

EC ministers agree on carrot and stick mission to Belgrade

By Boris Johnson, EC Correspondent, In The Hague

THREE EC foreign ministers arrive in Belgrade for renewed peace talks today after the Common Market imposed a simultaneous arms embargo and aid freeze on Yugoslavia yesterday.

The ministers, from Holland, Luxembourg and Portugal, also carry with them the threat to grant EC diplomatic recognition to the breakaway republics of Slovenia and Croatia if the Yugoslav federal army resorts to force again.

Agreement on the diplomatic moves was reached after protracted arguments between the 12 EC foreign ministers in The Hague yesterday afternoon, in which the Community appeared almost as divided about the future of Yugoslavia as the Yugoslavs themselves.

As a concession to the French and others who want to prolong the life of the federation, the EC will also support Belgrade's demands that Slovenian troops must withdraw from positions in control of the border, although it

believes the federal authorities' deadline of Sunday noon should be extended.

The aid freeze will cut Yugoslavia off from about £600 million of EC money.

Mr Hans van den Broek, Dutch Foreign Minister leading the delegation, said the EC was demanding a "return to the situation of June 25". That would mean that the Slovenes and Croats would maintain only their formal declara-

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tion of independence. The practical implementation would be rolled back pending further negotiations.

The EC ministers agreed yesterday to send a mission of between 30 and 50 unarmed officers to monitor the various arrangements under the terms of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe agreement. These include the return of troops to barracks, withdrawal of Slovenian forces from borders,

and a moratorium on independence moves.

Germany was pressing hardest for the EC to make an explicit threat to recognise the rebel republics as a way of deterring military action from Belgrade. But France displayed growing anxiety that a newly independent Slovenia would swiftly attach itself to Austria, and so become part of a renewed greater German zone in central Europe.

M Roland Dumas, French Foreign Minister, said: "When we had zones of influence in the past, it was not the happiest of things."

M Dumas was giving voice to historic fears in Paris that Germany could become the dominating force in eastern Europe. But Germany says it is obliged to support the principle of the self-determination of peoples — especially after other countries consented so rapidly to German reunification.

After tense argument over lunch, the 12 ministers agreed that they would not grant immediate recognition to the breakaway republics, but they said they would "have to consider again their position in the event of any further breach of the ceasefire".

Herr Hans-Dietrich Genscher, the German minister, said this was an implicit threat to grant recognition, although he would have liked a clearer reference.

The only other country to support Germany was Denmark, which believes that the EC must publicly recognise the Slovenes and the Croats to pave the way for recognition of the Soviet Baltic states. Almost all other EC countries view the possible break-up of Yugoslavia with caution or even horror.



Going home: two Yugoslav army conscripts, captured in Slovenia, are released in Ljubljana yesterday