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YUGOSLAVIA: Divisive Plenum on Kosovo

A Central Committee plenum of Yugoslavia's Communist Party ended bitterly Saturday without adopting new measures to stem mounting ethnic tensions in Serbia's autonomous province of Kosovo. Serbia has aggravated these tensions by demanding constitutional amendments that would drastically reduce the autonomy of Kosovo and of Serbia's other autonomous province, Vojvodina. The plenum—during which Serbia received little support from other regional parties—formed a commission to assess Serbia's responsibility for demonstrations in Vojvodina by ethnic Serbs last month. A Yugoslav official, according to press reports, has asserted that the number of special federal police in Kosovo, now about 300, may be increased [redacted]

[redacted] The fight between Serbia and its provinces will grow even more contentious over the next two months as the national assembly draws up amendments to the national constitution. By strengthening the two provinces, the plenum almost certainly increased the frustration of Serbian officials. They may encourage new demonstrations by ethnic Serbs that could turn violent or provoke new deployments of federal police to Kosovo. The commission's report is likely to be ready by the Central Committee plenum next month and will probably rebuke Serbian party chief Milosevic for encouraging ethnic demonstrations; it is not likely to call for his ouster [redacted]

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