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DOCUMENT ID: 31114966
INQNO: DOC6D 00685171
DOCNO: TEL 012898 87
PRODUCER: VIENNA
SOURCE: STATE
DOCTYPE: IN
DOR: 19870912
TOR: 041435
DOCPREC: R
ORIGDATE: 198709111601
MHFNO: 87 6119810
DOCCLASS: C
CAVEATS: FOUO

NAZI WAR CRIMES DISCLOSURE ACT
2000

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STU2636
RR RUEHC
DE RUFHVI #2898/01 2541603
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 111601Z SEP 87
FM AMEMBASSY VIENNA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 6313
INFO RUEBWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC
RUFHOL/AMEMBASSY BONN 6682
RUFHRN/AMEMBASSY BERN 5258
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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE VIENNA 12898

JUSTICE FOR KORTEN AND SHER

USVIENNA FOR UNVIE

E.O. 12356: N/A

TEXT
TAGS: PGOV, PREL, AU
SUBJECT: WALDHEIM HISTORIAN COMMISSION

1. (LOU) SUMMARY: THE WALDHEIM HISTORIAN COMMISSION,
HAS BEEN APPOINTED BY THE CABINET AND IS NOW IN PROGRESS.
FROM THE FOREIGN MINISTRY'S POINT OF VIEW, THE HISTORIAN
COMMISSION IS GUIDED BY A SET OF UNDERSTANDINGS WHICH IT

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BELIEVES WILL EXONERATE WALDHEIM OF "WAR CRIMES." HOWEVER, IT HAS BECOME CLEAR THAT FM MOCK AND HIS MANDATE WILL NOT GOVERN THE HISTORIANS' INVESTIGATION. INDEED, THE HISTORIANS ARE LIKELY TO EXAMINE NOT ONLY THE ISSUE OF WAR CRIMES BUT WALDHEIM'S HONESTY AND PERHAPS LESSER PARTICIPATION IN WORLD WAR II EVENTS. FURTHERMORE, THE HISTORIANS ARE NOT AN INTEGRATED WHOLE. NATIONAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL DIFFERENCES MAY WELL DIVIDE THE HISTORIANS FROM EACH OTHER, AS WELL AS FROM THE GOA. IN SHORT, THE HISTORIAN COMMISSION IS A LOOSE CANNON, AND ITS AIM AND TRAJECTORY MAY WELL NOT PLEASE THE AUSTRIAN GOVERNMENT. END SUMMARY.

2. (U) THE SIX-MEMBER WALDHEIM HISTORIAN COMMISSION CONCLUDED ITS FIRST SERIES OF MEETINGS ON SEPT. 4. ORGANIZATIONAL QUESTIONS, THE COMMISSION'S AGENDA, AS WELL AS LISTS OF WITNESSES - REPORTEDLY ALSO INCLUDING WJC REPRESENTATIVES - WERE THE MAIN TOPICS IN THESE FIRST SESSIONS. THE COMMISSION IS EXPECTED TO CONCLUDE ITS INVESTIGATIONS IN THREE MONTHS, AND TO REPORT ITS FINDINGS TO THE GOA. CRITICISM HAS ALREADY BEEN VOICED CONCERNING THE GOA'S FINANCING OF THE COMMISSION, AS WELL AS REGARDING ITS COMPOSITION AND ALLEGED INVOLVEMENT OF THE MFA IN THE SELECTION PROCESS. IN FIRST STATEMENTS, THE COMMISSION MEMBERS HAVE INDICATED THAT THEY EXPECTED THEIR FINDINGS TO BE NEITHER UNDISPUTED NOR INSTRUMENTAL IN CHANGING INTERNATIONAL OPINION ON WALDHEIM.

3. (U) ESTABLISHMENT OF THE COMMISSION:
ACCORDING TO HIS PRESS SPOKESMAN, PRESIDENT WALDHEIM, IN A LETTER ON MAY 7, 1987, HAD ASKED THE GOA, WHICH HAD AGREED, TO ESTABLISH THE COMMISSION WITH A MANDATE TO "EXAMINE AND EVALUATE THE DOCUMENTS RELATED TO CHARGES MADE AGAINST PRESIDENT WALDHEIM. THE COMMISSION SHALL EXAMINE IF IT FINDS **KURT WALDHEIM** PERSONALLY GUILTY IN HIS WARTIME ACTIVITIES. IT SHOULD, IN A CONFIDENTIAL PROCEDURE, ON THE BASIS OF DOCUMENTS IT HAS COLLECTED OR WHICH IT HAS OBTAINED, DETERMINE AND EVALUATE THE RESPECTIVE FINDINGS." THE GOA IS CARRYING THE COSTS OF THE COMMISSION, WHICH ARE ESTIMATED AT SOME US DOLLARS 118,500.

4. (U) COMMISSION MEMBERS:
IN JUNE, THE SWISS MILITARY HISTORIAN HANS-RUDOLF KURZ WAS NOMINATED BY THE GOA AS CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMISSION. FM MOCK ATTRIBUTED HIS CHOICE TO KURZ'S "INTERNATIONALLY ACKNOWLEDGED EXPERTISE" AND HIS "PERSONAL INTEGRITY". KURZ THEN SELECTED THE FIVE OTHER MEMBERS:
- RETIRED U.S. GENERAL JAMES COLLINS;
- ISRAELI MILITARY HISTORIAN JEHUDA WALLACH;
- BRITISH PROFESSOR FOR MILITARY SCIENCE GERALD FLEMING;
- GERMAN MILITARY HISTORIAN MANFRED MESSERSCHMIDT;
- AND BELGIAN MILITARY HISTORIAN JEAN VANWELKENHUYZEN.

5. (U) COMMISSION MEMBER STATEMENTS:
IN FIRST STATEMENTS LAST WEEK, THE COMMISSION MEMBERS STRESSED THEIR COMMITMENT TO OBJECTIVE AND INDEPENDENT

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CLARIFICATION OF WALDHEIM'S WARTIME ACTIVITIES. THEY ALSO INDICATED, HOWEVER, THAT, WHATEVER THE OUTCOME OF THEIR INVESTIGATIONS, INTERNATIONAL OPINION ON WALDHEIM WAS UNLIKELY TO CHANGE. GERMAN COMMISSION MEMBER MESSERSCHMIDT ALSO NOTED THAT HE PERSONALLY WANTED TO GO BEYOND THE COMMISSION'S TASK IN TRYING TO DETERMINE "WHAT WALDHEIM KNEW, AND WHAT HIS INFLUENCE WAS".

6. (U) IN A SEPT. 4 RADIO INTERVIEW, FOLLOWING THE CONCLUSION OF THE COMMISSION'S FIRST SESSIONS, CHAIRMAN
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KURZ MADE AN APPEAL TO "ANY INSTITUTION OR PERSON" TO PROVIDE DOCUMENTARY MATERIAL WHICH COULD BE OF HELP IN CLARIFYING THE WALDHEIM CASE. KURZ ALSO SAID THAT COMMISSION MEMBER COLLINS WOULD ATTEMPT TO OBTAIN FURTHER MATERIAL FROM THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES IN WASHINGTON. THE COMMISSION WOULD ALSO TRY TO OBTAIN ALLEGED CIA FILES ON WALDHEIM WHICH WERE MENTIONED IN A SEPT. 4 PRESS REPORT, KURZ NOTED. HE ANNOUNCED THE NEXT COMMISSION MEETING FOR THE END OF OCTOBER.

7. (LOU) COMMENT: THE COMMISSION'S PROCEEDINGS WILL DO LITTLE TO MOVE THE WALDHEIM DEBATE TO SOME CONCLUSION. FOR AUSTRIA, THE HISTORIANS WILL OFFER LITTLE ULTIMATE JOY. WALDHEIM MAY BE DECLARED INNOCENT OF "WAR CRIMES," BUT IT IS UNLIKELY THAT THE COMMISSION WILL EXONERATE HIM FOR LYING AND FOR SOME FORM OF PARTICIPATION IN ACTS OF PERSECUTION. SIMILARLY, THE U.S. CANNOT HOPE TO GAIN ANY ADVANTAGE FROM THE COMMISSION'S PROCEEDINGS. ITS FINDINGS WILL STILL LEAVE THE CENTRAL ETHICAL QUESTIONS, AND THE QUESTION OF WALDHEIM'S COMPLICITY IN PERSECUTION, AMBIGUOUS AND UNRESOLVED. FOR THOSE FEW WHO UNDERSTAND THE BASIS FOR THE U.S. DECISION ON WALDHEIM THIS MAY SUFFICE. BUT FOR THE VAST AUSTRIAN MAJORITY WHO SEE THE U.S. DECISION AS A JUDGMENT ON "WAR CRIMES," AN ACT OF INJUSTICE WITHOUT DUE PROCESS AND A PUSILLANIMOUS CAVING TO JEWISH PRESSURE--THE COMMISSION'S FINDING WILL LEAVE UNTOUCHED THE EROSION OF U.S. STANDING IN AUSTRIA AND CREDIBILITY ON THIS ISSUE. HABIB

ADMIN
END OF MESSAGE

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