

Rebels on guard

Race for shelters as air raid siren sounds

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deadline's expiry, the ringing of church bells for Sunday services was replaced by the wail of air raid sirens.

Slovene TV and radio interrupted programmes to instruct citizens to go immediately to air raid shelters, recently converted from underground car parks, wine cellars and basements.

As families clutching food and blankets ran for the shelters, officials warned that four warplanes had taken off from Belgrade for Ljubljana.

It was 75 tense minutes before the all-clear was sounded. Throughout yesterday, work was going on to construct more bomb shelters.

The streets of Ljubljana were almost deserted by members of the public for the first time since the declaration of independence by Slovenia and Croatia last Tuesday.

Security in the city was dramatically increased with roadblocks of lorries and buses four deep jamming the roads.

Bargain

Young crop-haired policemen, dressed in blue denim jeans, T-shirts and leather jackets, and carrying Uzi sub-machine guns, mingled with militia. Flak-jacketed members of the defence force appeared on every street corner, searching those few who ventured out.

Despite federal claims that they now control all 27 frontier crossing points, at least 14 remain in dispute and Slovenia's forces are clearly holding their ground.

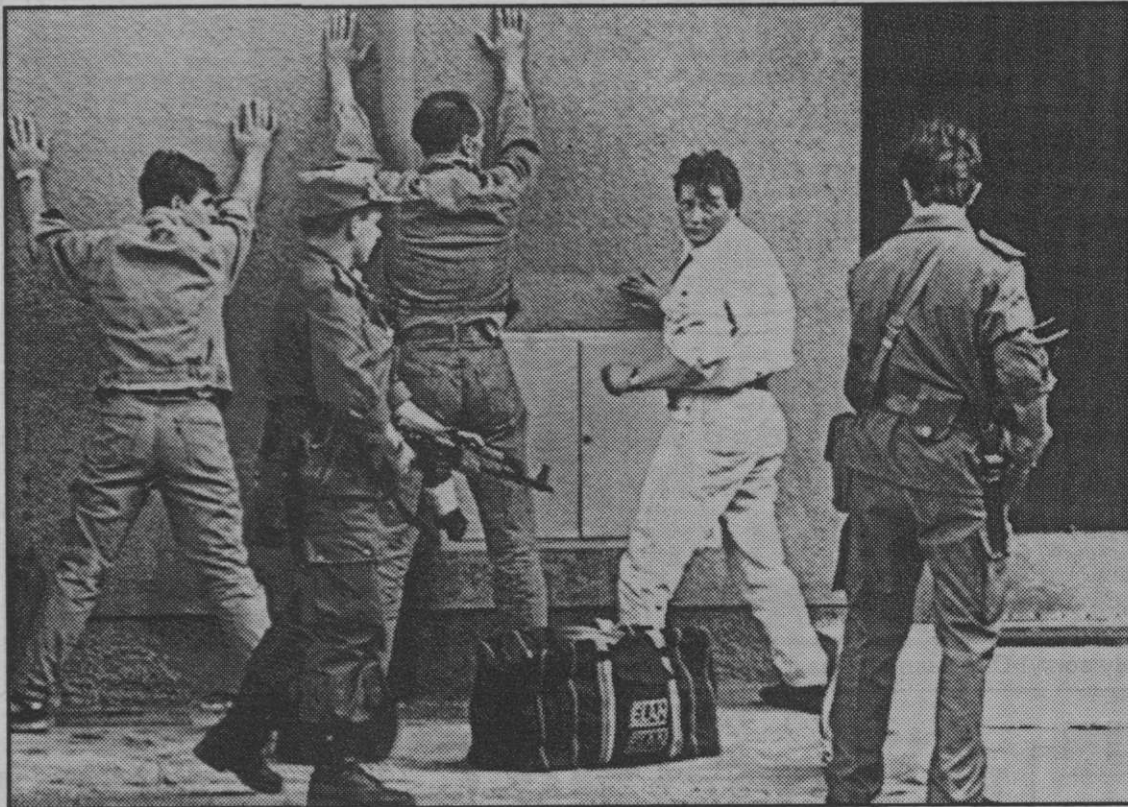
On the roads north towards the Austrian and Hungarian borders, hastily-built blockades seemed to have appeared almost every two miles.

The defence forces have learnt quickly from the first days of the confrontation when federal tanks simply smashed through barricades. Now, on major roads and bridges, lorries are packed tightly together. In the centre of each blockade petrol tankers and canisters of gas await the bullet which would cause an explosion destroying everything within hundreds of yards.

Yesterday troops from the 40,000-strong defence force could be seen lying on their bellies in dense undergrowth. There appeared no shortage of the shoulder-fired anti-tank weapons which have proved such a success for the resistance fighters.

STEVE DOUGHTY, *Diplomatic Correspondent*, writes: The three EC foreign ministers who brokered a ceasefire bargain on Friday night saw it fall apart within hours of their return to the Luxembourg summit.

The deal involved federal army troops returning to their barracks



Flashpoint: Slovenian soldiers arrest three men at Ljubljana railway station

Ready to die at freedom bridge

From DUNCAN SHIELDS in Muersko Sredisce



THE bridge, wired with explosives and blocked by five full petrol lorries, is rapidly becoming a symbol of Slovenia's stand for freedom.

The local people, determined to resist the power of Belgrade, could blow up half this tiny Croatian border town. And they will if the federal army tries to break through to Slovenia on the other side of the River Mure. The locals' nerve has already been tested

once. On Friday they confronted a column of seven federal tanks at the bridge. After 15 minutes of talks between the commander and the town's leaders, the tanks beat an undignified, clattering retreat.

Tension, however, remains at fever-pitch. As policeman Ivan Varga said: 'Who's to know how desperate they'll be next time round? If the army want a fight they'll get one. I'm prepared to die protecting this town. So is everyone else here.'

and Slovenia and Croatia freezing their declarations of independence for three months.

Last night the three — Italian Foreign Minister Gianni De Michelis, the Netherlands' Hans Van Den Broek and Jacques Poos, Foreign Minister of Luxembourg which held the rotating EC presidency until midnight — were aiming to make the bargain between

the national government and the breakaway republics stick at the second attempt.

They repeated the threat to freeze £600million in Community aid unless a ceasefire holds.

British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd said the aid threat would count for little among the warring Yugoslav factions, but he gave his backing to the renewed peace mission.

Last night German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher said his country's aid to Yugoslavia, both direct and through the EC, had been stopped immediately.

He plans to go to Yugoslavia today to help the effort to find a diplomatic solution.

Comment and Paul Johnson
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