

UNCLASSIFIED

DOCUMENT ID: 21502639
INQNO: DOC2D 00440179
DOCNO: TEL 003776 86
PRODUCER: VIENNA
SOURCE: STATE
DOCTYPE: IN
DOR: 19860314
TOR: 073327
DOCPREC: R
ORIGDATE: 198603111620
MHFNO: 86 0214243
DOCCLASS: U

HEADER
RR RUEAIIB
ZNR UUUUU ZOC STATE ZZH
UTS8458
RR RUEHC
DE RUEHVI #3776/01 0701623
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 111620Z MAR 86
FM AMEMBASSY VIENNA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3086
BT

CONTROLS
UNCLAS VIENNA 03776

E.O. 12356: N/S

TEXT
TAGS: PGOV, AU
SUBJECT: AUSTRIAN EDITORIAL COMMENT ON WALDHEIM
- ALLEGATIONS

REF: VIENNA 3435
-

1. SUMMARY AND COMMENT: THE "AFFAIR" WALDHEIM -- THE
POSITION OF WALDHEIM'S WARTIME BEHAVIOR AND HIS SUBSE-
QUENT REACTION TO ALLEGATIONS OF A NAZI PAST -- CONTINUES
TO GRIP THE AUSTRIAN PRESS AND PUBLIC. WE ARE PRE-
SENTING BELOW A CROSS-SECTION OF EDITORIAL COMMENT TO
GIVE WASHINGTON THE FLAVOR OF THE PRESS POSITION AT THIS
TIME. INCREASINGLY, PUBLIC OPINION HERE SEEMS TO BE
SWINGING IN WALDHEIM'S FAVOR. THE ISSUE IN AUSTRIA
APPEARS TO BE LESS A QUESTION OF WALDHEIM'S WARTIME
PAST AND MORE A QUESTION OF HIS CREDIBILITY AND PER-
FORMANCE TODAY IN FACING PRESS ALLEGATIONS. WALDHEIM
SEEMS TO HAVE GAINED CONFIDENCE IN MANAGING THE PRESS
CHARGES AND, GIVEN HIS INCREASINGLY CREDIBLE PERFORMANCE
AND THE PUBLIC SYMPATHY WHICH THE CHARGES AGAINST
WALDHEIM HAVE INSPIRED, POLLS ARE INDICATING MOUNTING
SUPPORT FOR HIM, AT LEAST FOR THE MOMENT. THE TONE OF
THE PRESS COMMENTARY, EXCEPT FOR THE COMMUNIST PAPER
"VOLKSSTIMME" WHICH TAKES THE POSITION OF "A PLAGUE
ON BOTH THE MAJOR PARTIES' HOUSES," SUGGESTS AN

DECLASSIFIED AND RELEASED BY
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
SOURCES METHODS EXEMPTION 9B2B
NAZI WAR CRIMES DISCLOSURE ACT
DATE 2001 2007

NAZI WAR CRIMES DISCLOSURE ACT
2000

CIA HAS NO OBJECTION TO
DECLASSIFICATION AND/OR
RELEASE OF CIA INFORMATION
IN THIS DOCUMENT

UNCLASSIFIED

INCREASING DEFENSIVENESS ON THE PART OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY AFFILIATED NEWSPAPERS. END SUMMARY AND COMMENT.

-
2. UPPER AUSTRIA'S LEADING DAILY "OBEROESTERREICHISCHE NACHRICHTEN" OF MARCH 10 GIVES PERHAPS THE BEST SUMMATION OF THE CURRENT STATE OF THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN WHEN IT ASSERTS THAT "NOBODY CAN SAY YET WHAT THE FINAL DECISION OF THE VOTERS WILL BE." REGARDING THE DEBATE ON **KURT WALDHEIM'S** PAST, THE PAPER SAYS THAT NONE OF THE CHARGES AGAINST HIM HAS YET BEEN PROVED AND EVERYBODY CAN STILL BELIEVE WHAT HE WANTS. ON THE BASIS OF OPINION POLLS, THE PAPER SURMISES THAT THE PUBLIC DEBATE HAS PUSHED THE MAJOR PART OF THE UNDECIDED VOTERS IN WALDHEIM'S DIRECTION AND CITES AS POSSIBLE MOTIVES THE AUSTRIANS' DISTASTE FOR DISCUSSING THE PAST AND A CERTAIN COMPASSION FOR THE CANDIDATE.

-
3. CATHOLIC "KLEINE ZEITUNG" OF MARCH 10, THE PAPER WITH THE WIDEST CIRCULATION IN SOUTHERN AUSTRIA, COMMENTS THAT WALDHEIM'S HIGHLY EMOTIONAL AND AGGRESSIVE REJECTION OF THE CHARGES AGAINST HIM IN HIS TV APPEARANCE NETTED HIM MUCH SYMPATHY, SINCE IT IS STILL ONE OF THE BASIC TENETS OF AUSTRIA'S WAY OF LIFE TO LET THE PAST FINALLY REST. WITH A HIGH DEGREE OF PERSONAL CREDIBILITY WALDHEIM HAS STRUCK THIS VERY NOTE, THE PAPER ASSERTS, AND IT SUSPECTS THAT THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION MIGHT ALREADY HAVE BEEN DECIDED IN WALDHEIM'S FAVOR.

-
4. ON MARCH 8, AUSTRIA'S MOST PRESTIGIOUS PROVINCIAL DAILY, "THE SALZBURGER NACHRICHTEN," TAKES A MORE CAUTIOUS STAND, SAYING THAT WHAT HAS SO FAR BEEN UNEARTHED REGARDING WALDHEIM'S PAST DOES NOT MAKE HIM UNFIT FOR THE OFFICE OF PRESIDENT. BUT THE PAPER SQUARELY CRITICIZES HIM FOR CLUMSINESS IN THE HANDLING OF HIS BIOGRAPHY AND FOR AWKWARD BEHAVIOR IN HIS INTERVIEW WITH "THE NEW YORK TIMES." THE PAPER WINDS UP: "IT IS ABOUT TIME THAT WALDHEIM PUT A CLEARLY WORDED EXPLANATION ON THE TABLE SO THAT THIS HORRID PHASE OF THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN CAN BE BROUGHT TO A CLOSE."

-
5. INDEPENDENT MASS-CIRCULATION "KRONEN-ZEITUNG" OF MARCH 6 ECHOES WIDESPREAD FEELINGS THAT THE SURFACING OF THE WALDHEIM STORY IN AUSTRIAN AND INTERNATIONAL MEDIA TWO MONTHS BEFORE THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION WAS NO MERE ACCIDENT. THE PAPER SEES THE ORIGIN OF THE ANTI-WALDHEIM CAMPAIGN IN "CERTAIN AUSTRIAN QUARTERS." IT ADDS THAT WHOEVER INITIATED THIS PLOT, THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT IT CAUSES MORE HARM TO AUSTRIA THAN THE WINE SCANDAL OR THE FRISCHENSCHLAGER-REDER AFFAIR. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE PAPER SAYS, WALDHEIM COULD HAVE AVOIDED BEING PUSHED INTO THE DEFENSIVE IF HE HAD CLEARED UP EVERYTHING IN TIME.

-
6. IN A LATER COMMENT AFTER WALDHEIM WAS GRILLED BY JOURNALISTS IN A TELEVISION PRESS HOUR, "KRONEN-ZEITUNG"

UNCLASSIFIED

OF MARCH 10 PLEADS FOR A RETURN TO THE REAL ISSUES IN THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN. IT ASKS, "WHAT IS REALLY TO BE JUDGED IN THE COMING ELECTIONS - THE ACTIVITIES OF A GERMAN ARMY GROUP AND THE STATUS OF A STORMTROOPER CAVALRY SQUAD OR WHO IS THE BEST MAN FOR THE HIGHEST OFFICE OF THE NATION?" IT IS TIME TO START TALKING AGAIN ABOUT THINGS THAT REALLY MATTER, THE PAPER FINDS, UNCLAS SECTION 02 OF 02 VIENNA 03776

E.O. 12356: N/S
TAGS: PGOV, AU
SUBJECT: AUSTRIAN EDITORIAL COMMENT ON WALDHEIM

AND TAKES A SIDESWIPE AT THE MEDIA FOR HAVING INFLATED A "NOTHING" INTO AN OVERSIZED BALLOON.

-
7. VIENNA'S SECOND MASS-CIRCULATION DAILY, "KURIER," OF MARCH 6 ARGUES THAT WALDHEIM HIMSELF IS TO BE BLAMED FOR HIS PREDICAMENT BECAUSE HE HAD COME OUT WITH THE FULL TRUTH ONLY AFTER BEING CONFRONTED WITH NEW DISCLOSURES. AND EVEN THEN, SOME SHRED OF UNCERTAINTY HAS REMAINED, THE PAPER NOTES DISAPPROVINGLY. HOWEVER, "KURIER" SUMS UP: "IF WALDHEIM SURVIVES THE CURRENT BARRAGE WITHOUT BEING CAUGHT IN A LIE, OR IF NO IRREFUTABLE EVIDENCE IS TURNED UP, HIS CHANCES OF BEING ELECTED WILL RISE CONSIDERABLY. BUT IF IT TURNS OUT THAT HE CONSCIOUSLY LIED, HE WILL BE IN BAD SHAPE."

-
8. SOCIALIST AZ OF MARCH 10 TURNS AGAINST THE PEOPLE'S PARTY'S AND WALDHEIM'S CLAIM OF A "STEERED CAMPAIGN" AGAINST HIM, ARGUING THAT THE BIOGRAPHY OF A CANDIDATE FOR THE HIGHEST OFFICE IS NOT A PRIVATE MATTER AND QUESTIONS REGARDING DETAILS COULD THEREFORE NOT BE DENOUNCED AS A DEFAMATION CAMPAIGN. THE DAMAGE FOR AUSTRIA WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY BE GREATER IF SUCH QUESTIONS WERE PUT TO A PRESIDENT ALREADY IN OFFICE, THE PAPER OBSERVES. IN AN EARLIER COMMENT OF MARCH 6, AZ FOLLOWED THE SAME LINE, SAYING NOBODY WANTS TO IMPUTE TO WALDHEIM PARTICIPATION IN WAR CRIMES OR TO DEPICT HIM AS A SUPER-NAZI, BUT IF HIS PAST GETS TALKED ABOUT, THE PEOPLE HAVE A RIGHT TO BE FULLY INFORMED.

-
9. VIENNA'S RESPECTED INDEPENDENT "DIE PRESSE" OF MARCH 5 SPARES WALDHEIM AND STEYRER CRITICISM WHILE SCORING THE STAFFS OF THE TWO CANDIDATES FOR SYSTEMATICALLY TRYING TO "DO IN" THE OPPONENT. THE ANTI-WALDHEIM REVELATIONS ARE SEEN BY THE PAPER AS PART OF THIS MUDSLINGING PATTERN OF ELECTIONEERING. IN A COMMENT IN ITS MARCH 10 ISSUE, THE PAPER QUESTIONS THE CLAIM OF SOCIALIST SPOKESMEN THAT THE SPO IS ACTING WITH RESTRAINT IN THE WALDHEIM CASE AND POINTS TO THE COVERAGE IN SOCIALIST PARTY ORGAN AZ WHICH WAS "BOTH GLOATING AND UNCRITICAL."

-
10. REACTING TO THE FIRST DISCLOSURES ON HIS ALLEGED MEMBERSHIP IN NAZI ORGANIZATIONS, COMMUNIST DAILY

UNCLASSIFIED

"VOLKSSTIMME" OF MARCH 4 SAID THE LEAST THAT WALDHEIM CAN BE CHARGED WITH IS THAT HE MANAGED TO COME TO TERMS WITH A REGIME WHICH COVERED EUROPE WITH WAR AND MURDERED MILLIONS OF PEOPLE. THE PAPER MOCKS SOCIALIST APPEALS TO WALDHEIM TO MAKE HIS ATTITUDE TOWARD FASCISM UNMISTAKABLY CLEAR, AND ASKS WHERE THE ANTI-FASCISM OF SPO LEADERS WAS WHEN THEY CONSIDERED SUPPORTING FORMER SS MEMBER FRIEDRICH PETER AS CANDIDATE FOR THE VICE PRESIDENCY OF PARLIAMENT AND WHEN THEY BACKED FRISSHEESCHLAGER AFTER HIS HANDSHAKE WITH REDER. IN ITS MARCH 6 ISSUE, THE COMMUNIST PARTY ORGAN ONCE MORE HARPS ON THE LEGITIMACY OF SOCIALIST CRITICISM OF WALDHEIM, BUT IT ALSO POINTS TO WALDHEIM'S "OBVIOUS PLIABILITY," BOTH IN THE NAZI ERA AND IN HIS LATER DIPLOMATIC CAREER, AS MAKING HIM UNFIT FOR THE HIGHEST OFFICE IN THE NATION. BLOCH

END OF MESSAGE

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

Page 4