



BACKGROUND PAPER:

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Crisis Committee on the Breakup of Yugoslavia

Introduction:

Following the death of President for Life Josip Broz Tito in 1980, the divergent ethnic interests within Yugoslavia began to boil over. A key aspect of the tension was the intense nationalism that existed within the republics, which was often utilized by politicians in the country as a tool in their pursuit of power. In January of 1990, Yugoslavia is on the verge of a major crisis. The committee begins at the 14th Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia.

Background and History

1918 to 1941

On December 1, 1918, following World War I, Yugoslavia was formed under the name “Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes”. Alexander I, the prince regent of Serbia, became the King of Yugoslavia in 1921, and, in 1929, the country was officially named Yugoslavia. King Alexander’s reign ended in 1934 when he was assassinated by Vlado Chernozemski, a member of the International Macedonian Revolutionary Organization, in Marseille, France. Alexander’s

son, Peter II, was only eleven years old at the time, so his cousin, Prince Paul, assumed the regency. On March 25, 1941, Prince Paul signed the Tripartite Pact in Vienna, aligning with fascists. This was a highly unpopular decision and jumpstarted a coup that left Prince Paul dead and seventeen-year-old Peter as the sole monarch. On April 6, 1941, Yugoslavia was invaded by the Axis powers. On April 17, Yugoslavia signed an armistice with Germany. Yugoslavia was split up. Croatia became a Nazi satellite state ruled by the Ustaše, a radical Croatian nationalist party that was backed by Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and Slovenia were all occupied.

1941 to 1960

For the next 4 years, the Ustaše regime brutalized the region, murdering nearly 500,000, exiling 250,000, and forcing many more to convert to Catholicism. On November 29th, 1943, the Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia was held. This date is the Yugoslavian “Republic Day,” celebrating the events of the next few years. The Yugoslavian monarchy was abolished in 1945 and, in 1946, a communist government was established. The two main resistance forces were the Yugoslav Partisans, a communist group led by Josip Broz Tito, and the Chetniks, a royalist group led by Draža Mihailović. Although they were both originally focused on fighting against the Axis powers, the Chetniks slowly became a Serb nationalist tool of the Axis powers, fighting against the highly successful guerrilla campaign initiated by the Yugoslav Partisans.

In 1944, the Yugoslav Partisans expelled the Axis powers from Serbia, and, later in the year, they expelled the Axis powers from the rest of Yugoslavia. In late 1944 and early 1955, Josip Broz Tito and the former prime minister of Yugoslavia, Ivan Šubašić, negotiated to

establish a post-World War II coalition government. This process began in June 1944 and concluded in March 1945. Tito became the Prime Minister of Yugoslavia, and the Provisional Government of the Democratic Federal Yugoslavia was established.

On January 31, 1946, the new constitution of Yugoslavia was created, establishing six republics, an autonomous province, and an autonomous district. The six republics were: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia (which included Vojvodina and Kosovo), and Slovenia. The capital was Belgrade. Tito planned to take control of Albania and parts of Greece.

In 1948, Yugoslavia split from Soviet influence, amending the constitution to adopt a more decentralized governance structure. They broke from the Soviet Union's position on the Marshall Plan, an American initiative to create economic recovery program's in European countries following World War II. The Soviet Union rejected this money and blocked its satellite and ally states from participating in the program. Under Tito, Yugoslavia accepted this money, opening the door to improved relations with the United States despite Yugoslavia's communist ideals. Following this split with the Soviet Union, the US attempted to seize this opportunity to turn Yugoslavia into an ally. They granted additional economic and military aid to the country.



Source: Sotirović, Vladislav. (2013). Former Yugoslavia - political map.

1961 to 1989

In 1961, Tito helped found the Non-Aligned Movement along with a range of other nations from across the globe. The member nations of the Non-Aligned Movement remained separate from the Eastern Bloc nations and the NATO nations. On April 7, 1963, Josip Broz Tito was declared the president for life. Tito was incredibly powerful, and those who criticized him—including a few among his inner circle—often fell victim to unfortunate ‘accidents’ soon after that left them incapacitated, impoverished, or dead. In 1968, there were worldwide movements in support of civil rights. Many of these protestors were students and, in Yugoslavia, they were fighting against the communist elites, instead favoring increased freedom of

expression and other rights. The leaders of these protests were sacked from university and political posts.

During the Croatian Spring of 1970 and 1971, students in Zagreb protested for more Croatian autonomy. They felt as though Serbia had an unfairly great amount of power compared to the rest of the republics in Yugoslavia. Although this was shut down very quickly, some high-ranking politicians secretly supported the cause and worked to create greater autonomy for the member republics of Yugoslavia, as well as the provinces within Serbia.

In 1974, Vojvodina, Kosovo-Metohija, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro were granted greater autonomy. This provoked mixed reactions. Serbs felt as though this was an appeasement to radical Croat and ethnic Albanian nationalists. Kosovo's ethnic Albanians felt that this was not a big enough step—Tito decided that residents of the provinces of Kosovo-Metohija and Vojvodina would be able to vote, but that the provinces would not be able to declare independence from Yugoslavia. This served to increase tensions, especially as Serbs felt that their power was decreasing. Because of these tensions, Slobodan Milosevic, a communist party leader, came to power in Serbia. He worked to decrease the independence of Kosovo and Vojvodina. This was a part of his larger plan to increase Serbia's power.

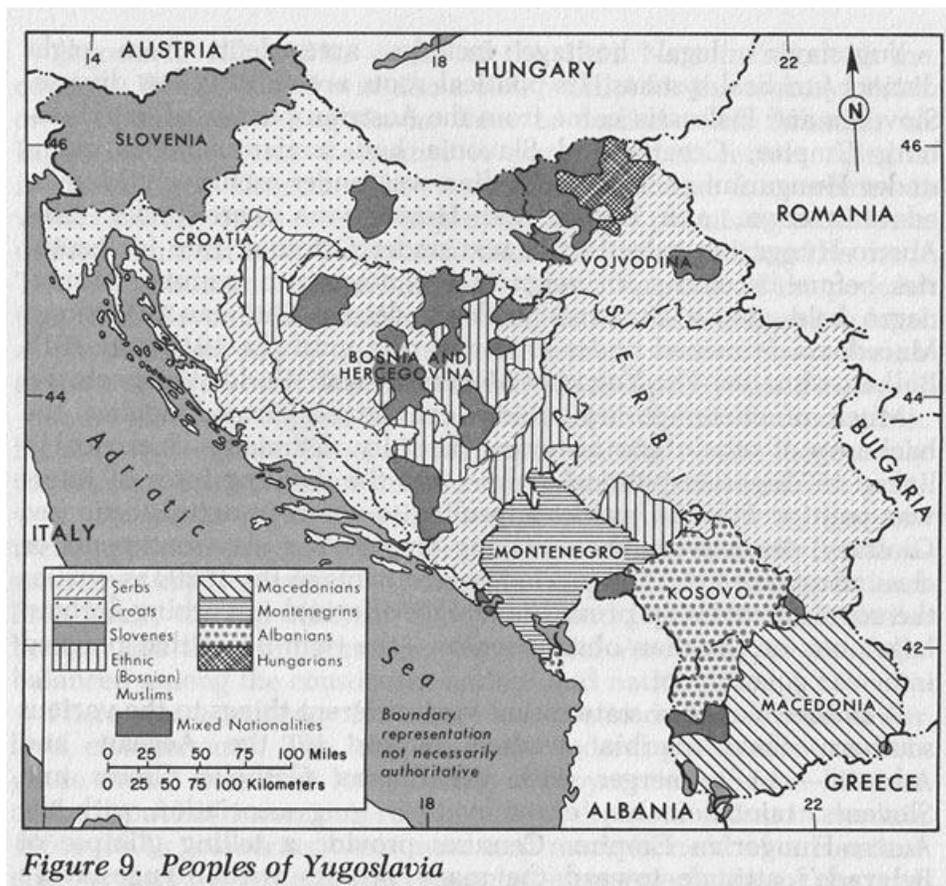
Current Situation:

In 1989, after Serbia limited the autonomy of Kosovo and Vojvodina, miners in Kosovo began a hunger strike. It succeeded in gaining attention, however, it resulted in the arrest or hospitalization of many miners, and ultimately failed to prevent Serbia from taking away Kosovo's autonomy. During this period, the economy in Yugoslavia was abysmal due to various

world events and bad decisions made by the Yugoslavian government. Many firms went bankrupt, in the process laying off over one-fifth of the total Yugoslavian workforce.

It's January of 1990 and the 14th Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia will soon meet. Tensions are high and the proceedings are expected to devolve very quickly. Each country's delegation is bringing its own agenda, and observer nations are expected to take decisive action in response to the results of the Congress.

As it stands now, tensions are at an all-time high and they're only getting worse. A crisis is on the horizon and a peaceful resolution much be reached as soon as possible.



Source: "Ethnic Groups in Yugoslavia," in World History Commons,
<https://worldhistorycommons.org/ethnic-groups-yugoslavia>

Relevant Documents:

- 1974 Yugoslav Constitution
- Report on the Conversation between Marko Nikezic and Dean Rusk at the State Department
- The Opinions of the Badinter Arbitration Committee: A Second Breath for the Self-Determination of Peoples

Bloc Positions:

Serbia

Following the appointment of Slobodan Milosevic as President in 1989, nationalism in Serbia became infinitely more severe. The Serbian government was incredibly harsh on Albanian protesters in the republic who were unhappy with their treatment, particularly in the autonomous region of Kosovo, where many ethnic Albanians resided. Going into the 14th Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, the Serbian delegation hopes to convince the other republics to create a more centralized Yugoslavian government, which would entail a “one person, one vote” system in which the amount of representatives is decided by population. This system would allow Serbia to dominate the Yugoslavian government to an even greater degree.

Vojvodina, Kosovo, and Montenegro

Due to the recent coups staged by Serbia in Vojvodina, Kosovo, and Montenegro, it is in the best interests of the delegations from Vojvodina and Kosovo to support decisions and suggestions made by Serbia. The delegations may try to influence Serbia’s decisions. Although many of the residents of these regions, in particular ethnic Albanians in Kosovo, are incredibly

unhappy with their standing, this is not something the delegations will likely act upon during the 14th Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia. There will be further opportunities for these countries to break away.

Bosnia & Herzegovina

Politicians from Bosnia & Herzegovina worked for many years to maintain the sovereignty of the region, which proved to be a wise decision during the period after Tito's death. The ultimate goal of the delegation from Bosnia & Herzegovina is to maintain the cooperation between the Yugoslavian republics. The delegation from Bosnia & Herzegovina is concerned about the demands of the Serbian delegation and hopes to find a peaceful resolution to the rising crisis at the upcoming 14th Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia.

Croatia

In 1967, Croatians petitioned for equal treatment of all Yugoslavian languages, sparking a civil rights movement that eventually led to the Croatian Spring of 1971. This was harshly suppressed by the Yugoslavian government at the time. The 1974 Yugoslavian Constitution succeeded in satisfying some of the demands of the movement, but the sentiment remains for many Croatians. The Croatian delegation is seeking a resolution that establishes a looser federation of the Yugoslavian republics. Croatia hopes for greater autonomy and aims to create a more decentralized national government.

Macedonia

The Macedonian delegation is mainly hoping to avoid any form of conflict that may arise but is supportive of a more decentralized national government. Support for independence from Yugoslavia is extremely high in Macedonia, something that the delegation from Macedonia should take into account during the proceedings.

Slovenia

In 1989, Slovenia passed a constitutional amendment that established a parliamentary democracy in the republic. Out of all the republics in Yugoslavia, it is the most ardently supportive of increased independence for the republics, or even secession if necessary. Coming into the 14th Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, the Slovenian delegation hopes to collaborate with the other delegations to increase the sovereignty of the individual Yugoslavian republics. They will not stand for any suggestions to further centralize the Yugoslavian government or to increase the power of any individual republic within the nation.

The Russian Federation, Great Britain, and the United States of America

All three of these countries have their own, individual agendas for Yugoslavia. They are observer nations during the proceedings of the 14th Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia but may attempt to influence votes or create resolutions. They will have other chances to take decisive action.

Committee Mission:

The committee will begin at the 14th Congress of the League of Communists and continue through the next 10 years. Decisions made by delegates will drastically change the course of the conflict, and delegates should ensure that they are aware of the different factors that will influence the countries or republics they are representing. Every delegate must be aware of the contrasting ethnic interests. Delegates should act according to the major goals of the states they represent while minimizing conflict if at all possible.

Questions to Consider:

1. Is your republic within Serbia's bloc or Slovenia's bloc? If you are a delegate from another country, which bloc aligns with your interests?
2. What are your delegation's short-term and long-term goals?
3. What compromises can be made to avoid conflict?
4. What form of government do the residents of each of the republics prefer?
5. What is the ethnic makeup of each of the republics?

Sources for Further Research:

- BBC
- CIA Archives
- UK Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs
- Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, Conferences at Malta and Yalta, 1945
- New York Times Article, "Yugoslav Police Check Cars To Stop Protest by Serbians"

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