

# Peace talks stalled as violence

## grows in Croatia

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From Tony Barber in Belgrade  
and Steve Crawshaw in Zagreb

EUROPEAN Community leaders made little headway yesterday in their last-minute attempt to prevent Yugoslavia from slipping further into civil war, at a meeting with representatives of the six republics on the Adriatic island of Brioni. Their discussions, which were still going late last night, were overshadowed by the growing violence in eastern Croatia, where a Serb-Croat war has in effect broken out.

In Tenja, in the eastern part of Croatia known as Slavonia, there were serious clashes yesterday. Local officials said dozens were killed, including at least two federal soldiers who died when the army sent in tanks to separate the two sides. The battle lasted for most of the day, before a ceasefire was agreed. Many Yugoslavs believe the point of no return has been reached.

Those attending yesterday's meeting on Brioni — once Tito's summer retreat — included the Croat President, Franjo Tudjman, Milan Kucan of Slovenia, and the Yugoslav President, Stipe Mesic. The EC was represented by the new "troika" of foreign ministers from Luxembourg, Portugal and the Netherlands. They were hop-

ing to ensure that there will be some kind of international monitoring of any agreed ceasefire.

Sources close to the EC envoys said the participants were considering a four-point plan calling for a ceasefire, the establishment of full control over the armed forces by the federal presidency and a commitment by all parties to talks on Yugoslavia's future and on border controls.

Late last night conference sources said the talks had reached an impasse, with Slovenia refusing to give in to EC demands to hand back control of its borders with Austria, Italy and Hungary to federal authorities for a three-month period. Slovenian defence forces gained control of the checkpoints during fighting which broke out after Slovenia and Croatia declared independence on 25 June.

The key figure who might be able to help the peace plan suc-

ceed in Croatia was missing from the talks yesterday. The Serbian President, Slobodan Milosevic, stayed in Belgrade. Serbia was represented instead by its member of the federal presidency, Borisav Jovic. At the weekend, Mr Milosevic suggested that Serbs should be ready for war. He implied a readiness to move into areas with a large Serbian population in Croatia itself, in "defence" of Serbs there. His words raised the political temperature higher than ever.

Both Serb and Croat leaders have in effect put their peoples on a war footing. The army's role in Croatia is purportedly that of peacekeeper but Croat officials do not hide their anger at what they believe to be the way in which the army protects Serb gunmen.

Croatia's Information Minister said on Saturday that he thought Serbia and Croatia might be at

war "in the next few days". He said that such a war would make recent events in Slovenia look like "a Disneyland".

A leader of the 600,000 Serbs of Croatia, who have themselves proclaimed independence, said yesterday his forces were growing stronger by the day. "Apart from infantry and artillery units, the formation of airborne forces has been under way," said Milan Martic, the Interior Minister of the self-styled Serbian autonomous region of Krajina.

In Slovenia, the violence appears to have ended, for the moment at least. The army had set a deadline of noon yesterday for Slovenia to return its international frontier posts to Yugoslav control, but the hour passed with no federal intervention. However, one commander indicated that a new federal onslaught on the republic was unlikely. "Should the army move again to take control of the border in Slovenia, it would mean a new war with a huge number of casualties and material losses," said General Andrija Raseta, commander of the Fifth District, which covers Slovenia.

Further reports, page 8  
George Weidenfeld, page 19