

Hundreds of children drown while fleeing latest attacks

Armenian offensive dashes Azeri peace hopes

IF AZERBAIJAN'S new government believed that making up with Moscow would end its nightmarish string of defeats by the Armenians of Nagorny Karabakh, its hopes have been horribly dashed.

By the time a one-week Armenian offensive died down over the weekend, diplomats said the attacking forces had captured virtually all of south-western Azerbaijan, joining the southern edge of Nagorny Karabakh with Armenia proper and 60 miles of the Azeri border with Iran.

Many children were drowned while trying to swim to safety across the Araxes river to join at least 16,000 Azeris forced out of their homes. The eventual number of new displaced may reach 60,000, said the Baku representative of United Nations, Mahmoud el-Said.

"We have reports of several hundred people drowning while trying to cross, mostly children. The whole horrific aspect of this is the human suffering," he said by telephone from Baku. Mr el-Said described driving along the Iranian side of the Araxes river border on Friday. In Azeri towns and villages, he said, "everything was on fire ... on the Iranian side of the border I saw thousands of refugees, desperate, with nothing."

At least one in 10 of Azerbaijan's seven million people have been displaced in five years of conflict with Armenia, and at least a fifth of its territory has now been occupied by Armenian forces, including Nagorny Karabakh, the original bone of contention.

Diplomats said that the Armenian action may have been triggered by a small attack from the Azeri side, probably by a contingent of Afghan mujahedin mercenaries hired months ago. But the massive Armenian response and Russia's official indifference has stunned President Geidar Aliyev's government and means that progress is unlikely

HUGH POPE
in Istanbul

in the main forum for peace negotiations, the nine-nation Minsk Group of the CSCE that started meeting in Vienna yesterday.

Mr Aliyev had hoped the conflict with Armenia could be solved by mending fences with Russia, Armenia's principal ally, and reversing the pro-Western, pro-Turkish trend of the previous Azeri government ousted in June. But Moscow was either unable or unwilling to help, given the controversy over its commitments in Georgia, Tajikistan and elsewhere.

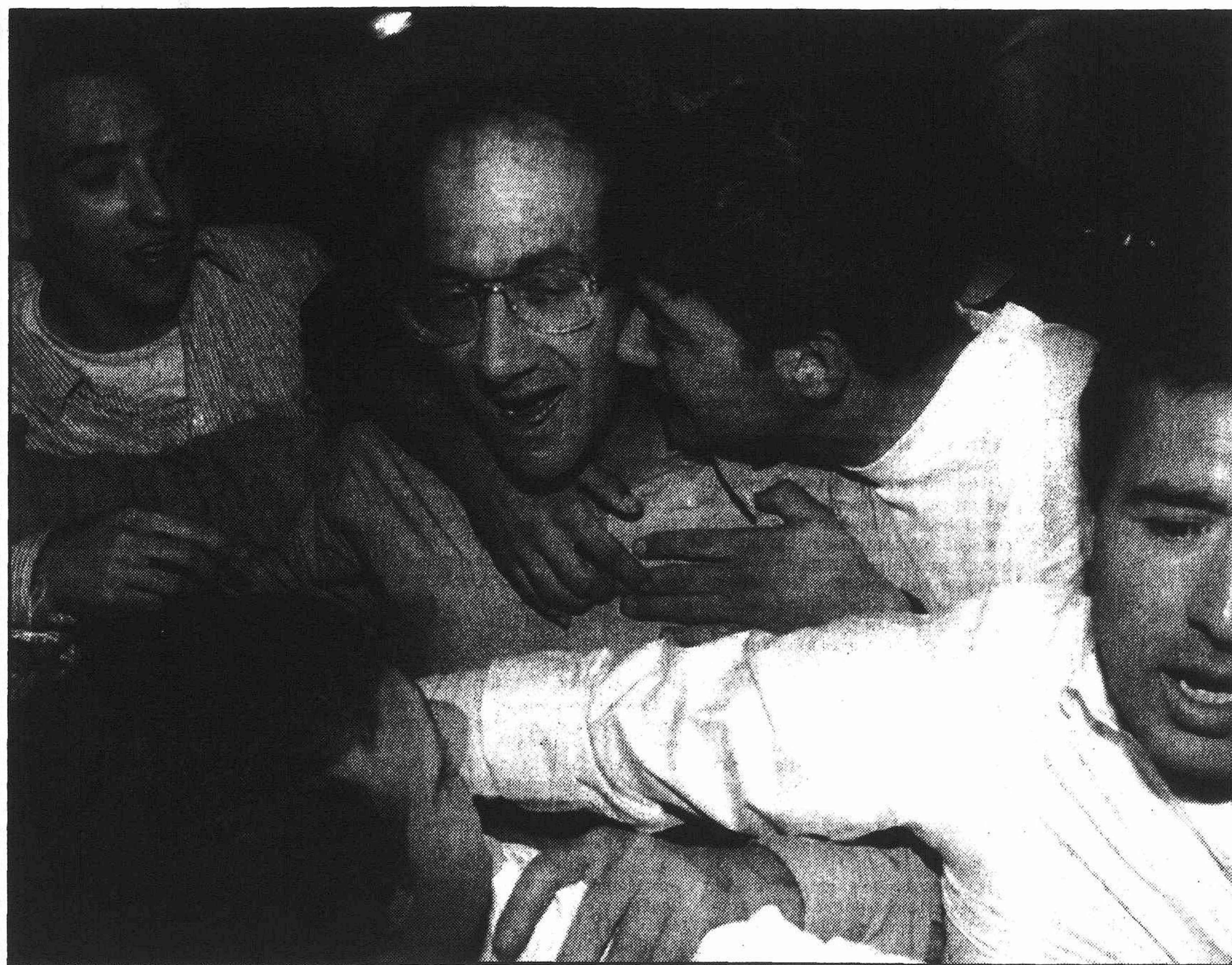
Some diplomats believed that hardliners in Russia had flashed a green light for the attack. The idea would be to force the new government of President Aliyev to agree to humiliating peace terms and a Russian "interposing force" paid for by the CSCE. The aim might also have been to humble Mr Aliyev himself.

"The Russians were angry that Aliyev did not agree immediately to their proposals for the Caucasus at the Moscow summit a month ago," said one diplomat. "They have used Aliyev to smash the nationalist government in Azerbaijan. Now they may want to crush the last vestiges of Western influence."

The 70-year-old former KGB General and member of the Soviet Politburo has vowed to keep Azerbaijan's door open to the West and has promised that a Western consortium headed by British Petroleum will take the lion's share of developing Azerbaijan's oil riches in the Caspian Sea.

But it is unclear how the oil can be exported without Russian goodwill and with Azerbaijan still in disarray. Mr Aliyev's policy remains that set out in his inauguration speech last month: to create a proper army and recapture the lost territory.

Right-winger defeats Teddy Kollek to become mayor of Jerusalem



Ehud Olmert (in glasses), of Likud, is embraced by a supporter at his election headquarters last night Photograph: Jim Hollander/Reuter

Palestinians break off talks with Israel

SARAH HELM in Jerusalem

THE Palestinians suspended autonomy negotiations with Israel indefinitely yesterday, demanding a "general military withdrawal" from the occupied Gaza Strip and not simply redeployment. But Israel's chief delegate, Amnon Shahak, urged the Palestine Liberation Organisation to return to the negotiating table, saying "the plan is not sacrosanct".

Nabil Shaath, his PLO counterpart, announced: "We are suspending the negotiations to go back to our leadership and allow our Israeli counterparts to go back to their leadership. The [13 September] agreement provided for a withdrawal from Gaza, not within the Gaza Strip. It is a withdrawal [that we] agreed and not a redeployment."

The dispute arose at the Israeli-Palestinian talks being held

at the Red Sea resort of Taba after Israel presented its first outline proposals for withdrawal, which detailed how the army would pull back from Palestinian refugee camps and towns in Gaza to three areas near by, where Jewish settlements are located. The areas would be surrounded by electric fences and razor wire, and linked to Israel by special protected roads.

In addition, Israel proposed that it have observation posts along Gaza's Mediterranean coast and control of the waters offshore.

Hassan Asfur, a leading negotiator for the Palestine Liberation Organisation, said the proposals were "unacceptable".

However, despite the strong words, sources close to both sides

believe the disagreement will be resolved. A certain amount of manoeuvring at the negotiating table is inevitable, but observers believe that the momentum behind the outline agreement remains powerful enough to ensure that compromise is achieved. Furthermore, while detailed discussions about how to implement the Israeli-Palestinian self-rule deal are held in Taba, high-level contacts between the two sides continue behind closed doors. These are being conducted inside the secret channel which led to the original accord: it is here that major barriers can be overcome.

Concern at senior levels appears to centre far more on economic issues and on the lack of any Palestinian system for command and con-

trol to take over in the occupied territories, than on the nature and extent of the withdrawal.

The Palestinian objections on the withdrawal issue may have been hardened in recent days by rising concern about settler violence against Palestinians. While Israel is determined to protect settlers living in the occupied territories by maintaining a military presence around them, Palestinian leaders are complaining that no attention is being paid to the threat to Palestinians from settlers.

This has come to the fore following the rampage by settlers on the West Bank, seeking revenge for the killing on Friday of a settler, apparently by Hamas, the Islamic Resistance Movement. The settlers closed off roads, burnt Palestinian cars and set fire to a school-room in a Palestinian refugee camp.

Iraqis denounce 'playboy' Charles

NICOSIA (AP) — An Iraqi newspaper run by Saddam Hussein's son yesterday described the Prince of Wales as a "notorious playboy" well known in "whorehouses throughout Europe".

The article in the daily *Babel* scorned the Prince's comments last Wednesday in which he attacked President Saddam for "unmentionable horrors" against the people of southern Iraq.

Babel accused the Prince of "lies and tear-shedding over virtuous values, sublime morals and human rights", according to excerpts of the article carried by the state-run Iraqi News Agency.

The newspaper expressed "surprise and consternation that a notorious playboy well known in the cellars of the night and in whorehouses throughout Europe should suddenly become a preacher of sublime values".

"Picture Charles ... shedding tears for the Iraqis while he himself is sinking deep in adultery and family intrigues and while the British papers are publishing a long and endless series of scandals connected with Charles' disolute life," wrote the newspaper, which is run by President Saddam's son, Uday.

It was referring to newspaper reports of the Prince's alleged adulterous relationship with Camilla Parker Bowles. "We in Iraq, who relentlessly fought British colonialism for many decades and offered numerous martyrs to end the British colonialist presence, do not pay any attention to the likes of the British crown prince," it said.

In the comments he made last week, the Prince urged the West to save the marshes of southern Iraq and their people from further persecution.

"Even at the eleventh hour it is still not too late to prevent a total cataclysm," the Prince said. "I pray that this at least might be a cause in which Islam and the West could join forces for the sake of common humanity."

The Prince rarely makes attacks on foreign leaders.

Iraqi Shia rebels have used the marshes in southern Iraq as a hide-out from President Saddam's forces, which have bombarded the area repeatedly since the end of the Gulf war in 1991 and are draining the water from large sections of the area.



Air smiles.

The good news is you can now earn Air Miles flying with us to Hong Kong and beyond.

FROM 1 NOVEMBER,

First Class and Marco Polo

Business Class travellers can

earn Air Miles on every Cathay

Pacific flight. We've arranged

with British Airways for you

to earn Air Miles through their

Executive Club programme in

addition to all the other benefits

of flying Cathay Pacific. If you're

already a member of the British

Airways Executive Club, you need to

do nothing more - simply ensure your

membership number is quoted every

time a reservation is made in your name,

and you'll automatically receive Air Miles

on every eligible fare with Cathay Pacific.

If you're not currently a British Airways

Executive Club member, just telephone

us on 071-747 8880 and we will send

you further details and an application form.



CATHAY PACIFIC
Arrive in better shape.

Pope, Hugh. "Armenian offensive dashes Azeri peace hopes." *Independent*, 3 Nov. 1993, p. 14.
The Independent Historical Archive, <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/FQ4200697293/INDA?u=nypl&sid=INDA&xid=5cebb6c3>. Accessed 20 Oct. 2020.