

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE A1eNEW YORK TIMES
6 March 1986

Waldheim Says His Past Was Misrepresented

By JOHN T. McQUISTON

Kurt Waldheim, former Secretary General of the United Nations, said yesterday that his affiliation with a German Army command responsible for the deportation of Greek Jews in World War II was being misrepresented to disrupt his campaign as an independent candidate for the presidency of Austria.

"It is true that I served in the German Army command in the Balkans, but I never participated in any sort of cruelties," he said in an interview on the CBS morning news. "All I did was to interpret between Italian and German commanders."

His appearance was one of several he made from his Vienna office in response to a report in The New York Times on Tuesday that he had served as an interpreter under Gen. Alexander Löhr, head of a German command that fought Yugoslav partisans and deported Greek Jews from Salonika in 1942-43.

After the war, Yugoslavia executed General Löhr in 1947 for war crimes.

The report in The Times was based on documents found among German military records and in the archives of the Austrian Justice Ministry and Foreign Ministry. They had been turned over to The Times by the World Jewish Congress and were independently corroborated.

When Mr. Waldheim was asked on the CBS News program why he had kept the Yugoslav and Greek aspects of his German military service a secret for so long, he said:

"Isn't that interesting? For 40 years nobody cared about all this. The Austrian intelligence, as well as probably all international intelligences, checked me carefully when I became Secretary General of the United Nations.

"Nobody found anything. And now, because I am running for the presidency in Austria, suddenly somebody digs in and produces accusations which are completely untrue."

In an interview with The New York

Times on Sunday, Mr. Waldheim said he had not known until that moment about mass deportations of Jews from Salonika.

In Vienna, Simon Wiesenthal, the hunter of Nazi fugitives, said he was convinced Mr. Waldheim had not been a member of the Nazi Party. However, he questioned how Mr. Waldheim could have been unaware of the deportations from Salonika, a city of 60,000 Jews before the war.

In Greece, Hagen Fleischer, a Crete University specialist on the deportations, said Mr. Waldheim "had nothing to do with Greek Jewry." Professor Fleischer told the Reuters news agency that he knew the names of all the people who played a significant part in rounding up Jews in Salonika and Mr. Waldheim was not among them.

According to Professor Fleischer,

Mr. Waldheim was used by the German forces as an interpreter when Italian partisans captured in Epirus were being interrogated about their contacts with Greek guerrillas.

Mr. Waldheim placed a call yesterday to Edgar M. Bronfman, president of the World Jewish Congress. Mr. Bronfman was absent, and the call was taken by Israel Singer, the organization's secretary general.

Mr. Singer later said that Mr. Waldheim had denied being involved "in the tortures of Yugoslavs or deportation of Jews."

Mr. Singer said the disclosures about Mr. Waldheim were not timed to coincide with the Austrian election campaign, in which Mr. Waldheim is being opposed by the governing Socialists.

"There has been a rumor mill on him for years and we just got around to sending our legal counsel to Austria to take a look around," he said. "It had nothing to do with the Austrian elections."

A spokesman for Mr. Waldheim said he had been misquoted in the account of an interview published in the Times on Tuesday or had been the victim of a faulty translation.

Warren Hoge, foreign editor of The Times, said that all the quotations in the article had been verified on a tape recording of the interview, which was held in Vienna on Sunday. The author of the article, John Tagliabue, conducted the interview in German, a language in which he is fluent.

STAT