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**European Review**



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## Yugoslavia: Prospects for Nuclear Power Development [redacted]

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The future of nuclear energy in Yugoslavia, once bright, is now uncertain. Growing and unusually broad-based antinuclear sentiment has forced Belgrade to put on hold plans to build several nuclear plants, including a \$2.5 billion plant in Croatia on which US and other foreign firms are bidding. Chances are still better than even that the Croatian plant ultimately will be approved. But the decision probably will come only after lengthy study and could cause further controversy among both the leadership and the public. [redacted]

### Current Status

Yugoslavia's nuclear power development program, in particular, plans to build its second nuclear plant at Prevlaka near the Croatian capital of Zagreb, has been sidetracked but not derailed. Pronuclear forces, previously virtually unchallenged, have suffered serious setbacks. Several regional bodies have eliminated or postponed commitments to nuclear plants. [redacted]

Moreover, the issue has been bucked up to the federal level, where a special new commission reportedly has been formed to reexamine nuclear power in the context of the country's long-term energy development plans. Premier Branko Mikulic and top leadership bodies in recent weeks have indicated that no plants will be approved until the government finishes its study. [redacted]

Nonetheless, the program is far from dead. The nuclear lobby remains a potent force, relatively few top officials have rejected the nuclear option, and the review of bids and other preliminary work for Prevlaka is continuing. Mikulic has noted that one of the purposes of the commission is to provide a cooling off period. The complex series of agreements among governmental and economic organizations to build the plant also remain intact. [redacted]

Prevlaka was to be the first of a four-unit series of 1,000 megawatt plants—following the opening in 1982 of the country's first 664 megawatt plant built



*The successful operation of the country's first nuclear plant, built by Westinghouse in the Slovenian town of Krsko, is an argument used by nuclear proponents [redacted]* Yugoslav Source ©

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by Westinghouse in Krsko, Slovenia—with the possibility of an eventual seven to 11 plants nationwide. The \$2.5 billion Prevlaka plant was planned to be built by a consortium of utilities from Croatia, Slovenia, and possibly Vojvodina. Construction was originally slated to begin in mid-1988 with commercial output beginning in 1995, but that timetable has continued to slip. Bidders include firms from the United States, France, Great Britain, West Germany, Canada, Japan, and the USSR. [redacted]

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### Pronuclear Lobby

If Prevlaka is approved, it will be thanks to a hardcore of pronuclear officials motivated by both conviction and self-interest. They consist of scientists, academics, and—even more vocally and visibly—regional and federal energy officials, utility officials, and industrial organizations producing power equipment. They tend to draw their strength from three common arguments:

- Yugoslavia is an energy deficient and import dependent country with no viable domestic long-term energy alternatives to nuclear power. [redacted]

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- The decision to develop nuclear power has been legitimized through a series of accords between regions, industries, and various layers of government—in keeping with the country's traditional system of economic decision making—and verified through national economic programs based on economic and scientific analysis.
- The successful operation of the Krsko plant demonstrates the safety, reliability, and efficiency of nuclear power. [redacted]

Though recently thrown on the defensive, pronuclear officials employ hard-hitting charges in rebutting their critics. They argue that safety and environmental concerns often have been used as a smokescreen by groups motivated more by political or economic interests. They maintain that those regions not slated for nuclear plants, mostly in the poorer south, are simply jealous or fearful that the country's limited capital must by necessity be committed to selected republics. They accuse opponents and the press of spreading grossly inaccurate data concerning cost and safety, trying to create an atmosphere of hysteria. [redacted]

Circumstantial evidence suggests that nuclear advocates and their sympathizers may be more numerous than their current visibility suggests. Antinuclear activists continue to characterize them as a strong and determined force. Few advocates have been known to retract their commitment to nuclear power in the face of the protest wave. And support for increased energy supplies from any sources could increase if a hard winter approaches and utility companies resort to electricity brownouts. [redacted]

**Antinuclear Forces**

The pronuclear lobby, however, faces a formidable opponent in the form of unusually widespread antinuclear sentiment. The breadth of opposition to an established government policy such as nuclear power in fact is unprecedented in recent years as is the success of nuclear opponents in gaining a reassessment of the energy program. [redacted]

The antinuclear forces, though largely uncoordinated, consist of a number of disparate groups with normally unrelated interests. They include several regions that have sufficient energy resources of their own, some official youth organizations, parts of the scientific community and the media, the public at large, veterans, and apparently some circles within the military. [redacted]

Regardless of the latest furor, antinuclear agitation in itself is nothing new and even has won some modest victories. The decision to locate the current plant at Prevlaka, for instance, came about only after plans to build it on the Adriatic Coast near Zadar were upset in 1979. Local officials maintained a reactor would threaten the area's tourism industry. Opposition to nuclear power was strong and growing even before the Chernobyl accident. Nonetheless, Chernobyl gave antinuclear forces important new impetus, especially when the regime ordered—and the media publicized—preventive measures against radioactive fallout affecting most of Yugoslavia. [redacted]

Several common themes run through Yugoslav antinuclear sentiment, cutting across the diverse groups. One is that new nuclear plants are financially unsound. Critics argue that building four new plants would double the country's \$20 billion foreign debt and compromise the nonaligned country's economic and political independence. They assert that foreign credits to build even the Krsko plant so far have not been repaid, only rescheduled. Another is that they are unnecessary, since the country purportedly has sufficient untapped alternative domestic coal and water resources. And, especially since Chernobyl, there has been a growing belief that they pose a real threat to the public's safety and the environment. [redacted]

**Outlook**

The leadership seems to be playing for time, hoping that antinuclear sentiment eventually will subside and a decision on Prevlaka, pro or con, can be made on practical economic and other grounds. The regime [redacted]

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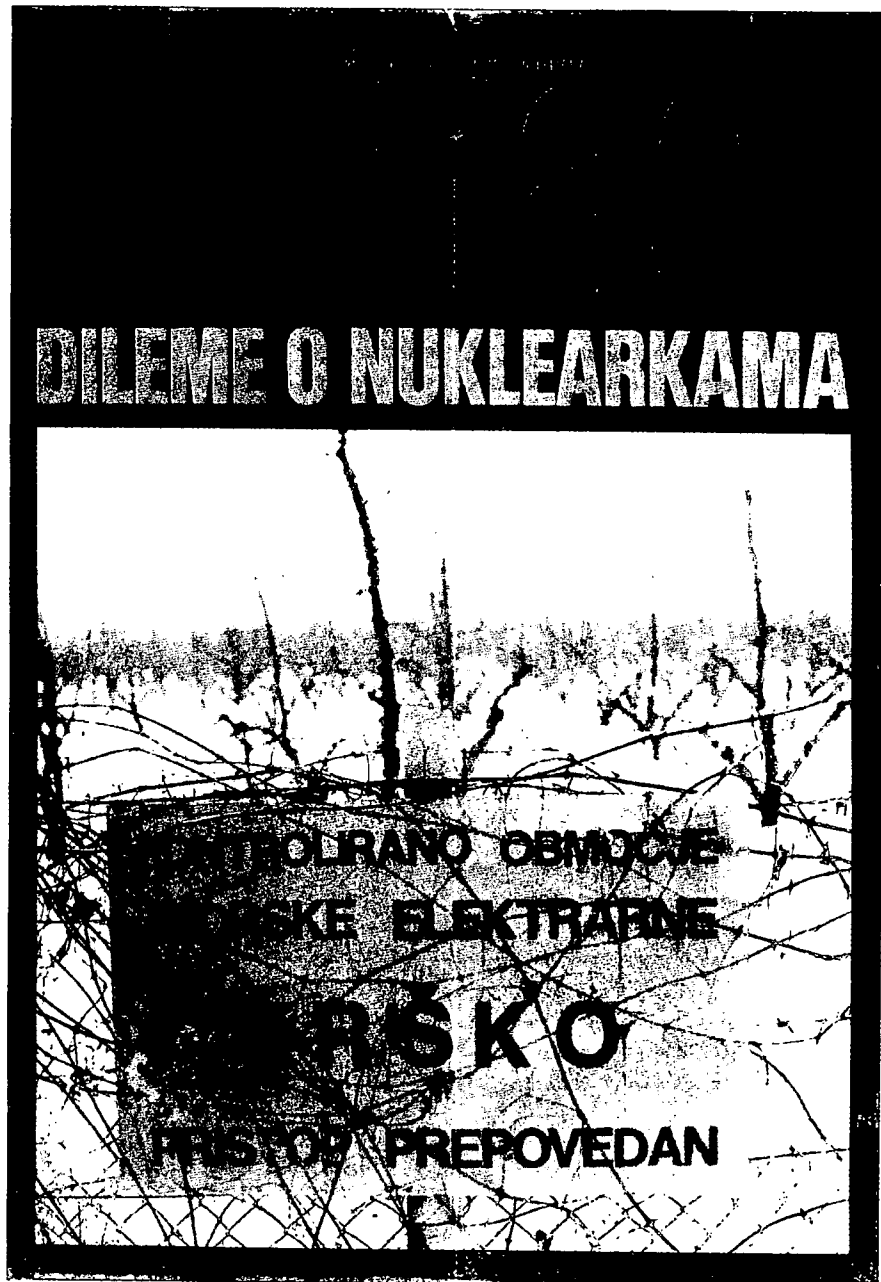
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*Antinuclear views have received ample coverage in the press, including this Zagreb magazine feature on the nuclear debate.*



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**Antinuclear Pressure Groups**

*Following are some of the key antinuclear pressure groups and outlines of their motives and impacts:*

**Regional Interest Groups.** Interest groups from several regions have cause to be unsupportive of, and even antagonistic to, Prevlaka. Serbia, Kosovo, and Premier Mikulic's home republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina each have substantial untapped coal resources of their own and a vested interest in further developing alternative energy sources in their own regions. Even Slovenia, a junior partner in Prevlaka, is only lukewarm about the project, US diplomats have reported. [redacted]

**Youth Groups.** Some youth groups have been among the most vocal and visible opponents of nuclear plants. The official youth group in Slovenia, the country's most Westward-looking and tolerant republic, has come out against nuclear energy. Members of Croatia's youth group have protested the lack of say on nuclear planning and have discussed staging sit-ins at Prevlaka with their Slovene counterparts. Some 70,000 Serbian youth reportedly signed an antinuclear petition. [redacted]

**Military.** Some evidence suggests that circles within the military have reservations about nuclear power. One military commentator in March warned that nuclear plants would make Yugoslavia more dependent on big powers and could be vulnerable to attack even from small Balkan neighbors. Nikola Ljubicic, a Serbian leader and ex-defense minister, also has spoken against nuclear power. [redacted]

**Veterans.** The veterans, a conservative and vociferous pressure group, called for the suspension of all new nuclear plants at a congress in June. Individual

delegates—including some from Croatia—protested a lack of public voice on nuclear planning and warned that Yugoslavia could become a nuclear waste disposal dump. [redacted]

**Scientific Community.** The experts seem sharply divided over the safety and appropriateness of nuclear plants. Many scientists and engineers reportedly have signed antinuclear petitions sent to national leadership bodies. [redacted]

**Public at Large.** The antinuclear issue has strong appeal to the man in the street. A public opinion poll taken at about the time of Chernobyl found that 75 percent of adult respondents nationwide believed nuclear plants are unnecessary, and an "absolute majority" asserted that they are environmentally more threatening than other power plants. [redacted]

**The Media.** Some of the country's increasingly freewheeling media have seized on nuclear power to sell papers and mold opinion. The press gave extensive, largely unvarnished coverage to the Chernobyl disaster and has reported openly and often sympathetically on the views of nuclear opponents. [redacted]

**Courts.** The nuclear program may hit a legal snag. The country's Constitutional Court reportedly has begun to examine whether the issue falls within its competence. The court flexed its muscle last year when it ruled unconstitutional another established government policy on foreign exchange. [redacted]

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