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TEXT
TAGS: PGOV, GE
SUBJECT: KOHL SUPPORTS WALDHEIM IN AUSTRIAN ELECTION
CAMPAIGN

- CONFIDENTIAL - ENTIRE TEXT.
- SUMMARY: IN AN INTERVIEW WITH AUSTRIAN RADIO LAST WEEKEND, CHANCELLOR HELMUT KOHL OPENLY CAME OUT IN SUPPORT OF **KURT WALDHEIM**, THE AUSTRIAN PEOPLE'S PARTY CANDIDATE IN THE MAY 4 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS. KOHL DEFENDED WALDHEIM AGAINST ATTACKS MADE IN CONNECTION WITH HIS CONTROVERSIAL ROLE AS WEHRMACHT OFFICER IN THE BALKAN DURING WW II. KOHL'S UNUSUALLY BLUNT REMARKS, VOICED IN THE FINAL PHASE OF AN EXTREMELY DIVISIVE FOREIGN ELECTION CAMPAIGN, HAVE PREDICTABLY COME UNDER ATTACK FROM THE SPD AND GREENS. END SUMMARY.
- KOHL MET WITH WALDHEIM IN SALZBURG ON APRIL 26, WHERE THE CHANCELLOR HAD GIVEN A SPEECH BEFORE THE "GERMAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE IN AUSTRIA." REFERRING TO THE ONGOING CONTROVERSY ABOUT WALDHEIM'S CANDIDACY IN THE AUSTRIAN

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PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS, KOHL MADE THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT IN A SUBSEQUENT INTERVIEW WITH AUSTRIAN RADIO: "I AM NOT IN A POSITION TO VOTE HERE, BUT I WOULD LIKE TO SAY QUITE FRANKLY THAT, IF I WERE ELIGIBLE TO VOTE IN AUSTRIA, I WOULD KNOW WHOM TO VOTE FOR."

4. STRESSING THAT IT WAS NOT HIS "INTENTION AND TASK" TO INTERFERE IN THE AUSTRIAN ELECTION CAMPAIGN, KOHL SAID THAT HE WAS "TAKEN ABACK AT THE ACCUSATIONS AND THE MALICIOUSNESS" DIRECTED AGAINST WALDHEIM, WHOM HE CALLED AN "OLD PERSONAL FRIEND" AND A "GREAT PATRIOT." KOHL REFERRED TO WALDHEIM AS "A MAN WHO BELONGS TO A GENERATION WHICH HAS LIVED THROUGH AND SUFFERED THROUGH THE UPS AND DOWNS OF THIS CENTURY AND COMMON GERMAN-AUSTRIAN HISTORY."

5. WHILE WE ARE AWARE THAT KOHL'S REMARKS ON WALDHEIM HAVE BEEN SEVERELY CRITICIZED IN AUSTRIA AND ISRAEL, WHERE, ACCORDING TO PRESS SUPPORTS, SEVERAL POLITICIANS REGRETTED KOHL'S INTERFERENCE IN AUSTRIAN INTERNAL AFFAIRS AND HIS LACK OF HISTORICAL SENSITIVITY, THE REMARKS HAVE PREDICTABLY ALSO COME UNDER ATTACK IN THE FRG. SPD PARTY SPOKESMAN WOLFGANG CLEMENT QUOTED THE ROMAN PHILOSOPHER AND STATESMAN ANICIUS BOETHIUS TO CRITICIZE KOHL: "O SI TACUISSES PHILOSOPHUS MANSISSES" - ("IF YOU HAD KEPT SILENT YOU WOULD HAVE REMAINED A PHILOSOPHER"). IF KOHL HAD KEPT SILENT, CLEMENT SAID, KOHL WOULD HAVE DONE "A GOOD SERVICE TO COMMON GERMAN AND AUSTRIAN HISTORY, AND ABOVE ALL TO TODAY'S INTERESTS OF BOTH COUNTRIES." FORMER GREENS BUNDESTAG DEPUTY ANTJE VOLLMER COMMENTED KOHL'S REMARKS WITH THE WORDS "GOD PROTECT AUSTRIA FROM THIS WORLDWIDE CLIQUE OF OLD COMRADES AND BRAVE PATRIOTS."

6. COMMENT: AT FIRST GLANCE IT IS DIFFICULT TO FIGURE OUT WHY, AS THE GERMAN CHANCELLOR, KOHL CHOSE TO GO PUBLIC WITH HIS PERSONAL SUPPORT FOR WALDHEIM ON AN ISSUE OF SUCH SENSITIVITY BOTH IN THE FRG AND INTERNATIONALLY. BUT KOHL CERTAINLY REMEMBERS LAST YEAR'S BITBURG EXPERIENCE, WHERE LARGE PARTS OF GERMAN PUBLIC OPINION EXPRESSED IRRITATION WITH THE BASHING OF THE WEHRMACHT IN THE FOREIGN MEDIA. PERHAPS HE FIGURES THAT THE ATTACKS ON WALDHEIM HAVE STRUCK A SIMILAR CHORD.

BURT

END OF MESSAGE

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