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NAZI WAR CRIMES DISCLOSURE ACT  
2000

DOCUMENT ID: 26228097  
INQNO: DOC12D 00084538  
DOCNO: TEL 016577 89  
PRODUCER: PARIS  
SOURCE: STATE  
DOCTYPE: IN  
DOR: 19890522  
TOR: 125207  
DOCPREC: 0  
ORIGDATE: 198905221610  
MHFNO: 89 2887989  
DOCCLASS: U

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IN THIS DOCUMENT

HEADER  
OO RUEAIIB  
ZNR UUUUU ZOC STATE ZZH  
TOU1672  
OO RUEHC RUEHKK  
DE RUFHFR #6577/01 1421610  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
O 221610Z MAY 89  
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4952  
INFO RUEHKK/EC COLLECTIVE  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 9592  
BT

CONTROLS  
UNCLAS PARIS 16577

FOR COORDINATION WITH <sup>ed</sup> State

DEPT. AND GENEVA PASS TO USTR; BRUSSELS ALSO FOR USEC

E.O. 12356: N/A

TEXT  
TAGS: ETRD, GATT, EEC, FR  
SUBJECT: FRENCH VIEWS ON EC TV BROADCASTING DIRECTIVE

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
SOURCES METHODS EXEMPTION 3B2B  
NAZI WAR CRIMES DISCLOSURE ACT  
DATE 2001 2007

REF: A) MURPHY/BERRY TELCON OF 5/22/89, B) STATE 152619,  
C) PARIS 16339

1. SUMMARY: THE FOLLOWING MAY 22 INTERNATIONAL HERALD  
TRIBUNE ARTICLE BY MARY BLUME HIGHLIGHTS THE POLITICAL  
SENSITIVITY OF THE BROADCAST DIRECTIVE IN FRANCE AND THE  
POLITICAL FLAK MINISTER FOR EUROPEAN AFFAIRS EDITH CRESSON  
HAS TAKEN FOR GOING ALONG WITH THE WATERED DOWN VERSION.  
END SUMMARY.

2. BEGIN ARTICLE TEXT:

CULTURAL ELITE IN PARIS BATTLES FOR TV QUOTAS

PARIS - MONDAY MORNING AT 9, A SPECIAL TRAIN WAS TO LEAVE  
THE GARE DE L'EST FOR STRASBOURG, CARRYING 500 PASSENGERS  
WHO INTENDED TO LOBBY THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ON THE SUBJECT  
OF TELEVISION POLICY AND TO RETURN TO PARIS AT MIDNIGHT.

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BAPTIZED "LE TRAIN DE LA CULTURE," THE TRAIN WAS TO BE SENT OFF BY BAND MUSIC AND TO BE DIVIDED INTO CARS OFFERING ENTERTAINMENT AND LABELED FILM, CINEMA, POETRY, LEISURE AND DEBATE, MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC COULD JOIN MORE CELEBRATED DAYTRIPPERS FOR THE MODEST SUM OF 250 FRANCS, ROUND TRIP (ABOUT \$38).

THE CULTURE TRAIN IS THE SPLASHIEST OF SEVERAL ATTEMPTS BY FRENCH FILM AND TELEVISION PERSONALITIES TO OVERRIDE EC POLICY ON "FRONTIER-FREE" TELEVISION AND TO MAINTAIN A QUOTA ON THE SCREENING OF FOREIGN PROGRAMS.

"WE HAVE THE MEDIA ON OUR SIDE," SAID THE SCENARIST JEAN-CLAUDE CARRIERE, ONE OF THE LEADERS OF THE FIGHT TO MAINTAIN QUOTAS. CARRIERE AND HIS COLLEAGUES HAD ALSO THOUGHT THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT WAS ON THEIR SIDE BUT TURNED OUT TO BE MISTAKEN WHEN EDITH CRESSON, FRANCE'S MINISTER FOR EUROPEAN AFFAIRS, WAS INSTRUCTED TO VOTE LAST MONTH IN BRUSSELS WITH THE MAJORITY FOR A DIRECTIVE STATING THAT, INSTEAD OF A PRECISE QUOTA, EUROPE'S PARTNERS SHOULD SCREEN PROGRAMS OF EUROPEAN ORIGIN "WHERE PRACTIBLE." THE EC PARLIAMENT IN STRASBOURG MUST VOTE THE DIRECTIVE INTO LAW.

DEFENDERS OF A QUOTA MAINTAIN THAT WITHOUT RESTRICTIONS EUROPEAN TELEVISION WILL BE FLOODED WITH CHEAP AMERICAN AND JAPANESE RERUNS AND THAT NATIVE PRODUCTION WILL DECLINE.

OF THE EUROPEAN PARTNERS, FRANCE'S PROTEST TO THE EC DIRECTIVE HAS BEEN THE MOST VOCAL. BRITAIN, WITH THE BEST TELEVISION IN THE WORLD, AND WITH HIGH EXPORT FIGURES FOR PROGRAM SALES (BBC ENTERPRISES SOLD OVER 12,000 HOURS OF VIEWING TIME TO SOME HUNDRED COUNTRIES IN 1988) HAS STOOD ALOOF FROM THE PROTEST.

"FRENCH TELEVISION IS INCREDIBLY DULL, AND I CAN QUITE SEE WHY THEY ARE NERVOUS," SAID GAY ROBERTSON, WHO PURCHASES PROGRAMS FOR BBC-2. SHE HAS BOUGHT SEVERAL GERMAN TV FEATURES AND VERY FEW FRENCH. THE FRENCH ATTRIBUTE THE SUCCESS OF BRITISH TELEVISION TO A WIDE ENGLISH-SPEAKING MARKET AND TO A VOLUNTARY QUOTA ON FOREIGN PROGRAMS OF 14 TO 15 PERCENT.

"ENGLISH TELEVISION IS 85-PERCENT INDIGENOUS PROGRAMS AND PEOPLE PRAISE IT AS GOOD TELEVISION. IF WE COULD HAVE THE SAME PROTECTION, FINE," SAID THE DIRECTOR BERTRAND TAVERNIER, WHOSE DOCUMENTARY ON LYON IS ONE OF THE FEW FRENCH PROGRAMS ROBERTSON HAS BOUGHT.

FRENCH PROTESTS AGAINST THE EC DIRECTIVE HAVE CUT ACROSS PARTY LINES: A GAULLIST SENATOR SPOKE OF "CULTURAL SUICIDE" WHILE JACK RALITE, A COMMUNIST MINISTER DURING FRANCOIS MITTERRAND'S FIRST PRESIDENTIAL TERM, IS AN ORGANIZER OF THE CULTURE TRAIN.

ANOTHER PROTESTER WARNED OF "A CULTURAL MUNICH" AND IN AN OPEN LETTER TO PRESIDENT MITTERRAND, SIGNED BY 500

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PERSONALITIES INCLUDING JEAN-PAUL BELMONDO, GERARD DEPARDIEU, EUGENE IONESCO AND LOUIS MALLE, THE EC DIRECTIVE WAS DESCRIBED AS "AN OPEN DOOR TO THE COLONIZATION OF EUROPEAN TELEVISION BY PRODUCTIONS FROM OTHER CONTINENTS."

CRESSON, ARGUING THAT FRANCE HAD TO YIELD ON ITS ORIGINAL CALL FOR A 60-PERCENT EUROPEAN QUOTA, HAS CALLED THE

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PROTESTERS PROTECTIONIST. "EDITH CRESSON IS AN INCOMPETENT IMBECILE AND YOU CAN QUOTE ME ON THAT," CARRIERE SAID.

THE PRESENT FRENCH QUOTA, WHICH WILL DISAPPEAR IF THE DIRECTIVE BECOMES LAW, REQUIRES THAT 60 PERCENT OF TELEVISION PROGRAMS BE EUROPEAN IN ORIGIN AND THAT 50 PERCENT OF THAT BE FRENCH. GIVEN THE POOR QUALITY OF PRESENT-DAY FRENCH TELEVISION, A QUOTA WOULD NOT SEEM A GUARANTEE OF HIGH STANDARDS.

"A QUOTA IS LIKE AFFIRMATIVE ACTION FOR WOMEN OR BLACKS," SAID MARCEL OPHULS, DIRECTOR OF "THE SORROW AND THE PITY" AND OF THE OSCAR-WINNING "HOTEL TERMINUS: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF KLAUS BARBIE," AND A SIGNER OF THE OPEN LETTER. "IT'S SOMETHING YOU GO TO AS A LAST RESORT - NOT BECAUSE YOU THINK IT'S A BEAUTIFUL THING BUT BECAUSE SOMETIMES THE LAWS OF THE JUNGLE HAVE TO BE CORRECTED."

IF FRENCH TELEVISION IS NOT EASILY DEFENDED ON THE GROUNDS OF QUALITY, PROTESTERS ARGUE THAT WITHOUT RESTRICTIONS IT WILL BE EVEN WORSE.

"IN FIVE YEARS, TODAY'S TELEVISION WILL SEEM MARVELOUS," CARRIERE SAID.

"NOWHERE IN THE WORLD CAN YOU SAY THERE IS REALLY GOOD TELEVISION, THERE IS TELEVISION THAT DOES GOOD THINGS," SAID TAVERNIER.

"FRENCH TELEVISION IS REALLY TERRIBLE," LOUIS MALLE SAID, "BUT IF THERE WERE NO QUOTA IT WOULD BE EVEN WORSE BECAUSE THERE WOULD BE NO LOCAL PRODUCTION AT ALL AND IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO GET OUR FILMS ON TV."

MUCH OF THE ARGUMENT IN FAVOR OF KEEPING OUT FOREIGN PRODUCTIONS SEEMS TO BE BASED LESS ON DEFENDING THE QUALITY OF FRENCH TELEVISION THAN ON SAFEGUARDING THE FUTURE OF THE FRENCH FILM INDUSTRY, WHICH IS CLOSELY TIED TO TELEVISION WITH, IT IS MAINTAINED, ALMOST ALL FEATURE FILMS AT PRESENT RECEIVING AT LEAST PART OF THEIR FUNDING FROM TELEVISION.

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THE PROTESTERS SAY UNRESTRICTED CHEAP IMPORTS WOULD PUT AN END NOT ONLY TO FRENCH TELEVISION BUT TO FRENCH CINEMA AS WELL.

"THE PROBLEM IS VERY SIMPLE: DOES ONE OR DOES ONE NOT WANT FRENCH FILM TO CONTINUE?" CARRIERE SAID. "IN FIVE YEARS FRENCH CINEMA WILL FALL FROM 125 FEATURE FILMS A YEAR TO LESS THAN 30.

"THE GOVERNMENT HAS SHOWN THAT THEY CONSIDER FRENCH TELEVISION AND CINEMA SECONDARY. MAYBE WE ARE SECONDARY - WE DON'T CLAIM TO BE ESSENTIAL TO THE COUNTRY'S SURVIVAL - BUT WE HAVE BEEN CONDEMNED TO DEATH, BETRAYED, STABBED IN THE BACK."

"THE SITUATION IS TERRIBLE, TERRIBLE, TERRIBLE," SAID TAVERNIER. "THERE WILL BE A DICTATORSHIP OF DISTRIBUTORS. NOT PRODUCERS WHO MAKE FILMS, BUT DISTRIBUTORS. DISTRIBUTORS STOCK UP ON PRODUCT AND SELL IT LIKE BARS SELL DRINKS. WE ARE NOT FOR THE MOST PART PEOPLE WHO SUPPORT A QUOTA SYSTEM, BUT IF YOU GIVE DISTRIBUTORS FREE REIN THERE WILL BE ONLY ONE SORT OF TV.

"THE NEW CABLES WILL DROWN US IN AMERICAN PRODUCT. FOR ME THAT IS NOT EUROPE. EUROPE MEANS REAL CO-PRODUCTIONS BETWEEN MEMBER COUNTRIES, NOT FREEING AMERICAN COMPANIES TO BROADCAST 25,000 HOURS OF THEIR PRODUCT. FOR ME THE IDEA OF EUROPE IS TO BUILD AND PRESERVE THE INDIVIDUALITY OF EACH COUNTRY WHILE OFFERING THE FINANCIAL MEANS TO MAKE NEW WORKS MORE EASILY."

"FRENCH TELEVISION AND MOVIES, AND ALL EUROPEAN TELEVISION AND MOTION PICTURES, NEED PROTECTION. OTHER INDUSTRIES GET IT," OPHULS SAID.

NEITHER TAVERNIER, ONE OF FRANCE'S TOP EXPERTS ON AMERICAN FILM HISTORY, NOR OPHULS, WHO CARRIES AN AMERICAN PASSPORT, COULD BE CONSIDERED ANTI-AMERICAN: THEY FEEL THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT HAS LET FRANCE DOWN.

"PEOPLE SHOULD BE ABLE TO BUY JAPANESE CARS IF THEY WANT TO, THEY SHOULD BE ABLE TO BUY HONG KONG SHIRTS," OPHULS SAID. "BUT TELEVISION AND MOVIES HAVE TO DO WITH LANGUAGE AND CULTURE AND LANDSCAPE - CREATIVITY. NONE OF US IS DEFENDING

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FRENCH TELEVISION, IT'S ABOMINABLE. BUT WE DON'T WANT TO DEFEND GERALDO RIVERA EITHER, DO WE?"

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THE PROSPECT OF NATIVE SKILLS NOT FINDING EMPLOYMENT AND OF  
ENDLESS PACKAGED SITCOMS IS UNBEARABLE TO TAVERNIER,  
WHATEVER THE WEAKNESSES OF FRENCH TELEVISION:

"THERE IS AN OLD SAYING: IT'S NOT BECAUSE YOUR HORSE IS  
ONE-EYED THAT YOU SHOULD MAKE IT BLIND. FRENCH TELEVISION  
IS ONE-EYED, BUT WHAT THEY ARE PROPOSING IS A TELEVISION  
THAT IS BLIND." END TEXT LISSFELT

ADMIN  
END OF MESSAGE

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