny state — and

this nanny has handcuffs." The new governments of Central Europe seem to have found a taste for inhibiting political freedom, albeit for reasons of health or morality. Warsaw has made the wear-

SOLIDARITY politicians, ing of safety belts compulsory ported last year) and helps to for back-seat passengers, and tough anti-abortion bill, shelved in the last parliament, is being revived.

The anti-smoking bill provides for imprisonment or fines for those who import and distribute nicotine-flavoured chewing gum and for cigarette manufacturers who fail to carry a grim health

warning on their packets. The newly democratic East European states are seen as one of the few growth areas for Western tobacco companies. Under communism, East Europeans were already aware of certain Western brands, because they were sold through hard currency stores. In Romania, Kent cigarettes even served as a substitute currency. On the whole, though, sales to communist Europe were low. Now the state tobacco monopolies are being broken and Western manufacturers are jostling for position in a largely unregulated market.

According to Piotr Mierzewski, the deputy health minister, Poland has Europe's highest growth rate in lung cancer. Smoking also adds to the large number of respiratory diseases (19,000 new cases of tuberculosis were re-

depress male life expectancy. There is a fear that the tobacco giants will use their resources to promote a glamorous image of smokers, and get young people hooked. Marlboros are already something of a status symbol with young Central European professionals who shun strong, acrid Bulgarian, Albanian and home brands. The Western strategy goes well beyond stepping up imports. British-American Tobacco has signed a joint venture in Hungary, R. J. Reynolds is planning to make Camels in Kazakhstan, and Philip Morris has been using eastern Germany as a production base. It seems doubtful that even strict legislation can stop this invasion. Most Poles are aware of the health risks of smoking, but cigarettes are a symbol not just of masculinity, adulthood or sophistication, but also of political seriousness. Dissidents smoked their way through the 1970s and 1980s, and all three Solidarity prime ministers have been smokers. Most former communist leaders have given up the habit, perhaps because they need to extend their lifespan to have a chance of reclaiming power.

BBC falls for Rhineland hot air on bagpipes

BY IAN MURRAY

THE supposedly grey men at the German ministry of labour were having a hearty laugh yesterday at Britain's expense after the BBC belatedly took a Rhineland carnival joke seriously. Outraged Scottish listen-

ers to the Today programme heard that assertive, unified Germany was making a takeover bid for the invention of the bagpipe, insisting that it should really be recognised throughout Europe as the Dudelsack because it was first blown in the little town of Dudelsheim, near Frankfurt.

Not content with forcing the European Community to recognise the independence of Croatia or demanding that the German language become an offical EC language, it seemed that Bonn was now officially claiming proprietorial

rights to the pibroch. The first the ministry of

labour in Bonn heard about the BBC report was when the German embassy in London rang to complain British government officials wanted an explanation for this latest example of Teutonic arrogance. The ministry was responsible, since the report was based on a written parliamentary answer from Norbert Blüm. He is not only labour minister but leader of the Christian Democrats in North Rhine Westphalia, home-

the equivalent of April Fool. Last month he gave a fivepage written answer to a series of ten questions posed in November, at the beginning of the Karneval season, by a consortium of Bundestag members apparently deeply worried about the use and reputation of the Dudelsack.

land of German Karneval,

Herr Blüm, owner of a fine collection of Karneval

fool caps, answered in kind. As far as the instrument's origins were concerned, the minister explained this had been the subject of a special protocol added to the conclusions of the Maastricht summit. Although the protocol recognised the Scottish origins of the bagpipe, under pressure from the German side it had been accepted that the Dudelsheim influence was "unmistakable" and the characteristic pipes originated from Hesse, a land of great piping culture.

The laboured joke won no space in German papers, used to Karneval foolery. The BBC, however, treated it so seriously that Ludger Jäers, the chief labour ministry spokesman, could scarcely believe it.

"I am surprised," he said. "I thought you British were supposed to have a sense of



The real McCoy: a genuine Scottish piper, not to be confused with any imitation, even in fun

Lieven, Anatol. "Armenia chips away at last Azerbaijani bases in Karabakh." Times, 14 Mar. 1992, p. 9. The Times Digital Archive, https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/IF0503294422/TTDA?u=nypl&sid=TTDA&xid=78db3223. Accessed 12 Oct. 2020.