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C O N F I D E N T I A L BELGRADE 03270

E.O. 12356:OADR

TEXT
TAGS: PREL, AU, YO
SUBJECT: WALDHEIM AND THE YUGOSLAVS

REF: (A) VIENNA 5137, (B) USUN 945

1. C-ENTIRE TEXT.

2. DURING A CALL APRIL 9 ON AUSTRIAN EMBASSY COUNSELOR YURI STANDENAT (STRICTLY PROTECT) TO DISCUSS PRIME MINISTER PLANINC'S MARCH 23-25 VISIT TO VIENNA (SEPTTEL), THE SUBJECT OF **KURT WALDHEIM** AND HIS WORLD WAR II RECORD WAS ALSO DISCUSSED. EMBOFF STRESSED THAT THE EMBASSY HAD NO INTENTION OF GETTING INVOLVED IN WHAT WAS ESSENTIALLY AN INTERNAL AUSTRIAN MATTER, BUT WAS INTERESTED IN HOW THE AUSTRIAN EMBASSY VIEWED THE

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YUGOSLAV HANDLING OF THIS MATTER TO DATE.

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3. FOR BACKGROUND, PUBLICLY THE YUGOSLAV GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN EXTREMELY CIRCUMSPECT. DURING MS. PLANINC'S VISIT TO AUSTRIA, SHE DECLINED TO COMMENT ON THE ISSUE. IN ADDITION, THERE HAVE BEEN TWO YUGOSLAV FOREIGN MINISTRY PRESS CONFERENCES--MARCH 27 AND APRIL 3--IN WHICH PRESS SPOKESMAN ALEKSANDAR STANIC, IN ESSENCE, HAS DECLINED TO COMMENT. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE BELGRADE NEWSPAPER VECERNJE NOVOSTI ON MARCH 27 CARRIED A MAJOR ARTICLE ON WALDHEIM'S WAR TIME CAREER WHICH CLAIMED THAT THE YUGOSLAVS STILL HAD A DOSSIER ON WALDHEIM NUMBERED F-25572 STASHED SOMEWHERE IN YUGOSLAV ARCHIVES. POPULAR MAGAZINES IN YUGOSLAVIA SUCH AS "DUGA" AND "START" HAVE ALSO HAD MAJOR STORIES ON WALDHEIM, IN WHICH THEY AVIDLY REPORT WHATEVER INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE ON THE "BLACK HOLE" OF WALDHEIM'S CAREER DURING WORLD WAR II. THE WAR YEARS WERE A SEMINAL PERIOD IN YUGOSLAVIA'S HISTORY DURING WHICH TIME SOME TEN PERCENT OF YUGOSLAVIA'S POPULATION WAS KILLED, AND MANY ORDINARY YUGOSLAV CITIZENS HAVE FOLLOWED THE VARIOUS ALLEGATIONS ABOUT WALDHEIM WITH CONSIDERABLE INTEREST.

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4. STANDENAT WAS UNDERSTANDABLY RATHER GUARDED IN HIS REMARKS. REGARDING THE YUGOSLAV OFFICIAL POSITION, HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE PRESS STATEMENTS HAD BEEN PROPER AND APPROPRIATE. HE WONDERED OUT LOUD, HOWEVER, ABOUT HOW INDEPENDENT THE YUGOSLAV PRESS REALLY WAS, IMPLYING THAT THE VECERNJE NOVOSTI ARTICLES MAY HAVE BEEN OFFICIALLY INSPIRED. HE ACCEPTED EMBOFF'S COMMENT THAT THERE WAS NO PRE-PUBLICATION CENSORSHIP IN YUGOSLAVIA, AND THAT ONE SUCH ARTICLE MIGHT SLIP THROUGH. HE WAS NOT READY TO ACCEPT, HOWEVER, THAT THE VARIOUS YUGOSLAV MAGAZINES WOULD CONTINUE TO PRINT THESE ARTICLES WITHOUT AT LEAST TACIT YUGOSLAV GOVERNMENT APPROVAL. EMBOFF SPECULATED THAT, GIVEN THE INTENSE LOCAL INTEREST IN THE ISSUE, IT MIGHT BE THAT ANY ATTEMPT TO CURB THE MEDIA NOW WOULD EXPLODE IN THE GOVERNMENT'S FACE, IMPLYING THAT THERE WAS SOMETHING TO HIDE; STANDENAT DID NOT RESPOND TO THIS POINT.

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5. REGARDING YUGOSLAVIA'S POST-WAR INVESTIGATIONS INTO THIS ASPECT OF WARTIME HISTORY, STANDENAT SAID THAT IN THE LATE 1940'S THE YUGOSLAV GOVERNMENT HAD OFFERED LISTS OF NAMES AND OTHER INFORMATION TO THE AUSTRIAN GOVERNMENT, WHICH HAD DECLINED TO ACCEPT THEM. (COMMENT: WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE YUGOSLAVS IN THEIR INVESTIGATIONS COMPILED LONG LISTS OF ALL THE OCCUPIERS STATIONED HERE DURING THE WAR WITHOUT ANY REGARD TO THEIR DEGREE OF ACTUAL CULPABILITY FOR EVENTS DURING THE WAR. END COMMENT). STANDENAT ADDED THAT AUSTRIA HAD NEVER RECEIVED A COPY OF THE SO-CALLED DOSSIER F-25572. HE PRESUMED THAT SOME OF THESE YUGOSLAV MATERIALS MIGHT HAVE FOUND THEIR WAY INTO THE WAR COMMISSION REPORTS THAT HAD BEEN PUT ON FILE

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AT THE UN, BUT HE HAD NO SPECIFIC INFORMATION TO THAT EFFECT. IN RESPONSE TO A DIRECT QUESTION, STANDENAT SAID HE CONSIDERED IT "UNLIKELY" THAT THE AUSTRIAN GOVERNMENT "WOULD EVER REQUEST" TO SEE THE YUGOSLAV DOSSIER.

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6. STANDENAT WAS AWARE THAT THE AUSTRIAN REPRESENTA-
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TIVES IN NEW YORK WOULD BE EXAMINING THE FILE THAT SAME DAY, BUT DID NOT SEEM TO KNOW THAT THE ISRAELI REPRESENTATIVE WOULD SEE IT AS WELL. HE SAID THAT THE CONTENTS OF THE FILE WOULD BE REPORTED DIRECTLY TO PRESIDENT KIRCHSCHLAGER, WHO WOULD DETERMINE WHAT TO DO WITH THE MATERIAL. HE WAS UNABLE OR UNWILLING TO PREDICT WHAT THE AUSTRIAN PRESIDENT MIGHT CHOOSE TO DO AFTER THAT.

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7. COMMENT: AT ONE POINT STANDENAT STATED THAT THE SOVIETS COULD NOT HAVE KNOWN ABOUT THE DOSSIER REGARDING WALDHEIM'S WAR RECORD OR THEY MIGHT HAVE OBJECTED TO HIS BECOMING U.N. SECRETARY GENERAL. WE ARE NOT ENTIRELY CERTAIN THIS IS THE CASE. SHORTLY AFTER THE WALDHEIM AFFAIR BROKE, AN EXTREMELY RELIABLE YUGOSLAV JOURNALIST HERE (STRICTLY PROTECT) QUOTED YUGOSLAV DIPLOMATS TO EMBOFF TO THE EFFECT THAT AT THE TIME OF WALDHEIM'S ELECTION AS SECRETARY GENERAL A SOVIET DIPLOMAT IN BELGRADE HAD TOLD THE YUGOSLAVS GLEEFULLY THAT THE SOVIETS "HAD WALDHEIM IN THEIR POCKET." THE JOURNALIST INSISTED THAT THE SOVIETS MIGHT EASILY HAVE BEHAVED THIS WAY WITH WALDHEIM, AND CITED THE CASE OF YUGOSLAV COMINFORMIST ANDRIJA HEBRANG, PURGED BY TITO AFTER HEBRANG SUPPORTED STALIN IN THE 1948 BREAK WITH TITO. THE JOURNALIST ALLEGED THAT THE SOVIETS HAD A HOLD ON HEBRANG BECAUSE OF DOCUMENTS THEY FOUND WHICH PROVED THAT HEBRANG HAD COLLABORATED WITH ANTI-TITO, PRO-NAZI FORCES DURING WORLD WAR II. THE JOURNALIST SUGGESTED THAT THE SOVIETS MAY HAVE FOUND SIMILAR DOCUMENTS ON WALDHEIM EITHER IN THE VIENNA ARCHIVES, WHICH THE SOVIETS CAPTURED AT THE END OF THE WAR, OR IN DOCUMENTS SEIZED IN YUGOSLAVIA AS THE SOVIET ARMIES ROLLED THROUGH IN 1944-45.

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8. COMMENT CONTINUED. YUGOSLAV OFFICIALS FIND THEMSELVES IN A TICKLISH SITUATION. IF NEWS REPORTS ARE TRUE, THEN WALDHEIM STANDS A GOOD CHANCE OF BECOMING PRESIDENT OF AUSTRIA, A NEIGHBORING STATE WITH WHICH YUGOSLAVIA SEEKS TO MAINTAIN GOOD RELATIONS. THE FACT THAT WALDHEIM'S CHANCES SEEM TO HAVE IMPROVED WITH THE OUTBREAK OF NEWS ABOUT HIS QUESTIONABLE ACTIVITIES IN YUGOSLAVIA DURING WORLD WAR II COULD BE DOUBLY GALLING. NONETHELESS THE YUGOSLAVS CAN BE

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EXPECTED TO BE STRICTLY EVEN-HANDED IN THE WEEKS
BEFORE THE MAY 4 ELECTIONS IN AUSTRIA--IF WALDHEIM DOES
WIN, THE YUGOSLAVS WILL HAVE TO DEAL WITH HIM FOR THE
FORESEEABLE FUTURE. IN POINT OF FACT, HOWEVER, THEY
WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY PREFER A VICTORY BY HIS SOCIALIST
PARTY OPPONENT KURT STEYRER EVEN THOUGH NOT MUCH
IS KNOWN ABOUT STEYRER HERE. PRESEL
END OF MESSAGE

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