

# EC observers hunt for office space in Zagreb

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From David Osborne  
in Brussels and agencies

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AS THE first arguments broke out yesterday about the precise role of the European Community monitoring force in Yugoslavia, the observers themselves, newly arrived in the Croatian capital, Zagreb, were facing a more basic problem: they could find no headquarters from which to work.

The first 27 members of the 50-strong mission arrived in Zagreb on Monday evening. But so difficult is the job of finding a proper working centre that they might be forced to open up shop in their hotel.

Meanwhile the mission, led by a Dutch diplomat, Jo van der Valk, ran straight into wrangling about its actual task. Mr Van der Valk at first disappointed the Croatian leadership by indicating that his team would not monitor the ethnic clashes now spreading in Croatia between Croats and Serbs, because they do not fall within the terms of the ceasefire agreed on the Croatian island of Brioni on 7 July.

But later the EC said its team would work in Croatia, monitoring the federal army's return to barracks, although it would not visit the worst scenes of fighting.

Under the Brioni terms, the EC mission will monitor the ceasefire between Slovenia and Croatia and the federal army as well as the three-month suspension of the declarations of independence by

the two republics. When the mission members finally leave Zagreb to begin monitoring — which now seems unlikely before the end of the week — great efforts will be made to ensure that their identity as non-military, non-partisan observers is shown. All will be in civilian clothing. The EC flag of 12 gold stars on a blue background will be flown above whatever co-ordination centres are used. It will also be woven on arm-bands and painted on the cars of EC personnel.

So deep is the concern to avoid all military connotations that three army helicopters sent to Zagreb from the Netherlands yesterday as transport for the observers have already had their military camouflage sprayed with virgin white paint and those ubiquitous gold stars. The Dutch military pilots will, exceptionally, fly the helicopters out of uniform.

The full team of observers will be a mix of civilian and military officials from several EC states, including Britain. Four Whitehall civil servants have been chosen and a further two might be sent later, a British spokesman said. The European Commission is providing five officials, a move which is highly symbolic in the

context of the EC's internal political union negotiations.

The EC's efforts, however, may be halted if co-operation by all the parties founders, Hans van den Broek, the Dutch Foreign Minister, said in London yesterday.

"We cannot impose anything. So if there is not full co-operation from the parties we have spoken to and with whom certain undertakings were reached ... then of course our involvement must stop," Mr Van den Broek said.

However, Serbia yesterday boycotted a meeting of the Yugoslav collective presidency on Brioni.

Serbia demanded that the eight-member body meet in the Macedonian town of Ohrid, 320 miles south of Belgrade.

■ BELGRADE — Serbian nationalists shot dead a Croat policeman and a member of the republic's National Guard in continued fighting yesterday, Reuters reports.

Police said a national guardman was killed when Serbs fired mortars on a police station in the village of Vidusevac, 150 miles west of Belgrade. Meanwhile, a Croat policeman died in an ambush in the nearby village of Lipik and nine others were hurt in attacks on three police stations with assault rifles, mortars and machine-guns, according to the Croatian Information Minister, Hrvoje Hitrec.