

Yugoslav crisis deepens

SEE REVERSE SIDE ALSO
FINANCIAL TIMES 4/7/91

By Judy Dempsey in Ljubljana and Laura Silber in Belgrade

THE CRISIS in Yugoslavia deepened yesterday as tanks of the federal army fanned out across the country and clashes were reported throughout the day between troops and Slovene forces.

Diplomatic efforts to defuse the crisis intensified. The 35-nation Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe appealed for an immediate ceasefire.

European Community foreign ministers were preparing to meet tomorrow to consider recognising the rebel republics of Slovenia and Croatia, whose declarations of independence last week sparked the multi-ethnic conflict.

The US, warning of the danger of "full-fledged" civil war, said it was considering an arms embargo and cutting off aid to Yugoslavia to put pressure on the warring parties to agree a ceasefire.

In the federal capital Belgrade, the office of Mr Ante Markovic, Yugoslavia's prime minister, last night denied rumours that he had been placed under house arrest.

Tanjug, the country's official news agency said Mr Markovic had spent the day in a session with the federal government. The federal army also released a statement denying his arrest.

Last night Slovene and federal troops appeared to be beginning to disengage. However, there was speculation that federal troops moving south into neighbouring Croatia had in fact been instructed to regroup for a fresh assault. One unit stopped within 500 metres of the border after crossing into Croatia.

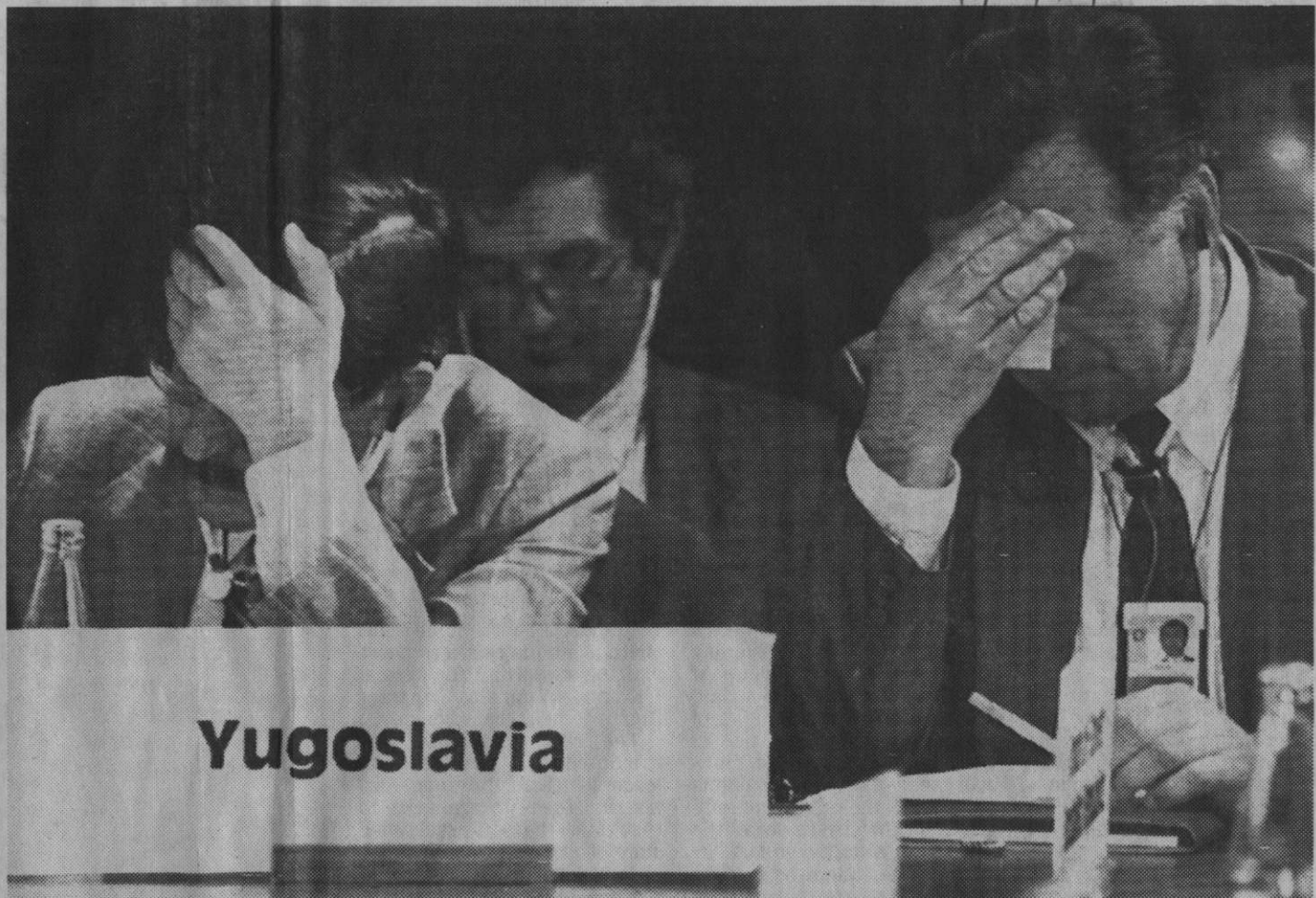
Last night 130 military vehicles, including armoured personnel carriers and trucks left Belgrade heading in the direction of Zagreb, the Croatian capital.

The troop movements appeared to conflict with an earlier statement by General Andrija Raseta, second in command of the Fifth Military District, which controls Slovenia and Croatia, that the army was not preparing a military takeover of Slovenia.

Slovenia said it feared an army attack today. Mr Jelco Kacin, the republic's minister of information, said that the text of an order to army units in Slovenia had been intercepted.

He said the order informed "all senior officers and soldiers to prepare for new activity to take place in the early morning. It is a brutal order".

Earlier Mr Kacin said Slovenia had started talks with the Yugoslav army on how to arrange for federal troops to return to barracks after days of fighting over the republic's independence bid. He said a Slovene delegation met federal



Hot seats: Yugoslav delegates at yesterday's Prague meeting of the CSCE listen to the call for an end to hostilities

defence ministry officials and representatives of the Fifth Military District.

Amid the confusion about the military's intentions, Gen Raseta, speaking in Zagreb, said that a ceasefire had been declared. "The army will not occupy Slovenia", he said. "The Yugoslav People's Army

radio reported skirmishes during the day between the republic's defence units and federal troops at Gornja Radgona, on the Austrian border. Casualty figures are unknown and last night the federal troops there are reported to have pulled out.

Fighting was also reported in the village of Brezice, south-east of the republic.

During the afternoon, Slovene and Croatian radio reported that large convoys of tanks had travelled through the republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina. There was speculation these had been sent to Krajina, south-western Croatia, to protect the ethnic Serb minority there against any attack from Croatia's armed forces.

In Croatia the government appeared to be preparing for war. Barricades were thrown up around the centre of Zagreb, on main roads and along some border crossings.

The Croatian leadership, led by President Franjo Tudjman, meanwhile announced a government reshuffle, under which Mr Martin Spigelj, the defence minister and a staunch Croat nationalist, became commander of the republic's national guard.

Mr Sima Djodan, described by western military attaches as "the hawk of all hawks", was promoted to take over at the defence ministry.

BEHIND THE CONFLICT

- Torn between loyalty and fear of bloodshed... Page 2
- Italy moves up tanks and helicopters..... Page 2
- Diplomacy tested by territorial integrity.. Page 2
- Airlines take avoiding action..... Page 2
- Editorial Comment.. Page 12
- Settling old scores. Page 12

will hold its fire. There will be no military takeover." However, there was no confirmation of his comments from army high command.

Gen Raseta also said the army accepted Mr Stipe Mesic, the federal president, as commander-in-chief of the armed forces. But earlier in the week, Mr Janez Drnovsek, Slovenia's representative on the state presidency, said the federal authorities had lost control over the army.

In Slovenia, the republic's