

**December 9, 1989**

**Special Analysis: Yugoslavia: Sinking Deeper into  
Political Quagmire**□□□

**Citation:**

"Special Analysis: Yugoslavia: Sinking Deeper into Political Quagmire", December 9, 1989, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Approved for Release by the Central Intelligence Agency, October 29, 2019. <https://wilson-center.drivingcreative.com/document/209503>

**Summary:**

An analysis of the political climate in Yugoslavia and its effects on national leadership.

**Original Language:**

English

**Contents:**

Original Scan

0225

~~Top Secret~~**Special Analysis****YUGOSLAVIA: Sinking Deeper Into Political Quagmire**

*The postwar political consensus among Yugoslavia's ethnic groups is breaking down after a decade of economic deterioration and government mismanagement. Political tensions probably will increase next year, undermining the implementation of sorely needed economic and political reforms and further weakening the country's stability.*

Tensions in Yugoslavia, already at a postwar high, rose again last week after bitter exchanges between Serbian and Slovene officials over a planned demonstration in Slovenia by as many as 40,000 ethnic Serbs. The demonstration was canceled after Slovene leaders termed it a Serbian provocation and threatened to use police to prevent it. Serbian officials are calling for a retaliatory economic boycott of Slovenia.

The national leadership has been seriously weakened by the increasing polarization of regional disputes and has been unable to mediate effectively. The eight-member State Presidency, which reportedly often splits evenly on key domestic issues, gave the Slovene leadership only weak support during the latest dispute with Serbia. The party's Central Committee is also deadlocked; the latest furor prompted party leaders to cancel a plenum that was to have prepared for next month's national party congress.

Yugoslav leaders are unlikely to forge a new agreement on ethnic power sharing in the coming year. Preparations for the national party congress are exposing sharp regional differences over reforms and regional autonomy that republic party congresses to be held this month will reinforce. Slovenia, and to a lesser extent Croatia, probably will advocate a multiparty parliamentary system and greater regional autonomy. Serbia, the largest republic, and its allies in Vojvodina and Montenegro will support a stronger central government and the retention of the Communist Party's political monopoly. In the near term Slovenia probably will proceed with its plan for its own de facto multiparty system and with plans for open elections next spring. Few changes are likely in Serbia and its provinces.

Despite the deepening political divisions, Yugoslav leaders probably can muddle through for at least another year, but the outlook thereafter seems increasingly bleak.

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TCS 2985/89

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