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E.O. 12356: N/A

TEXT

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: WALDHEIM

THIS MORNING'S SWISS HEADLINES INCLUDED "WALDHEIM KNEW BUT DID NOT PARTICIPATE" (ZURICH TAGES-ANZEIGER), "WALDHEIM WAS AWARE OF WAR CRIMES" (BASLER ZEITUNG), "NOT GUILTY OF WAR CRIMES, BUT HE KNEW ABOUT THEM" (BERNER ZEITUNG), "IT SMELLS FISHY" (LAUSANNE 24 HEURES), AND "KURT WALDHEIM KNEW" (GENEVA LA SUISSE).

EDITORIAL COMMENT INCLUDED THE FOLLOWING:

JOURNAL DE GENEVE (CENTER-RIGHT): "WALDHEIM'S PERSONALITY SEEMS TO EPITOMIZE AN AUSTRIA WHICH TAKES ITS COMMITMENTS LIGHTLY--PASSING FROM ANTI-HITLERISM TO THE ANSCHLUSS, THEN TO ENTHUSIASM FOR DEMOCRACY. AUSTRIA IS ALMOST

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PAINFULLY 'REALIST'; POLLS INDICATE 72 PERCENT OF WALDHEIM'S FELLOW-COUNTRYMEN BELIEVE THAT, ALTHOUGH HE SURELY KNEW ABOUT THE NAZI DEATH CAMPS, HE SHOULD NOT RESIGN FROM THE PRESIDENCY."
RESIGN FROM THE PRESIDENCY."

24 HEURES (CENTRIST), LAUSANNE: "THE REPORT CONCLUDES THAT **KURT WALDHEIM** DID NOT PERSONALLY ORDER THE DEPORTATION OF MORE THAN 4,000 CIVILIANS FROM KOZARA. ONE IS GLAD TO LEARN THIS, BOTH FOR HIS SAKE AND THAT OF THE AUSTRIAN PEOPLE WHO SEEM LARGELY BEHIND HIM. NEVERTHELESS, THE REPORT A PANEL OF HISTORIANS HAS SUBMITTED TO THE AUSTRIAN AUTHORITIES DOES NOT, UNFORTUNATELY, REMOVE ALL THE DOUBTS HANGING OVER THE EX-U.N. GENERAL SECRETARY.

"THE IMPRESSION GIVEN IS THAT THE CONCLUSIONS NOW MADE PUBLIC ARE BASED MORE ON THE ONLY DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE THAN ON WALDHEIM'S REAL PAST. THESE DOUBTS ARE REINFORCED BY THE ONLY HARD FACT THAT THE COMMISSION HAS BEEN ABLE TO ESTABLISH: THAT **KURT WALDHEIM** HAS LIED CONTINUALLY ABOUT HIS 'GERMAN' PAST, AS IF HE HAD SOMETHING TO HIDE. SHOULD HE STAY IN OFFICE AFTER THIS? IT'S A PROBLEM FOR NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES, AND ALSO FOR THE AUSTRIANS THEMSELVES, WHO HAVE BEEN FORCED TO TAKE A FRESH LOOK AT A NATIONAL PAST WHICH HAD BEEN OFFICIALLY CLOSED."

LE MATIN (CENTER-LEFT), LAUSANNE: "THERE WERE DIFFERENCES AMONG THE HISTORIANS ON THE COMMISSION. WEST GERMANY'S MANFRED MESSERSCHMIDT MAINTAINED NO GUILT ATTACHED TO **KURT WALDHEIM'S** WARTIME BEHAVIOR. BELGIUM'S VANWELENHUYZEN, ON THE OTHER HAND, HELD THAT THE FORMER WEHRMACHT LIEUTENANT IS NOT ABOVE SUSPICION. SO THE COMPROMISE ANNOUNCED YESTERDAY WAS REACHED: WALDHEIM CANNOT BE CONSIDERED A WAR CRIMINAL, BUT HE DID KNOW WHAT WAS GOING ON."

LA SUISSE (CENTRIST), GENEVA: EDITORIAL HEADED "WALDHEIM THE PARIAH": "THE COMMISSION CONCLUDED THAT WALDHEIM WAS NOT A WAR CRIMINAL, BUT THAT HE KNEW MORE THAN HE HAS ADMITTED ABOUT THE WEHRMACHT'S BEHAVIOR IN THE BALKANS FROM 1942 TO 1945. LIEUTENANT WALDHEIM HAS NOT BEEN COMPLETELY EXONERATED. WHAT NOW COUNTS AGAINST HIM IS THE FACT THAT FOR SO LONG HE HAD BEEN SAYING THAT HE KNEW NOTHING ABOUT WAR CRIMES.

"UNDER THIS PRESSURE, WILL WALDHEIM BE COMPELLED TO RESIGN AS AUSTRIA'S PRESIDENT? HIS REPEATED DENIALS SUGGEST IT IS UNLIKELY. BUT PERHAPS HE WILL CHANGE HIS MIND TO AVOID TARNISHING HIS COUNTRY'S IMAGE. AFTER ALL, FROM NOW ON HE WILL BE NOTHING BUT A PARIAH ON THAT INTERNATIONAL STAGE WHERE HE ONCE PLAYED A DISTINGUISHED ROLE."
- .- " " :STINGUISHED

LE COURRIER (CENTER-LEFT CATHOLIC), GENEVA: "SO **KURT WALDHEIM** LIED. IS THAT REALLY NEWS TO ANYONE? NO, BUT THIS TIME THE DECLARATION BEARS THE SEAL OF A PANEL OF

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DISTINGUISHED HISTORIANS. FOR LONG, MR. WALDHEIM HAS BEEN REGARDED AS A SOCIAL CLIMBER WHO WASN'T SCRUPULOUS ABOUT HOW HE REACHED THE TOP. HAVING RETIRED FROM SENIOR INTERNATIONAL FUNCTIONS, HE COULD WELL HAVE SPENT A PEACEFUL RETIREMENT IN HIS HOMETOWN--JUST ONE OF MANY AUSTRIANS WHO HAD A 'PAST' THAT THEY COULD CONVENIENTLY FORGET WITH THE COMPLICITY OF THEIR FELLOW-COUNTRYMEN.

UNCLAS SECTION 02 OF 02 GENEVA 01244

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"BUT HIS AMBITION CONTINUED TO DRIVE HIM ON. AUSTRIANS SAW IN HIS CANDIDATURE FOR PRESIDENT A MEANS OF COMING TO TERMS WITH THE COUNTRY'S NAZI PAST. WHEN IN MARCH THEY COMMEMORATE THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ANSCHLUSS, THEY WILL BE ABLE TO COMFORT THEMSELVES WITH THE THOUGHT THAT THEIR PRESIDENT WAS IN THE SAME BOAT AS THEMSELVES.

"DURING HIS ARMY SERVICE, WALDHEIM COLLABORATED PASSIVELY IN SOME NASTY BUSINESS. HE WAS NO HERO, JUST AN OFFICER WHO LIKE MANY OTHERS PUT HIS CONSCIENCE IN COLD STORAGE FOR THE DURATION. DIDN'T THE WEST GERMANS ONCE HAVE A PRESIDENT CALLED LUEBKE WHO HELPED BUILD HUTS FOR CONCENTRATION CAMPS WITHOUT INQUIRING TOO CLOSELY WHAT THEY WERE FOR?

"THE EXPERTS HAVE ESTABLISHED THAT WALDHEIM DID NOT ACTUALLY COMMIT ANY WAR CRIMES. BUT THAT DOESN'T PUT AN END TO THE MATTER. IT ISN'T EVEN CERTAIN THAT A RESIGNATION BY WALDHEIM WOULD CALM THE STORM. MORE THAN 70 PERCENT OF AUSTRIANS, ACCORDING TO A RECENT POLL, THINK HE SHOULD STAY IN OFFICE. BUT HIS LYING HAS COST HIM DEAR IN INTERNATIONAL REPUTATION." (2/9/88) HENZE

ADMIN
END OF MESSAGE

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