

“gotten rid” of the corpses, to “hide the evidence” of the “massacre.”

Geopolitical factors: the role of Turkey

The deeper consideration behind the CIS withdrawal is that Russia feels it needs to work with Turkey, as part of an overall strategic relationship with the United States to contain Islamic fundamentalism in the Muslim republics of the former U.S.S.R.

This policy materialized during the little-noticed Feb. 4-5 visit to Ankara by Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev, which inaugurated, in his words, “a new era in Russian-Turkish relations,” and where Kozyrev welcomed Turkey’s involvement in the Muslim republics of Central Asia. The visit was climaxed by an announcement that Russian President Boris Yeltsin will visit Turkey later this year. The Kozyrev visit was coordinated with the Washington summit one week later of President Bush and Turkish Prime Minister Suleyman Demirel, and the talks held in Baku with the Azeri leadership by U.S. Secretary of State James Baker, talks that set the stage for Azerbaidzhan’s onslaught against Karabakh.

Since the Kozyrev visit, Russia has granted Turkey extraordinary favors, aimed at countering Iran’s influence in Central Asia. Turkish merchant ships may now transit from the Black Sea, over Russian territory, via the Don River, Don-Volga Canal, and Volga River, into the Caspian Sea, breaking the Iranian monopoly on non-Russian seagoing trade with Azerbaidzhan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan.

The global strategic dimensions of this new Russo-Turkish dynamic were evident in statements in Moscow, Feb. 25, by NATO Secretary General Manfred Wörner, declaring that the “rise of Islamic fundamentalism” in Central Asian republics is against the “interests of NATO” and Russia. Thus, with NATO ally Turkey as the wedge, the West is trying to co-manage, with Russia, the entire “southern tier” of the former U.S.S.R.

The U.S.-Turkish policy to fuel crises in this southern belt, as levers to increase the influence of Washington through its Ankara surrogate in the region, has been sharply denounced by Iran. Speaking in Teheran March 2, at an international conference of academics on “The Transformation of the Former Soviet Union and its Implications for the Third World,” Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati accused the United States and Turkey of working against Iran in Central Asia and the Transcaucasus, by fueling hot spots. Speaking just after his unsuccessful mediation tour of Azerbaidzhan and Armenia, Velayati condemned “those who pretend to care, but are not willing to see another country [i.e., Iran] solve the problem. Many western countries and some countries in the region [referring to Turkey and Saudi Arabia] don’t care to see Iran put out the fire. They are not happy that it is not them or someone in their bloc. Many are attacking our motives in this region, but we are used to being attacked. We will carry on and do what we think is right. . . . Sources

of instability in these republics can pave the way for the growing American influence in the region.”

Expect new ‘mediation’ efforts

Moving into the second week of March, the next round of internationally coordinated efforts to discredit Armenia, following the insidious effect of the “massacre” stories, will be in full bloom, this time under the rhetorical guise of “mediation” and demands for “unconditional cease-fire.” The big mid-March “mediation” effort will be made by Douglas Hogg, a minister in the British Foreign Office, who will travel to Moscow, Baku, and Yerevan. Public statements made to date by Hogg, putting the blame on “both sides” for the war, foretell a repeat of the same British support for aggression, under the cover of pseudo-objectivity, that had occurred regarding former Yugoslavia through the “peace mission” of Lord Carrington.

Hogg stressed, in a March 3 statement, his support for the next “mediation” mission being a Russian-CIS effort. Within 24 hours, Azerbaidzhan President Mutalibov welcomed the Hogg mission and any Russian-CIS mediation. Besides the pro-Azerbaidzhan tilt of Russian policy, one must not forget that anything labeled “CIS” is stacked in Azerbaidzhan’s favor, as six of the 11 CIS republics are Muslim and pro-Azerbaidzhan. Any “cease-fire” agreements, if not minimally augmented by ironclad clauses banning any Azeri troop reinforcements and movements near the borders of Karabakh, will be, as in former Yugoslavia, the mere breathing space preceding the next offensive by the aggressor.

Baroness Cox warns of slaughter in Karabakh

by Mark Burdman

On Feb. 28, the office of EIR Nachrichtenagentur in Wiesbaden, Germany received a chilling briefing by telephone on the situation in and around Nagorno-Karabakh, from Britain’s Baroness Caroline Cox. Baroness Cox, a member of the House of Lords, has been very active in trying to bring the world’s attention to the plight of the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh. She has visited that enclave five times in the past 10 months, most recently in mid-January. Specialists on the Transcaucasus region regard her as a reliable source of “on-the-ground” readings about what is happening in Karabakh. In the last days of February, she traveled to Germany and Switzerland, attempting to rally parliamentarians, Christian groups, humanitarian agencies, and others, to take urgent action to save the population from genocide.

In her view, the situation in Karabakh threatens to become a slaughter, unless action is taken within the next days

to contain the Azeris. She is appealing for the immediate dispatch of international observers to Karabakh itself, rather than only to the respective capitals of Armenia and Azerbaidzhan, Yerevan and Baku. This direct, "on the ground" stationing, would be a deterrent action. She is hoping that initiatives by the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) or the United Nations can be transformed into such an "on the ground" action. This, in her view, must be coupled with "massive humanitarian aid," at a time when the intensive multiple rocket-launcher bombardments of Karabakh's capital, Stepanakert, is making the city unlivable.

Baroness Cox warned that Stepanakert is on the verge of becoming "an absolute hellhole, worse than anything we have seen in Croatia, as bad as that has been." What has dramatically worsened the situation, is the Azeri use of GRAD BM-21 multiple rocket-launchers, which fire 40 rockets in one volley, and have a similar effect on the population and infrastructure as weapons of mass destruction. These GRADs are destroying multi-story buildings, which are collapsing on top of people. Electricity is being destroyed, it is impossible to move the debris, there is no running water, and, because of the lack of water, it is impossible to put out fires. The hospitals, insofar as they remain standing or operate out of cellars, are out of analgesic drugs, and are performing surgery with vodka. She stressed that the use of GRADs and the destruction they have caused, have come on top of a situation that was already desperate.

The use of GRADs began in mid-February, first against the Armenian-populated village of Shaumyan, and then against the Karabakh capital of Stepanakert. What worsened matters still further, is that on Feb. 24-26, the Azeri forces seized three more arsenals of weaponry of the former Soviet Army (see details below), and gained the capability to greatly escalate the onslaught. She also stressed that what is unfolding, if not stopped, will be worse than a "simple slaughter," given the precedent of the atrocities that the Azeris committed when they carried out forced deportations of Armenians in April-May of last year, at that time in tandem with the Soviet Fourth Army.

Baroness Cox expressed the fear that Armenian military successes of the past couple of days, while undoubtedly meaningful in terms of undermining the Azeri blockade of Karabakh, are only "desperate measures of self-defense." The various "international mediation" efforts now ongoing—Iranian, French, and others—are only giving the Azeris more time to consolidate their military buildup. As an example, she noted that the "so-called peace talks" that recently took place in Moscow, sponsored by the Russian leadership, were taking place coincident with Azeri missile attacks on Stepanakert. The danger now is that the appearance of "mediation efforts" will only "lull the international community into a sense of false complacency."

Baroness Cox said she was "very, very dismayed" by the diplomacy of U.S. Secretary of State James Baker III in this

area, since he agreed to American recognition of Azerbaidzhan "with no specified stipulated conditions at all," without even demanding respect for human rights or the "right to life" of the Armenians. Since that time, the Azeri military buildup has proceeded massively, including the creation of an Azeri army through conscription and "re-conscription," i.e., redrafting Azeris who had previously served in the Soviet army.

The danger of 'impending genocide'

In addition to the above evaluation, Baroness Cox's office in London released, on Feb. 26, the following press statement:

"In the last two days (Feb. 24-26):

"1) Azerbaidzhani forces have seized control of the military base Agdam with its large supply of military equipment and weapons; it is thought that these forces may not be under the control of President Mutalibov.

"2) Azeri troops have also taken control of the village of Nasosnaya which has the biggest stock of military armaments including 'GRAD' missile rocket launchers; it is thought that these troops are from the Azeri Popular Front.

"3) Also seized by Azeri forces is the base at South Lenkoran, which contains 40% of the Soviet military equipment based in Azerbaidzhan.

"The seizure of these massive supplies of military arms and equipment clearly represents a grave danger of an imminent all-out onslaught on the Armenians of Karabakh. In the meantime, 'GRAD' rockets and other artillery shells are still being fired on the capital city of Stepanakert as well as on villages in the region.

"If a major and decisive onslaught is to be averted, *urgent* initiatives must be taken. Otherwise, Azerbaidzhan may achieve a *fait accompli* before any initiatives recommended by the recent CSCE delegation can be implemented."

On Feb. 27, she released a situation report on Karabakh, warning: "The enclave of 200,000 people is besieged, blockaded, and bombarded, with devastating effects on the civilian population. There is no electricity, no light, heat, power for hospital equipment or for power-assisted machinery for moving rubble caused by shelling, burying civilians; water shortages have been cut off—so not only is there an acute shortage of adequate drinking water—there is no sanitation, a serious risk of epidemic disease."

She enumerated "priorities requiring *urgent* assistance," including medical supplies, milk for infants, and food, etc., and warned about the massive destruction caused by the GRAD launchers. This statement concluded: "The situation in Karabakh today is probably one of the most catastrophic in the world at the present time. The double effects of war and blockade mean that the civilian population is trapped in desperate conditions, and faces death either by slow strangulation through deprivation of essential supplies, or by bombardment with massive casualties and no effective medical treatment for those are not killed outright."