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E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR

TEXT  
TAGS: PREL, PGOV, AU  
SUBJECT: WALDHEIM: THE AFFAIR GOES ON

1. (U) INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY: ALTHOUGH EDITORIALISTS OF AUSTRIA'S CONSERVATIVE PRESS HOPED THAT THE WALDHEIM CONTROVERSY MIGHT SUBSIDE FOLLOWING THE JULY 8 INAUGURATION, RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AT HOME AND TO A LESSER EXTENT ABROAD SUGGEST THE CONTRARY. PRESIDENT WALDHEIM SEEMS INTENT ON UNDERLINING HIS COMMITMENT TO BRIDGE PARTY DIVISIONS AT HOME AND SEEK RECONCILIATION

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WITH HIS DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN CRITICS, AT TIMES SPEAKING OUT STRONGLY AGAINST ANTI-SEMITISM. SOME LEADING SPO POLITICIANS, HOWEVER, CONTINUE TO WARN AGAINST WHAT THEY SEE AS A DANGEROUS "NEW SPIRIT" PERSONIFIED BY WALDHEIM. A FEW SOCIALIST MPS HAVE PUBLICLY ENDORSED THE SLOGAN "WALDHEIM IS NOT OUR PRESIDENT", WHICH HAS BEEN DISPLAYED ON BANNERS DURING TWO ANTI-WALDHEIM DEMONSTRATIONS ON JULY 7 AND 8. AMONG THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE DEMONSTRATIONS, WHICH, HOWEVER, ATTRACTED ONLY MODEST TURNOUTS, WERE LEADERS OF THE YOUNG SOCIALISTS AS WELL AS PROMINENT AUSTRIAN ARTISTS AND INTELLECTUALS. THE PROTESTERS WERE JOINED BY A RABBI AND A NUN FROM THE US AS WELL AS WEST GERMAN JOURNALIST AND WELL-KNOWN NAZI HUNTER BEATE KLARFELD. AUSTRIAN MEDIA REPORTED HIGHLY CRITICAL REACTION TO WALDHEIM'S INAUGURATION ORIGINATING FROM ISRAEL AND THE US. CONTINUING CONTROVERSY OVER A SPEECH VIENNA MAYOR ZILK GAVE IN NEW YORK RECENTLY THREATENED TO PROLONG PARTY ANIMOSITY OVER THE WALDHEIM AFFAIR. FINALLY, THE JULY 9 ANNOUNCEMENT BY AUSTRIAN EDUCATION MINISTER HERBERT MORIIZ THAT POLITICAL EDUCATION IN AUSTRIAN SCHOOLS WILL HAVE TO TO BE REEMPHASIZED IN VIEW OF RECENT EVENTS MIGHT FURTHER EXACERBATE TENSIONS. END SUMMARY AND INTRODUCTION.

2. (U) WALDHEIM PRESS CONFERENCE. IN HIS FIRST PRESS CONFERENCE JULY 9, NEWLY-INAUGURATED PRESIDENT **KURT WALDHEIM** BASICALLY REPEATED STATEMENTS HE MADE IN HIS JULY 8 INAUGURAL SPEECH. WALDHEIM SAID HE WAS DETERMINED TO STRIVE FOR CONSENSUS AND TRUST AMONG THE AUSTRIAN PEOPLE. THE FIRST PRIORITY WAS TO CALM THE POLITICAL SITUATION AT HOME AND ABROAD, WALDHEIM DECLARED. HE WAS GRATIFIED BY THE "CONCILIATORY WORDS" SPOKEN BY SPO FLOOR LEADER SEPP WILLE AND REJECTED THE IDEA THAT THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN HAD SPLIT AUSTRIANS INTO TWO CAMPS. WALDHEIM SAID HE WAS NOT THINKING OF MAKING ANY STATE VISITS ABROAD FOR THE TIME BEING. ASKED ABOUT AUSTRIA'S FOREIGN POLICY, WALDHEIM PRAISED AUSTRIAN FM PETER JANKOWITSCH AND ANNOUNCED PERSONAL EFFORTS TO CONTRIBUTE TO A "CREDIBLE" FOREIGN POLICY. WALDHEIM STRESSED HIS INTEREST IN GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE SIGNATORY POWERS OF THE AUSTRIAN STATE TREATY AS WELL AS WITH THE NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES. TO FOREIGN JOURNALISTS WALDHEIM ANNOUNCED HE WOULD DO EVERYTHING TO PREVENT THE REEMERGENCE OF ANTI-SEMITISM. WALDHEIM REFUSED TO COMMENT ON THE LATEST ALLEGATIONS BY THE WJC REGARDING HIS WARTIME ROLE.

3. (U) SPO LEADERSHIP WARNS AGAINST ADVENT OF "NEW SPIRIT": IN THE COURSE OF A BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION FOR WIDELY-RESPECTED FORMER AUSTRIAN RESISTANCE ACTIVIST ROSA JOCHMANN IN VIENNA JULY 9, SPO CHAIRMAN AND EX-CHANCELLOR FRED SINOWATZ CALLED FOR "ALERTNESS" TO PREVENT THE ADVENT OF "A NEW SPIRIT" WHICH MIGHT ACCOMPANY THE PRESIDENTIAL TRANSITION. SINOWATZ AND VIENNA CITY COUNCILMAN JOHANN HATZL DENOUNCED WHAT THEY CALLED DANGEROUS APPEALS TO LOW INSTINCTS, CHAUVINISM AND THE IDEA OF A STRONG MAN. JOCHMANN CALLED THE DAY OF

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THE INAUGURATION "A BLACK TUESDAY" AND DECLARED THAT SHE WOULD NOT "FEEL OBLIGED TO HONOR THIS PRESIDENT". SEVERAL SPO LEGISLATORS AND PROVINCIAL GOVERNORS CRITICIZED WALDHEIM IN THE SOCIALIST MONTHLY "ZUKUNFT".

4. (U) A FEW SOCIALIST MPS WHO WORE BLACK TIES OR REFUSED TO APPLAUD DURING THE INAUGURATION CEREMONY HAVE COME UNDER OPPOSITION FIRE. OVP SECRETARY-GENERAL MICHAEL GRAFF SAID THE SPO SHOULD FINALLY ACCEPT THE DEMOCRATIC MAJORITY DECISION OR RISK THE CHARGE OF BEING ANTI-AUSTRIAN OR ANTI-DEMOCRATIC. ON INAUGURATION DAY,  
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SOME PROMINENT AUSTRIAN INTELLECTUALS, YOUNG SOCIALISTS AND EVEN A HIGH RANKING CIVIL SERVANT PROTESTED IN DOWNTOWN VIENNA AGAINST "POLITICAL FORGETFULNESS". ON THE SAME DAY, A U.S. RABBI AND NUN AS WELL AS GERMAN JOURNALIST AND NAZI-HUNTER BEATE KLARSFELDT PROTESTED IN FRONT OF PARLIAMENT AND LATER THE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE BUILDING. AUSTRIAN NATIONAL RADIO QUOTED THE U.S. RABBI AS SAYING HE FELT "THREATENED" DURING HIS PROTEST IN VIENNA.

5. (U) REACTION IN ISRAEL AND THE U.S.: ON THE DAY OF THE INAUGURATION, NAZI DEATH CAMP SURVIVERS ORGANIZED DEMONSTRATIONS OUTSIDE THE AUSTRIAN EMBASSY IN TEL AVIV, WHILE THE KNESSET WATCHED A HOLOCAUST FILM IN PROTEST AGAINST WALDHEIM. AUSTRIAN PAPERS ALSO REFERRED TO HIGHLY CRITICAL ISRAELI NEWSPAPER REPORTS ON WALDHEIM'S INAUGURATION. IN BOSTON, AUSTRIAN HONORARY CONSUL MASTERMAN WAS SAID TO HAVE RESIGNED AFTER LEARNING OF WALDHEIM'S INAUGURATION. JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS IN CHICAGO AND SAN FRANCISCO SPOKE OUT STRONGLY AGAINST WALDHEIM. ACCORDING TO AN ARTICLE IN THE "NEW YORK TIMES" TWO AMERICAN LAWYERS SAID THEY FAVORED BANNING WALDHEIM FROM ENTERING THE US.

6. (U) VIENNA MAYOR HELMUT ZILK AND LEADING OVP POLITICIANS CONTINUED ATTACKING A SPEECH ZILK GAVE AT THE OPENING OF THE "VIENNA - 1900" EXHIBITION IN NEW YORK LAST WEEK. THE OVP CHARGED THAT ZILK HAD REFERRED TO "TWO CAMPS" IN AUSTRIA, OF WHICH ONLY ONE (IMPLYING THE SPO) HAD LEARNED FROM HISTORY. OVP LEADERS CALLED THESE PASSAGES "SCANDALOUS". ZILK, IN RETURN, ACCUSED THE OVP OF MAKING DEFAMATORY STATEMENTS.

7. (U) ON JULY 9, AUSTRIAN MINISTER FOR EDUCATION HERBERT MORITZ SAID AUSTRIA SHOULD REEMPHASIZE POLITICAL EDUCATION IN AUSTRIAN SCHOOLS IN VIEW OF RECENT EVENTS.

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8. (U) EDITORIAL REACTION TO WALDHEIM'S INAUGURATION:  
EDITORIAL REACTION TO **KURT WALDHEIM'S** INAUGURATION JULY 8  
RANGED FROM CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM TO SCEPTICISM THAT "WOUNDS  
WOULD BE HEALED" IN THE NEAR FUTURE. VIENNA'S  
CONSERVATIVE DAILIES EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT WALDHEIM'S  
PLEDGE TO SEEK DOMESTIC RECONCILIATION WOULD EVENTUALLY  
CALM THE SITUATION. INDEPENDENT PROVINCIAL PAPERS,  
HOWEVER, GENERALLY NOTED THAT THE POLITICAL DAMAGE HAS  
BEEN TOO SEVERE TO BE REPAIRED SOON. MOST EDITORIALISTS  
SEEMED TO AGREE THAT THE PRESIDENTIAL OFFICE DEMANDED  
ACCEPTANCE AND RESPECT BUT DID NOT AUTOMATICALLY EXEMPT  
THE HOLDER OF THE POSITION FROM CRITICISM.

9. (U) IN A FRONT-PAGE EDITORIAL, "DIE PRESSE" CHIEF  
EDITOR THOMAS CHORHERR DESCRIBED THE "HISTORICAL,  
EDIFYING" INAUGURATION CEREMONY DURING WHICH "EVERYBODY  
APPLAUDED THE NEW PRESIDENT". THE ADMONISHING BUT ALSO  
CONCILIATORY TONE ASSUMED BY KEY SPO SPEAKERS AT THE  
CEREMONY WAS A FIRST INDICATION OF THAT MUCH DESIRED AND  
NEEDED BASIC CONSENSUS, CHORHERR REFLECTED. WALDHEIM,  
WHO SHOWED PROPER MODESTY, LEARNED THE LESSONS OF THE  
PAST AND IS FULLY AWARE OF FUTURE CHALLENGES, CHORHERR  
ASSERTED.

10. (U) THE DAILY "KURIER"'S CHIEF EDITOR HANS RAUSCHER  
ADMITTED SURPRISE AT WALDHEIM'S PLEDGE TO WORK TO  
RE-UNITE THE NATION. WALDHEIM IS CLEARLY "ON  
PROBATION", BUT HIS CRITICS SHOULD ACCEPT HIS  
OUTSTRECHED HAND, RAUSCHER OBSERVED. IN HIS VIEW,  
THERE WERE THREE REASONS FOR WALDHEIM'S ELECTION: PROTEST  
AGAINST THE SPO, SOLIDARITY OF THE OLDER GENERATION  
WITH WALDHEIM AND THE YOUNG VOTERS' APPROVAL OF  
WALDHEIM'S REJECTION OF POLITICAL PATRONAGE. THESE  
FACTORS, RAUSCHER FELT, COULD REPRESENT A HEALTHY,  
PERMANENT CHALLENGE TO MANY AUSTRIAN POLITICIANS. AUSTRIA  
WILL TAKE A WAIT-AND-SEE ATTITUDE TOWARD WALDHEIM IN HIS  
DIFFICULT ENDEAVOR TO REGAIN HIS REPUTATION ABROAD,  
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RAUSCHER BELIEVED.

11. (U) SOCIALIST "AZ" CHIEF EDITOR MANFRED SCHEUCH  
CALLED ON THE SOCIALISTS NOT TO PROLONG "THE WAR OF  
ATTRITION", THUS APPARENTLY HEEDING A SIMILAR CALL BY  
SPO FLOOR LEADER WILLE. NEVERTHELESS, WALDHEIM CANNOT  
EXPECT TO BE SPARED ALL CRITICISM MERELY BECAUSE HE IS  
PRESIDENT, SCHEUCH ARGUED. ---A SECOND COMMENTARY ON  
WALDHEIM'S INAUGURATION ARGUED THAT TOO MUCH HAS SURFACED  
DURING THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN TO ALLOW A RETURN TO

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BUSINESS AS USUAL.

12. (U) AUTHORITATIVE PROVINCIAL PRESS COMMENTARY:  
-- SALZBURGER NACHRICHTEN" IN ITS EDITORIAL ALSO NOTED  
THE DOMESTIC DISCORD WHICH IT FEELS COULD NOT BE RESOLVED  
EASILY IN THE NEAR FUTURE.  
-- HERMANN POLZ, EDITORIALIST IN INDEPENDENT PROVINCIAL  
"OBEROESTERREICHISCHE NACHRICHTEN", FELT THAT FORMAL  
COMMITMENTS TO FIGHT ANTI-SEMITISM CERTAINLY WILL NOT BE  
ENOUGH TO CONVINCE HIS CRITICS.  
-- OVP PROVINCIAL DAILY "NEUES VOLKSBLATT" EXPRESSED  
OUTRAGE AT THE LACK OF "JUSTIFIED REVERENCE" TOWARDS THE  
NEW PRESIDENT.

13. (LOU) COMMENT: MANY HERE HAVE BELIEVED THAT  
WITH THE PRESIDENTIAL INAUGURATION THE "AFFAIR  
WALDHEIM" WOULD BE CONSIGNED TO THE ALREADY OVERFLOWING  
AUSTRIAN PA ST. IT IS NOW BECOMING EVIDENT THAT THE  
QUESTIONS LOOSED IN THE PRESIDENTIAL RACE --  
WALDHEIM'S CHARACTER; THE ANTI-SEMITIC OVERTONES  
AND NATIONALIST SENTIMENTS OF HIS CAMPAIGN; AND THE  
LARGER ISSUE OF AUSTRIA'S RECONCILIATION WITH ITS  
OWN PAST -- HAVE ASSUMED LIVES OF THEIR OWN. IN  
CONTRAST TO NORMAL AUSTRIAN OBEISANCE TO TRADITION,  
IMPORTANT SEGMENTS OF THE AUSTRIAN INTELLECTUAL  
COMMUNITY AND THE SOCIALIST PARTY HAVE IMPLIED OR  
DECLARED THEIR OPPOSITION TO WALDHEIM -- ALBEIT  
NOT QUESTIONING THE LEGITIMACY OF HIS ELECTION.  
THIS IS A LARGELY UNPRECEDENTED PHENOMENON IN THE  
POST-WAR AUSTRIAN WORLD. IT IS, WE BELIEVE, A POLITICAL  
PHENOMENON THAT WILL BE WITH US FOR SOME TIME.  
ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR AUSTRIAN SOCIETY AND POLITICAL  
LIFE ARE NOT YET CLEAR, BUT THAT THEY WILL BE AFFECTED  
IN SOME MEASURE NOW LOOKS HIGHLY PROBABLE. AT THE  
SAME TIME, THE GOVERNMENT HAS TAKEN PAINS TO BE  
CORRECT IN ITS RELATIONS WITH (AND DEFENSE OF)  
WALDHEIM; BUT ITS BEHAVIOR LACKS WARMTH AND  
ENTHUSIASM, WHICH SERVES ONLY TO HIGHLIGHT HOW  
FORMAL ITS ACCEPTANCE OF ITS NEW PRESIDENT IS IN FACT.  
LAUDER

END OF MESSAGE

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