

Serbians change course, seek U.N. force in Croatia

BELGRADE, Yugoslavia (AP) — Serbia and its allies, in a surprising shift of position, urged the United Nations yesterday to send peacekeeping troops to Croatia to stop ethnic bloodshed in the battle-scarred republic.

The appeal came as fighting raged across Croatia. A seven-hour assault on Dubrovnik, the fiercest army attack in a 42-day siege, brought federal troops closer to the medieval heart of the Adriatic port in preparation for a final onslaught on Croatian defenses.

The army issued an ultimatum for besieged defenders to lay down their arms. But the demand was rejected, according to a pool dispatch from reporters in Dubrovnik, where most communications were severed in the fighting.

Shells from cannon and gunboats hit Dubrovnik early yesterday, the Tanjug news agency said, quoting Croatian radio. Croatian television said suburbs bordering the city's old walled center were under assault.

In a heated battle for strategic Bosanka hill overlooking Dubrovnik, two federal soldiers were killed and six were injured, and the Croats took heavy casualties, Tanjug reported. It said the army finally took the hill.

Croatia declared independence June 25, and more than 1,700 peo-

ple have died in fighting since. Serb rebels and the Serbian-dominated federal army have captured about one-third of Croatian territory.

The appeal for the dispatch of U.N. peacekeeping troops came in a letter to the Security Council from the four pro-Serbian members remaining on the collective federal presidency. They urged that the peacekeeping forces form a buffer zone between areas dominated by Serbs and Croats in Croatia.

Serbia and its allies previously had rejected any foreign troop involvement in Croatia's four-month war of secession.

Their appeal likely was coordinated with commanders of the Serb-dominated federal forces, who have helped rebel Serbs capture one-third of Croatia's territory and are nominally under command of the federal presidency.

Yesterday's statement appeared to be an attempt to forestall a U.N. oil embargo requested by the European Community when it imposed economic sanctions on Yugoslavia Friday. President Bush announced yesterday that the United States would join in the EC actions.

Croatian Foreign Minister Zvonimir Separovic gave a cautious welcome to the request for peacekeeping troops. But there was no suggestion



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Croatian prisoners of war hug in Zagreb after a POW exchange.

in the presidency's letter that the Serbian side intended to relinquish territory captured from the Croats.

Serbia has said Croatia cannot secede from Yugoslavia within its present borders, claiming the republic's 600,000-strong Serb minority would face persecution.

Croatia says Serbia seeks to greatly expand its own borders, with chunks of Croatia and large tracts of the ethnically mixed state of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Army assaults also were reported on several Croatian strongholds overnight and early yesterday. Residents in Karlovac, a barracks town southwest of Zagreb, emerged from what local defense officials called one of the worst nights of the four-month war, after 160 hours in their shelters. Earlier, Tanjug reported heavy fighting in Vukovar, the besieged Croatian stronghold on the Danube and in Nova Gradiska in western Slavonia.

Actors, artists assume defense role in Croatian tragedy

By Jason Feer
Special to The Sun

ZAGREB, Yugoslavia — The latest unit to develop in Croatia's army may bring choreography to the battle strategy in the siege of the break-away republic.

It is the Croatian Art Force, and its members recently traded in their pens, paintbrushes and ballet slippers for assault rifles, hand grenades and army boots in a bid to help win independence for Croatia.

The 88 men and two women of the new infantry unit, who in civil-

ian life were writers, dancers, sculptors, painters and actors, recently finished two weeks of combat training and are waiting to be sent into the field.

At the Art Force's recent graduation ceremony in Zagreb, it was apparent that the former artists still had some trouble with the idea of military discipline. As Croatian Defense Minister Gojko Susak was reviewing the troops, some of the artist-soldiers broke ranks to talk to wives and girlfriends. Others lighted cigarettes and leaned on their guns once Mr. Susak had passed.

The unit was the brainchild of Tom Stojkovic, an actor and theater director from the embattled city of Dubrovnik. "None of us were inspired to create anything artistic because of all the fighting," he said. "But we could not just watch as our country was torn to pieces."

Mr. Stojkovic began recruiting actors, but artists from other media also enlisted. The Art Force's theatrical origins are evident in the unit's shoulder insignia — the masks of comedy and tragedy.

Private funding has made the Art Force one of the few Croatian units

in which all soldiers are equipped with the same uniforms and arms — no small feat in an army where many fight in blue jeans and others are armed with crossbows. The Art Force is also the only Croatian unit that has its own video camera crew.

Though the unit received limited training, members were confident that they would be able to handle the rigors of battle.

"Many of us are already in good condition because of our jobs," said Igor Sedmakov, a ballet dancer with the National Theater of Croatia.

Gesturing toward a group of overweight men a few feet away, Mr. Sedmakov acknowledged that physical fitness was still a problem for some soldiers in the unit. "Some of us, mostly writers and painters, still make inviting targets, but they will learn that it is better to be smaller," he said grimly.

Mr. Stojkovic said that it proved difficult to develop killer instincts among the troops in the Art Force. "How do you teach peaceful people to kill, when all they really want is to be left alone to paint or write?" he asked. "The hardest part was bayonet training. None of them wanted to stab the dummies."

Nevertheless, the soldiers in the Art Force seemed determined to make a good showing in the field.

"It is true that we are not aggressive people," said Darko Bolhacic, a dancer with the Zagreb Ballet. "But if we have to fight and kill to be free, then that is what we will do."

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U.S. joins Europeans in Yugoslav sanctions

Bush issues warning about nationalism

By James Gerstenzang
Los Angeles Times

THE HAGUE, Netherlands — The United States, in an effort to stem the fighting in Yugoslavia, has joined the European economic sanctions against Belgrade and will co-sponsor a U.N. resolution that could lead to an oil embargo, President Bush announced yesterday.

The step was the strongest yet by the United States to bring pressure on the warring Serbs and Croats, whose battles have taken thousands of lives.

Mr. Bush warned that such violent nationalism could produce the kind of political instability that plunged Europe into two world wars this century.

"All of Europe has awakened to the dangers of an old enemy: a nationalism animated by hatred and unmoved by nobler ends," the president said. "We are ready to join the EC in holding accountable those in Yugoslavia whose parochial ambitions are perpetrating this agony."

But Mr. Bush said that any suggestion of the use of force by the West was "too far ahead of the power curve."

"We're not talking about force. We're talking about economic sanctions. We're just not there yet," he said at a news conference.

In a speech at the conclusion of a meeting of the European Community, Mr. Bush addressed the problems of Yugoslavia in the context of growing nationalism in Eastern Europe — one of three elements that he warned bear the seeds of danger. The others, he said, are an inability to move into a period of peace following the Cold War and failure to meld divergent forces into cooperative trade agreements.

His address was one of his most extended public discussions of challenges posed by the turn toward democracy in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union over the past two years.

"The collapse of communism has thrown open a Pandora's Box of ancient ethnic hatreds, resentment, even revenge," Mr. Bush said, warning that "democracy's new freedoms" could be used "to settle old scores."

Mr. Bush's announcement on Yugoslavia followed by one day the European Community's decision to impose economic sanctions on Yugoslavia. The EC called on the United Nations to declare a global oil embargo against the Balkan nation in an effort to cut off fuel for vehicles. The measures were aimed primarily at Serbia, which the EC has declared the aggressor in the war with breakaway Croatia.

Announcing his decision to join that effort and to strengthen the existing embargo on arms shipments to Yugoslavia, Mr. Bush said: "Measures must be taken to hold accountable those who placed their narrow ambitions above the well-being of

the peoples."

But the president conceded, "I don't think anyone can predict that sanctions alone will solve the problem."

The sanctions imposed Friday by the 12-nation Economic Community and joined yesterday by the United States immediately suspend trade concessions, ban imports of Yugoslav textiles and strike Yugoslavia from a list of aid recipients in Eastern Europe. But a wider effort, built around a U.N. oil embargo, is seen by many as necessary to expand the relatively limited reach of the effort. Yugoslavia imports most of its oil from Libya and the Soviet Union, nations that are not parties to the new economic embargo.

Stating that the United States "strongly supports" the European Community's efforts, Mr. Bush said that no one need fear "national pride." But he said: "We must guard against nationalism of a more sinister sort — one that feeds on old, stale prejudices, teaches people intolerance and suspicion, and even racism and anti-Semitism; one that pits nation against nation, citizen against citizen."

"There can be no place for these old animosities in the new Europe," he said.

He warned Europe of the dangers of repeating in 1991 the errors of 1919 — the beginning of the post-World War I era when "naive isolationism" gave rise to the horrors of Adolf Hitler and then the Cold War.

The address and news conference completed the president's four-day European trip. Yesterday afternoon, Mr. Bush flew to Washington and a weekend at Camp David.