An anti-aircraft battery, manned by members of the Slovene Territorial Defence Force, on guard near Maribor, in northern Slovenia
Photograph: David Rose

Albania says Belgrade is planning genocide

VIENNA (Reuter) — Albania's new non-communist government, using language that was strongly reminiscent of its Stalinist predecessors, has accused Yugoslavia of planning genocide against its large Albanian minority.

The government expressed concern about violence in Yugoslavia since Slovenia and Croatia declared independence last month, and said ethnic Albanians must be given more autonomy, possibly their own republic. In a statement issued on Saturday,

it said armed Serbs were threatening Albanians in Kosovo, a province of Serbia.

"The Serb population is being armed. Paramilitary bands are making provocations, at any moment looking for pretexts for the escalation of genocide against the Albanians," said the statement, carried by the official ATA news agency and monitored in Vienna. "Bloodshed, which the Serb chauvinist forces in Kosovo are preparing, gravely threatens stability and peace in the Balkans and Europe."

Belgrade says there are 1.7 million Albanians in Yugoslavia, around 7.7 per cent of its population of 23.5 million. Albania puts the figure at more than 3 million, roughly the same size as its own population of 3.18 million. At least 60 people were killed in Kosovo in 1989 and 1990 as ethnic Albanians sought more autonomy from Serbia. Albanians outnumber Serbs in Kosovo by nine to one.

The Albanian statement called for free elections to allow all the peoples of Yugo-

slavia to determine their own future. "It is the elementary right of 3 million Albanians, tragically divided from the other part of the nation, in the context of a possible reorganisation of the Yugoslav state, to be a constituent, autonomous part of it, up to the form of a republic," it said.

Albania's President, Ramiz Alia, accusing Serbia of "savage police and military violence" in Kosovo, ordered extra troops to the border with Yugoslavia on Friday, and increased the army's state of alert.

50 miles

Clashes

Serbian populated areas in Croatia

13 HQ of federal army corps (Zagreb is also HQ of V military regiment)

Tank columns

Graphic:
Kristina Ferris