



Mr Markovic: under verbal assault by army chiefs

Slovenes remain defiant

**By Michael Montgomery
in Belgrade**

SLOVENIA rejected yesterday an order from Belgrade to return its border posts to the control of federal troops and withdraw all its defence units from them.

But it did agree to let more than 2,000 Yugoslav army prisoners return home on a special train from Ljubljana.

Slovenian officials said they were pulling back some of their units, but ruled out a demobilisation of the entire 40,000-strong territorial defence force.

They also refused to dismantle barricades, raising fears of another showdown with the federation when a deadline for the order runs out on Sunday.

Mr Jelko Kacin, Slovenian Information Minister, said: "Like it is impossible to awaken the dead, it is also impossible to restore the situation that used to exist in Slovenia."

Slovenian flags and insignia have been put up at border points with Italy, Austria and Hungary.

A shaky truce held yesterday as the EC prepared to send a three-strong delegation to Belgrade to step up diplomatic pressure for a lasting ceasefire.

Slovenia and Croatia, which declared independence 10 days ago and are eyeing international recognition, have urged Western intervention to stop what they claim are efforts by the Communist-dominated army to crush their moves for sovereignty.

The Yugoslav army high command stepped further outside the control of the civilian government yesterday by accusing Mr Ante Markovic, Prime Minister, of abandoning his constitutional role by distancing his government from the intervention in Slovenia.

General Marko Negovanovic, a member of the high command, also accused Slovenia of violating terms of a ceasefire plan, and reported several overnight attacks on army garrisons in the republic. Gen Negovanovic said the military was ready to use all means to halt widening inter-ethnic clashes and civil war.

Federal army units had all returned to barracks in Slovenia, but were deployed for the second day in eastern Croatia to establish a buffer zone between warring groups of Serbs and Croats near Borovo Selo.

● **Chris Bennett** in Ljubljana writes: Anxious parents of captured soldiers who had travelled to Ljubljana from all over Yugoslavia were emotionally reunited with their sons yesterday.

A train carrying cheering and waving conscripts finally pulled out of Ljubljana station at 9pm — 10 hours behind schedule. The soldiers have 15 days' leave, and will complete their compulsory year of military service in their own republics.