

# Germans experience conflicting pressures

By Quentin Peel in Bonn

THE GERMAN government is facing conflicting pressures over how far to go in supporting moves to independence of Slovenia and Croatia.

Mr Hans-Dietrich Genscher, the German foreign minister, will be pressing his EC partners in The Hague today for a strongly-worded political declaration on Yugoslavia. This could include the threat at least to consider recognition of the two breakaway republics, if the Yugoslav army were to intervene, according to German diplomats.

The Germans expect other EC states, including Britain, France and Spain, to prevent the declaration from being too explicit.

In theory, the issue concerns the two potentially conflicting articles of the Helsinki declaration on human rights, the one concerning territorial integrity, and the second, self-determination.

However, the real life linkage which concerns both the German Foreign Ministry, and other EC states, is what effect too rapid recognition of Croatia and Slovenia would have on the situation in the Soviet Union.

At the same time Britain, France and above all Spain, threatened by Basque and Catalonian separatist movements, are all concerned not to give excessive weight to the issue of self-determination.

The German government is acutely concerned about the potential disintegration of the Soviet Union.

Mr Genscher suffered the ignominy earlier this week of a unanimous vote in the Bundestag foreign affairs committee to investigate his alleged policy of appeasement towards Belgrade. He has also been strongly attacked on the issue by Mr Volker Rühle, general secretary of the Christian Democrats, the majority partner in the government, for not rushing into recognition.

Thus what he needs today is a strong enough political statement to deflect domestic criticism, and hopefully to deter the Yugoslav armed forces, but not one which commits him to early recognition.

"Recognition is really the only major card we have in our hands to use as a means of persuasion with Belgrade," according to one Western diplomat in Bonn. "We cannot afford to play it in any decisive way too soon."