

## ‘The whims of the Twelve’ from La Libre Belgique (12 May 1992)

**Caption:** On 12 May 1992, the Brussels-based daily newspaper La Libre Belgique criticises the policy pursued by the European Community on the Yugoslav conflict.

**Source:** La Libre Belgique. 12.05.1992, n° 133; 111e année. Bruxelles: Edition de la Libre Belgique S.A. "Les foudres des Douze", auteur:Rosten, Michel , p. 4.

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## The whims of the Twelve

by Michel Rosten

All eyes were on the EEC's Foreign Affairs Council on Monday as it took two decisions on the Yugoslav crisis that were difficult to understand and would be qualified as outrageous had they not been put forward by people who, in theory, spend their lives pondering the major diplomatic problems of the day. The Twelve agreed to recall their ambassadors from Belgrade and declared their intention to vote in favour of Yugoslavia's exclusion from the CSCE and the OECD.

By behaving in this way, the Twelve are giving the unfortunate impression that they are pushing down on the head of a drowning man. Last summer, when the federal army was attacking in Slovenia and Croatia, it would have been courageous to take such a step and sideline the federal army that was serving Mr Milosevic's interests. Serbia would then perhaps have hesitated before pursuing its suicidal policy which led to the collapse of the country and irreparable tragedies in the break-away republics. But what purpose can the European ministers' whimsical behaviour serve now? The die is cast. Since last Friday, the rump presidency of what remains of Yugoslavia has capitulated by decapitating the federal army of which it remained, in constitutional terms, the commander-in-chief. The Defence Minister, General Adzic, was forced to resign while 39 other generals, known for their extremism, were sent into retirement.

This measure, all observers agreed last week, was particularly aimed at finding a solution to the civil war now ravaging Bosnia and Herzegovina. It also came close on the heels of another decision taken in Belgrade which called on Serb and Montenegrin officers and privates to go back home. On Monday, Vice-President Kostic (a Montenegrin) proposed to the Bosnian Head of State, Mr Izetbegovic, that talks on the fate of the former federal army be re-started on 13 May. In short, it is precisely as the political situation is enjoying something of a bright spell and could possibly have helped achieve a military settlement that the Twelve are recalling their ambassadors. But in the days and weeks ahead, it could be useful to have them on the spot. It is as though the EEC officials had spent their weekend cut off from any news.

Also, demanding that Serbia be suspended from the CSCE is certainly not the best idea in the current circumstances. Isolating this Republic from the international community (or at least from the old continent) has its disadvantages, not so much for those targeted by this measure as for the minorities, who, since they are living in Serb territory, have to get along with the powers that be. This is especially the case for the Kosovar Albanians, who are going to feel more isolated than ever.