

Letter to Hans van den Broek, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Hague, 2nd December, 1991

Dear Hans,

You will remember that we had a talk on Saturday evening about the future prospects in Yugoslavia and the problems of recognition of Croatia and Slovenia. I think it right to put my views on paper and hope perhaps that you will find it possible to circulate them to you EC colleagues.

On 4th October we agreed with the three Yugoslav principals that recognition would be granted within the framework of an overall settlement of the Yugoslav problem - a position subsequently endorsed by the EC. A lot of water has flown under the bridge since then but Cy Vance is working hard to maintain the ceasefire negotiated on 23rd November in Geneva and there is a real prospect that the UN will agree to send peacekeeping troops. In that event, it will be possible to continue the peace conference and discuss amongst the six Presidents the plan which is already on the table. An early recognition of Croatia would undoubtedly mean the break-up of the conference, as I cannot see that the Serbs would be prepared in those circumstances to continue, nor would the Croats and Slovenes be much interested in its continuance.

There is also a real danger, perhaps even a probability, that Bosnia-Herzegovina would also ask for independence and recognition, which would be wholly unacceptable to the Serbs in that republic in which there are something like 100,000 JNA troops, some of whom have withdrawn there from Croatia. Milosevic has hinted that military action would take place there if Croatia and Slovenia were recognised. This might well be the spark that sets Bosnia-Herzegovina alight.

Recognition would also call into question the role of the peacekeeping force which would be deployed in the context of a continuing peace conference. Ministers would no doubt like to consider how the UN would view a situation in which there was no political machinery to achieve a settlement whilst they had the responsibility for indefinite peacekeeping.

Letter from Javier Perez de Cuellar to Mr. H. van den Broek, 10 December, 1991

Dear Foreign Minister,

I wish to share with you concerns which I have in regard to the situation in Yugoslavia.

These concerns have been deepened by the report that I have just received from my Personal Envoy, Mr. Cyrus Vance who returned last evening from a fourth mission to Yugoslavia. They have also been deepened by the outcome of yesterday's informal meeting of the Presidents of the six Yugoslav republics, which Lord Carrington convened in The Hague in his capacity as Chairman of the Conference on Yugoslavia.

I shall shortly be reporting to the Security Council on the outcome of Mr. Vance's mission. As far as a United Nations peace-keeping operation in Yugoslavia is concerned, difficulties persist - owing to the fact that the Geneva agreement of 23 November is not being fully implemented. A paper comprising a concept and operational plan of a potential peace-keeping operation has, however, been left with the principal parties by Mr. Vance. It has met with a wide measure of agreement from them.

In his report to me today, Mr. Vance has described widely expressed apprehensions about the possibility of premature recognition of the independence of some of the Yugoslav republics and the effect that such a move might have on remaining republics. Leaders of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia were among the many political and military figures who last week underscored to Mr. Vance their own strong fears in this regards. More than one of his high-level interlocutors described the possibly explosive consequences of such a development as being a "potential time bomb".

Given these anxieties, I believe that the Twelve were correct when they reiterated, at their special EPC Ministerial Meeting held in Rome on 8 November, that the prospect of recognition of the independence of those republics wishing it, "can only be envisaged in the framework of an overall settlement...". As we know, that overall settlement is being pursued by the Conference on Yugoslavia under the Chairmanship of Lord Carrington.

Let me be clear: I am not in any way calling into question the principle of self-determination which is enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. However, I am deeply worried that any early, selective recognition could widen the present conflict and fuel an explosive situation especially in Bosnia-Herzegovina and also Macedonia; indeed, serious consequences could ensue for the entire Balkan region. I believe, therefore, that uncoordinated actions should be avoided.

I should be grateful if you could bring my concerns to the attention of your partners among the Twelve, given the particular responsibility of the United Nations for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Please accept, dear Foreign Minister, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Letter from Hans-Dietrich Genscher to the General Secretary, 13 December 1991

Sehr geehrter Herr Generalsekretar,

Aussenminister van den Broek hat mir wie den anderen Aussenministern der Mitgliedstaaten der Europäischen Gemeinschaft von ihrem Schreiben an ihn Kenntnis gegeben. Ich möchte ihnen meine tiefe Besorgnis darüber zum Ausdruck bringen, dass diese Ausführungen - und die inzwischen erfolgte Veröffentlichung - geeignet sind, jene Kräfte in Jugoslawien zu ermutigen, die sich schon bisher dem erfolgreichen Abschluss des Friedensprozesses entschieden widersetzt haben. Nach den Feststellungen der EG und der Monitoren trägt die serbische Führung zusammen mit der jugoslawischen Volksarmee die Hauptverantwortung dafür, dass in Kroatien die Waffenruhe nicht eingehalten wird und die Haager Jugoslawien-Konferenz bereits seit mehreren Wochen stagniert.

Die Verweigerung der Anerkennung jener Republiken, die ihre Unabhängigkeit wünschen, musste zu weiterer Eskalation der Gewaltanwendung durch die Volksarmee führen, weil sie darin eine Bestätigung ihrer Eroberungspolitik sehen würde. Ich darf darauf hinweisen, dass für Europa nach der Schlussakte von Helsinki und der Charta von Paris gilt, dass die Grenzen unverletzlich sind und nicht mit Gewalt geändert werden dürfen. Die EG hat deshalb die Respektierung der inneren und äusseren Grenzen Jugoslawiens gefordert.

Lassen Sie mich meine Zuversicht zum Ausdruck bringen, dass die gemeinsamen Anstrengungen der Vereinten Nationen, der KSZE und der Europäischen Gemeinschaft den Völkern Jugoslawiens endlich Frieden bringen und ihnen eine gedeihliche Zukunft ermöglichen.

Mit freundlichen Grüssen.

Letter from Javier Perez de Cuellar to Hans-Dietrich Genscher, Vice-Chancellor and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany, 14 December, 1991

Dear Mr. Minister,

I have received your letter of 13 December in which you refer to mine of the 10th to Minister van den Broek, current President of the EC Council of Ministers.

I agree with you that public statements can exacerbate the tensions in Yugoslavia. That is why mine have been few and carefully considered.

Let me recall that at no point did my letter state that recognition of the independence of particular Yugoslav Republics should be denied, or withheld indefinitely. Rather, I observe that the principle of self-determination is enshrined in the United Nations Charter itself. The concern that I continue to have relates to the prospect of early, selective and uncoordinated recognition. In this connection, I cannot but note the omission from your letter of any reference to the common position adopted by you and your colleagues of the Twelve at the Special Ministerial EPC Meeting held at Rome on 8 November 1991. You will recall that the Declaration issued by the Twelve on that occasion stated that "the prospect of recognition of the independence of those Republics wishing it, can only be envisaged in the framework of an overall settlement...".

Furthermore, you will no doubt be aware of the contents of the letter sent by Lord Carrington, Chairman of the Conference on Yugoslavia, on 2 December to Minister van den Broek in which Lord Carrington stated that early and selective recognition "would undoubtedly lead to the break-up of the Conference".

I trust also that you will have learned of the deep concern that has been expressed by the Presidents of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia, as well as by many others, that early selective recognitions could result in a widening of the present conflict to those sensitive areas. Such a development could have grave consequences for the Balkan region as a whole, and it would seriously undermine my own efforts and those of my Personal Envoy to secure the conditions necessary for the deployment of a peace-keeping operation in Yugoslavia.

I am confident that you will understand that in view of my responsibilities under the Charter, I am duty bound to express such concerns when they are also my own.

Needless to say, I am entirely in agreement with you in supporting the principle set out in the Helsinki Final Act and the Charter of Paris that rules out changes of borders by force. That principle also flows from the provisions of the United Nations Charter.

Please accept, Mr. Minister, the assurances of my highest consideration.