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SUBJECT: EUROPEAN BRIEF [REDACTED] FOR 19 MARCH 1990

[REDACTED] YUGOSLAVIA: SECESSIONIST SENTIMENT RISING IN SLOVENIA [REDACTED]

RISING NATIONALIST AND SECESSIONIST SENTIMENT IN SLOVENIA IS DELAYING PREMIER MARKOVIC'S PROPOSED POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC REFORMS AND MAY THREATEN NATIONAL UNITY. [REDACTED]

THE SLOVENE ASSEMBLY RECENTLY DECLARED THE REPUBLIC'S ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE AND POSTPONED DECIDING ON A PACKAGE OF CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS PROPOSED BY MARKOVIC TO EXPAND THE PREMIER'S POWER TO SET NATIONAL ECONOMIC POLICY. THE ASSEMBLY ALSO DECIDED TO DRAFT A PROPOSAL FOR A "CONFEDERAL" YUGOSLAVIA; ASSEMBLY LEADERS THREATENED TO CONSIDER SECESSION IF BELGRADE REJECTS IT. SOME SLOVENE BUSINESSMEN REPORTEDLY WILL SUPPORT SECESSION UNDER SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES. [REDACTED]

SLOVENIA HAS LOOSENED ITS TIES TO THE FEDERATION SINCE THE DE FACTO BREAKUP OF THE NATIONAL COMMUNIST PARTY IN JANUARY AND AS ITS RELATIONS WITH SERBIA HAVE BECOME TENSE. SLOVENIA RECENTLY WITHDREW ITS CONTINGENT FROM THE FEDERAL POLICE IN SERBIA'S KOSOVO PROVINCE AND THIS MONTH CUT OFF CONTRIBUTIONS TO FEDERAL PROGRAMS THAT BENEFIT SERBIAN-CONTROLLED AREAS. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] SLOVENIA'S RELATIONS WITH THE FEDERATION ARE AT A POSTWAR LOW, AND THE REPUBLIC'S LATEST MOVES COMPLICATES BUILDING A NATIONAL CONSENSUS ON VITALLY NEEDED ECONOMIC REFORMS. THE PRESS REPORTS PUBLIC SENTIMENT FOR SECESSION IS GROWING. MANY OFFICIALS HOPE SLOVENIA'S RELATIONS WITH THE FEDERATION WILL IMPROVE AFTER THE SLOVENE ELECTION NEXT MONTH, BUT THE CAMPAIGN COULD INFLAME NATIONALIST SENTIMENTS BEYOND WHAT SLOVENE LEADERS CAN CONTROL. IF SUPPORT IN THE SLOVENE BUSINESS COMMUNITY FOR A UNITED YUGOSLAVIA

~~SECRET~~

WEAKENS SIGNIFICANTLY, BELGRADE WILL HAVE ONLY THE THREAT OF MILITARY INTERVENTION TO FORESTALL SERIOUS DELIBERATIONS ON SECESSION. [REDACTED]