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— SHADOW OF WAR GROWS —

EUROPE ON EDGE AFTER PRO-RUSSIAN SLOVAK PM IS GUNNED DOWN

**As Ukraine conflict escalates, fears that Putin
will exploit attack to destabilise Nato nation**

THE pro-Putin prime minister of Slovakia was in a serious condition in hospital last night after being shot in an assassination bid that triggered alarm bells across Europe.

Robert Fico was beckoned

By **Andy Jehring** and **Mark Nicol**

over to meet a crowd of supporters before a gunman leaned across and fired five times at point-blank range, sending the divisive politician sprawling to the ground.

Bodyguards pounced on the would-be assassin as Mr Fico was carried into a government limousine

which sped away before he was airlifted to hospital.

He was said to be recovering following surgery as police said they had detained 71-year-old poet Juraj Cintula on suspicion of the shooting in Handlova, central Slovakia.

Vladimir Putin last night described the attack as a 'monstrous crime' and there are fears he will now seize on

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**Now golfer
Rory's wife
ditches her
£500,000 ring**

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Split: Rory McIlroy's wife Erica Stoll yesterday