



Capital life: A couple stroll hand-in-hand past Slovene militia vehicles in a park in Ljubljana

Army 'to grab borders'

AS THE deadline for the surrender of Slovenia's border posts expired peacefully yesterday, secret plans to seize all frontiers by force were leaked.

The orders, contained in a document intercepted and passed to the breakaway republic's defence force, will be followed unless last-ditch talks hammer out a political solution.

Helicopters will ferry in Yugoslav army storm-troopers, backed by armour and infantry, to re-take the republic's 27 border points with Italy, Austria and Hungary.

Field commanders will call for the surrender of Slovene forces. If they ignore a warning shot and return fire, 'battle rules' will be implemented.

Further plans for troops to take Brnik airport in the Slovene capital Ljubljana and seal the internal border with Croatia were also detailed.

The document was issued

despite a promise from federal president Stipe Mesic that force will not be used. Army commanders in Belgrade had indicated, too, that a political solution was needed.

Challenged on the authenticity of the document, Slovene government officials yesterday produced what they described as the 'genuine and detailed'

original. A government spokesman said: 'The borders will remain part of Slovenia. If that means we must fight again, then we shall.'

As the deadline passed at noon yesterday, all 27 border posts were in Slovene hands.

At Sezana, the main crossing with Italy, militia lay in wait. At the border

SECRET PLANS ORDER TROOPS TO OPEN FIRE

post itself, the red-white-and-blue flag of an independent Slovenia fluttered proudly above the barriers.

Yugoslavia yesterday accused Austria of supplying weapons to Slovenia and Croatia. Walter Siegl, the Austrian ambassador to Belgrade, was summoned by assistant foreign minister Dusan Rodic who registered 'a sharp protest'.

● Peace talks set up by the EC continued yesterday on the island of Brioni. Dutch Foreign Minister Hans van den Broek said: 'We are not getting anywhere.'



From DAVID WILLIAMS in Sezana, Slovenia