

Vatican pressures for cover of relief operations

By John Thavis
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — As the bloody war in Bosnia-Herzegovina dragged on, the Vatican in mid-September stepped up pressure on the international community to provide military protection for relief operations.

At the same time, Croatian Cardinal Franjo Kuharic rejected the idea of carving up Bosnia-Herzegovina into autonomous ethnic zones, saying the republic deserves full independence.

At the United Nations, the Security Council took the first step toward expelling the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which now consists only of Serbia and Montenegro.

In an unusually detailed speech to the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe Sept. 16 in Prague, Czechoslovakia, Monsignor Alain Lebeaupin, Vatican representative, said sterner measures such as a "no-fly" zone and militarily protected relief corridors were needed in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Monsignor Lebeaupin said the CSCE, which includes the United States, Canada and European nations, had appeared powerless and disorganized in the face of continued fighting in Bosnia.

He criticized this lack of a coordinated Western peace strategy, especially in view of the war's human toll. In particular, he denounced a "climate of terror" created by detention camps in Bosnia, where he said human dignity had been "outrageously violated."

Monsignor Lebeaupin recommended that the international community use "every means at its disposal"



AP/Wide World Photos
An unidentified Muslim boy and girl kiss each other on a Sarajevo Street in spite of daily attacks and danger Sept. 15. Sarajevo was reeling after renewed bombardment Sept. 17 and the Bosnian government rejected Serb proposals to stop fighting and divide the war-torn republic.

in dealing with the Balkan crisis and help end "what should certainly be called a true war of aggression and ethnic expansion."

The world should make clear that a war of "ethnic cleansing" is unacceptable in today's Europe, and that those who support it place themselves outside international society, he said.

The fighting in Bosnia-Herzegovina has pitted Serbian forces against the majority Croat and Muslim population of the republic. The term "ethnic cleansing" has generally been used to describe Serbian attempts to rid captured areas of non-Serbs.

In addition to militarily protected relief routes, the measures proposed by

the Vatican representative included:

- Establishing a "real" naval blockade. Currently, U.N. trade sanctions against Yugoslavia are monitored but unenforced.

- The possible closing of air space over Bosnia-Herzegovina to all flights except those of the United Nations, to halt the bombing of civilian populations and curb the re-supply of weapons.

- Toughening and controlling the existing land and river trade embargoes against Yugoslavia.

- Making Yugoslavia's continued participation in the CSCE contingent on respect for the territorial integrity of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

On Sept. 19, the Vatican's top doctrinal official defended the idea of mi-

litary intervention to protect relief operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, said in an interview with Vatican Radio that he would recommend "the protection and defense, if necessary even with weapons, of humanitarian aid and its transportation."

The cardinal cautioned that such operations would have to be well-defined. If not, he warned, military intervention could easily spread.

He said that in general outside military intervention in Bosnia would be "doubtful and problematic." Use of ground troops would only complicate the situation, and an air war would not be a good solution, he said.

The U.N. Security Council voted Sept. 15 to send 7,500 troops to protect the humanitarian effort in Bosnia-Herzegovina, joining the 1,500 soldiers already there. The Security Council failed to agree on creating a "no-fly" zone over the republic, however.

Earlier, the United Nations rejected a proposal to establish an overland relief corridor and protect it with 100,000 troops. Aid workers trying to deliver food and medical supplies to besieged towns and refugee populations in Bosnia have been attacked routinely.

Cardinal Kuharic, the leading churchman in neighboring Croatia, said one proposed solution to the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina — the creation of autonomous zones based on ethnic identity — would be ineffective and unjust.

It would be difficult and dangerous to try to establish "pure cantons," he told the Italian newspaper *Avvenire*. It would be almost impossible to guarantee that one group would not overpower another.

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