

Moscow drops objection to CSCE mission

By Robert Mauthner and Ariane Genillard in Prague

THE 35 member nations of the Conference on Security and Co-Operation in Europe agreed last night to send a "good offices" mission to Yugoslavia to facilitate political dialogue between the countries' warring factions.

After a day of wrangling, the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia dropped their objections to such a procedure, following the acceptance of a number of "minor amendments" tabled by Moscow.

But the emergency meeting of senior CSCE officials was still deadlocked over another proposal, calling upon the European Community to send an observer mission to Yugoslavia to monitor a ceasefire between the federal forces and troops of the breakaway republics of Slovenia and Croatia.

At one point in the discussions, the Yugoslavia delegation proposed the word "observers" be dropped from the draft text, which would refer only to "an EC mission" to Yugoslavia.

The partial breakthrough in the laborious negotiations occurred after the Soviet Union had modified its outright opposition to any proposal involving intervention in the internal affairs of a member country.

Fearing that the "good offices" procedure might be invoked to deal with disputes between the central Soviet government and individual Soviet republics seeking greater autonomy, the Soviet delegation insisted on inclusion of a statement in the text that the

mission to Yugoslavia should not be a precedent.

The text also makes clear that all aspects of the mission should be agreed with the Yugoslav authorities.

The composition and precise mandate of the "good offices" mission was not settled last night, but will be worked out by the chairman of the committee of CSCE senior officials in consultation with other member countries.

The meeting of senior officials was intended to lay the

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groundwork for a meeting of EC foreign ministers, due to be held in The Hague today.

On the first day of its emergency session on Wednesday, the senior officials called for an immediate halt to hostilities in Yugoslavia, the return of all troops to their barracks and the restoration of political control over all armed forces in Yugoslavia.

Mr Gianni de Michelis, the Italian foreign minister, made an unexpected appearance at the senior officials' meeting, although he is no longer a member of the EC "troika" playing a mediating role.

Mr de Michelis, who was accompanying Mr Francesco Cossiga, the Italian president, on a visit to Czechoslovakia, made an urgent appeal to the conference to approve both the observer and "good offices" missions.