

# Croatian cardinal appeals for help as war rages

ZAGREB, Yugoslavia (CNS) — The head of the Yugoslavian bishops' conference, Cardinal Franjo Kuharic, has pleaded with the European Community to save Croatia from destruction in the expanding civil war.

In an Aug. 27 letter to the European Community, based in Belgium, Cardinal Kuharic said, "Your immediate intervention and help in this emergency is critically needed to prevent further untold catastrophic consequences."

"The war and terrorism which is being waged against Croatia is increasingly more devastating and causing untold damage," said the cardinal, who is archbishop of the Croatian capital, Zagreb.

Meanwhile the European Community and others were trying to put a cease-fire in place and to restart peace talks between Serbia, the Serbian-dominated federal government and Croatia.

Despite new efforts to halt the armed clashes that have claimed at least 300 lives since the republic declared independence in late June, fresh fighting had erupted in Croatia and heavy casualties were reported. Slovenia, another of the constituent republics of Yugoslavia, also broke away from the federation.

The European Community launched a new peace initiative and French President Francois Mitterrand had separate talks in Paris with Croatian President Franjo



Croatian national guardsmen aim their automatic rifles from a trench in the village of Vidusevac, Yugoslavia, Aug. 28.

Tudjman and Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic.

Serbs say they are fighting to keep Serb-populated areas of Croatia inside Yugoslavia. Croatia accuses them of seizing its territory to enlarge their own republic.

On Aug. 27, the European Community blamed Serbia for the conflict and threatened to isolate it.

"The civilian Croatian population is being driven from their homes; towns and villages are totally demolished as a

schools, hospitals, churches and cultural monuments," Cardinal Kuharic said.

"More than 100,000 persons have been driven from their homes and have become refugees," he said. "The toll of those killed and wounded runs to the hundreds."

"It is our firm belief that immediate international support and backing for the Croatian and Slovenian position is imperative," the cardinal said.

In the United States, Archbishop John R. Roach of St. Paul-Minneapolis, chairman

of the U.S. bishops' International Policy Committee, warned the Yugoslavian government that continued civil war will "lead to ruin for all peoples of Yugoslavia."

"We are especially concerned about reports that the Yugoslav (federal) army is supporting the terrorism of the Serbian guerrillas in Croatia," Archbishop Roach stated Aug. 30 in a letter to Yugoslavia's U.S. ambassador, Dzevad Mujezinovic.

He urged the government to "end the violence by the federal army and other parties," to respect Croatia's "right of self-determination" and to "promote the political reforms and other conditions necessary" for a peaceful solution to the conflict.

The Serbian-dominated federal army, while ostensibly in Croatia only as a peacekeeping force, has repeatedly come to the aid of Serbian guerrillas in clashes with Croatian militia forces, according to news reports from Croatia.

In a separate message to Cardinal Kuharic, Archbishop Roach praised his "eloquent appeals for peace and justice" and said the U.S. bishops "view with increasing alarm the terrorist violence in Croatia."

"During these dark days, I assure you that our bishops' conference remains in solidarity with you and your brother bishops in Croatia," he wrote.

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