

EC in a Yugoslav minefield

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THE European Community is making another attempt to stop Yugoslavia's slide into chaos, a move reflecting both concern for eastern Europe's stability and internal wrangling over the EC's future.

Community foreign ministers met prime minister Ante Markovic and three other Yugoslav leaders in Brussels and agreed to send a new ministerial team, negotiate another ceasefire and increase the number of EC peace monitors in the country from 50 to as many as 150.

But the ministers' long-running arguments over the EC's future shape and powers were never far from the surface.

With several member states openly gloomy about the chances for success in the EC's

latest peace effort, some diplomats were wondering whether the community should have stepped in at all.

The EC's initial success early this month in restoring peace in Slovenia, which along with Croatia declared independence on 25 June, delighted proponents of a vigorous EC foreign policy.

Both sides' arguments began to unravel when the EC observers in Slovenia were left idle after the violence there died down only to flare across the border in Croatia, in fighting between Croats and Serbians.

In Yugoslavia itself a flood of refugees, mostly women and children, have taken to roads and ferries to escape the fighting in areas around Zagreb.