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UNCLAS VIENNA 01158

E.O. 12356: N/A

TEXT

TAGS: PGOV, AU  
SUBJECT: "NEW" DOCUMENT FANS OLD DEBATE OVER WALDHEIM

1. SUMMARY: THE CONTROVERSIAL "NEW" DOCUMENT ON PRESIDENT WALDHEIM'S WARTIME ACTIVITIES PUBLISHED IN TODAY'S EDITION OF "DER SPIEGEL" COULD SET BACK PLANS BY THE HISTORIANS COMMISSION TO SUBMIT ITS REPORT BY FEBRUARY 8. ACCORDING TO THE DOCUMENT PROVIDED TO THE WEST GERMAN WEEKLY BY YUGOSLAV HISTORIAN DUSAN PLENCA, WALDHEIM ORDERED THE DEPORTATION OF SOME 4,000 YUGOSLAVS IN 1942. WEST GERMAN HISTORIAN MANFRED MESSERSCHMIDT, ONE OF THE MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION, ANNOUNCED HE WOULD TRAVEL TO ZAGREB ON FEBRUARY 1, 1988 TO ASSESS THE VALIDITY OF THE DOCUMENT; HOWEVER, HE POSTPONED HIS TRIP TODAY WHEN IT WAS LEARNED THAT THE DOCUMENT HAD "DISAPPEARED" FROM THE ZAGREB ARCHIVES, ACCORDING TO RADIO REPORTS HERE. ANOTHER REPORT QUOTES FORMER YUGOSLAV DIPLOMAT ANTON KOLENDIC AS SAYING HE ALSO HAD ADDITIONAL MATERIAL PROVING WALDHEIM'S DIRECT INVOLVEMENT IN NAZI REPRISALS IN THE KOZARA REGION. WALDHEIM'S OFFICE HAS DISMISSED THE PLENCA DOCUMENT AS A FORGERY, AND EVEN MANY OF THE PRESIDENT'S OPPONENTS ARE SKEPTICAL

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OF ITS AUTHENTICITY. IF IT PROVES A FABRICATION, THE CASE AGAINST THE PRESIDENT WILL HAVE SUFFERED SOME LOSS OF CREDIBILITY.

2. TODAY'S EDITION OF THE WEST GERMAN WEEKLY MAGAZINE "DER SPIEGEL" CARRIES A COPY OF A DOCUMENT WHICH THE WEEKLY SAYS PROVES WALDHEIM'S COMPLICITY IN WAR CRIMES IN THE BALKANS. THE DOCUMENT, DATED JULY 22, 1942, IS AN "URGENT" TELEGRAM BY COLONEL FEDOR DRAGOJLOV (OF THE CROATIAN USTASHI UNIT) TO THE HIGHER HEADQUARTERS. THE TEXT READS: "VERY URGENT. LIEUTENANT **KURT WALDHEIM** OF GENERAL (FRIEDRICH) STAHL'S STAFF DEMANDS THAT 4,224 PRISONERS FROM KOZARA, CONSISTING MAINLY OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN AND ABOUT 15 PERCENT OLD MEN, BE SENT ON THEIR WAY; 3514 TO GRUBISINIO POLJE AND 730 TO ZEMUN". FROM THESE TRANSIT CAMPS THE DEPORTED PRISONERS, AMONG THEM MANY JEWS, WERE SENT ON TO THE YUGOSLAV CONCENTRATION CAMP JASENOVAC WHERE MANY OF THEM DIED, ACCORDING TO THE WEEKLY.

3. "DER SPIEGEL" NOTED IT HAD OBTAINED THE DOCUMENT FROM DUSAN PLENCA, "THE FORMER HEAD OF THE BELGRADE MILITARY ARCHIVES". PLENCA CLAIMS HE DISCOVERED THE THE DOCUMENT IN THE ARCHIVES IN ZAGREB. A NUMBER OF AUSTRIAN NEWS REPORTS CLAIM THE DOCUMENT WAS OFFERED FOR A 5-DIGIT DOLLAR FIGURE TO SEVERAL WEST GERMAN AND U.S. PAPERS WHICH, HOWEVER, DECLINED TO "BUY" IT SINCE THEY WERE UNABLE TO ASSESS ITS AUTHENTICITY.

4. IN RECENT WEEKS, PLENCA HAS IRRITATED SOME MEMBERS OF THE HISTORIANS COMMISSION BY SAYING HE HAD FOUND EVIDENCE PROVING THAT WALDHEIM WAS "DIRECTLY INVOLVED" IN WAR CRIMES. IN ADDITION PLENCA ATTACKED THE KURZ COMMISSION FOR WHAT HE CONSIDERED ITS "SUPERFICIAL" APPROACH, SAYING IT HAD CONDUCTED RESEARCH ONLY IN THE MAIN BELGRADE ARCHIVES AND NEGLECTED KEY EVIDENCE AVAILABLE IN PROVINCIAL ARCHIVES IN OTHER PARTS OF THE COUNTRY. IN AN INTERVIEW GIVEN TO THE INDEPENDENT VIENNA DAILY "KURIER" (JANUARY 31, 1988), PLENCA EXPLAINED THAT HE WAS "OUT TO CALL INTO QUESTION THE SCIENTIFIC METHODOLOGY OF THE COMMISSION" (RATHER THAN TO MAINTAIN THAT WALDHEIM WAS A WAR CRIMINAL). MOREOVER, HE FELT THE HISTORIANS COMMISSION SHOULD HAVE INCLUDED A YUGOSLAV, GIVEN THAT THE CRIMES **KURT WALDHEIM** IS ACCUSED OF WERE COMMITTED ON YUGOSLAV SOIL. (PLENCA WAS INVITED BY THE HISTORIANS COMMISSION TO PARTICIPATE IN THEIR WORK BUT WAS NEVER OFFERED A POSITION AS A MEMBER OF THE BODY). REFERRING TO THE ALLEGED WHEELING AND DEALING WITH THE DOCUMENT THAT HAS NOW BEEN PUBLISHED BY "DER SPIEGEL", PLENCA EMPHASIZED HE HAD "NEVER RECEIVED A CENT FOR HIS SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH".

5. WALDHEIM PRESS SPOKESMAN GEROLD CHRISTIAN AND THE PRESIDENT HIMSELF HAVE COUNTERED THAT "THE DOCUMENT IS OBVIOUSLY A FORGERY". CHRISTIAN SAID WALDHEIM HAD NEVER HAD THE AUTHORITY TO GIVE ORDERS AND THEREFORE COULD NOT HAVE CALLED FOR THE DEPORTATION OF PRISONERS. IN AN INTERVIEW FOR THE VIENNA DAILY "DIE PRESSE" OF FEBRUARY

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1, 1988, WALDHEIM TERMED THE ENTIRE AFFAIR "HIGHLY DUBIOUS", SAYING THE TELEGRAM "LACKED ANY CREDIBILITY". IN HIS VIEW, THE ENTIRE AFFAIR WAS ANOTHER ATTEMPT TO "UNNERVE" THE COMMISSION AND THE PUBLIC IN THE FINAL STAGES OF THE HISTORIANS' CONSULTATIONS.

6. ACCORDING TO MANFRED MESSERSCHMIDT, THE WEST GERMAN UNCLAS SECTION 02 OF 02 VIENNA 01158

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MEMBER OF THE HISTORIANS COMMISSION, THE DOCUMENT WOULD, IF AUTHENTIC, PLACE WALDHEIM IN "EXTREMELY CLOSE" PROXIMITY TO WAR CRIMES. IF NECESSARY, THE COMMISSION SHOULD EXTEND ITS RESEARCH BEYOND FEBRUARY 8, 1988, (THE DATE WHEN THE COMMISSION PLANS TO HAND OVER ITS REPORT TO THE AUSTRIAN GOVERNMENT). HE ALSO POINTED OUT THAT THE LANGUAGE USED IN THE DOCUMENT DID NOT CONFORM TO THE MILITARY DICTION USED AT THE TIME. MESSERSCHMIDT FELT IT WAS NECESSARY TO STUDY THE ORIGINAL OF THE DOCUMENT. AFTER ANNOUNCING HE WOULD TRAVEL TO ZAGREB TO EXAMINE THE ORIGINAL, HE CALLED OFF HIS TRIP WHEN IT WAS LEARNED ON FEBRUARY 1, 1988 THAT THE DOCUMENT HAD APPARENTLY "DISAPPEARED" FROM THE ARCHIVES IN ZAGREB.

7. IN A RELATED DEVELOPMENT OVER THE WEEKEND, RETIRED YUGOSLAV DIPLOMAT ANTON KOLENDIC REPORTEDLY CLAIMED HE PERSONALLY POSSESSED PAPERS DOCUMENTING WALDHEIM'S COMPLICITY IN NAZI REPRISALS IN YUGOSLAVIA. ACCORDING TO THESE ALLEGATIONS, WALDHEIM WAS DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN "PACIFICATION OPERATIONS" IN THE KOZARA REGION OF WEST BOSNIA. THE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE POINTED OUT THAT IN THE PAST KOLENDIC HAD REPEATEDLY CONTRADICTED HIMSELF AND STRESSED THAT HIS MATERIAL, TOO, WAS OBVIOUSLY A FORGERY.

8. MEANWHILE, OVP FM ALOIS MOCK SAID ON FRENCH TV OVER THE WEEKEND THAT TWO YEARS' RESEARCH IN VARIOUS ARCHIVES ALL OVER THE WORLD HAD NOT PRODUCED "MATERIAL EVIDENCE" OF PERSONAL GUILT ON THE PART OF WALDHEIM. OVP FLOOR LEADER FRITZ KOENIG SAID THE "DER SPIEGEL" MOVE WAS APPARENTLY DESIGNED TO "UNNERVE" THE MEMBERS OF THE HISTORIANS COMMISSION. IT HAD TO BE ASKED WHY THIS MATERIAL WAS BEING PUBLISHED AT THIS MOMENT. THE ATTEMPTS TO WHEEL AND DEAL WITH THIS PRESUMABLY FALSE DOCUMENT WERE JUST ANOTHER MOVE IN THE SLANDER CAMPAIGN AGAINST WALDHEIM, SAID KOENIG. HIS COUNTERPART IN THE SOCIALIST PARTY, HEINZ FISCHER, SAID METHODS SUCH AS "FORGING DOCUMENTS IN ORDER TO INCRIMINATE THE HEAD OF A STATE" HAD TO BE REJECTED UTTERLY. AT THE SAME TIME, FISCHER NOTED THAT ANYBODY WHO CALLED A DOCUMENT A FORGERY PUT HIMSELF IN AN EXTREMELY EMBARRASSING SITUATION IF IT TURNED OUT TO BE AUTHENTIC. THIS WAS ALSO THE THEME OF THE BULK OF EDITORIAL COMMENT IN THE AUSTRIAN PRESS OVER THE WEEKEND. SIMON WIESENTHAL,

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DIRECTOR OF THE JEWISH DOCUMENTATION CENTER IN VIENNA,  
REMARKED THAT THE DOCUMENT, IF AUTHENTIC, COULD ESTABLISH  
A LEGAL CASE FOR CHARGING THE PRESIDENT WITH GIVING  
CRIMINAL ORDERS. GRUNWALD

ADMIN  
END OF MESSAGE

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