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Turkey urges UN to stop Armenia seizing Karabakh

Azeris lose control of last stronghold

Jonathan Steele in Baku and Jonathan Faingman in Ankara

TURKEY urged the United Nations yesterday to prevent Armenia seizing the disputed enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh, as senior Azerbaijani officials conceded they had lost control of Shusha, their last stronghold in the area.

"The Armenians are in Shusha. Fighting is going on. Our people are trying to liberate it," Vafa Gulizade, the Azerbaijani president's foreign policy adviser, said.

Shusha is the main city on the road connecting Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia. If the city, the Azerbaijani capital of the mainly Armenian enclave, falls, the chances of Armenia's forcing a permanent corridor to the enclave would be increased. Food and arms supplies would be able to go through unchecked.

War between Armenia and Azerbaijan has raised fears in the West of a regional conflict on religious lines. The United Nations and the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe have both sent fact-finding missions to Nagorno-Karabakh, where more than 1,000 people have died.

Armenian volunteers have carried the brunt of the fighting, but the Armenian government denies official involvement.

President Levon Ter-Petrossian of Armenia called President Bush yesterday, while his foreign minister made urgent calls to Germany and Iran.

Turkey's request for UN action was contained in a letter to the Security Council calling on it to take "serious measures" to resolving the crisis. The letter called for urgent action and is thought to seek a ceasefire enforced by the UN.

The Turkish prime minister, Suleyman Demirel, who is attending a summit of Asian leaders in the former Soviet republic of Turkmenistan, said that Nagorno-Karabakh was internationally recognised as belonging to Azerbaijan, and that Turkey would not allow that to be changed by force.

In a joint statement issued in the Turkmen capital, Ashgabad, leaders from four republics as well as Turkey, Iran and Pakistan, called on Armenian forces to withdraw from Shusha.

Azerbaijan first conceded the loss of Shusha on Saturday, the day after Armenia and Azerbaijan signed a ceasefire agreement in Tehran. But its defence ministry yesterday claimed that the town had been recaptured by Azerbaijani forces.

Last night the ministry said: "The situation is changing every half hour. There is fighting in Shusha itself and along the road between Shusha and Lachin."

Lachin is on the border of Nagorno-Karabakh and separated from Armenia, proper, by a sliver of land only six miles wide. Aid agencies have repeatedly called for an international corridor to be pushed through there.

The Azerbaijani defence ministry said Lachin was being heavily bombed from the Goris region of Armenia. It said one Azerbaijani battalion had been cut off in Shusha but four others had broken through to it.

The ministry also reported heavy fighting on the eastern edge of Nagorno-Karabakh around the town of Agdam. It said Agdam was being bombed by Armenian forces.

The fall of Shusha would almost certainly be the turning point in the four-year war. Azerbaijan has already ceded control of all but a few villages.

In Baku, the Azerbaijani capital, gloomy crowds gathered outside the headquarters of the opposition Popular Front waiting for news, not wanting to believe Shusha had fallen.

An emergency session of the republic's special parliamentary council on Saturday night discussed whether to postpone presidential elections due on June 7.

The Popular Front is against delay but its candidate, Abdulfez Aliyev, said he would halt his campaign while all forces were concentrated on regaining Shusha.

Mr Gulizade conceded that the Popular Front had a strong chance of being elected to the presidency.

"The fall of Shusha would deepen the political crisis here," he declared. "There is no stability of power in the republic at the moment."

Mr Gulizade was in Tehran on Friday for the two-day meeting with the Armenians and Iranians. The ceasefire agreement was signed after the Armenian attack on Shusha was under way.

Mr Gulizade spoke bitterly of Iran's mediation effort which has, until now, seemed the most promising of the various international missions. "If Shusha is lost, it is all over."

Iranian proposals reflected Armenia's position, he said, warning Tehran that one side in this would boomerang.

"Iran's wrong position on Karabakh will bring an explosion inside Iran from its own Azerbaijani population," he said. He charged Iran with taking "an anti-Turkish position", with wanting to bring Iranian fundamentalism to Azerbaijan.

He also rejected the widespread view in Baku that Azerbaijan had become a victim of outside powers. He said Russia was giving weapons to Armenia.



Last stand... The shell of a building in Shusha, the sole remaining Azerbaijani stronghold in Nagorno-Karabakh, which reportedly fell to Armenian forces

US aid squeeze urged on 'terror weapons'

Simon Tisdall on plans by the Democrats to penalise states putting bombs before bread

DEMOCRATS in Congress are proposing a drastic remedy for the world-wide proliferation of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons and missiles.

Legislation now before the House of Representatives would halt all United States funding of the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and other multilateral development agencies unless all countries receiving aid from such institutions agreed to abide by existing international non-proliferation agreements.

The bill would also prevent the US Export-Import Bank from assisting countries which are producing, or seeking to produce, weapons of mass destruction. The measure is strongly opposed by the Bush administration.

According to the Central Intelligence Agency, more than 20 countries possess or are developing nuclear, chemical or biological weapons and the means to deliver them. Introducing the bill at a hearing of the House

banking committee last Friday, Henry Gonzalez, a Democrat, suggested that the Bush administration could not be trusted to take adequate measures to counter the "alarming spread of nuclear and other weapons" threatening global security.

In the case of Iraq, Mr Gonzalez said, "our own government allowed itself to help finance terror weapons that easily could have been used against our own soldiers."

In addition, "the Iraqi government was able to obtain... the technology and know-how necessary to produce its own weapons by procuring so-called dual-use technology and materials from the US and our European neighbours, including the former Soviet Union as well as Argentina, China and North Korea."

Mr Gonzalez noted that the World Bank president, Lewis Preston, had already questioned whether financial assistance to countries spending 35 to 40 per cent of their budgets on arms "was an appropriate

use for [World Bank] funds". But a Republican committee member, Doug Bereuter, argued that the bill, if enacted, "would create more problems than solutions", have a strongly negative impact on the former Soviet republics, for example, and would "penalise US exporters".

Speaking in favour of the bill, Gary Milhollin of the independent Wisconsin Project on Nuclear Arms Control said aid recipients must "choose between bombs and breakfast". Professor Milhollin cited the case of India, which received more than \$2 billion in World Bank loans in 1991 and has received over \$37 billion in total. India also received more than \$2 billion in IMF loans last year.

"India is running an [annual] trade deficit of \$8 billion, which must be added to the interest payments on its \$70 billion foreign debt," Prof Milhollin told the committee. "Yet India is still spending over \$9 billion per year on defence."

India was, for instance, planning to spend \$200 million to import rocket technology from Russia in violation of the Missile Technology Control Regime

— a key non-proliferation agreement, he said. "Where will India get the money? From foreign aid. If we continue to shovel foreign exchange into India while it is making bombs and missiles, we are simply bankrolling its drive to become a mini nuclear superpower."

Prof Milhollin pointed to parallels between US support for Iraq before the Gulf war, and Washington's aid programme to Pakistan. "Strangely enough, the aid flowed until Pakistan was actually able to assemble a nuclear device, at which point we cut them off. One can wonder at the effectiveness of such a policy."

He also noted the contradictions in US policy towards Israel: "It is not easy to convince the Islamic countries that they don't need nuclear weapons, chemical weapons, and long-range missiles when Israel has all three, with our apparent blessing."

Kathleen Bailey of the independent National Institute for Public Policy told the committee that international efforts to tighten export controls were failing because chemical and biological weapons, and missile

technologies, were "relatively inexpensive". Such weapons were increasingly easy to produce indigenously, or by imports of dual-use equipment — that is, material that could have commercial as well as military applications.

Measures such as defence alliances and US security guarantees for countries which renounced weapons of mass destruction should be considered, Dr Bailey said.

The Bush administration has mounted a determined effort to kill the House bill. Representatives of the state department, the Pentagon, the Federal Reserve, and the treasury all told the committee that the linking of US funding of multilateral development agencies to members' adherence to non-proliferation would be counterproductive.

"The international institutions were established with strong US support and have effectively advanced US interests throughout the world," the treasury department's Barry Newman told the committee. Such linkage would "seriously erode" the institutions' ability to "fulfill their responsibilities in the world economy".

Nato agonises over German choice for air command

David Fairhall in Brussels

THE proposed appointment of a German air force general to command Nato's rapid reaction air forces is obliging defence ministers to confront publicly the sensitive question of Germany's longer-term military ambitions.

The point of the rapid reaction forces, both ground and air, is that they must be ready to move at short notice to any corner of the alliance's territory, whether northern Norway or eastern Turkey. They are increasingly seen as the military framework within which a selected allied force might be assembled to operate "out of area" — perhaps in the Gulf — under UN or EC auspices.

In that situation, as in the Gulf war, the first to be deployed would probably be air defence squadrons followed by strike aircraft capable of instant retaliation. But as the Gulf war showed, Germany is deeply inhibited about any military adventure that reaches even obliquely beyond Nato's boundaries, and for historical reasons some of its allies applaud such caution.

German minesweepers were eventually deployed in the Gulf and reinforcements were sent to Turkey; but only after much political and constitutional debate.

From that point of view, a German hardly seems the best choice for the air forces that are to support Nato's ground forces — the multinational Rapid Reaction Corps. But since a British general is to command the force, it would be virtually impossible for the defence secretary, Malcolm Rifkind, to oppose the appointment of a German to head the supporting air forces. The proposal is expected to be confirmed at a meeting of Nato defence ministers in Brussels later this month.

The rapid reaction air forces will have their headquarters at Ramstein in south-western Germany. The British contribution is likely to be about 80 combat planes. The American air force will also contribute substantial numbers, although its European arm, which also has its headquarters at Ramstein — is running down its combat strength from more than 600 planes to about 230, with the closure of several bases in that part of Germany as well as in Britain and Spain.

Tajik talks go on despite killings

Agencies in Dushanbe

RUSSIA'S former Soviet republic of Tajikistan opened fire on a crowd in the capital Dushanbe yesterday. Tajik television said there were eight dead and 12 seriously wounded.

Talks between government and opposition leaders were suspended because of the violence. Opposition leaders earlier stormed out after hearing of the shooting, but later resumed the negotiations.

A Reuters correspondent saw three bodies covered in white blankets in the forecourt of the city's central mosque, having been taken there by ambulances. Guards said relatives had removed a fourth body.

Opposition-controlled Tajik radio said the deaths and injuries happened when police fired automatic weapons at a peaceful procession.

Interfax news agency quoted General Anatoly Martovitsky, head of Tajikistan's national border guards, as saying a crowd of armed people had tried to break into the KGB building, where some government officials have been hiding since the conservative leadership collapsed last week.

Police fired warning shots in the air, but when shots were returned fired directly into the crowd, which scattered, Gen Martovitsky said. There were dead and wounded on both sides, he added.

The shooting shattered a brief period of calm which fol-

lowed Thursday's victory by Muslim and democratic forces protesting against the government.

"There was an exchange of fire. They started shooting at peaceful people," said a man in camouflage fatigues. Blood seeped through his fingers as he held a wounded thigh.

Sporadic gunfire, including the loud blast of a grenade launcher, echoed through the streets after the initial shooting. Forces loyal to the opposition kept their distance from the KGB building.

Ambulances raced along a central thoroughfare to the mosque, passing through Shokhidon Square where anti-communist demonstrators have been rallying for the past six weeks.

It was not clear if President Rakhmon Nabiyev, resisting calls for his resignation, was in the KGB headquarters at the time of the shooting or if the negotiations which were going on with the opposition.

Attempts to garner regional economic support for Muslim former Soviet republics stumbled yesterday, apparently under the weight of competition between Turkey and Iran. The five republics, seeking a new political alliance as Russia looks westwards, ended a two-day conference with no apparent gains.

Draft agreements presented by Turkmenistan outlining Turkish and Iranian financial support for key projects were dropped or gutted in a final seven hours of talks.

Irish cardinal says bishop scandal causing 'great pain to all of us'

Joe Joyce in Dublin

THE head of the Roman Catholic church in Ireland, Cardinal Cahal Daly, said yesterday that he knew nothing about one of his bishops having an affair and fathering a child before the matter became public last week.

The cardinal also defended celibacy, which he said was "a positive thing... an enrichment of one's ministry". Cardinal Daly described the scandal as a "deep wound and very great pain to all of us". But he emphasised that the church was bigger than any bishop.

"We are all so fallible, and we are all so weak, and we just rely on the grace and mercy of God. He is never closer to us than at times of trial and darkness like this." Prayers for Dr Eamonn Casey were said at masses throughout his former diocese in Galway as pressure increased on him to tell his side of the story after a woman in Connecticut said she had become pregnant by the churchman in 1973. His former press officer as bishop of Kerry, Frank Lewis, was

among those who called on him to speak out.

Dr Casey's whereabouts are unknown. He flew to New York last week when the story broke and before Annie Murphy and her 17-year-old son, Peter, spoke openly about their relationship. Unconfirmed reports suggest he may have gone on to South America to begin the missionary work he referred to in his resignation statement.

The archbishop of Tuam, Joseph Cassidy, said that Dr Casey must be blamed in so far as he was guilty; but "he must not be crucified".

Meanwhile, there was further bad news for the church and its opposition to abortion with a weekend opinion poll in Ireland showing that 73 per cent of those questioned supported women's rights to travel abroad for legal abortions and to receive information about abortion services.

The poll by Irish Market Surveys in the Irish Independent also found that 61 per cent supported the European Community's Maastricht treaty in spite of calls by the "pro life" lobby for a "no" vote on ratifying the treaty.

Peacekeepers fail to prevent forced expulsions in Croatia

Vigal Cizman in Belgrade

CROATS, Ruthenians and ethnic Hungarians living in UN-protected zones of eastern Croatia are being expelled by Serb extremists apparently intent on clearing the area of other ethnic groups.

Representatives in Belgrade of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees say that in the past two months more than 1,000 villagers in eastern Slavonia have been rounded up at gunpoint and ordered out of the region. Thousands more are being subjected to intimidation in neighbouring Banja.

Much of eastern Croatia was captured by the Serb-led federal army during the civil war. Although the area has since been divided into UN-protected zones, Serbs continue to hold political and military control.

UNHCR officials have protested to the local Serbian authorities, who claimed civilians have signed documents saying they are leaving voluntarily.

"There's clear evidence that

1,200 Croats, Ruthenians and Hungarians have been expelled so far, although we fear that the real figure is much higher," a senior UNHCR official said.

Typically they were given no more than a few hours to pack their belongings before being put on buses, driven to the perimeter of the UN-protected zone and ordered to cross into Croatian-held territory.

Relief agencies believe the expulsions are probably being carried out by embittered Serb refugees from other parts of Croatia. "In eastern Slavonia there are many displaced people whose homes were destroyed by Croatian forces," said one aid worker. "Their experiences radicalise them and they are now after revenge."

Peacekeeping troops and UN civilian police in the region have been hard-pressed to stop the expulsions because they are carried out so swiftly.

"We rarely get advance warning of these operations," said Jim Lubin, the UN's chief civil affairs officer for the sector. "The perpetrators have lists of

civilians. They are put on mini buses or coaches which pass through road blocks with no questions asked."

Mr Lubin said heightened UN vigilance should thwart further expulsions, but warned that intimidation was difficult to prevent. "We are doing our best to help the victims by setting up safe-haven shelters and increasing patrols, but there aren't enough men to protect everyone."

UN officials hope the withdrawal of the federal army and the disbanding of local Serbian militias under the second phase of the peace plan will further curb intimidation and put a halt to expulsions.

Mr Lubin is less optimistic about the early repatriation of the tens of thousands, mainly Croats and ethnic Hungarians, who fled the region last year, since many of their homes were either destroyed or have been occupied by Serb refugees.

"The Croatian authorities are eager to return people to the area, but the issue of housing will take some time to resolve."

Swedes to try guard scheme for women at risk

Maggie Davis

WOMEN in Sweden who are harassed by violent ex-husbands and boyfriends will soon have personal bodyguards assigned to them by the police. The government has put aside 10 million crowns (about £1 million) for the scheme.

Five areas have been selected to take part in a trial, which will help police decide how best to put the idea into practice. A police spokesman, Leif Jennekvist, said bodyguards would accompany the women to and from work and social events.

Violence against women by former husbands and boyfriends is a growing problem in Sweden. Police have already provided bodyguards for five women after their ex-partners escaped from prison.

If the scheme fails, it is likely to be on the grounds of expense. A woman seeking protection from a particularly violent man could be assigned up to three bodyguards, costing 25,000 crowns (£2,500) a day. A slightly cheaper option is to allow the woman, or her bodyguard, to carry a gun.

A large security firm, Partena, is likely to get most of the contracts.

Mr Jennekvist said police had to provide protection for women at risk because it was not always possible to press charges and incarcerate the offender.

"The offence might have taken the form of threats, or a man following a woman. There's not enough evidence to put the person in custody. In a civilised country, you can't sentence somebody for a crime

which they might commit in the future."

Sweden has no legal equivalent to injunctions or restraining orders. Caroline McKinlay of the Women's Aid Federation of England, which provides refugees for battered women, said she was not overly impressed with the Swedish idea.

"It's a rather impractical move, and it would limit the women's freedom to move around."

She noted that the Law Commission has just recommended that injunctions be strengthened. These are imposed by the courts, and prevent a man going too near a woman or her home. "The way to move forward is to have powers of arrest automatically attached to injunctions. Then the police can intervene as soon as necessary, and they themselves will be able to protect women."

News in brief

PM links Reagan to recession

The new French prime minister, Pierre Bérégovoy, yesterday blamed mismanagement of the US economy by the Reagan administration for the subsequent international recession.

Speaking on the eve of a meeting in Washington between the French foreign minister, Roland Dumas, and President Bush, Mr Bérégovoy said that the rest of the world was paying for "the excessive size of the American debt and the over-importance of the dollar". — AP.

Radicals routed

Supporters of the Iranian President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani's moderate economic and foreign policy were heading for a landslide victory over their radical rivals in parliamentary elections held on Friday, interim results showed yesterday. — Reuter.

Lava threat looms

After a two-week pause, lava from Mount Etna spilled over the last of the barriers built in its path outside the town of Zafferana Etnea yesterday. The lava flow is now 80 yards from the town, and moving at about 13 feet an hour. — AP.

Kurds killed

Security forces killed 12 Kurdish guerrillas and captured two others in south-eastern Turkey. The victims belonged to the outlawed Kurdistan Labour Party, which has fought for self-rule in the region since 1984. — AP.

Referendum call

Swiss pacifists said yesterday that in 12 days they have gathered the 100,000 signatures needed to force a referendum on the purchase of 44 jet fighters. They intend to demand a vote on December 6. — Reuter.

Mine death toll

Rescue teams yesterday found the bodies of 11 of 26 coal miners trapped by a methane gas explosion a mile underground at Stellarton, in Nova Scotia, Canada. The men had been killed instantly. The search was continuing for 15 missing men despite dangerous levels of methane and carbon monoxide in the mine. — Reuter.

Monarchist rally

Several thousand Romanians demonstrated yesterday in Bucharest to call for the return of the exiled King Michael, aged 70, who visited the country for the first time in 45 years two weeks ago, writes Chris Stephen in Bucharest. May 10 is the anniversary of the coronation of his great grandfather, Carol I, in 1881, when the Romanian monarchy was established.

Plea to cut aid

Malawian opposition groups, which accuse the government of brutality in riots which resulted in the deaths of up to 38 people, called on the west yesterday to suspend aid payments. Officials from donor countries are due to meet in Paris today to discuss Malawi's crisis. — Reuter.

Singer dies

The veteran American cabaret and jazz singer, Sylvia Syms, collapsed and died after an apparent heart attack during a performance yesterday at a New York hotel. Aged 74, the self-taught contralto's career spanned more than half a century. — Reuter.

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