

Khomeini says he wants help from USSR ties

NICOSIA, Cyprus -- Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini said Sunday he wants strong ties with Moscow to help fight the "devilish" West, and Iranian legislators reportedly agreed to consider breaking ties with Britain.

Khomeini's overtures to the Soviet Union, which he previously condemned for its atheist ideology, came during a 1 1/2-hour meeting with Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze.

It was believed to be the first private meeting between Iran's 88-year-old revolutionary patriarch and a foreign minister, according to Iran's official Islamic Republic News Agency.

IRNA said Shevardnadze did not ask Khomeini to withdraw his order

for Moslem zealots to assassinate British author Salman Rushdie because of his book "The Satanic Verses." Britain reportedly asked Shevardnadze to press Khomeini to give a reprieve to Rushdie, whose book has been denounced as insulting to Islam.

"There was no mention of the affair in Shevardnadze's speech," said IRNA, monitored in Nicosia.

The meeting with Shevardnadze came two days after Khomeini declared Iran does not need relations with the West. This issue has divided the Tehran hierarchy between so-called pragmatists, who favor more relations with the rest of the world, and hardliners, who favor continued isolation.

Rushdie has been in hiding since Khomeini's Feb. 14 execution order, and Iranian religious leaders put a \$5.2 million bounty on his head.

In protest, Britain withdrew all its diplomats from its embassy in Tehran, which had been reopened in December after an earlier rift of more than a year. It also asked Iranian diplomats to leave London.

The 11 other European Community countries as well as Norway, Sweden and Canada, recalled their top diplomats from Iran, and Tehran brought its ambassadors home.

No diplomatic ties have been formally broken. But religious leaders in Tehran last week called for a break with Britain.

IRNA said more than 100 of the

270 deputies in Iran's Parliament sponsored a bill Sunday to put relations with Britain to the vote. The bill was "passed overwhelmingly," making it a priority at the next parliamentary session Tuesday, IRNA said.

Rushdie, a Briton born into a Moslem family in India, has apologized for the distress "The Satanic Verses" has caused, saying his work was intended to study good and evil from a secular viewpoint and not intended to insult anyone.

The English-language Tehran Times said Sunday that hostile relations with the West stemming from the Rushdie novel opened "all doors" to improving ties with Moscow.

It said the two main irritants to better relations with Moscow - the Soviet supply of arms to Iran's enemy in the 8-year Iran-Iraq war, and the Soviet military presence in Afghanistan -- were removed at a time when "the West has pushed its relations with Iran to an all-time low."

Khomeini stressed to Shevardnadze the importance of "the expansion of strong ties in various dimensions in confronting the devilish acts of the West," Tehran Radio reported. It broadcast extensive excerpts from the meeting at Khomeini's home.

Shevardnadze responded, "We believe that the time has come when our relations can enter a new phase in all fields," the radio said.

Honduras fears reaction to recent violence

TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras (AP) - A surge in violence has raised fears of a leftist revolt and renewed repression by rightist death squads in Honduras, which is squeezed between a civil war in El Salvador and a dying insurgency in Nicaragua.

Since Jan. 7, bombings have injured 10 people, three U.S. soldiers have been wounded in attacks on American troops, and three people have been assassinated.

Honduran officials, however, are quick to point out that the level of violence remains low by Central American standards.

"We are not in the middle of a communal war," said President Jose Azcona Hoyo in an interview with The Associated Press. "Health and education are more serious problems than violence."

But four bombings since Feb. 18 prompted the chief of the armed forces, Gen. Humberto Regalado, to announce Thursday increased internal security and vigilance at public buildings.

Americans are "briefed to keep a reasonable profile and be cautious in their daily lives," said U.S. Embassy spokesman Charles Barclay. He said the instructions had not changed since shots were fired at a military convoy on Feb. 1 and a bomb was tossed at a bus Feb. 18.

About 1,200 U.S. troops are stationed at Palmerola's Enrique Sotocano Air Base, and National Guard troops take part in frequent exercises. Honduras received about \$1.15 billion in U.S. civil and military aid from 1981 to 1988.

Set like a keystone between Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala, Honduras has frequently been involved in border problems and regional disputes, most recently by helping U.S.-supported Contra rebels trying to overthrow the leftist Sandinista government of Nicaragua.

"Honduras has been the big loser in Central America," said Efraim Diaz Arrivillaga, presidential candidate of the small Christian Democratic party in elections set for Nov. 26.

Some of the violence can be pinned on leftist groups like the Cinchonero guerrillas, but internal political disputes, drug trafficking and Machiavellian revenge theories also circulate, creating an atmosphere of uncertainty.

No group has claimed responsibility for the most recent bombings.

Carlos Montoya, president of the Honduran Congress, said they "are related to conflicts of an internal order."

He claimed the bombings are linked to drug trafficking and a recent police takeover at the Central Penitentiary, where guards were accused of taking payoffs. He refused to elaborate.

The most significant killing, that of Gen. Gustavo Alvarez Martinez on Jan. 25, was thoroughly professional. He was blasted by six gunmen who knew his routine, and the Cinchoneros promptly claimed responsibility.

Alvarez, head of the military from 1982 to 1984, played godfather to the Contras. He was dumped by fellow officers and made an apparently genuine conversion to evangelical Christianity, carrying a Bible and refusing armed guards.

Many Hondurans fear right-wing repression more than a revived guerrilla force. In 1980-1984, when the Cinchonero Popular Liberation Movement was most active, more than 130 death squad killings and disappearances were reported.

That is far fewer than the tens of thousands who have died in El Salvador and Guatemala. But the specter of death squads caused an almost panicked reaction when the Alliance for Anticommunist Action - Triple A - distributed leaflets in late January threatening human rights and labor and political leaders.

"We hope that the response (to violence) is not repression," said Felix Molina, an official of the Center for Human Rights. Molina claims Triple A is made up of army troops, but the military denies involvement.

"There's no evidence the Triple A exists. They haven't actually done anything. The leaflets could be produced by anyone," said Ruben Zepeda, the nation's attorney general.

Honduras was once the prototypical banana republic, with bananas its leading export and revolving door governments - it suffered 17 coups or coup attempts in four years.

The nation of about 5 million is the poorest in Central America. Illiteracy is estimated at 46 percent, unemployment 25 percent, inflation 30 percent.

16 dead Bus crash leaves many injured

RIO DE JANEIRO, Brazil -- A bus collided head-on with a truck in rural northeastern Brazil, killing 16 people and injuring 25, police said.

The crash occurred Saturday in Catalao, about 1,100 miles northwest of Rio de Janeiro.

The bus was packed with 41 weekend travelers making a 30-hour, 1,116-mile trip from Irace in the northeastern state of Bahia to

Brasilia, the capital, said Catalao Police Officer Jose da Silva.

The driver lost control of the bus on a hilly curve and swerved in front of an oncoming truck loaded with corn, he said.

"The scene was horrible," said da Silva, who assisted rescue workers. "The truck rammed the bus clear off the road and threw people over the drop that runs alongside the road. The

dead bodies were mangled and crushed, and bleeding people were screaming out for help from the twisted wreckage."

Fourteen bus passengers, the bus driver and the driver of the truck died instantly, da Silva said. Two bus passengers died shortly afterwards at Catalao Hospital and six of the 25 injured are in critical condition, he said.

IRA says it killed British agent

BELFAST, Northern Ireland -- A man was fatally shot in a west Belfast housing project Sunday night, police said, and the IRA claimed to have shot him because he was a British agent.

A spokesman for the Royal Ulster Constabulary said the force was not aware of the victim having any connection with the security forces.

In a brief statement released by the Irish Republican Army to Belfast news media, it said it had "executed a British agent."

The man, as yet unidentified by police, was killed in a dark alley in Bunbeg Park in the Glen Road area of west Belfast, police said.

Nearby residents said they heard five shots.

Police and troops flooded the area, set up road blocks and began searches.

The IRA is waging a violent campaign to drive the British out of the predominantly Protestant province and unite it with the largely Roman Catholic Republic of Ireland.

Bomb explodes at Brit consulate

KARACHI, Pakistan -- A bomb exploded at a guard house outside the British Consulate in Karachi on Sunday night, killing a Pakistani guard, police said.

There was an unconfirmed report that another person was injured in the blast, which eyewitnesses said occurred around 9:35 p.m. when the mission was closed.

Officers, speaking on the usual condition of anonymity, said a guard was killed instantly. They said the blast was almost certainly a bomb but that an investigation was under way.

None of the consulate staff was believed to be inside the building when the blast occurred. Witnesses said another person was injured, but police could not confirm that.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the explosion, but Moslems here have been protesting British writer Salman Rushdie's novel, "The Satanic Verses."

Ortega will step down on 'no' vote

MANAGUA, Nicaragua -- The Sandinistas will hand over power if they lose the 1990 presidential election, a government official was quoted as saying on Sunday.

President Daniel Ortega will "abandon power immediately" if he loses the February 1990 election, Interior Minister Tomas Borge told a group of disabled war veterans, the pro-government daily El Nuevo Diario said.

Earlier Saturday, Borge told a group of foreign correspondents that the Sandinistas would win the election. He also said the party hadn't discussed who its candidate would be.

Even though Ortega has not made his candidacy official, he has spoken publicly about running for re-election. Party faithful greeted him at a political rally in Managua Saturday with placards calling for him to run in 1990.

El Nuevo Diario quoted Borge

as saying the Sandinistas would win because they are "the biggest and the best."

Ortega announced earlier this month at a Central American summit meeting in El Salvador that Nicaragua would hold elections in February 1990 instead of November.

He said opposition parties would have an opportunity to participate fully in the electoral process and international monitors were welcome to observe every phase of the campaign and the voting.

The leftist Sandinistas, who have been in power since overthrowing dictator Anastasio Somoza in a 1979 revolution, have been holding talks with the opposition about electoral reforms and media access.

The United States supports the rebels known as Contras seeking to overthrow the Sandinista regime.

Quakes cause minor damage

SAN JOSE, Costa Rica (AP) - Two moderate earthquakes rattled Costa Rica Sunday, causing minor damage to an airport tower and cracking the pavement on some rural roads, two officials said.

Red Cross officials said they had no reports of injuries.

The first tremor occurred at 6:24 a.m. and measured 4.3 on the Richter scale, the Seismological Institute at the National University said. The second quake struck at 8:40 a.m. and measured 3.9 on the Richter scale.

The quakes were centered near San Marcos de Tarrazu, about 45

miles southwest of San Jose, according to institute spokesman Jorge Barquero. They were felt throughout Costa Rica.

He said the tremors cracked the walls of the tower at the Tobias Bolaños Airport, a general aviation facility two miles from San Jose, and the pavement of some rural roads. Airport Director William Alvarez said damage to the tower was minor and it would probably be reopened within hours.

An earthquake of 4 on the Richter scale can cause moderate damage and a quake measuring 5 can cause considerable damage.

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