

EC backs away from recognition

DESPITE German insistence, European Community foreign ministers yesterday backed away from formal recognition of the rebel Yugoslav republics and merely reserved the right to "reconsider" their position if there is further military action.

This formula papered over fundamental differences of approach among the Twelve, but in the eyes of some it left the threat of recognition implicit. The German Foreign Minister, Hans Dietrich Genscher, said. "If it had been up to me alone, specific mention would have been made of the need to recognise the independence of Slovenia and Croatia in the event of future military action."

From Sarah Lambert
in The Hague

The ministers met in emergency session in The Hague to build on the momentum generated last weekend. Euphoria at the prospect of an EC-brokered settlement has evaporated since then as the unrest continues.

The Twelve did, however, agree to take up the mandate given them by the CSCE meeting in Prague on Thursday and to dispatch a team to make arrangements to monitor the ceasefire. This will initially comprise the foreign ministers and senior diplomatic representatives of the

troika that represents the EC's past, present and future presidents — Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Portugal.

A Community-wide arms embargo was introduced and 850m ecus (£595m) of EC funds to Yugoslavia have been frozen.

The French, opposing the Germans and Danes, argued most strongly in favour of national integrity over self-determination. The French Foreign Minister, Roland Dumas, said that the primacy of the Yugoslav presidency was paramount. He spoke darkly about the need to ensure that some republics did not fall under "foreign influence" — a thinly disguised reference to Austria.