

# Slovenia

FINANCIAL TIMES

## rejects 5/7/9 federal demands

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SLOVENIA and the Yugoslav federal army were last night locked in a war of nerves after the rebel republic rejected an ultimatum to cede control of its external borders to the federal authorities by Sunday.

The ultimatum, and its rejection, added to fears in the Slovene capital Ljubljana that the federal army would carry out its threat and mount a full-scale attack on the republic. The Slovene authorities set up steel barricades across a number of main roads to protect the capital against a tank assault.

While tension remained high, the ceasefire between Slovene forces and the federal army continued to hold yesterday and it appeared that all federal army units had returned to barracks in Slovenia by last night.

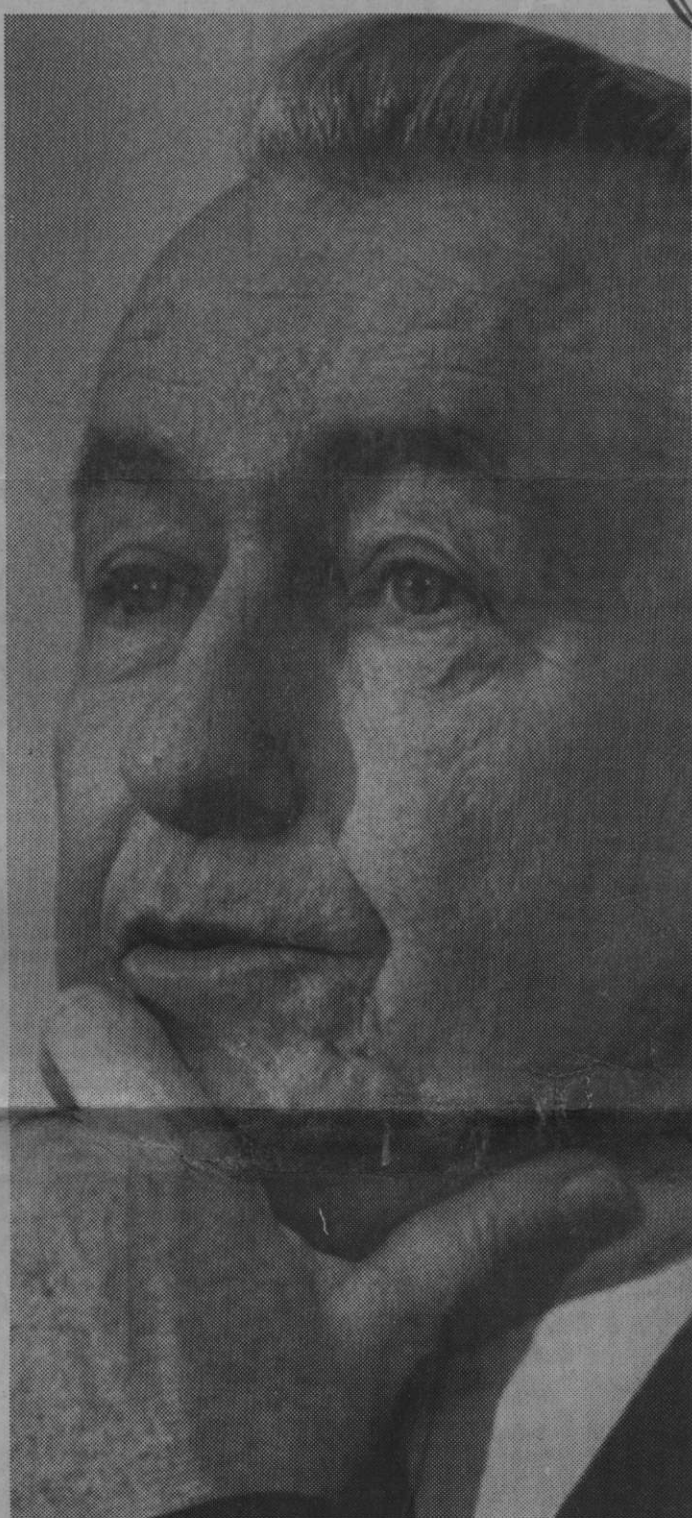
Western diplomats said the collective presidency's tough ultimatum against Slovenia showed that the hardline pro-army republics had given the army a "constitutional" right to take any action against the rebel republic.

The central presidency is dominated by a pro-army faction led by the republic of Serbia, which is supported by the republic of Montenegro, and the two provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina.

The eight-point ultimatum included a demand that all Slovene forces be returned to barracks and all barricades in the

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Denial in Belgrade: Ante Markovic, federal prime minister, at his news conference in the Yugoslav capital, where he said that the central government had not ordered last week's army action against the rebel republic of Slovenia

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republic be removed by today. But armed Slovenian militia men were still patrolling the streets of Ljubljana early today in defiance of the federal government's ultimatum.

The demand had been issued in the absence of Mr Janez Drnovsek, Slovenia's representative on the collective presidency, who did not attend the session on principle.

Mr Milan Kucan, Slovene president said: "An ultimatum [of this kind] can only be answered by another ultimatum. It looks as though in Yugoslavia force is the only answer."

Mr Jelco Kacin, Slovenia's minister of information, rejected the demand to lift the barricades or return federal army equipment seized during last week's fighting. He said the republic's borders were under Slovene control.

In Belgrade, Mr Ante Markovic, the federal prime minister, denied responsibility for the army's actions in Slovenia last week. "The federal government never ordered, nor could order, any army action in the way it was done," he told a news conference.

Army convoys continued to fan out across the country as tension heightened and there were further ethnic clashes in the republic of Croatia.

In eastern Croatia, a clash between two Serbian rebels and members of the Croat national guard left two Croats dead, according to the Serbian Tanjug news agency. Fighting was reported in the village of Celije, where three reservists were also injured. Another three Croat reservists were injured in the nearby village of Borovo.

In Prague, diplomatic efforts to resolve the crisis of Yugoslavia's rebel republics were speeded up. The 35-nation Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) agreed to send a "good offices" mission to Yugoslavia to try to aid a dialogue between the warring factions.

However, the meeting was still unable last night to agree on a proposal to call on the European Community to send an observer mission to monitor a ceasefire between Slovene forces and the federal army.

EC foreign ministers are to meet in The Hague today to discuss the crisis.

well as goods. Reforms would aim particularly at dealing with deceptive methods and