

# Hardline generals in federal army fail to force Slovenia into submission

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IF the hardline communist generals who control the Yugoslav army hoped to force Slovenia into submission they appear to have failed in their purpose. Instead the army's threat to use all force at its disposal to secure a ceasefire appears to have hardened the resolve of this small Alpine republic.

Mr Milan Kucan, the Slovene president, declared at the weekend: "Slovenia can no longer be an integral part of Yugoslavia. It could be forcibly annexed back to Yugoslavia, but such an act would not put a stop to the democratic processes here." He added: "Due to the current aggressive interventions of the army against Slovenia, it will not be possible to discuss the possibility of establishing a new community of sovereign states on the territory of former Yugoslavia."

## Control of the military appears to have passed to about 200 officers around the general staff

The agreement on a ceasefire by the federal army and Slovene forces, reached by the troika of EC foreign ministers and federal and republican ministers on Friday night, hinged on Slovenia accepting a three-month suspension in implementation of its declaration of independence. It also required Serbia to accept the appointment of Mr Stipe Mesic, a Croat, as federal president. Serbia had blocked his appointment on May 15. But the "peace agreement" was already in tatters when the troika returned to Luxembourg on Saturday morning.

Although Mr Ante Markovic, the federal prime minister, met Croat and Slovene leaders yesterday to seek a new political agreement, events over the last few days indicate that the real power behind the attempt to keep Yugoslavia as a federal state, by force if necessary, is not the weak and divided federal government but the federal army.

By giving the army the go-ahead in Slovenia, Mr Markovic has damaged his credentials as a prime minister committed to the democratic process and his credibility with the international community. In effect the generals appear to have pulled off a virtual military coup.

At least, this seems to be the conclusion to be drawn by recent events.

For a start, Mr Vejko Kadrijevic, the defence minister and member of the special co-ordinating council set up by Mr Markovic which helped fill the political vacuum caused by collapse of the collective presidency on May 15, has hardly been seen or heard since the military moved to seal off Slovenia's frontiers with Austria, Italy and Hungary on Wednesday.

Mr Markovic had relied on Mr Kadrijevic to keep a tight rein on the army and restrain the hardline communists and Serb nationalists.

Instead it was General Marko Negovanovic, a former head of the army's political department who went on Belgrade television on Saturday to threaten Slovenia that the army would drop its relative restraint and "declare a mobilisation" unless Slovenia honoured the ceasefire agreed on Friday night between the federal government and the EC troika. It was also Gen Negovanovic who announced that a general mobilisation of all armed forces was in its final stages on the territory of Croatia. Hard information is patchy, but control of the army appears to have moved into the hands of a group of 200 communist officers around the general staff. This group, set up earlier this year, has nothing but disdain for western governments and the democratic process. Its views were reflected in a document drawn up by last January which criticised what it called western attempts at interference in Yugoslavia, and went on to spell out its vision of a new Yugoslavia. The main points of the document were:

- "The west is aiming to divide Yugoslavia by attacking the communists. The functioning of the federal state must be secured. . . if the west imposes its will it would be difficult to avoid bloodshed. . .

- "Socialism is not finished and has not been brought to its knees, Yugoslavia though paying a high price has managed to overcome the first strike of the anti-communist hysteria wave. A real possibility to preserve the country as a federative and socialist society has been preserved.

- "The army as an institution must be included in discussions on the future of Yugoslavia.

- "Suggestions that Yugoslavia should



A Slovene militiaman in Ljubljana yesterday checks a motorist's identity as the city waited fearfully for air attacks

become a confederation run against the fact that such a state cannot exist. Yugoslavia can be only a unified federal state.

- "Every effort has to be made to ensure that the League of Communists/Movement for Yugoslavia, to which the senior officers belong, becomes the major political force in Yugoslavia over the next five or six months.

Even if the army does return to barracks today in line with an agreement announced last night in Ljubljana between Mr Markovic and Mr Kucan, Slovene and Croat government officials believe the crisis will continue. Events in Slovenia, they feel, are likely to lead to a chain reaction in other parts of the country where the potential for inter-ethnic conflict is infinitely greater than in small, ethnically homogeneous Slovenia which voted overwhelmingly to reject communism and create its own

multi-party, free market democracy last year.

Yesterday, hundreds of Slovene paramilitary troops, armed with rifles, pistols and grenades, and backed by armed civilians, waited for air attacks and Slovene television broadcast a video telling its citizens about air-raid shelters. Fear engulfed the Slovene capital of Ljubljana, a city of 350,000 people.

As for the federal army, it appeared surprised by the determined resistance of Slovenia's inexperienced territorial defence units, and frustrated by the restraint urged by some federal army commanders.

Even so, the loss of life, the strafing of blocked traffic, and the destruction of frontier posts and of vital tourist facilities such as Ljubljana and Maribor airports and passenger aircraft on the ground, have left a bitter taste which will be hard to remove.

# Feuding neighbours burn their remaining bridges

"IT will never be the same again," said Mr Rudi Jugovar.

He and four colleagues were standing at a quiet mountain pass not far from the Austrian border. The road was blocked by trees felled by Slovenia's territorial defence units (TDU).

Mr Jugovar, recruited into the TDU last week, said he did not think he would be returning to his job as a clerk for some time. "We have received no order to return to base," he said. Mr Jugovar believes the action by the federal army "has burned all its bridges with Slovenia. It would be a tragedy for us if we dared renounce our independence. We will go it alone to Europe, even if the west does not recognise us."

These were sentiments expressed by many Slovenes yesterday, as the federal army waged a war of nerves against this small Alpine republic of 2m people. Their dogged determination to implement their declaration of independence is now the driving force which steers the Slovene government.

During an emotional meeting of the parliament which lasted into the early hours of yesterday morning, interrupted by gunfire and threats by the federal army to bomb Ljubljana, it issued a statement which defied the federal government - and western governments.

The parliament stated that "the republic of Slovenia insists on the adopted independence documents and charges all state authorities of the republic to continue implementing the adopted decision."

This amounted to a snub to the European Community troika of foreign ministers who asked the Slovene government on Friday night "to postpone the execution of the declaration of independence for three months".

"We want to be part of Europe, and we will," said Mr Jelko Kacin, Slovenia's minister of information.

"The EC troika made a grave mistake. They played into the hands of the federalists, and confirmed the position of Serbia and the army. That is their mistake. There is no going back for Slovenia," he said in an interview. He added: "Sooner or later, Europe will recognise us."

Europe is the republic's pow-

erful magnet. Slovenia, unlike some of the attempts at independence by either the Baltic states, or Croatia, has pursued a measured road to independence which first started last December when its citizens voted to break away.

## Sentiments inside the Slovene republic have hardened as the war of nerves intensifies, reports Judy Dempsey

Since then, the parliament, dominated by a loose coalition of social democratic, christian liberal and green parties, have worked hard on drafting a new constitution, and drawing up political and economic laws aimed at reaching a divorce with the federal government.

"We really have no place in a Yugoslavia which is dominated by the republic of Serbia, or in a country which has slowed down any economic reforms," said Mr Joze Mencinger, an economist at Ljubljana University.

"Of course it will be difficult to be truly independent. It will take time," said Mr Andrija Ovcirk, the deputy prime minister.

"We have to draw up a new fiscal policy, create a central bank, build up reserves and eventually establish our own currency. But there is no going back," he explained.

The republic, along with neighbouring Croatia, had attempted, in a document drawn up last December, to persuade the federal government into creating a loose confederation of sovereign states aimed at weakening the power of Serbia, and speeding up reforms.

"We were blocked by the army, by Serbia and by the federal government," said Mr Kacin.

For months, Slovenia had kept Mr Ante Markovic the federal premier, informed, and even asked for formal negotiations with the federal government to discuss its moves towards independence.

"There was no response from Markovic," said Mr Ovcirk.

Mr Markovic visited Slovenia last week in an attempt to cajole the republic into postponing independence. When that failed, the army moved in.

The army occupation also represented a clear warning to Croatia that similar legal steps adopted in the future by that republic would not be tolerated.

But Croatia's declaration of independence last week was symbolic. Unlike Slovenia, it had not taken any significant measures to distance itself from the federation.

However, Croatia is in a more difficult position. It must decide how it can establish a *modus vivendi* with the ethnic Serbs, who make up 11 per cent of the republic's 4.5m population and who want no place in an independent Croatia.

