

Slovenia gets go-ahead for independence

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH
20/7/91

By Michael Montgomery, in Belgrade

A DEEP split emerged yesterday between Yugoslavia's two breakaway republics after Belgrade gave Slovenia the go-ahead for independence by ordering a complete withdrawal of Yugoslav army troops from its territory.

In a move that signalled the end of federal rule in Slovenia and will radically re-shape the troubled federation, Yugoslavia's collective leadership on Thursday night announced the pull-out of the remaining troops by mid-October. But the ruling made no mention of neighbouring Croatia, which is also seeking independence.

Slovenia yesterday welcomed the decision as *de facto* recognition of its sovereignty. The Slovenian president,

Mr Milan Kucan, said Slovenia was now prepared to return to the negotiating table with Yugoslavia's remaining republics as a "free and independent state". A meeting of Yugoslav political leaders has been set for Monday.

Mr Janez Drnovsek, Slovenia's delegate to the collective presidency, who voted against Croatia in support of the ruling, said it was a major step towards a peaceful resolution to the Yugoslav crisis.

A prominent Serbian intellectual said: "This is the end of post-war Yugoslavia. Slovenia will never return to the fold nor are they wanted. Now the real question is the Serbian-Croatian conflict."

The army units will be redeployed to bases in Serbia and the central republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

This should allow for a bigger concentration of federal units, whose commanders are predominantly Serbs, in regions heavily populated by Serbs. Croatia's representative to the presidency, Mr Stipe Mesic, underlined Croatian resistance by casting the lone vote against the decision, while the Bosnian delegate abstained.

Privately, many Croats feel betrayed by Slovenia since the two republics simultaneously declared independence on June 25. Some fear the deal will leave Croatia under the thumb of Belgrade and arch-rival Serbia.

Mr Josip Manolic, the Croatian prime minister, was at pains yesterday to portray the accord as a first step towards Croatian independence. He said: "For us Yugoslavia no longer exists. We are now in the process of a peaceful dialogue over how to solve mutual problems."

The Croatian president, Mr Franjo Tudjman, said: "Our position is that the army must return to barracks and after this they should leave sovereign Croatia completely."

There was little hint of a halt to the violence in Eastern Croatia yesterday as two Croatian police were killed and six wounded in an ambush by Serb gunmen near Daruvar, Belgrade Radio reported.

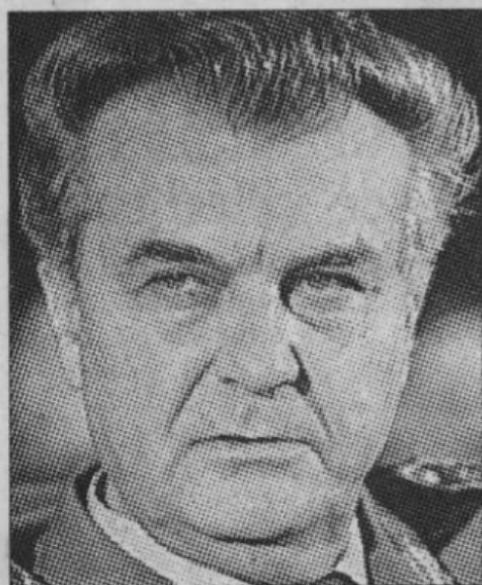
Earlier, Serb insurgents fired mortar on the Croatian town of Vinkovci and gun battles erupted near Vukovar. Radio reports also said fresh Serbian volunteer units had crossed the Danube into Croatia near Borovo to man barricades in Serb-populated villages.

● **Our Diplomatic Staff** writes: The issue of Slovenian independence is one which Britain and the European Community are not yet ready to face.

European sentiment is split.

Austria, Germany and Italy favour recognising Slovenia as an independent state and would welcome it into an Alpine community.

Britain and other countries farther away feel that Slovene independence would open the way for Croatia to go the same way, not without a bloodbath.



Gen Kadujevic: army avoided all-out war

Army issues ultimatum to nationalists

By Michael Montgomery

THE military has given feuding civilian leaders until Aug 15 to sort out their differences and reach agreement on the country's future order, Yugoslavia's leading general said on television last night.

Gen Veljko Kadujevic, Defence Minister, disclosed that the Yugoslav army had asked the collective leadership to order the withdrawal of its units from Slovenia where he said they were living in a state of siege.

He also said the army, which is dominated by Communist diehards, had issued an August ultimatum to the political leadership.

In his first on-camera interview, Gen Kadujevic blamed nationalist leaders for failing to come to grips with the crisis which has propelled Yugoslavia to the brink of war.

Gen Kadujevic also sharply attacked breakaway Slovenia for attacking the Yugoslav armed forces when army units were moving only to secure the country's borders.

"The army consciously avoided a real war with Slovenia because we knew what would be the terrible result in terms of civilian casualties."

He added that the army would use force if necessary to secure peaceful conditions for an agreement between the republics.