

# Kohl says time not ripe for recognition

By Quentin Peel in Bonn

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CHANCELLOR Helmut Kohl yesterday yielded to President François Mitterrand's persuasion and stated publicly that the time was not ripe for moves to recognise the independence of Croatia and Slovenia.

In so doing, he was resisting growing political pressure from the ranks of his own Christian Democrat supporters in the German government.

At the same time, the French president firmly rejected the use of force to hold the Yugoslav federation together, and then obliquely warned against any German temptation to intervene more directly.

"The era of great empires in the Balkans is over," Mr Mitterrand declared, at the end of an informal bilateral summit on the Tegernsee, in the southern Bavarian alps.

The glorious summer weather and visual splendour of the mountain setting was

supposed to underline the healthy state of Franco-German co-operation across the spectrum of international issues. However, the words of the two leaders suggested that, in fact, their relationship is decidedly wary on several issues, including Yugoslavia.

The principal subjects of discussion were the two inter-governmental conferences of the 12 EC member states, on economic and monetary union, and on political union.

While Mr Kohl praised Franco-German co-operation on political union, he merely expressed his conviction that a "reasonable compromise" would be reached on the outstanding questions on monetary union - where the two sides are clearly divided.

As for Mr Mitterrand, he warned that it was "premature" to draw any conclusions for security co-operation from the progress on political union.