



Croatian defence force members flash victory signs from a truck at the weekend. An hour later they were attacked by Serbian nationalists, but no one was hurt

Yugoslav leaders to meet in crisis summit

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By Laura Silber in Belgrade

YUGOSLAVIA'S leaders meet today for a crisis summit, in an attempt to curtail widespread ethnic and nationalist violence between Serbs and Croats in Croatia.

The meeting is also scheduled to consider joint efforts to staunch the country's accelerating economic collapse.

The state presidency, the country's eight-member collective leadership, and the presidents of the six Yugoslav republics will attempt to reach an accord as ethnic violence threatens to spill over into other parts of the country.

But sharp divisions remain between Serbia and its allies on one side and break-away Croatia and Slovenia on the other.

Over the weekend the leaders of Slovenia and Croatia, along with the cen-

tral republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina, agreed to set up a joint commission to overcome trade blockades. The three prime ministers said it was necessary to "connect the broken threads of economic co-operation to enable the free movement of goods and citizens across republic borders".

The weekend meeting was called by Bosnia, which fears an explosion of violence among its ethnically mixed population of Serbs, Croats and Slavic Moslems.

An awareness of the sharply deteriorating economic situation, exacerbated by mounting ethnic conflicts, hangs over the agenda of today's talks in the town of Ohrid, Macedonia. General Veljko Kadijevic, federal defence minister, said at the weekend the army had given Yugoslavia's leaders an ultima-

tum to reach a political solution by August 15.

However, the leaders of Serbia and Croatia, the largest republics, have only succeeded in heightening ethnic tensions in an effort to rally mass support. Ethnic-related clashes are becoming a daily occurrence.

Three Croatian policemen were killed by a lone gunman in the Croatian town of Daruvar, some 90km east of the republic's capital Zagreb, on Saturday night.

Croatian police said yesterday a man was shot and killed from a moving car while sitting in his house. Police also said they had killed five Serbian guerrillas in a gun and mortar battle and that a man was shot after firing on police guards at a roadblock.

Some of the incidents occurred in the

Slavonia region of eastern Croatia. "In Slavonia bodies are rotting in the fields. We cannot pick them up because of the danger of being fired on [by Serbian guerrillas]," a Croatian minister said.

During a visit yesterday to Osijek, the regional capital of Slavonia, Mr Franjo Tudjman, Croatian president, reiterated charges that Serbia, under President Slobodan Milosevic, was backing terrorist attacks in Croatia.

Today's summit of Yugoslav leaders follows the state presidency's order last week to the federal army to withdraw from Slovenia. The withdrawal paves the way for the alpine republic to secede. But fearing isolation in a rump Yugoslavia, Croatia has also appealed to the presidency, which is the commander in chief of the federal army, for the military to withdraw there too.