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TEXT

TAGS: PREL, PGOV, AU  
SUBJECT: WALDHEIM: REACTION TO RENEWED ACCUSATIONS

1. (U) THE WALDHEIM ISSUE HAS BREACHED THE POLITICAL SURFACE IN AUSTRIA ONCE AGAIN WITH THE LATEST ALLEGATIONS BY EDGAR BRONFMAN (WORLD JEWISH CONGRESS PRESIDENT) IN THIS WEEK'S ISSUE OF "DER SPIEGEL" -- WHICH RECEIVED WIDESPREAD COVERAGE IN TODAY'S AUSTRIAN PRESS. BOTH THE CHANCELLOR AND FM JANKOWITSCH RESPONDED TO BRONFMAN'S ASSERTIONS THAT KURT WALDHEIM WAS A WAR CRIMINAL AND THAT ANTI-SEMITISM IN AUSTRIA WAS MANIFESTING ITSELF MORE OPENLY NOW AS BEING "PERSONAL ACCUSATIONS" ON THE PART OF BRONFMAN. CHANCELLOR VRANITZKY AND THE FOREIGN MINISTER POINTED TO POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS ON THE GOVERNMENT LEVEL

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BETWEEN AUSTRIA AND ISRAEL AND TO "THE VERY GOOD RELATIONS" BETWEEN THE AUSTRIAN AND U.S. GOVERNMENTS.

2. (U) VRANITZKY:

VRANITZKY SAID AFTER TODAY'S CABINET MEETING THAT BRONFMAN'S ALLEGATIONS WERE A REPETITION OF PREVIOUS ATTACKS. VRANITZKY DID NOT WANT TO MAKE FURTHER COMMENTS ON THE ACCUSATIONS, SINCE THEY WERE "PERSONAL ALLEGATIONS". ON THE GOVERNMENT LEVEL, AUSTRIA HAS GOOD RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL, AND VERY GOOD, IF NOT EXCELLENT, RELATIONS WITH THE U.S., ADDED VRANITZKY.

3. (U) JANKOWITSCH:

FM JANKOWITSCH REPORTEDLY SAID THAT "'SPIEGEL' AND THE PRESIDENT OF THE WORLD JEWISH CONGRESS, EDGAR BRONFMAN, HAVE APPARENTLY BECOME PROFESSIONAL INSULTERS OF AUSTRIA." JANKOWITSCH REPORTEDLY CONSIDERS DIALOGUE "WITH PERSONS LIKE BRONFMAN AS, AT LEAST FOR THE TIME BEING, IMPOSSIBLE". THE FM ALSO NOTES POSITIVE SIGNALS EMANATING FROM ISRAEL ON RESTORING GOOD RELATIONS WITH AUSTRIA. ACCORDING TO JANKOWITSCH, THE AUSTRIAN AMBASSADOR TO ISRAEL, WHO HAD BEEN RECALLED TO VIENNA FOR CONSULTATIONS, MIGHT - AS A SIGN OF AUSTRIA'S GOOD WILL - BE SENT BACK TO TEL AVIV BEFORE CHRISTMAS.

4. (U) PEOPLE'S PARTY:

PEOPLE'S PARTY (OVP) FOREIGN POLICY SPOKESMAN LUDWIG STEINER CALLED BRONFMAN'S ALLEGATIONS "AN OUTRAGEOUS MIXTURE OF UNPROVED ACCUSATIONS AND OF ATTACKS WHICH HAVE ALREADY BEEN REJECTED". STEINER DEMANDED THAT BRONFMAN SHOULD FINALLY STOP SLANDERING WALDHEIM OR PRESENT REAL EVIDENCE.

5. (U) MEDIA:

MEDIA RESPONSE TO BRONFMAN'S ASSERTIONS HAS BEEN MIXED, REFLECTING SOME GROWING ACCEPTANCE OF THE NOTION THAT BEHIND THE WALDHEIM ISSUE -- HOWEVER UNACCEPTABLE -- LIES A PAST THAT MUST BE CONFRONTED. "DIE PRESSE" PRESENTED A LENGTHY REPORT ON BRONFMAN'S ALLEGATIONS WITHOUT COMMENT; BUT THE "KURIER" (FOR THE FIRST TIME) EDITORIALIZED THAT "WE ALSO SHOULD ACCEPT THE DARKER SIDES OF OUR HERITAGE...AND DO NOT MEASURE THE HOLOCAUST AGAINST ANYTHING"; THE EDITORIAL ALSO URGED THAT "WE REACT WITH REASON" TO BRONFMAN'S LATEST CHARGES.

6. (LOU) COMMENT: THE BRONFMAN EPISODE IS A TEMPEST IN A TEAPOT. BUT IT SERVES TO ILLUSTRATE SOME CONTINUING SEED TRUTHS REGARDING WALDHEIM AND AUSTRIA. FIRST AND FOREMOST, WALDHEIM WILL NOT GO AWAY AS AN ISSUE. IT CONTINUES TO BE HIGHLY EMOTIVE, POLITICALLY SENSITIVE AND A FACTOR IN AUSTRO-ISRAELI RELATIONS, AS IT IS A FACTOR IN AUSTRO-AMERICAN RELATIONS. IN THIS RESPECT, THE SOCIALISTS HAVE BEEN CONSIDERABLY MORE MODERATE ON BOTH COUNTS WHILE THE PEOPLE'S PARTY HAVE TAKEN AN AGGRESSIVELY CONFRONTATIONAL POSITION. RELATIONS BETWEEN THE OVP AND ISRAEL HAVE BEEN EMBITTERED AND WILL PROBABLY NOT BE RESTORED TO THEIR FORMER WARM AND MUTUALLY SUPPORTIVE QUALITY FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. THE WALDHEIM FACTOR HAS ALSO

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PLAYED IN OVP-U.S. RELATIONS, CHANGING THE TENOR AND QUALITY OF PRO-AMERICAN FEELINGS. BOTH ISRAEL AND THE U.S. HAVE COME IN FOR WIDESPREAD INVIDIOUS COMMENT IN THE AUSTRIAN CONSERVATIVE PRESS. THIS ONLY MIRRORS STRONGLY HELD PRIVATE ANTIPATHETIC FEELINGS WHICH HAVE THEIR ORIGIN IN THE WALDHEIM ISSUE. THE WALDHEIM MATTER HAS LOWERED THE THRESHOLD OF SYMPATHETIC AND UNDERSTANDING RESPONSE TO THE UNITED STATES IN THE CONSERVATIVE QUADRANT OF AUSTRIA. LAUDER

ADMIN  
END OF MESSAGE

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