

'EC recognises Croatia and Slovenia' from the Luxemburger Wort (16 January 1992)

Caption: On 16 January 1992, the daily newspaper Luxemburger Wort announces the decision taken by the Twelve the day before to recognise officially the independence of Slovenia and Croatia.

Source: Luxemburger Wort. Für Wahrheit und Recht. 16.01.1992, n° 13; 145e année. Luxembourg: Imprimerie Saint-Paul. "EG erkennt Kroatien und Slowenien an", p. 1.

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EC recognises Croatia and Slovenia

Criticism from Belgrade / UN forces open talks

Brussels / Belgrade (dpa). — On Wednesday, all the European Community Member States decided to recognise the secessionist Yugoslav Republics of Croatia and Slovenia. Austria and Switzerland directly followed the example of the EC. The Serb-dominated Yugoslav Federal Government condemned the wave of recognition as a violation of ‘Yugoslavia’s sovereign rights’. In the meantime, the United Nations Peacekeeping Force opened initial talks with Yugoslav Army representatives.

The EC countries’ decision jointly to recognise the two Republics was announced by the Portuguese Council Presidency in Brussels on Wednesday. The prospect of later recognition was held out to Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Advocates and opponents of recognition among the Community of the Twelve had fought a tough tug-of-war before a decision was reached. On 16 December 1991, the EC Foreign Ministers had taken a decision of principle to give conditional recognition to the secessionist Republics with effect from 15 January. On Wednesday, Germany established full diplomatic relations with Slovenia and Croatia.

By taking this decision, the EC countries have largely followed the recommendations of the legal Arbitration Commission of the EC-appointed Peace Conference on the civil war in Yugoslavia. According to the Arbitration Commission, final reservations against the still inadequate protection of ethnic minorities in Croatia had been dispelled in a letter from President Franjo Tudjman. In line with the EC Peace Plan, Mr Tudjman had promised to guarantee in the Constitution that Serb-populated areas would have a special status. French Foreign Minister Roland Dumas, however, said on Wednesday that Paris would not be sending an Ambassador to Zagreb until all conditions had been fulfilled.

As far as the other Yugoslav Republics awaiting recognition are concerned, the EC announced that some important issues still had to be resolved. In a list of criteria addressed to these Republics, Brussels had demanded that they defend democracy and the rule of law, guarantee the rights of ethnic minorities, recognise the inviolability of national borders and comply with CSCE commitments regarding disarmament, security and regional stability.

Contrary to the European Community declaration, the Arbitration Commission’s report came to the conclusion that recognition of Macedonia would also be possible. Adopting the name Macedonia would not imply that the Republic was laying any territorial claims to another country. Greece had expressed some reservations on this issue because one of its provinces also bears the name Macedonia. On the subject of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Arbitration Commission recommended that a referendum be held so as to confirm beyond any doubt the population’s willingness for independence.

Radio Zagreb reported that Croatian front-line soldiers had been firing into the air after hearing the news about the recognition. Cardinal Franjo Kuharic had ordered church bells to be rung throughout Croatia that evening.

The Serb-dominated Yugoslav Federal Government has announced that it will continue to ‘exercise its constitutional role’. Observers in the Yugoslav capital took this to mean that Belgrade would also in the future continue to speak for Slovenia and Croatia on foreign policy issues. The Federal Government furthermore declared that the recognition ‘could not anticipate the definitive solution of the crisis in Yugoslavia’.

On Wednesday, the UN forces opened initial talks with Yugoslav Army representatives in Belgrade. They are expected to arrive in their mission areas in the Croatian battle zone next weekend and take up positions on the Serbian side.

According to the Belgrade news agency Tanjug, the planned force of 10 000 UN soldiers might already arrive in Yugoslavia at the end of next week. Quoting ‘diplomatic circles in Belgrade’, Tanjug also announced a meeting of the United Nations Security Council on this subject at the beginning of next week.

Apart from some isolated firefights, the ceasefire held for the 12th day running. Croatian television reported that three Croatian National Guards had been killed by Serb snipers near the town of Karlovac.