

Part 2 of 3

# Mastering

DAILY MAIL 3/7/91



Deadly duty: A Yugoslav army soldier works to try to defuse a

TURMOIL AT THE TOP AS ARMY FIGHTS ON

From ANNA PUKAS  
in Belgrade

THE position of Stipe Mesic, the newly-elected president of Yugoslavia, is threatened by the ceasefire failure.

Mr Mesic, a Croat, took office on Sunday in the presence of a peace-seeking delegation of three European Community foreign ministers.

His elevation had been blocked for six weeks by Serbia, which has vowed to withdraw support for him immediately if Slovenia and Croatia violate the ceasefire agreement. The republics of Macedonia and Montenegro and the two autonomous regions of Vojvodina and Kosovo, would be certain to follow Serbia's lead.

Serbia's hostility stems not only from Mr Mesic's nationality but also from his apparent sympathies with the breakaway cause in a declaration before he took office that he would be 'the last president' of Yugoslavia in its current form.

He also made enemies in the army six months ago by promising to sack Gen Blagoje Adzic, the supreme military commander who earned his nickname of the Serbian Hawk through his hardline views. The majority of army officers are also Serbians.

However, the president has moved towards regaining military loyalty by sacking two senior commanders and replacing them with hardliners.

Lt Gen Konrad Kolksek, a Slovene, was sacked as commander of the 5th Corps which is stationed in Slovenia and Croatia. Asked if the dismissal was because of 'unsatisfactory motivation', Lt Gen Marko Negovanovic,

a senior member of the army staff corps, replied: 'Let's not talk about his motivation. Let's just look at his results.' Air force chief Colonel Marjan Rozic was also replaced.

Prime minister Ante Markovic has gone on record as saying the army has already acted without his authority and, on one occasion, without his knowledge.

Challenged with this, Lt Gen Negovanovic paused for a long time, smiled and said: 'I don't think he

said that.' When directly asked to whom the army answers, he said: 'To the collective presidency.'

It is self-evident however that, with a divided collective presidency, that does not mean a great deal.

Slovenia meanwhile, appears to be ignoring another part of the peace deal — that it should suspend its declaration of independence. Almost all Slovenes working for federal institutions in Belgrade have left for Ljubljana.

## Women on the warpath for peace

DOZENS of women occupied the Serbian parliament in Belgrade last night demanding the return of their menfolk from battle.

The wives and mothers of Serbians fighting with federal forces braved water cannon and teargas

to burst through the gates of the national assembly building and into the chamber where an all-day session was taking place.

Carrying placards demanding 'Stop the fighting' and calling for the resignation of Serbian

president Slobodan Milosevic, they brought the session to a halt.

One woman shouted: 'I don't care what is happening in Slovenia, I don't want my child to die up there.'

The women demanded

a law preventing Serbian conscripts serving outside their own borders. Hundreds more, including men, staged a noisy demonstration outside.

Serbia provides the bulk of Yugoslav army strength simply because it is the largest republic.

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# the minefield

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mine laid by rebels on a Slovenian highway. Many federal units are trapped in the republic

## Terror raid leaves rebel capital braced for a blitz

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that the army believes will end with the replacement of the legally elected Government of Slovenia.

'The world did not wake up to the tragedy of the Kurds until many people had died. I hope the same thing does not happen here.'

The 'second phase' had begun only hours after notorious hardline General Zivota Avramovic, a Serb, was appointed head of operations in the rebel republic.

It was as violent as it was sudden. As dawn broke at 4am, a convoy of federal tanks, trapped for the past five days, tried to break cover from an area of dense woodland five miles from the border with Croatia.

Defence forces, which had surrounded them, moved in. They had planned for just such an operation — minefields had been placed on two sides.

Federal helicopter gunships and warplanes firing rockets and cannon launched attack after attack, strafing the fields where rebel militia were dug in.

However Slovene forces claimed to have destroyed half the federal tank force.

At least three tanks, one with its turret blown off, smouldered beside an blazing armoured personnel carrier.

The only nuclear power station in Slovenia, three miles away, was closed down after three bombers were seen circling overhead. The Government said there was a 'very real possibility of catastrophe'.

### Trapped

The most devastating air attack was reserved for Ljubljana. The damage, however, was not physical but psychological.

A week ago the inhabitants danced in the streets at the announcement of independence. At 2pm yesterday, amid screaming, panic and confusion, they were running for their lives.

With a deafening roar, two MiG-29 fighter-bombers swooped at rooftop level. Some people threw themselves to the ground while others, transfixed, gazed at the sky.

Two huge explosions followed,

shattering glass. In fact, they were not bomb blasts but sonic booms.

However the damage had been done, and the city remained virtually empty. Last night the Slovene defence ministry warned residents to brace themselves for a massive attack. Hundreds of members of the Slovene defence forces were drafted in and could be seen preparing positions near the parliament buildings.

Anti-aircraft weapons were moved to barricades blocking roads into the city after intelligence reports that the Yugoslav air force would attempt

to blow them up, opening the way for tanks and troops to pour through.

Earlier Yugoslav troops fired on a crowd in Zagreb, capital of the other breakaway republic, Croatia, as the conflict spread to the city for the first time.

Hundreds of civilians gathered to shout and throw Molotov cocktails as several dozen tanks and armoured personnel carriers filed out of the huge Marshal Tito barracks on the edge of the city, apparently heading for Slovenia. Witnesses said soldiers

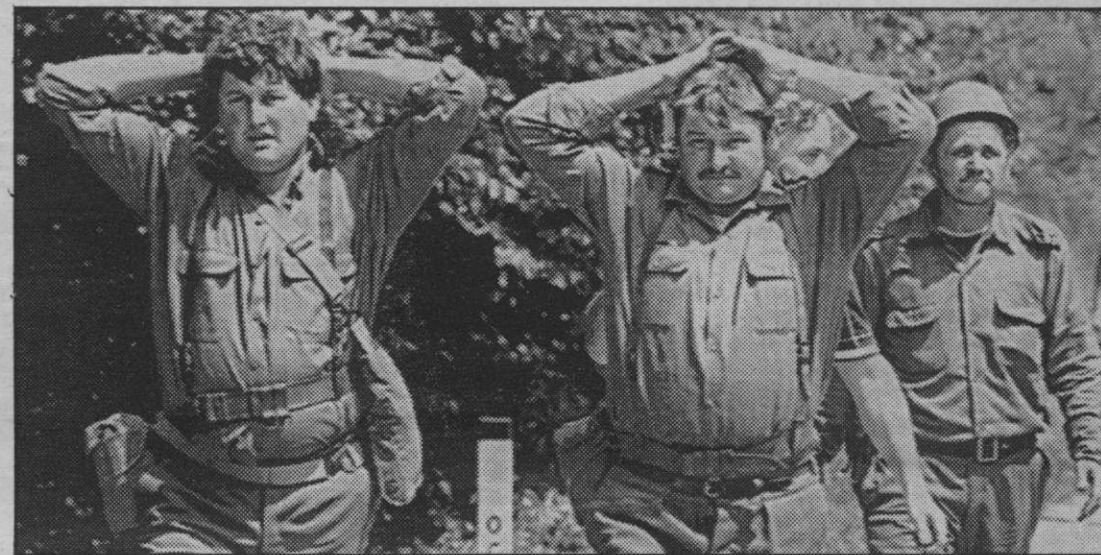
fired machine guns, killing at least one man, after one of the tanks was set alight. Zagreb radio said one soldier had also been killed.

Fighting erupted along Yugoslavia's border with Austria, apparently as trapped federal troops tried to break out from Slovenian units encircling them. Border checkpoints tentatively reopened by Austrian officials after weekend fighting on the other side were immediately shut again, leaving only three or four passable along the normally bustling frontier.

Austria has deployed 7,000 soldiers along its border, backed by tanks and fighter planes, to prevent fighting spilling over from Slovenia.

The republic's president Milan Kucan crossed into Austria yesterday for talks with German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher, who was meeting Yugoslav leaders in his capacity as chairman of the crisis management body of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Today three senior diplomats representing the EC will fly to Belgrade.



Surrender: Two Slovenian rebels are led away by an army officer

## WE WON'T COME HOME

FEWER than 100 British tourists remained in Slovenia yesterday, the Foreign Office said. They included three diehards who were refusing to leave the Slovenian coastal resort of Portoroz, some distance from the fighting. Yugotours, the main operator, said: 'They refuse to go because they like it so much. We are trying our very, very best to persuade them, but apart from bumping them on the head and putting them in a car there is not much we can do.' Nearly 1,000 British holidaymakers have been evacuated in the last week.