

# Yugoslavia truce observers

## under EC flag

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From David Osborne in The Hague  
and Marcus Tanner in Belgrade

THE EUROPEAN Community yesterday deepened its involvement in resolving Yugoslavia's constitutional crisis by confirming plans to send — under its own flag of 12 gold stars — a team of up to 50 observers to monitor the present ceasefire.

The Community will also set up a special diplomatic task force in Brussels to explore what direct contribution it might make to the negotiations between the Yugoslav republics and the federal presidency, which are due to start by 1 August.

At talks in The Hague, EC foreign ministers were hopeful that the Brioni agreement, which the EC helped to broker between Belgrade and the breakaway republics of Slovenia and Croatia last Sunday, may hold. They welcomed, in particular, the formal acceptance of the pact yesterday by the Slovenian parliament, which came after approval on Tuesday by Croatia's parliament.

The Slovene delegates ratified the proposal by a big majority, with 189 delegates voting to accept

the accord, and only 11 voting against. Defending the accord, Milan Kucan, the President of Slovenia, said that it did not mean Slovenia was backtracking over the issue of independence. "Today is the sixteenth day of our independence and the fifteenth day of the war. Those few days have changed our little world, Yugoslavia and Europe," he said.

In The Hague, Douglas Hogg, Minister of State at the Foreign Office, suggested that Britain would have no objection should the negotiating process in Yugoslavia result in some alteration of the internal border between Serbia and Croatia if it helped to resolve ethnic conflicts.

Mr Hogg insisted, however, that no changes to the external bor-

ders of Yugoslavia could be tolerated. Earlier, Hungary had reacted to news of a possible border deal between Croatia and Serbia by raising its own claim to areas of Serbia that contain large numbers of minority Hungarians.

The monitoring will at first be an exclusively EC affair and will not involve other countries in the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). This reflected Yugoslav concerns that neither of the superpowers nor Austria should be involved.

Moreover, it emerged that the mission, which will be concentrated primarily in Slovenia but could extend its work into Croatia, will operate under the EC flag of 12 gold stars. The flag will fly above its operating centres, which

are likely to be Italy's consulate in Ljubljana and the German consulate in Zagreb. Officials said markings of the 12 stars would also be placed on official vehicles.

This will be the first such foreign policy foray by the Community as a body, and is certain to encourage supporters of a fully-fledged EC common foreign policy, which is being mooted in political union negotiations.

It is also striking that the EC Commission, which wants a role in such a policy, has been invited to supply some observers. The others will come from all the member states. An EC Commission official observed, half in jest, that the EC was "ahead of itself by three years" in such a common exercise.

The ministers indicated that in a second phase, when the mission may grow to 70 members, it might contain other CSCE observers. Poland and Canada have both expressed an interest in participating. Any extension of the mission into Serbia would have to be agreed directly with the republic.

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