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TEXT

TAGS: PGOV, PREL, AU
SUBJECT: WALDHEIM CASE CONTINUES TO DRAW SIGNIFICANT
PRESS COVERAGE

1. INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY:

THE JUNE 28-29 WEEKEND PRESS DEVOTED SUBSTANTIAL
ATTENTION TO AMB. LAUDER'S PLANNED ABSENCE FROM
WALDHEIM'S INAUGURATION, U.S.-AUSTRIAN RELATIONS AND
THE "WALDHEIM AFFAIR" IN GENERAL. THE CONSERVATIVE PRESS
CONTINUED CRITICIZING LAUDER'S DECISION, BUT ALSO

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INCLUDED CALLS FOR AUSTRIAN GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO IMPROVE AUSTRIA'S IMAGE ABROAD. SOME NEWS ARTICLES URGED WALDHEIM AND THE PEOPLE'S PARTY (OVP) TO SEEK RECONCILIATION WITH AUSTRIA'S JEWISH COMMUNITY. A PROMINENT CONSERVATIVE EDITORIALIST CRITICIZED THE SOCIALISTS FOR REFUSING TO ACCEPT WALDHEIM'S ELECTION AND DEPLORED THE PRESENT BREAKDOWN IN AUSTRIA'S CONSENSUS POLITICS. END INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY.

2. LAUDER'S ABSENCE FROM THE WALDHEIM INAUGURATION: IN AN EDITORIAL IN THE DAILY "KURIER" OF JUNE 28, FOREIGN POLICY EDITOR HEINZ NUSSBAUMER SHARPLY CRITICIZED AMB. LAUDER FOR REFUSING TO ATTEND WALDHEIM'S SWEARING-IN CEREMONY. NUSSBAUMER ATTRIBUTED LAUDER'S ABSENCE TO THE LATTER'S POLITICAL AMBITION TO BECOME GOVERNOR OF NEW YORK STATE. LAUDER'S CLAIM THAT "FAMILY COMMITMENTS" PREVENTED HIS ATTENDANCE REVEALED EITHER HOW LIGHTLY HE TAKES HIS DUTIES OR CONSTITUTED "A DEMONSTRATIVE SLAP IN THE FACE" FOR VIENNA. UNLESS SOMEONE SPOKE UP, WASHINGTON WOULD NOT PAY ATTENTION TO AN AMBASSADOR'S ACTIONS. IT REMAINED TO BE SEEN IF AUSTRIA WOULD DO THE PROMPTING AND FINALLY DEFEND ITSELF IN A DETERMINED MANNER. THE AUSTRIAN GOVERNMENT PERHAPS COULD REFUSE TO COOPERATE WITH LAUDER OR PROMINENT AUSTRIANS MIGHT BOYCOTT THE EMBASSY'S JULY 4 RECEPTION.

3. A NEWS ANALYSIS PIECE IN THE JUNE 28 EDITION OF THE SOCIALIST "ARBEITERZEITUNG" ATTRIBUTED AMB. LAUDER'S IMPENDING ABSENCE TO THE ALLEGATIONS AGAINST WALDHEIM CONCERNING HIS WARTIME PAST. WHATEVER HIS MOTIVES, LAUDER'S ABSENCE WAS NOT INTENDED AS AN AFFRONT AGAINST THE PARLIAMENT (THE SITE OF THE SWEARING-IN CEREMONY), IT WAS CONCLUDED.

4. U.S.-AUSTRIAN RELATIONS: AN EXTENSIVE BACKGROUND ARTICLE IN THE JUNE 28 CONSERVATIVE DAILY "DIE PRESSE" BY DEPUTY CHIEF EDITOR ENGELBERT WASHIETL NOTED THAT IN THE POST WAR PERIOD THERE HAS NOT BEEN SUCH A "CRISIS OF UNDERSTANDING" IN AUSTRIAN-U.S. RELATIONS AS THAT EXPERIENCED DURING THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN. AUSTRIA HAS NOW BEEN FORCED TO REALIZE THAT THE U.S. WOULD "AT BEST, RESPOND WITH AMBIGUOUS SILENCE" IN THE FACE OF HOSTILE U.S. PUBLIC OPINION AND OF AGGRESSIVE LOBBYING AGAINST A "WEAKER COUNTRY". WASHIETL ACCUSED THE U.S. OF CARELESSNESS IN ITS RELATIONS WITH ITS EUROPEAN FRIENDS. HE DEPLORED "THE PRESENT U.S. POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE" IN WHICH DOMESTIC POLITICAL INTERESTS ARE PURSUED WITHOUT REGARD TO ANYONE ELSE IN THE WORLD. THE GOA, ON THE OTHER HAND, SHOULD NOW WORK TOWARD COMBATTING AUSTRIA'S DISTORTED IMAGE AS AN "ANTISEMITIC COUNTRY" AND LEAD THE "PUBLIC RELATIONS BATTLE" INTO A MORE CONSTRUCTIVE PHASE. WASHIETL EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT THE PRESENT DIFFICULTIES MIGHT BRING ABOUT A MORE REALISTIC AND SOBER BASIS FOR AUSTRIAN-U.S. RELATIONS.

5. ANTI-SEMITISM AND AUSTRIA'S IMAGE:

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IN AN EDITORIAL IN THE JUNE 29 EDITION OF THE DAILY "KURIER", FORMER EDITOR-IN-CHIEF GERD LEITGEB CRITICIZED THE OVP AND WALDHEIM FOR "FANNING THE FLAMES" OF ANTI-SEMITISM AND ADVOCATED EFFORTS TOWARD RECONCILIATION WITH THE JEWISH MINORITY. LEITGEB ACCUSED BOTH THE WJC AND THE OVP OF OVERREACTING IN THE "WALDHEIM AFFAIR". ON THE ONE HAND, IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE TO DEMAND RECONCILIATION FROM THE JEWISH POPULATION, WHICH HAD BEEN THE VICTIM OF TORTURE AND ATROCITIES. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE WJC SHOULD NOT USE FALSE TESTIMONY AGAINST WALDHEIM IN CONDEMNING HIM AS A WAR CRIMINAL, EVEN IF UNCLAS SECTION 02 OF 02 VIENNA 09577

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HE HAD BEEN AN OPPORTUNISTIC FELLOW TRAVELLER. THE ARTICLE CONCLUDED WITH AN APPEAL TO THE OVP AND WALDHEIM CALLING FOR MORE HUMBLeness AND HUMANENESS. LEITGEB DECLARED THAT JULY 8, THE DAY OF WALDHEIM'S INAUGURATION, WOULD BE A GOOD TIME TO BEGIN MOVING IN THIS DIRECTION.

6. AUSTRIAN POLITICAL CLIMATE:

IN AN EDITORIAL IN THE JUNE 28 EDITION OF "DIE PRESSE", THOMAS CHORHERR, THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, DEPLORED THE SOCIALIST PARTY'S ATTITUDE TOWARD **KURT WALDHEIM**, REFLECTED IN A CASUAL COMMENT BY AN SPO MP, WHO CALLED WALDHEIM'S ELECTION "A DISGRACE FOR AUSTRIA". BY SUCH AN ATTITUDE, CHORHERR WARNED, THE SPO DELIBERATELY RENOUNCES THE BASIC AUSTRIAN CONSENSUS WHICH "WE ALL DESPERATELY NEED RIGHT NOW". THIS, CHORHERR ADDS, IS THE REAL SHAME FOR THE DEMOCRATIC CONSCIENCE OF THIS COUNTRY. BLOCH

END OF MESSAGE

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