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SUBJECT: AUSTRIA MEDIA REACTION

1. WALDHEIM ON WATCH LIST: THE "KRONEN-ZEITUNG" REPORTED IN ITS LEAD ARTICLE TODAY THAT THE FIRST EXPERT OPINION ABOUT WALDHEIM'S WAR PAST WILL BE AVAILABLE NEXT WEEK. THE AUTHOR, PROF. MANFRED MESSERSCHMIDT OF THE MILITARY HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE IN FREIBURG IM BREISGAU, GERMANY, HAS STUDIED ALL THE AVAILABLE DOCUMENTS AND HAS COME UP WITH A 50-PAGE REPORT AS A STRICTLY INDEPENDENT SCHOLAR. HE IS WILLING TO CHAIR AN INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION OF MILITARY HISTORIANS, BUT ONLY ON CONDITION THAT HE CAN DECIDE ABOUT ITS COMPOSITION, THAT THE COMMISSION CAN WORK ABSOLUTELY INDEPENDENTLY WITHOUT INSTRUCTIONS, AND THAT GERMAN DEFENSE MINISTER WOERNER GIVE HIM PERMISSION TO HEAD THE COMMISSION. SIMON WIESENTHAL, THOUGH STRESSING PROF. MESSERSCHMIDT'S GOOD REPUTATION, IS OF THE OPINION THAT THE COMMISSION SHOULD NOT BE CHAIRED BY A GERMAN OR AN AUSTRIAN, BUT BY AN AMERICAN OR BRITISH EXPERT.

THE SEMI-OFFICIAL "WIENER ZEITUNG" AND SEVERAL OTHER PAPERS POINTED OUT THAT THREE AUSTRIAN EXPERTS WILL NOW TRAVEL TO BELGRADE TO EXAMINE YUGOSLAV WWII FILES. ACCORDING TO THE "KRONEN-ZEITUNG," AUSTRIAN AMBASSADOR THOMAS KLESTIL MET WITH AMBASSADOR LAUDER IN VIENNA YESTERDAY AND URGED THAT THE EVIDENCE SAID TO INCRIMINATE WALDHEIM BE AT LAST PUT ON THE TABLE.

AT A VIENNA PRESS CONFERENCE YESTERDAY, CENTRAL SECRETARY HEINRICH KELLER OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY CALLED IT "THE DAMNED DUTY OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT" TO SUPPORT WALDHEIM WHEN HE IS UNDER ATTACK. AS FOR THE QUESTION OF WHO SHOULD PAY FOR LEGAL ACTION TAKEN BY WALDHEIM, KELLER EXPLAINED THAT WALDHEIM HAS BEEN ATTACKED AS A PRIVATE CITIZEN, NOT IN HIS CAPACITY AS PRESIDENT OF AUSTRIA. KELLER ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT THE STATE OUGHT TO DEFRAY THE EXPENSES FOR A COMMISSION OF HISTORIANS.

THE FOREIGN EDITORS OF THE "KRONEN-ZEITUNG" AND THE "NEUE AZ" REPORTED FROM BUDAPEST ON THE MEETING OF THE WORLD JEWISH CONGRESS. THE "KRONEN-ZEITUNG" STRESSED THE FACT THAT THERE WERE STANDING OVATIONS WHEN THE MEETING PASSED A RESOLUTION CONGRATULATING THE U.S. GOVERNMENT FOR ITS DECISION ON WALDHEIM. HOWEVER, THE PAPER QUOTED THE CHAIRMAN OF THE JEWISH RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY IN AUSTRIA, PAUL GROSZ, AS HAVING SAID THAT HE WAS TAKEN BY SURPRISE, THIS RESOLUTION NOT HAVING BEEN ON THE AGENDA. HE SAID, "I DON'T KNOW ABOUT ANY DOCUMENTS WHICH WOULD PROVE THAT KURT WALDHEIM IS A WAR CRIMINAL. ... UNDER DEMOCRATIC LAW, A PERSON IS INNOCENT UNTIL PROVEN GUILTY."

ACCORDING TO THE "KRONEN-ZEITUNG," WJC SECRETARY GENERAL ISRAEL SINGER SAID THAT IF WALDHEIM WANTS TO SUE, LET HIM DO THAT. HE WONDERED HOW A CHIEF OF STATE CAN PROCEED AND WHETHER, LIKE ISRAELI GENERAL SHARON IN HIS

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LAWSUIT AGAINST "TIME" MAGAZINE, WALDHEIM WOULD PERSONALLY APPEAR IN A U.S. COURT AND BE WILLING TO TAKE AN OATH. IN SINGER'S OPINION, THIS IS NOT A MATTER OF WALDHEIM'S BEING "GUILTY" OR NOT - THE LAW ON WHICH THE WATCH LIST IS BASED MERELY PROVIDES FOR KEEPING OUT PEOPLE WHO YOU DON'T WANT TO HAVE IN YOUR OWN HOUSE. "IT'S AS SIMPLE AS THAT."  
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"DIE PRESSE" AND OTHER PAPERS REPORTED THAT WALDHEIM HAS ASKED HIS LEGAL COUNSELS TO DETERMINE WHETHER HE CAN SUE WJC PRESIDENT EDGAR BRONFMAN, WHO IN BUDAPEST DESCRIBED HIM AS "AN ESSENTIAL PART OF THE NAZI KILLING MACHINE." THE DECISION WILL BE MADE IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS. SOCIALIST PARTY SECRETARY KELLER, A LAWYER HIMSELF, THINKS THAT BRONFMAN'S REMARKS ARE ACTIONABLE. BRONFMAN HIMSELF IS WILLING TO COME TO AUSTRIA IN ORDER TO APPEAR IN COURT. HE SAID IN BUDAPEST THAT "AS FAR AS WE (OF THE WJC) ARE CONCERNED, THIS MATTER IS NOW OVER." THE "KURIER" EMPHASIZED BRONFMAN'S WISH FOR "RECONCILIATION WITH THE AUSTRIAN PEOPLE." ACCORDING TO THE "KRONEN-ZEITUNG," A WJC PRESS SPOKESMAN SAID IN BUDAPEST THAT FOREIGN MINISTER PETER VARKONYI - WHO RECENTLY VISITED AUSTRIA - SAYS NOW THAT WALDHEIM HAS BEEN INVITED TO HUNGARY ONLY VERY VAGUELY AND THAT ONE WILL WAIT AND SEE WHETHER HE WILL REALLY COME.

ACCORDING TO THE "KURIER," IT WAS LEARNED FROM THE PRESIDENTIAL OFFICE THAT PUBLICATION OF WALDHEIM'S OWN "WHITE BOOK" WILL BE POSTPONED UNTIL THE AUSTRIAN EXPERTS EXAMINING THE BELGRADE FILES COMPLETE THEIR WORK. CHANCELLOR VRANITZKY HAS MADE IT REPEATEDLY CLEAR IN THE LAST FEW DAYS THAT HE DOES NOT WANT THE WHITE BOOK TO BE PUBLISHED ON BEHALF OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, BUT THAT WALDHEIM HAS EXPRESSED EXACTLY THIS WISH.

REACTING TO FREEDOM PARTY CHARGES THAT AMBASSADOR KLESTIL WAS "CAUGHT NAPPING" WHEN THE DECISION AGAINST WALDHEIM WAS MADE, FOREIGN MINISTER ALOIS MOCK HAS ANNOUNCED THE COMPILATION OF DOCUMENTS SHOWING WHAT THE AUSTRIAN AUTHORITIES DID IN THE LAST FEW MONTHS ON BEHALF OF WALDHEIM.

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2. EDITORIAL COMMENT: UNDER THE FRONT PAGE HEADLINE "COUNTEROFFENSIVE," CHIEF EDITOR THOMAS CHORHERR WROTE IN THE INDEPENDENT DAILY "DIE PRESSE" TODAY: "THE PRESIDENT OF THE JEWISH WORLD CONGRESS FROM BUDAPEST HAS FIRED NEW BROADSIDES AGAINST THE AUSTRIAN PRESIDENT. HE HAS THUS FACILITATED THE WORK OF **KURT WALDHEIM'S** LAWYERS. THE PRESIDENT HAS SAID THAT ONE IS EXAMINING WHERE, WHOM AND WHAT TO SUE. ... WALDHEIM MUST NO LONGER CONTENT HIMSELF WITH WORDS, BUT LAUNCH A COUNTEROFFENSIVE. HESITATION WOULD BE APT TO CAUSE MISUNDERSTANDINGS." KOHL

ADMIN  
END OF MESSAGE

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