

# EU AND NATO BROKER FRAGILE PEACE DEAL

**Vilnius / Skopje, Macedonia/ Budapest, May 31, 2001**

As fears grew today for the safety of up to 10,000 villagers trapped by the fighting in Macedonia, NATO Secretary-General Lord ROBERTSON told the NATO Parliamentary Assembly meeting in Vilnius: "A band of armed thugs must not be allowed to destroy a multi-ethnic democracy."



A lasting solution "can only be achieved by political means," he said. But the deal brokered by EU High Representative Javier SOLANA (*right*) earlier this week to try to hold the government together remains highly fragile.

His signal achievement was to unpick the 'freelance' deal brokered US diplomat Robert FROWIC, under which the ethnic Albanian rebels agreed to withdraw in return for an amnesty and a veto over political decisions involving ethnic Albanian rights.



Macedonian Foreign Minister Ilinka MITREVA said Frowick had been "politely asked to leave Macedonia." The deal, counter to EU and NATO policy as well as that of the coalition government, resulted in deadlock in the Macedonian cabinet.

Slavic leaders insisted that the ethnic Albanian parties renounce the deal before co-operation is re-started; under the agreement brokered by Solana, the botched deal with the rebels has been annulled.

Solana spent seven hours with the leaders of Macedonia's three Slavic political parties and two ethnic Albanian parties, then flew to Budapest to brief foreign ministers.

He returned to Skopje on Tuesday to clinch the deal and was back in Hungary yesterday morning.

In another development, Macedonian President Boris TRAJKOVSKI last night proposed a partial amnesty for rebel fighters. But insiders fear it will have little impact on the fighters in the kills near the border with Kosovo.

Kris JANOWSKI, spokesman for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in Geneva, said some of the villagers - estimated to number between 5,000 and 10,000 - had been ordered by the rebels not to leave.