

# Slovenia claims to have uncovered a military plot to crush the separatist republics, as in Belgrade the Federal troops have 'secret plan'

YUGOSLAV federal infantry was yesterday reported to be on the move, possibly to bolster the armoured forces that have proved unsuitable in the alpine terrain of Slovenia, possibly to secure Croatian towns or Serbian enclaves in Croatia. The Slovene government says it has obtained a secret federal army invasion plan that was prepared two months ago.

According to unconfirmed reports federal troops boarded boats at Split, and buses in Bosnia. It is unclear whether the main thrust will be against Slovenia, or whether the federal command will let Slovenia try to prevent Croatia following.

Experts on the Yugoslav military consider the deployment of infantry to be more significant than reports of a large force of tanks - 180, nearly a division - halting on the Serbian-Croatian border. Ljubljana lies in a plain, but much of that is marshy so the tanks would be confined to the roads there, as in the mountains. North of Ljubljana lie the Julian Alps. Against guerrilla-type forces in this terrain, the effectiveness of tanks - and aircraft - is significantly reduced.

The Slovene and Croatian forces are lightly equipped, but have first class - if unlikely - leadership. Janez Jansa, the Slovenian Minister of Defence, is an academic defence expert, as is his close adviser, Professor Anton Bebler. According to James Gow, of London University's Centre for Defence Studies, he has "as good an understanding of both sides of the Yugoslav defence system - the federal army and the territorial defence system - as anyone in Yugoslavia".

Croatia's former defence minister, Martin Spegelj, was a former federal army general. On Tuesday he was replaced by Sime Djodan, a Croatian nationalist described as "the hawk of hawks".

Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina have not yet begun to organise independent armies, although Macedonia has tried to recall its people from the federal army. The army is the only federal institution with any real power. Colonel-General Blagoje Adzic, 63, the chief of staff of the federal army, is now in effective command after the Defence Minister, Vjeko Kadijevic, disappeared - probably because of ill-health. On Saturday the ultimatum to Slovenia was delivered by Lieutenant-General Marko Megovanovic, a former chief of military intelligence and

Col-Gen Adzic's deputy. But that does not necessarily mean Mr Kadijevic is no longer in charge, said John Zarnetta, a Yugoslav expert at the International Institute for Strategic Studies, yesterday.

Admiral Stane Brovet, a Deputy Minister of Defence, is a Slovene but he is a loyal communist and is unlikely to side with the secessionists.

The federal offensive against Slovenia followed the preparation two months ago of a secret plan known as *Bedem* [Rampart] - 91. A copy was captured from a federal army unit on 27 June and put on display by Mr Jansa. It was approved by Colonel-General Konrad Kolske, then commander of the 5th military region, with its headquarters in Zagreb, in Croatia.

The exercise envisaged a Yugoslav response to Nato intervention in Yugoslavia that penetrated Slovenia and parts of Croatia. This is a standard scenario for exercises to practise offensive movements: they are usually portrayed

as a counter attack. The Yugoslav federal ("red") forces' defensive plan envisaged countering "blue" attempts to destabilise Slovenia and Croatia as well as direct aggression. The operation took place mainly on Slovene and Croatian territory.

The attitude of the federal commanders is also apparent from a secret "topical brief" read to selected officers on 24 January. It noted that in spite of attempts by "Western anti-socialist strategists", socialism had not been rejected in countries where it had developed indigenously, rather than being imposed from outside. The report praised the Soviet armed forces actions to counter separatism.

Col-Gen Kolske is a Slovene and has since been replaced by a Serb. The lack of success of the federal army can be blamed on his lack of commitment, putting in only 2,000 troops initially. The initial objective was also extremely limited - to restore control of Yugoslavia's international frontiers, which had come under control of the break-away republics.

Yugoslavia's defence plans envisaged mobilisation of up to 85 per cent of the population in time of war, described by James Gow as "the core of the proto-army". Before fighting broke out, most of the heavy equipment had been withdrawn from the regional forces, but Croatia is estimated to have acquired 200 anti-tank and 200 anti-aircraft missile systems. They also still have some light armoured vehicles - BRDMs, and the Slovenes can probably field a few captured federal army tanks, and may be able to capture ammunition for them.

Slovenia has 50,000 territorial defence troops, plus 8,000 armed police. A large number of former troops could also join the Slovene forces. Croatia has no territorial defence troops, but 30,000 police, and an embryonic National Guard. They recently took delivery of 80,000 Hungarian Kalashnikov assault rifles, plus more from Singapore. It is estimated that Croatia could field more than 70,000 fighters.

The Federal Army has probably been reduced from its official strength of 138,000 to 130,000 by desertion, including probably 5,000 Slovenes. Before the fighting, during May and June, federal units, mostly from Serbia and Montenegro were deployed in Slovenia, and probably number 30,000. The Federal forces are tightly stretched in Slovenia, and according to John Zarnetta would face problems taking on the Croats as well.

In the past, the Yugoslav Army was a multi-ethnic force, with top posts distributed in proportion to the size of national groups. But on the eve of the crisis, this was being changed, with pressure put on senior Croats and Slovenes and the call-up of Serbian reservists to form picked units. The latter are mainly tank battalions, numbering a few thousand men, which have been deployed in Slovenia. Yugoslav elite units are also likely to be deployed. Elements of the one airborne brigade might be used in the border areas, to prise trapped Federal tank

units free. Other elite units include the few thousand men of the *Tiova Garda* - the Presidential Guard and the 1st Proletarian division. "I served in it myself some years ago", said John Zarnetta yesterday. "It's pretty good. They are the most disciplined. It's not only the ethnic element. It's the discipline."

YUGOSLAVIA'S exiled Crown Prince Alexander yesterday offered to return as its monarch, saying only he could unify the country. *Reuter* reports.

He said he could act as a constitutional umpire as Yugoslavia restored democracy and a free-market economy.

"I am the only one who can unify the country," he told a London radio station. He later repeated his offer to a British parliamentary committee on human rights. Some Serbian nationalists have also proposed restoring the monarchy. Yugoslavia was the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes under the Serbian monarchy when it was created in 1918 after the collapse of Austria-Hungary at the end of the First World War.

The monarchy was overthrown in 1943 when Tito's communist partisans formed a provisional government.

Christopher Bellamy

## Slovenia pays the price of economic renaissance

THE Slovenes are late-comers to a struggle for an independent state. Tucked into a tranquil and lush corner of the Alps, the two million Slovenes are not burdened with a martial tradition or memories of past glory.

A blurred memory still endures of an independent Slovene duchy, which vanished into the mist in the ninth century. Since then, the Slovenes have pragmatically accustomed themselves to foreign rule.

After six centuries in the Habsburg empire, they passed without undue exhilaration or distress in 1918 into the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, later called Yugoslavia.

Unlike their Catholic neighbours in Croatia, who struggled bitterly between 1918 and 1939 with their royal Serb masters, the Slovenes put destructive dreams of independence to one side in favour of the more lucrative, if more prosaic, struggle for self-enrichment.

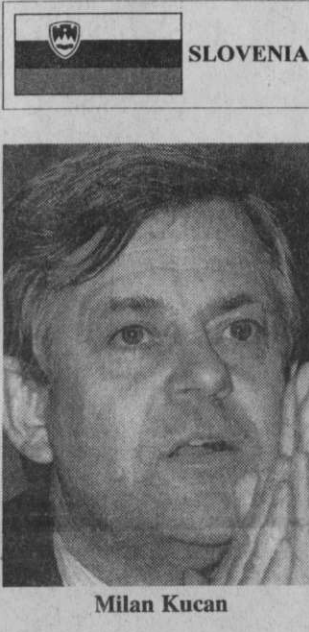
The mass of Slovenes rallied loyally to the Yugoslav cause when war broke out in 1941, though some followed the royalists and others the Partisans, led by Josip Broz Tito.

The victorious Tito was himself of mixed Slovene-Croat descent and the post-war Slovene Communist leaders accommodated themselves to the state with the familiar mixture of pragmatism and enlightened self-interest as their predecessors.

But by the 1980s, Slovenia was rapidly sloughing off Communist rule and was plunging into a cultural and economic renaissance. The speed of change began to place a serious strain on the republic's relationship with the rest of Yugoslavia.

To the horror of the Serbian Communists in Belgrade and their military allies, it seemed as if an alliance of pacifists, punks, Catholics, gays, greens and nationalists were being allowed to trample unchallenged over the sacred truths of Communist rule. The savage mockery of the Serb-dominated army in the pages of the radical magazine *Mladina* was particularly galling.

Appeals to Slovenia's new Communist leader, Milan Kucan, to crush this "counter revolution", as it was called in Serbia, fell on deaf ears. The canny Mr Kucan realised Communist rule in Europe was doomed and decided to champion the very forces which he was supposed to stop. He survived the transition in 1990 from Communist rule to a multi-party democracy quite unscathed, merging deftly into the role of non-party elder statesman when he was elected president of Slovenia in April 1990.



Milan Kucan

But the rise in Serbia of a xenophobic hardline Communist clique led by Slobodan Milosevic closed this path off and challenged the Slovenes. Mr Milosevic was determined to overthrow the post-war dominance in Yugoslavia of the northern republics of Slovenia and Croatia and restore Serbian power.

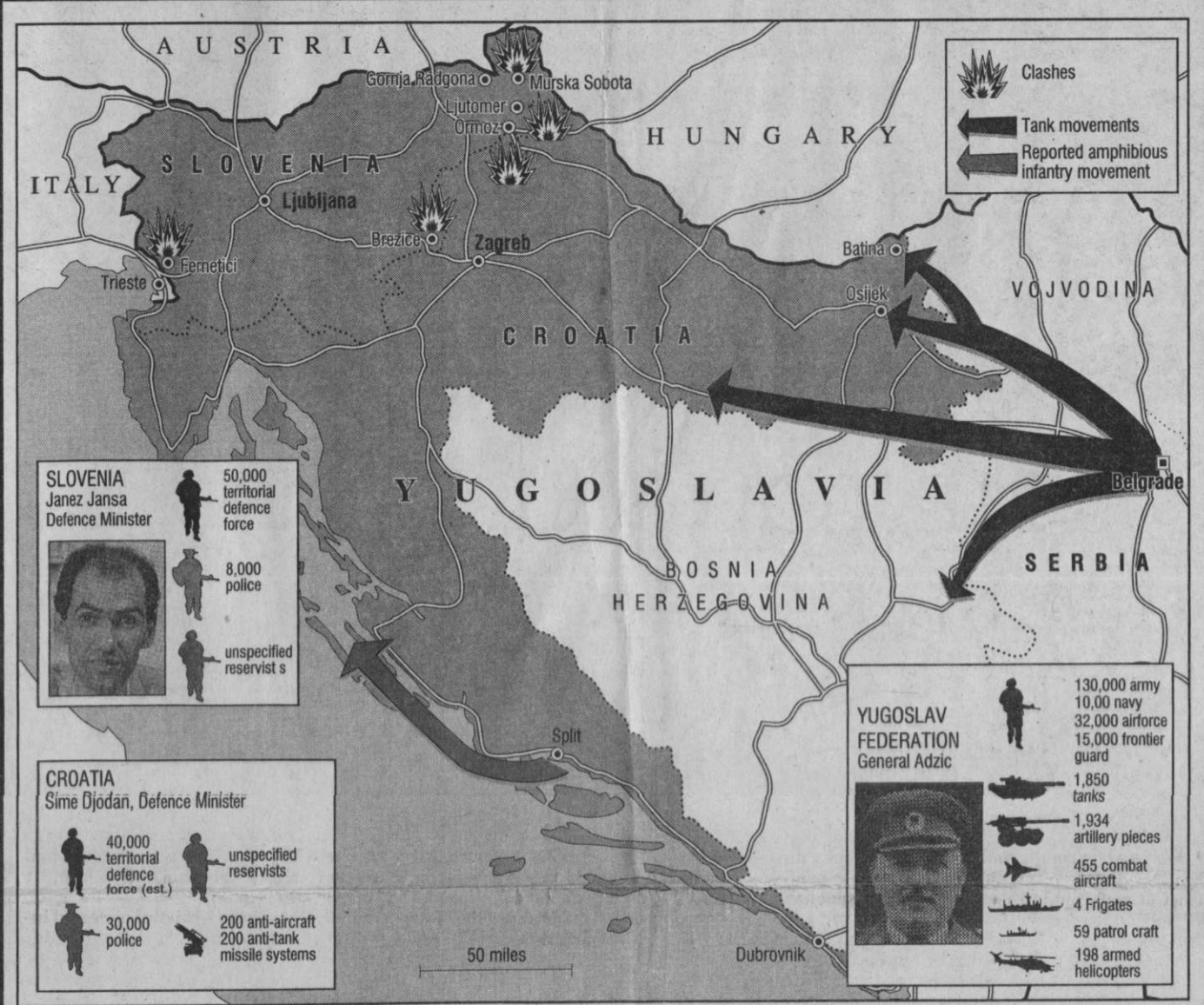
Slovene entreaties for the rapid integration of Yugoslavia with Europe, for the curtailment of military influence and a quicker transition to a market economy, fell on deaf, indeed hostile, ears.

As recently as a few weeks ago, very few people in Slovenia regarded the forthcoming "declaration of independence" from Yugoslavia as much more than a political gesture, designed to break the log-jam between the pro-Western republics of Croatia and Slovenia and their opponents in Serbia.

The ascendancy in the army of a very hardline faction of Serbian Communists, who appeared determined on war to retain the order and privileges with which they are familiar, forced the Slovenes to make a tough choice. On the one hand, they could return to a centralised, Serb-dominated state, burdened with a parasitical military machine and condemned to permanent isolation from the rest of Europe. The other choice is to fight.

The first choice means surrendering all the precious gains of the last 45 years but the second choice means taking an unfamiliar path. It is tragic but also richly ironic - a nation with no martial tradition and not much of a reputation for nationalism is now fighting perhaps the last war for independence in Europe.

Marcus Tanner



## Old fault-lines reappear

ASK A Yugoslav where he comes from and he will seldom say Yugoslavia. He will give the name of his republic.

The country has always seemed much less real to its inhabitants than to the outside world. It was created by sticking together bits of the former Habsburg and Ottoman empires under the Serbian monarchy, which became a dictatorship in 1929.

But the ancient fault-line between the two empires has continued to cause trouble to the present day. It goes back to the divide between the empires of Rome and Byzantium. Even now, Croatia uses the Latin alphabet while Serbia uses Cyrillic script. The situation is complicated by the presence of a large Muslim population, some of whom are Albanians converted by the Turks.

Different strands of Serbian and Croatian nationalism fought for supremacy in the nineteenth century as the Ottoman empire crumbled amid growing tensions between Serbia and the Austro-Hungarian empire, helping to trigger the First World War. Russia, France and Britain then fought with Serbia against Austria-Hungary, Germany and the Turks. The resulting chaos brought an uneasy alliance between Serbian and Croatian nationalism which formed the basis for the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, proclaimed in 1918 and renamed Yugoslavia 11 years later.

The Second World War saw Hitler invade. The country spent

the bulk of the war bitterly resisting the Nazis while engaged in a bloody civil conflict involving monarchist Chetniks, pro-Nazi Croats and Communists led by Josip Broz Tito. Memories of the civil war are very much alive today. In particular, Serbs remember the slaughter of their minority in Croatia by the Nazi puppet government of Ante Pavelic. Many Yugoslavs also still resent the British decision to back the communist partisans against the monarchists, in the belief that the communists were more effective against the Nazis.

After the war, the Communists had the additional advantage that they had attracted partisan fighters from different nationalities, including in particular the Croats, so they were able to impose a semblance of unity on the country. This was reinforced by Tito's personality, particularly after he had broken with Moscow in 1948.

Yugoslavia became officially non-aligned, proclaiming a unique and ultimately unworkable form of "socialist self-management", with a complex and constantly changing federal constitution designed to disperse power. Because of its key position it was propped up by both sides, and received substantial aid from the West.

Tito died in 1980 and the country went into steady economic and political decline, accelerated recently by the end of the Cold War and the collapse of communism. But the old fault-line survived. Slovenia and Croatia elected non-communist governments and started on the road to market economies.

Serbia, given at last a free choice, opted for the primitive amalgam of communism and nationalism represented by Slobodan Milosevic. His deliberate fomenting of Serbian grievances has increased the determination of the northern republics to get as far away as possible from Belgrade. It has also deeply alienated the Albanians of the Kosovo region, whose rights have been systematically violated.

Ancient differences account for a large part of the present troubles, but not all. There have been endless disputes over the distribution of wealth and resources. Slovenia and Croatia, being richer and more advanced than their southern neighbours, have complained of having to subsidise the federal budget, which includes the army, the federal civil service and the heavy cost of the Serbian occupation of Kosovo. They have come to believe that they would do better by turning their trade towards Austria and the European Community.

The Croats, who normally earn substantial sums from tourism, feel much the same as Slovenia on this score, but their situation is aggravated by the presence of a large and now very anxious Serbian minority.

The reasons for strong Serbian resistance to a break-up of Yugoslavia are partly pride and partly economics. Serbian nationalism, always a powerful force, has been kept on the boil by ambitious politicians and used by the armed forces in the name of national unity. Behind it are worries that the loss of the Slovene and Croatian economies would plunge Serbia into even worse trouble than it is in already. At the end of last year, Serbia simply lifted \$1.4bn (£875m) from the Yugoslav National Bank, to the fury of the other republics.

Serbia also fears the flaking away of other parts of the country. The Kosovo Albanians had little desire to join a communist Albania but now see signs of emerging democracy across the border, while Macedonian nationalists have eyes on the Macedonians of Greece and Bulgaria.

However, Serbia's attempts to keep the country together have had the contrary effect. Instead of grasping at last year's Slovene and Croatian proposal for a looser confederal structure, with a single market and single currency, Serbia clung ever more fiercely to the idea of a unitary state. It thereby alienated the northern republics, probably beyond recall, even before inflicting the final blow by resorting to armed force.

Richard Davy

## No neat tie-in between these rival republics

IMPRESSED by the neat scarves worn by Croat soldiers in the Habsburg army, Napoleon took the scarves back to France and named them after the enemy: "Cravates", he called them, after the Croats' own word for Croatian - *Hrvat*. To Croats, it must seem a disappointing form of international recognition.

Like the neighbouring republic of Slovenia, Croatia has been bashed back and forth like a ping pong ball over the centuries, suffering from invasions by French, Mongols, Turks, Venetians and other assorted conquerors.

Apart from their long history of invasion, however, the Croats have little or nothing in common with their Slovene neighbours. This week's frantic discussions in the West as to whether to recognise "Slovenia and Croatia" is seen by most analysts of the region's affairs as a dangerous red herring. Both may now be under threat from the federal Yugoslav army, but their aspirations towards independence cannot be equated with any ease.

"Slovenia is the only part of Yugoslavia that could conceivably make a really clean break," says Mark Wheeler, a lecturer at London University's School of Slavonic and East European studies.

"The Croats' democratic credentials are in no way as impressive as those in Slovenia. And the Croats are simply not in a position to withdraw from the federation without hideous consequences."

He is referring to the presence within Croatia of 700,000 Serbs, mostly Orthodox Christians, among an overall population of five million, most of them Roman Catholic. Despite centuries of living side by side, the two sides remain bitterly opposed, leaving Croatia a tinderbox for civil war.

"What has happened in Slovenia could turn out to be merely a sideshow compared with what could occur in Croatia," says Mr Wheeler. "You could call it a case of 'You ain't seen nothing' yet."

The Serbs in Croatia have been shaking in their shoes since Croatian nationalist Franjo Tudjman won the republic's first free elections since the Second World War last year at the head of the HDZ, the strongly Croatian nationalist Christian Democratic Union.

Watching the near-Nazi straight arm salute of his followers, and the fiery shouts of "Franjo, Franjo," the Serbs could be forgiven for recalling the public demonstrations of support for Hitler or Mussolini.

The free elections have been somewhat forgotten as Mr Tudjman has built up an authoritarian regime not entirely dissimilar to the communist one he replaced.



Franjo Tudjman

"A regime ostentatious in its chauvinism," is how Mr Wheeler euphemistically puts it.

There have been few moves towards the promised privatisation of the economy and Mr Tudjman has taken an almost communist-like grip on the republic's media, using the republic's press largely as his party's mouthpiece.

Since the elections, Mr Tudjman has overruled the opposition, including the former Communist party, now known as the Party for Democratic Change, and the third-placed Liberals. He continues to refer to Croatia as a "Christian wall against the infidels," a phrase first used against the Ottoman Turks, but now in currency as a slight against the republic's Serbian minority.

Mr Tudjman is a former communist, a former general who fought with Tito's partisans against the Nazis. But his strong Croatian nationalist views led to his imprisonment, twice, by Tito. While his rise to the Presidency of Croatia left the minority Serbs trembling with fear, he himself insists he is a Christian Democrat and likens himself to Mr Bush, Mrs Thatcher and Chancellor Kohl.

Currently protected by federal army tanks, many of the minority Serbs in Croatia say they would flee their homes if the tanks pulled out. Almost half a century has not dulled the memory of the massacres of Serbs by the pro-Hitler *Ustashe* regime during the Second World War.

The Croats, in turn, still refer to their Serbian neighbours with venom as "Chetniks", after the Serbian group that killed Croats in reprisal for the wartime massacres.

Phil Davison



Slobodan Milosevic

## Underdog complex fuels Serbia's right wing

THE Serbs are in a paradoxical position. They are seen by almost all the other members of the Yugoslav federation as the dominant group yet they always perceive themselves as the underdog.

Serbia's most notorious politician, Slobodan Milosevic, achieved extraordinary popular acclaim in Serbia by exploiting those resentments. As Serbia's Communist Party leader, he launched a campaign which effectively sought to disenfranchise the 90 per cent Albanian majority in the autonomous province of Kosovo - thus restoring Serbian "dignity".

The retaking of Kosovo was seen as a kind of historic mission. Although few Serbs have visited this impoverished area, most still see it as their "heartland".

Before the Second World War, the dominance of Serbia in Yugoslavia, created in 1918, was explicit: it was the Serbian monarchy which ruled the roost. But during the war, Serbs in Croatia suffered appalling losses at the hands of the *Ustashe*, the pro-fascist puppet regime in the republic. Tens or even hundreds of thousands died in what Serbs still describe as "hidden genocide".

The suffering at that time provides ample propaganda for the present. The elected government of Franjo Tudjman in Croatia is described as if he were the direct successor of the *Ustashe*. (Mr Tudjman, though no *Ustashe* himself, does not help by refusing to condemn the historic atrocities).

After the Second World War, Tito sought to create a Yugoslavia which would be free of domination by any one ethnic group -

hence the rotating leadership which Serbia sabotaged six weeks ago by refusing to allow a Croat president. None the less, the federal capital was in the Serbian capital, Belgrade, and the Serbs were dominant both in the officer cadre of the army and the diplomatic corps.

With multi-party elections throughout Yugoslavia in 1990, Communists were voted out everywhere except in Serbia and the republic's closest ally, Montenegro. After the collapse of communism, most republics were uneasy about continuing with a federation where Serbia remained dominant and appeared to drag them down.

There were similarities with republics of the Soviet Union wishing to break away from Moscow. But, unlike Russia, Serbia has no popular figure such as Boris Yeltsin who rejects the Communist heritage and renounces his country's right to command. Serbia does not even have a Communist reformer such as Mikhail Gorbachev. Serbian liberals, such as the presidential candidate, Ivan Djuric, gained only a tiny percentage of the vote in last year's elections.

A more popular Serbian opposition figure, Vuk Draskovic, is himself sometimes sharply nationalist.

Meanwhile, support is growing for the far-right leader, Vojislav Seselj, whose followers believe

that routine violence against Croats is acceptable. Part of the large Serbian minority in Croatia has been in a virtual state of war against the Croatian authorities, whom they reject as "*Ustashe* terrorists". The Croats, in turn, call the Serbs "Chetnik" (extreme right) and "Bolshevik".

In contrast to the growing support for democratic politicians in Russia, there is as yet no hint that Serbs are ready to come to terms with a change in their dominant status. During last year's elections, liberals such as Mr Djuric expressed the hope that, with the economic collapse of the system, the Serbs would eventually rebel against the broken promises of nationalist communism and would feel the need of moderation and compromise. There were anti-government demonstrations in March



Vuk Draskovic

Steve Crawshaw