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2000

DOCUMENT\_ID: 21906672  
INQNO: DOC8D 00080392  
DOCNO: TEL 001296 88  
PRODUCER: BELGRADE  
SOURCE: STATE  
DOCTYPE: IN  
DOR: 19880209  
TOR: 123156  
DOCPREC: P  
ORIGDATE: 198802091602  
MHFNO: 88 7786460  
DOCCCLASS: C

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ZNY CCCCC ZOC STATE ZZH  
STU3168  
PP RUEHC  
DE RUFHBE #1296/01 0401611  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 091602Z FEB 88  
FM AMEMBASSY BELGRADE  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1506  
INFO RUFHVI/AMEMBASSY VIENNA PRIORITY 2550  
RUFHOL/AMEMBASSY BONN 8089  
RUFHBE/AMCONSUL ZAGREB 0107  
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CONTROLS  
C O N F I D E N T I A L BELGRADE 01296

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR

TEXT  
TAGS: PGOV, PREL, YO, AU  
SUBJECT: GOY PRESS STATEMENT ON WALDHEIM; REACTION  
- TO COMMISSION REPORT

REF: VIENNA 1399

1. C-ENTIRE TEXT.
2. SUMMARY: THE GOY ISSUED ON FEBRUARY 8 ITS FIRST OFFICIAL STATEMENT SINCE THE RECENT FLURRY OF NEWS STORIES ON PRESIDENT WALDHEIM'S ACTIVITIES IN WARTIME YUGOSLAVIA. PRESS REACTION TO THE REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION OF HISTORIANS SO FAR HAS BEEN STRAIGHTFORWARD. AT THE SAME TIME, THE YUGOSLAV MEDIA CONTINUE TO UNCOVER AND PUBLISH ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT WALDHEIM'S ACTIVITIES DURING WORLD WAR II. DUSAN PLENCA THE YUGOSLAV HISTORIAN WHO WAS THE SOURCE OF THE "DER SPIEGEL" TELEGRAM, HELD A PRESS CONFERENCE IN BELGRADE ON FEBRUARY 5 DURING WHICH HE ACCUSED THE USG OF OBSTRUCTING THE WORK OF THE COMMISSION BY ITS

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REFUSAL TO PUT HIS INFORMATION AT ITS DISPOSAL. PLENCA ALSO MET LAST WEEK WITH A DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, OFFICE OF SPECIAL INVESTIGATIONS HISTORIAN (PROTECT) REGARDING THE "DER SPIEGEL" TELEGRAM. END SUMMARY.

3. THE GOY ISSUED AN OFFICIAL STATEMENT ON FEBRUARY 8 ON THE WALDHEIM AFFAIR--ITS FIRST OFFICIAL REACTION TO THE RECENT FLURRY OF STORIES ARISING FROM PUBLICATION OF THE NOW-FAMOUS "DER SPEIGEL" TELEGRAM. THE STATEMENT WAS ISSUED BEFORE THE WALDHEIM COMMISSION RELEASED ITS REPORT AND DID NOT DEAL DIRECTLY WITH THE COMMISSION'S CONCLUSIONS. THE MAIN POINTS OF THE GOY STATEMENT, WHICH WAS READ BY FOREIGN SECRETARIAT SPOKESMAN ALEKSANDAR STANIC, ARE THAT:

--THE GOY HAS RECEIVED THE REQUEST OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION OF HISTORIANS TO BRING TO LIGHT DOCUMENTS ON THE "ROLE OF LIEUTENANT WALDHEIM ON THE STAFF OF THE MILITARY GROUP FOR WESTERN BOSNIA;"

--DOCUMENTS IN YUGOSLAV ARCHIVES ARE ACCESSIBLE TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS UNDER THE SAME CONDITIONS, AND THIS INCLUDES MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION;

--THE VERIFICATION OF DOCUMENTS WHICH HAVE APPEARED IN PUBLIC, AND ALL REMAINING QUESTIONS IN THIS CONNECTION, ARE SUBJECT TO THE JUDGMENT OF EXPERTS AND INVESTIGATORS;

--YUGOSLAVIA HAS ALWAYS HAD AND STILL HAS HISTORICAL AND MORAL REASONS TO DETERMINE THAT THE MOST COMPLETE TRUTH ABOUT THE EVENTS ON ITS TERRITORY DURING WORLD WAR II IS ESTABLISHED;

--THE GOY WANTS TO EMPHASIZE THE NEED AND MUTUAL INTEREST IN STABLE AND FRIENDLY RELATIONS BETWEEN YUGOSLAVIA AND AUSTRIA.

4. REACTION IN THE YUGOSLAV PRESS TO THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION'S REPORT THUS FAR HAS BEEN RELATIVELY STRAIGHTFORWARD. BOTH BORBA AND POLITIKA PRINTED A TANJUG WIRE SERVICE REPORT ON THE SUBMISSION OF THE REPORT TO AUSTRIAN CHANCELLOR VRANITZKY. THEY NOTED THAT THE REPORT DID NOT ESTABLISH WALDHEIM'S PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR WAR CRIMES, BUT THAT IT ALSO CONTAINS MUCH CRITICISM OF WALDHEIM'S BEHAVIOR AS A WEHRMACHT OFFICER. THE YUGOSLAV PRESS ACCOUNTS ALSO MENTIONED THAT VICE CHANCELLOR REITERATED HIS CLAIM THAT WALDHEIM'S MANDATE AS PRESIDENT WILL NOT BE AFFECTED BY THE COMMISSION'S REPORT SINCE IT DID NOT CONFIRM ANY WRONGDOING BY THE PRESIDENT.

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5. WHILE THE GOY MAINTAINED UNTIL NOW OFFICIAL SILENCE ON THE RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE CASE, YUGOSLAV MEDIA CONTINUE TO UNCOVER AS YET UNCONFIRMED INFORMATION ON VARIOUS ASPECTS OF THE AFFAIR. ON FEBRUARY 5 THE BELGRADE DAILY POLITIKA BEGAN A SERIES OF ARTICLES BY  
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BOZIDAR DIKIC, ITS SPECIALIST IN WARTIME AND POSTWAR YUGOSLAV-GERMAN RELATIONS, THAT DETAILS THE WARTIME TRAVELS AND ASSIGNMENTS OF WALDHEIM. IT IS NOT CLEAR WHAT DIKIC'S SOURCES ARE, AND POLITIKA WAS CAREFUL TO NOTE THAT THE SERIES WILL AVOID MAKING "ANY FINAL CLAIMS AND JUDGEMENTS." THE FIRST ARTICLE OF THE SERIES DESCRIBES WALDHEIM'S ASSIGNMENTS IN THE BALKANS, INCLUDING HIS ASSIGNMENT AS A STAFF AIDE IN THE "MILITARY GROUP BADER," WHICH, ACCORDING TO THE ARTICLE, HAD THE TASK OF "ERADICATING REBELLION IN SERBIA AND CROATIA." THE ARTICLE ALSO DESCRIBES WALDHEIM'S DUTIES AS A MILITARY INTELLIGENCE LIAISON OFFICER BETWEEN THE "MILITARY GROUP BADER" AND THE ELITE ITALIAN MOUNTAIN DIVISION "PUSTERIA." THE THIRD ARTICLE OF THE SERIES ON FEBRUARY 8 DESCRIBES THE SHOOTING OF 32 CIVILIAN HOSTAGES BY THE "PUSTERIA" TROOPS IN DECEMBER 1941 AND INCLUDES A PHOTO OF FURTHER EXECUTIONS IN MAY 1942. WHILE WALDHEIM IS NEVER PLACED PHYSICALLY ON THE SCENE OF THESE EXECUTIONS, THE ARTICLES CLEARLY IMPLY THAT BECAUSE OF HIS DUTIES AS LIASON OFFICER HE MUST HAVE KNOWN OF THE SHOOTINGS.

6. NEW REVELATIONS CONTINUED TO APPEAR IN THE WEEKEND PRESS. THE FEBRUARY 7 ISSUE OF THE BELGRADE WEEKLY NIN AND THE WEEKEND EDITION OF BORBA BOTH CARRIED AN INTERVIEW WITH ANTON KOLENDIC. IN 1947 KOLENDIC WAS, HE SAYS IN THE ARTICLE, THE "REZIDENT" IN VIENNA. ACCORDING TO KOLENDIC, WALDHEIM WAS KNOWN TO THE YUGOSLAVS AS A WAR CRIMINAL, AND HIS NAME WAS INCLUDED ON A LIST OF SUCH CRIMINALS TRANSMITTED FROM BELGRADE SHORTLY AFTER KOLENDIC'S ARRIVAL IN VIENNA. KOLENDIC ASSERTS THAT THE YUGOSLAVS WISHED TO HAVE WALDHEIM'S NAME PLACED ON THE 'A' LIST OF WAR CRIMINALS, WHICH INCLUDED SUCH LUMINARIES AS **ADOLF EICHMANN** AND ANDRIJA ARTUKOVIC. HOWEVER, KOLENDIC CLAIMS THAT YUGOSLAV INITIATIVES WERE BLOCKED BY THE SOVIET UNION,

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THE UNITED STATES AND GREAT BRITAIN. KOLENDIC ALSO IMPLIES IN THE ARTICLE THAT THE NKVD CHIEF IN VIENNA AT THE TIME, ONE COL. GONDE, WAS AWARE OF WALDHEIM'S ALLEGED WAR CRIMES. KOLENDIC FURTHER ASSERTS THAT WALDHEIM'S CRIMES WERE NOT LIMITED TO THE TERRITORY OF YUGOSLAVIA. ACCORDING TO KOLENDIC, THE YUGOSLAVS HAD INFORMATION THAT WALDHEIM ALSO PARTICIPATED IN THE OCCUPATION OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA, LED A HORSE-MOUNTED RECONNAISSANCE UNIT IN THE SOVIET UNION IN 1941 WHICH OPERATED AGAINST SOVIET PARTISANS AND CIVILIANS. KOLENDIC ALSO INSINUATES THAT ONE REASON FOR INTERNATIONAL SILENCE ON WALDHEIM OVER THE YEARS WAS THAT FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE SERVICES WANTED TO USE THEIR KNOWLEDGE OF WALDHEIM'S WARTIME ACTIVITIES IN "COOPERATING" WITH HIM WHILE HE WAS UN SECRETARY GENERAL.

7. DUSAN PLENCA, THE YUGOSLAV HISTORIAN, SOURCE OF THE TELEGRAM PRINTED IN "DER SPIEGEL" ALSO CONTINUED TO ATTRACT SOME PUBLIC ATTENTION. SPEAKING AT AN INFORMAL PRESS CONFERENCE AT THE HOTEL YUGOSLAVIA IN BELGRADE ON FEBRUARY 5, PLENCA STATED THAT HE HAS "RELIABLE INFORMATION THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES REFUSED TO PLACE HIS INFORMATION ABOUT KURT WALDHEIM AT THE DISPOSAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION OF HISTORIANS." PLENCA DID NOT ELABORATE ON THIS CLAIM, BUT HE ALSO ACCUSED THE COMMISSION OF BEING "SUPERFICIAL."

8. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, OFFICE OF SPECIAL INVESTIGATIONS HISTORIAN PATRICK TREANOR (PROTECT) WAS, COINCIDENTALLY, IN YUGOSLAVIA CONDUCTING RESEARCH AT THE TIME THAT THE FLURRY OF PRESS NEWS ABOUT THE WALDHEIM AFFAIR AROSE. HE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO MEET PLENCA, AND TO SPEAK AT LENGTH SEVERAL TIMES WITH YUGOSLAV JOURNALIST  
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DANKO VASOVIC, PLENCA'S COLLABORATOR. THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION EMERGED FROM THESE DISCUSSIONS. (PLEASE NOTE: THIS REPORTING WAS NOT CLEARED WITH TREANOR PRIOR TO HIS DEPARTURE FROM YUGOSLAVIA.):

--PLENCA STATED THAT HE ENCOUNTERED THE DISPUTED TELEGRAM A NUMBER OF YEARS AGO WHILE DOING RESEARCH; HE DOES NOT RECALL JUST WHERE HE SAW IT, SINCE HE HAS DONE RESEARCH OVER THE YEARS

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IN MANY DIFFERENT ARCHIVES AND DEPOSITORIES. HE CAME UPON A COPY OF IT RECENTLY WHILE WORKING WITH HIS DOCUMENTATION. PLENCA REPORTS THAT HE HAS SEEN OTHER DOCUMENTS ON THE SAME GROUP OF PRISONERS MENTIONED IN THE TELEGRAM, AND ANOTHER DOCUMENT THAT MENTIONS WALDHEIM. IN HIS TALKS WITH TREANOR, PLENCA APPEARED TO BE FUZZY ON HISTORICAL DETAILS AND RELEVANT TERMINOLOGY.

--WHEN TREANOR LEFT BELGRADE HE APPEARED RATHER SKEPTICAL ABOUT THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE PLENCA TELEGRAM.

--VASOVIC STATES THAT HE NEVER SAW THE ORIGINAL TELEGRAM, BUT ONLY PLENCA'S COPY OF IT; THAT COPY DID NOT APPEAR TO BE MORE THAN PERHAPS SIX MONTHS OLD. VASOVIC HIMSELF IS NOW SKEPTICAL ABOUT THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE DOCUMENT. HE ALSO STATES THAT HE RECEIVED THE COPY OF THE TELEGRAM FROM PLENCA ONLY A FEW DAYS BEFORE TRAVELLING TO HAMBURG TO DEAL WITH "SPIEGEL." HIS TRIP TO HAMBURG HAD ORIGINALLY BEEN ARRANGED ON THE BASIS OF A PHOTOGRAPH PURPORTEDLY SHOWING WALDHEIM IN COMPANY WITH ANTE PAVELIC, HEAD OF GOVERNMENT OF THE INDEPENDENT STATE OF CROATIA, AND MAJOR GENERAL STAHL. VASOVIC REPORTS THAT THAT PHOTOGRAPH WAS PROVIDED TO HIM BY COL. ANTUN MILETIC, DIRECTOR OF THE ARCHIVES OF THE MILITARY HISTORY INSTITUTE IN BELGRADE.

9. MR. TREANOR ALSO HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO REVIEW GERMAN PROPAGANDA FILMS AT THE FILM ARCHIVES OF "JUGOSLOVENSKA KINOTEKA" FROM WHICH THE ABOVE-MENTIONED PHOTOGRAPH WAS SAID TO HAVE BEEN EXTRACTED. CONFERRING WITH EXPERTS AT THOSE ARCHIVES, THE CONSENSUS WAS (1) THAT THE PICTURE DID NOT COME FROM THOSE FILMS BUT WAS TAKEN AT THE SAME PERIOD, SEPARATELY, AND (2) THAT THE PERSON APPEARING IN THE PHOTO, SUPPOSED TO BE WALDHEIM, DID APPEAR IN THOSE FILMS, BUT IN ANY CASE WAS NOT WALDHEIM.

10. COMMENT: THE GOY STATEMENT APPEARS TO RAISE ALMOST AS MANY QUESTIONS AS IT ANSWERS. IT CONSPICUOUSLY AVOIDS THE QUESTION OF WHETHER OR NOT THE GOY HAS AN OFFICIAL VIEW ON WALDHEIM'S ACTIVITIES ON YUGOSLAVIA DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR. THE GOY'S SLOWNESS IN REACTING OFFICIALLY TO UNFOLDING RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AROUND THE WALDHEIM AFFAIR PROBABLY REFLECTS ITS DESIRE NOT TO GET OUT IN FRONT OF AN UNCLEAR SITUATION AS WELL AS ALL TOO TYPICAL YUGOSLAV DITHERING WHEN CONFRONTED WITH DIFFICULT DECISIONS.

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THERE IS ALSO A NATURAL RELUCTANCE BY THE GOY TO TAKE A LEAD IN ATTACKING WALDHEIM, WHO WHILE UN SECRETARY GENERAL ENJOYED GOOD PERSONAL RELATIONS WITH TITO. WE BELIEVE THAT THE BOTTOM LINE, FOR THE GOY, IS THE DESIRE NOT TO TAKE STEPS THAT WOULD DAMAGE ITS GOOD RELATIONS WITH NEIGHBORING AUSTRIA.

11. THE PLENCA TELEGRAM WAS FIRST ALLUDED TO PUBLICLY DURING A BELGRADE TELEVISION INTERVIEW WITH PLENCA ON JANUARY 22 WHICH WAS REPRINTED IN ITS ENTIRETY IN THE JANUARY 23 POLITIKA. REPORTS ABOUT THE PLENCA TELEGRAM FROM THE FOREIGN PRESS IN BELGRADE STIMULATED INCREASING INTEREST AMONGST THAT EVENTUALLY CULMINATED IN PUBLICATION OF THE TELEGRAM BY SPIEGEL. KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE PLENCA TELEGRAM HAD APPARENTLY BEEN CIRCULATING IN BELGRADE FOR SOME TIME.  
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BELGRADE TV'S DECISION TO AIR THE STORY COULD HAVE BEEN BASED ON A RECOGNITION OF THE ISSUE'S NEWS WORTHINESS AS THE WALDHEIM COMMISSION MOVED TOWARD COMPLETION OF ITS WORK. THERE IS NO ADVANCE - CENSORSHIP OF NEWS IN YUGOSLAVIA AND THE YUGOSLAV MEDIA HAS GROWN INCREASINGLY INDEPENDENT AND AGGRESSIVE RECENTLY. HOWEVER, WE DOUBT THAT BELGRADE TV WOULD HAVE AIRED THE POLITICALLY SENSITIVE PLENCA STORY WITHOUT SOME INDICATION THAT IT WOULD NOT RUN INTO TROUBLE WITH THE AUTHORITIES. THE SAME COULD ALSO BE SAID ABOUT POLITIKA'S DECISION TO RUN A NUMBER OF ARTICLES ABOUT WALDHEIM'S WAR-TIME ACTIVITIES IN YUGOSLAVIA. (NIN IS PART OF THE POLITIKA PUBLISHING HOUSE.) AS THE AFFAIR DEVELOPED, HOWEVER, OTHER ELEMENTS IN THE YUGOSLAV PRESS, NOTABLY THE INCREASINGLY INFLUENTIAL AND INDEPENDENT NATIONAL DAILY BORBA BEGAN TO RAISE QUESTIONS ABOUT THE GOY'S FAILURE TO RESPOND PUBLICLY ON THE AFFAIR. WE HAVE ALSO HEARD RUMORS THAT ABOUT A WEEK AGO BELGRADE TV RECEIVED GUIDANCE TO DOWNPLAY ITS COVERAGE OF THE AFFAIR.

12. AS COULD BE EXPECTED THE AFFAIR HAS RAISED A VARIETY OF THEORIES IN BELGRADE. THESE INCLUDE ATTRIBUTING THE APPEARANCE OF THE PLENCA TELEGRAM TO A DESIRE BY OFFICIAL CIRCLES NOT TO SEE THE WALDHEIM COMMISSION ISSUE A WHITEWASH; A DESIRE TO COVER UP DUBIOUS YUGOSLAV ACTIVITIES SHORTLY AFTER THE END OF

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THE WAR, POSSIBLY SUCH AS FORGING DOCUMENTS RELATED TO WALDHEIM (ALTHOUGH IT ESCAPES US WHY THE GOY WOULD DO THIS AGAINST A PERSON WHO WAS THEN A RELATIVELY SMALL FISH); OR EVEN A DESIRE TO HELP WALDHEIM BY SURFACING A DOCUMENT OF SUCH DUBIOUS PROVENANCE AS THE PLENCA TELEGRAM, WHOSE EFFECT WOULD EVENTUALLY BE TO DISCREDIT CHARGES THAT WALDHEIM HAD ENGAGED IN WAR CRIMES. FOR NOW WE ARE INCLINED TO ATTRIBUTE THESE CONSPIRACY THEORIES TO OVERFEVERED BALKAN IMAGINATIONS. ON BALANCE, WE BELIEVE THAT THE GOY STANCE ON THE WALDHEIM AFFAIR CAN BEST BE EXPLAINED BY CONCERN TO MAINTAIN GOOD RELATIONS WITH A NEIGHBORING COUNTRY OF CONSIDERABLE IMPORTANCE TO YUGOSLAVIA.  
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