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YUGOSLAVIA:

As Albanians Ease Protests, Serbs Begin

Ethnic Albanian miners in Kosovo Province ended their weeklong protests yesterday after several provincial leaders resigned. Serbian miners began their own strike protesting the resignations to bring pressure on a key provincial leadership meeting today.

Some 1,300 Albanian miners began returning to work yesterday after several Serbian-backed provincial officials, including new Kosovo party leader Morina, resigned. Press reports are contradictory on whether the remaining 39,000 Albanian demonstrators throughout the province are ending their protests.

In response to the resignations, about 800 Kosovo Serbian and Montenegrin miners began striking, according to press reports. Serbs and Montenegrins elsewhere in the country also reportedly held meetings in support of the strike, and one group of 300 Kosovo Serbs threatened to emigrate to Serbia en masse if the Kosovo leadership accepted the resignations. A meeting of the provincial party presidium set for today is to discuss Morina's resignation. Some 5,000 Serbian students marched on the federal parliament in Belgrade this morning to protest the Albanians' demands.

The collective national State Presidency early yesterday announced it was taking unspecified "special measures" in Kosovo, and troops, tanks, and police were deployed throughout the province during the course of the day. The Belgrade press reports that armed guards have been stationed in front of government and military buildings.

Any action the national leadership takes is likely to anger one side or the other. The presence of military units probably did little to bring an end to the miners strike. Federal officials probably did not expect the Serbian reaction, and more Serbian protests are likely if the Kosovo leadership accepts the resignations today. Authorities probably would be restrained in dealing with Serbian protesters but would use the military in the unlikely event they turn violent.

The acceptance of Morina's resignation will put an end to Albanian demonstrations for now. In the coming weeks, however, the Albanians probably will be emboldened by their success. Despite the leadership's show of force, they may renew protests against constitutional amendments that give Serbia increased control over the province.

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