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DIRECTOR 032898

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TO: PRIORITY EUROPEAN BRIEF.

[REDACTED] CIA [REDACTED]

SUBJECT: EUROPEAN BRIEF [REDACTED] FOR 31 JANUARY 1990.

FROM: DDI/O/CPAS.

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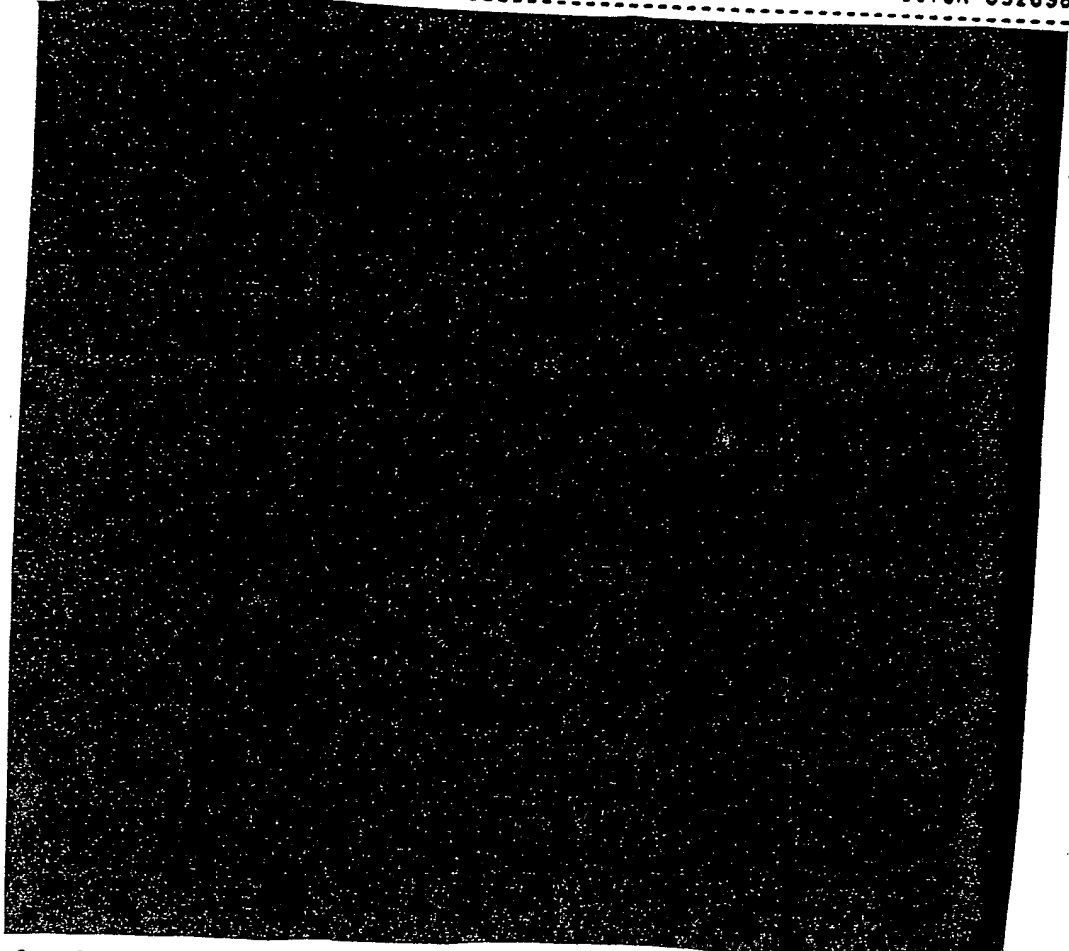
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2. USSR: CAUCASUS UPDATE

CANDIDATE POLITBURO MEMBER PRIMAKOV, PARTY SECRETARY GIRENKO, AND VYACHESLAV MIKHAYLOV--SENT TO DEAL WITH THE CRISIS IN THE CAUCASUS--SURFACED AT PRESS CONFERENCES YESTERDAY IN MOSCOW; MIKHAYLOV, DEPUTY CHIEF OF THE CPSU'S DEPARTMENT FOR INTERETHNIC RELATIONS, SAID THAT, ALTHOUGH THE ARMED FORCES CAN MAINTAIN LAW AND ORDER, IT IS UP TO THE REPUBLICS TO RESOLVE THE PROBLEM.

THE AZERI PEOPLE'S FRONT IS SENDING TWO REPRESENTATIVES TO RIGA FOR NEGOTIATIONS TOMORROW WITH THE ARMENIANS. THE FRONT WAS QUICK TO DECLAR THAT THE TALKS WILL NOT INVOLVE DISPUTED TERRITORY BUT BE LIMITED TO THE SOVIET TROOP PRESENCE AND REFUGEE AND HUMANITARIAN ISSUES--A POSITION MOSCOW RADIO CLAIMS THE ARMENIANS SHARE.

A STRIKE BEGUN MONDAY IN NAGORNO-KARABAKH, TO PROTEST THE AZERI ADMINISTRATION IMPOSED BY THE USSR SUPREME SOVIET COMPROMISE IN NOVEMBER, HAS BROUGHT THE OBLAST TO A VIRTUAL STANDSTILL; LOCAL ARMENIAN LEADERS ADOPTED A RESOLUTION DEMANDING ITS DISSOLUTION.

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MEANWHILE, MOSCOW RADIO SAYS 400 PEOPLE WERE RECENTLY DETAINED TRYING TO CROSS THE BORDER ILLEGALLY, AND PACKAGES--ALLEGEDLY CONTAINING 6 MILLION IRANIAN REALS AND 300 GOLD COINS--WERE CONFISCATED.

PRESS REPORTS INDICATE THAT ALMOST 400 TRAINS WITH FREIGHT FOR ARMENIA ARE BLOCKED OUTSIDE THE REGION AND THAT EFFORTS TO RESTORE THE RAIL LINKS ARE FAILING.

COMMENT: THE RETURN OF THE OFFICIALS TO MOSCOW, WHO PRESUMABLY DIRECTED THE RECENT CHANGES IN THE AZERI LEADERSHIP, SUGGESTS MOSCOW BELIEVES THE NEW LEADERS--BACKED BY SOVIET SECURITY FORCES--CAN CONTROL THE SITUATION, UNTIL THE AZERIS AND ARMENIANS AGREE TO NEGOTIATE ON THE DISPUTED TERRITORY ISSUE, THE SITUATION WILL BEG FOR CONTINUED MOSCOW INTERVENTION. BY PUBLISHING THE INFORMATION THAT SMUGGLED CURRENCY WAS CONFISCATED, MOSCOW APPEARS TO AGAIN BE EMPHASIZING POSSIBLE IRANIAN CONNECTIONS WITH UNREST ALONG THE BORDER.

#### SOVIETS WARY OF IRANIAN RADICALS

SOVIET MEDIA CONTINUE TO NOTE TEHRAN'S CONCILIATORY POLICY WHILE INTENSIFYING CRITICISM OF IRANIAN RADICALS FOR THEIR ATTACKS ON SOVIET POLICY IN AZERBAIJAN. PRESS REPORTS DURING THE WEEKEND REPEATEDLY MENTIONED THE LATTER IRANIAN FOREIGN MINISTER VELAYATI SENT LAST WEEK TO HIS SOVIET COUNTERPART, EDUARD SHEVARDNADZE, PLEDGING IRANIAN COOPERATION. SOVIET COMMENTATORS, HOWEVER, HAVE INCREASED CHARGES THAT IRANIAN RADICALS ARE TRYING TO EXPLOIT THE MUSLIMS IN AZERBAIJAN YET CONDONE THE SUFFERING OF MUSLIMS IN IRAN WHEN IT SUITS THEM POLITICALLY.

MOSCOW'S EFFORTS PROBABLY ARE INTENDED TO PUT IRANIAN RADICALS ON THE DEFENSIVE AND COUNTER FOREIGN PRESS REPORTS THAT SOVIET-IRANIAN RELATIONS ARE DETERIORATING. THE SOVIETS PROBABLY UNDERSTAND THAT RESPONDING TOO HARSHLY TO IRANIAN ATTACKS COULD BACKFIRE AND STRENGTHEN DOMESTIC SUPPORT IN IRAN FOR THE DEMANDS OF THE RADICALS. THEY REALIZE THAT SOME IRANIAN CRITICISM OF MOSCOW'S ACTIONS IS PRIMARILY FOR DOMESTIC POLITICAL PURPOSES.

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