

Croatia breaks off talks

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From Marc Champion in Belgrade

THE BREAKAWAY Yugoslav Republic of Croatia has resolved not to take part in any further talks to solve the country's deepening political crisis, until federal army units in the Republic have been withdrawn to barracks.

The decision, which was taken by the Republican Council in Zagreb in the early hours of yesterday morning, appeared to seal the failure of Monday's meeting of Yugoslavia's collective presidency in Ohrid, Macedonia, to control the violence accompanying the federation's disintegration. Another two Croatian National Guards were shot dead in eastern Croatia yesterday during fighting in the village of Palacce.

A statement at the end of the talks called for all paramilitary organisations in Croatia, including the National Guard, to disarm and disband, paving the way for European Community observers to monitor the peace. But the Croatian President, Franjo Tudjman, made agreement conditional on the army's prior withdrawal to

barracks in Croatia and the accord was stillborn. To remove the army from between Serb and Croat communities now could lead to "an open civil war and blood up to the knees", said Borisav Jovic, the Serbian representative to the collective presidency.

According to Tanjug, the Yugoslav news agency, Croatian and federal army units tangled in a pitched battle on a strategic bridge between Croatia and Serbia during the night. The army said its garrison was attacked and that it retaliated with automatic and artillery fire, but suffered no casualties.

It became increasingly clear yesterday that despite the EC-brokered three-month moratorium on claims to legal secession, Yugoslavia is ceasing to function as a state. Trains from Belgrade to Western Europe will from now on be re-routed through the country's northern border rather than

passing through Zagreb. The federal chamber of the Yugoslav Parliament will meet tomorrow to discuss the crisis, but without Slovenian and perhaps Croatian representatives. It is not clear whether the other chamber, of republics and provinces, will be able to reconvene at all, since it must constitutionally have all delegations present to operate.

In a document headed "The last appeal to reason", the federal executive council listed measures to keep the Yugoslav constitution operating through the moratorium. Otherwise, the council warned, the economy would collapse by the end of August and "chaos" would reign.

Deliveries of raw materials between the republics have ground almost to a halt, while Slovenia yesterday began to map out its claim for a share of military equipment from the army once divorce from its federation is final.

Croatian officials confirmed yesterday that 20 people died and 25 were wounded in fighting between Croats and Serbs in the Slavonian village of Mirkovci on Monday. The Croatian Deputy Interior Minister, Milan Brezak, claimed that "at least 60 terrorists were killed", with "terrorists" referring to armed Serbs.

■ **BAD WIESSEE**, Germany — François Mitterrand, the French President, and Helmut Kohl, the German Chancellor, agreed yesterday that divided Yugoslavia could not be held together by force, **Reuter reports**.

Speaking after meeting in the Bavarian lakeside resort of Bad Wiessee, they supported EC efforts to mediate in the crisis. Mr Mitterrand, who has made clear he would like Yugoslavia to remain intact, appeared to have moved closer to Germany's view which is more sympathetic to the independence movements. He said there would have to be "new reflections" by the EC if mediation attempts failed.