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AFTERMATH OF KOSOVO RIOTS IN YUGOSLAVIA [REDACTED]

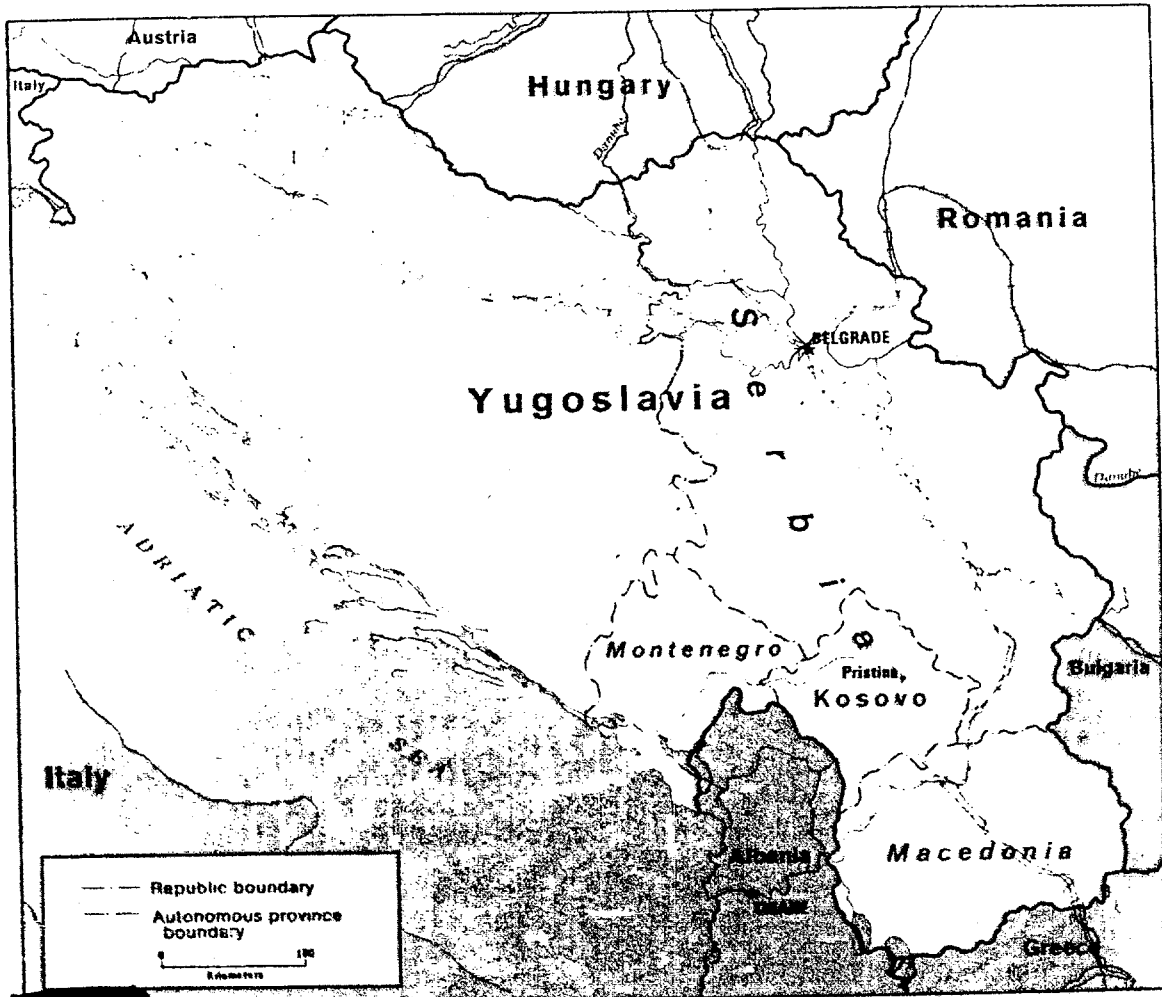
Two months after violence erupted among the Albanian population in Kosovo, Belgrade is still struggling to harness nationalistic sentiments in that province. The Yugoslav leadership has acknowledged further instances of unrest and there are continuing reports of guerrilla activity by Albanians who fled to redoubts in the hills. The steps taken to date to control the situation, which included a widespread purge, the strengthening of the local security forces, and adjustments to the university system, are unlikely to ease the underlying problems in this economically backward area. Despite these rumblings of nationalism, there is no imminent threat to the regime in Belgrade. The heated exchanges between Belgrade and Tirane have verged on a break in relations, but it now appears that cooler heads will prevail and, barring a new revelation of involvement by Albania in the Kosovo disturbances, the Yugoslavs will stop short of severing ties.

While the violent demonstrations that took place in the province in late March and early April have not been repeated, the situation there has not returned to normal. The Yugoslav authorities have described the local political and security situation as "very complex" and cite continuing attempts by "hostile, counterrevolutionary elements" to destabilize the region. The authorities have characterized the internal instigators of the unrest as a small group of Albanian nationalists bent on destabilizing Yugoslavia and forming a "Greater Albania." Given the scope of the demonstrations, however, and the persistent unrest, it is likely that there is at least passive support for the nationalist slogans among a large number of Kosovo's Albanians who resent the years of Serb domination.

The Yugoslav leaders have tried hard to find scapegoats for the unrest--blaming external forces including Albania and hostile Albanian and Croatian emigres as well as Kosovo's leaders--but the regime has done little to

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resolve the province's fundamental problems: Serb-Albanian hostility, a backward economy, resentment over the discrepancy in living standards between the southern province and the northern regions, and a high unemployment rate for Kosovo university graduates. The Kosovo leadership has come under heavy attack from Belgrade for inadequate vigilance in the face of nationalist rumblings and its inept handling of the demonstrations. The only specific action taken to date, however, has been a widespread purge of the party membership, and officials connected with educational and cultural institutions, the media, and the work force. Presumably, Belgrade will keep a closer eye on Kosovo. Its educational and cultural programs will be given a more critical examination and ties between Albania and Kosovo will be controlled by Belgrade rather than by the provincial authorities.

The most prominent loser in the housecleaning process has been Mahmut Bakali, the former head of the Kosovo party, who resigned under fire in early May. He was replaced by Veli Deva, an old-guard party leader, well respected by Kosovo's Albanians, who will reportedly run the province's affairs with a stronger hand. Bakali is one of some 20 party functionaries to resign thus far in the wake of the unrest and further personnel changes are likely as the question of personal responsibility of officials at both the local and federal level is examined. Late last month a commentator for the Belgrade party newspaper Politika decried the lack of self-criticism of the Kosovo leadership and urged that much of that leadership be replaced.

Pristina University, in the Kosovo capital, which has been pinpointed by Belgrade as a hotbed of Albanian nationalism, was hit hard by the purges. The rector and vice rector reluctantly resigned in early June and 16 professors have been suspended. Steps are also being taken to pare down the large student population to a more manageable size and to screen new students in hopes of weeding out potential troublemakers. Textbooks will also be reviewed to eliminate those originating in Tirane which had slipped into the curriculum and which, from the Yugoslav point of view, might be considered subversive.

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Although widespread, implementation of the purges has been inconsistent and there has been passive resistance to the process, probably due to resentment on the part of the local Albanians at both Serbian and federal interference in Kosovo. While warning that the "enemy" has not been defeated, there appears to be a recent attempt by provincial leaders to deemphasize the negative aspects of the purge and instead play up the progress made toward political stabilization. This may be an effort to boost the sagging morale of the Albanians in the province.

Continuing Yugoslav official concern was evidenced by the announcement by Interior Minister Herljevic in early June that Kosovo's security service would be beefed up by adding 1,000 persons to the militia and doubling the number of state security workers in the area. In the same statement, Herljevic acknowledged two incidents of armed clashes in the province since the early April riots.

Herljevic has, no doubt, been called upon to explain to his peers how the security situation in Kosovo was allowed to deteriorate to the point it did. In an effort to shift blame, he has pointed an accusing finger at the provincial leaders in Kosovo for letting down their guard and underestimating the threat of subversion from nationalist elements. He also put much of the blame on external enemies and singled out Tirane. Herljevic has good reason to be defensive about the failures of the federal security apparatus in light of police brutality and the ineffectiveness of the service during the riots. To counteract this image, it is likely that harsh sentences will be handed out at the impending trials in Kosovo of those who were allegedly responsible for the disturbances in the spring. Official figures for total arrests have listed the number of criminal prosecutions pending at 100 and misdemeanor offenses at 450.

Yugoslav authorities have publicly admitted to an increasing assertiveness on the part of the Albanian minority in Macedonia and Montenegro that border Kosovo. A Macedonian party official said recently that conditions similar to those which pertained in Kosovo before the disturbances also exist in Macedonia, and he called for greater vigilance and concrete political action. "Everyone," he said, "has the duty to sweep in front of his own

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house." In late May, five Albanian nationalists in Skopje, the Macedonian capital, received sentences ranging from seven to thirteen and a half years for membership in an illegal organization which sought to create a "Greater Albania." There have been reports in both republics of instances of "nationalistic excesses" such as the appearance of anti-Yugoslav slogans and the wearing of Albanian national costumes.

Tirane's vocal support for the Albanian nationalists has led to a sharp deterioration of relations with Yugoslavia. Belgrade remains highly suspicious of Albanian Government complicity in the Kosovo disturbances and a polemic ensued between the two capitals which peaked at the end of May when the Yugoslav Embassy in Tirane was bombed. In the past few weeks, the press attacks have abated somewhat, perhaps because they have not produced any evidence that the Albanian leadership played an active role in the unrest in Kosovo or in the bombing.

Recent high-level statements, including those by Yugoslav party Presidium members Stane Dolanc and Milos Minic--the latter, one of the chief foreign policy architects--have reiterated Belgrade's desire for good relations with Tirane and, unless evidence of Albanian involvement is uncovered, Belgrade is unlikely to break diplomatic ties. Both regimes are well aware of the adverse effect this would have on stability in the Balkans, and the possibility that Moscow would quickly take advantage of that development.

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