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TEXT

TAGS: PGOV, PREL, AU
SUBJECT: WALDHEIM WATCH-LIST DECISION - MEDIA REACTION

1. INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY: THE U.S. DECISION TO PUT KURT WALDHEIM ON THE WATCH-LIST HAS RECEIVED PREDICTABLY INTENSE COVERAGE AND EDITORIAL COMMENT IN THE AUSTRIAN MEDIA. ALL PAPERS HAVE EVINCED SHOCK AND CONSTERNATION. TO THIS, SOME COMMENTATORS (PARTICULARLY AUSTRIAN TV CORRESPONDENT EMMERICH, THE "KRONENZEITUNG") HAVE ADDED A DISPLAY OF BITTERNESS AND ANTI-AMERICAN SENTIMENT, WHILE OTHERS ("KURIER", SOCIALIST "AZ") HAVE ADOPTED A TONE MORE OF SORROW THAN OF ANGER. COMMENTARIES HAVE STRESSED

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THE LIKELIHOOD OF A SERIOUS DETERIORATION IN AUSTRO-U.S. RELATIONS, ISOLATION OF AUSTRIA, THE NEGATIVE IMPACT ON VIENNA AS INTERNATIONAL MEETING PLACE, AS WELL AS ON TOURISM AND TRADE. SOME REPORTS HAVE SPECULATED THAT THE DECISION WAS MOTIVATED BY THE UPCOMING PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN THE U.S. AND ALLEGED THAT THE DECISION VIOLATED THE PRINCIPLE OF THE SUPPOSITION OF INNOCENCE. OF THE VIENNA PAPERS, ONLY THE SOCIALIST "AZ" HAS IMPLIED WALDHEIM MIGHT WANT TO CONSIDER RESIGNING. END SUMMARY AND INTRODUCTION.

2. TELEVISION/RADIO:

AUSTRIAN TELEVISION AND RADIO (ORF) HAS BEEN COVERING THE WALDHEIM EXCLUSION EXTENSIVELY, EVER SINCE THE NEWS BROKE YESTERDAY AFTERNOON. REPORTS HAVE CAREFULLY NOTED THAT THE U.S. GOVERNMENT STRESSED THAT THE MOVE WAS DIRECTED AGAINST WALDHEIM AS A PRIVATE PERSON AND NOT AGAINST AUSTRIA. THE "WATCH-LIST" HAS BEEN FURTHER CHARACTERIZED AS A SCREENING METHOD WHICH, IN THE FIRST INSTANCE, REQUIRED THAT A VISA APPLICANT DISPROVE SUSPICIONS OF HAVING A NAZI PAST. THE LANGUAGE OF THE U.S. LAW HAS ALSO BEEN CITED.

3. NOTWITHSTANDING THESE QUALIFICATIONS, EDITORIAL COMMENT, WHICH HAS PENETRATED INTO WHAT OTHERWISE ONE WOULD EXPECT TO BE STRAIGHT NEWS REPORTS, HAS OFTEN SHOWN AN INDIGNANT EDGE. FOR EXAMPLE, THE ORF'S WASHINGTON CORRESPONDENT, KLAUS EMMERICH, VISIBLY ANGERED, CRITICIZED THE FACT THAT PRESIDENT REAGAN HAD CORDIALLY RECEIVED AUSTRIAN AMBASSADOR THOMAS KLESTIL, "WALDHEIM'S OFFICIAL REPRESENTATIVE", JUST BEFORE THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT MADE THE WALDHEIM ANNOUNCEMENT. IN MEDIEVAL TIMES THE AFFAIR WOULD HAVE BEEN A CASUS BELLI, EMMERICH SNEERED, AND CONCLUDED HIS STATEMENT WITH THE REMARK "...AND THEY DO NOT KNOW WHAT THEY ARE DOING.". EVEN THE ORF ANCHORMAN WAS TAKEN ABACK BY THE ACRIMONY IN EMMERICH'S STATEMENTS.

4. IN THE SAME PROGRAM, ORF POLITICAL COMMENTATOR HUGO PORTISCH RECOMMENDED THAT WALDHEIM SUE FOR LIBEL, RECALLING A SIMILAR AFFAIR INVOLVING FORMER ISRAELI ARMY GENERAL SHARON AND TIME MAGAZINE, TO REPAIR PART OF THE IMAGE DAMAGE, AND ALSO AS MEANS OF OVERTURNING THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE DECISION. IF THE U.S. HAD A LONGSTANDING GEO-POLITICAL, STRATEGIC INTEREST IN MAINTAINING AUSTRIA'S ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL WELL-BEING, PORTISCH WENT ON, THEN IT MUST ALSO HAVE A SIMILAR INTEREST IN PREVENTING A SLANDERING OF AUSTRIA WHICH MIGHT EQUALLY SHAKE THE COUNTRY'S STABILITY. PORTISCH NOTED THAT CHANCELLOR FRANZ VRANITZKY'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON WOULD BE AN EXCELLENT OCCASION TO ATTACK THE CURRENT PROBLEMS AND SHOULD THEREFORE NOT BE CANCELLED. IN ANY CASE, THE AFFAIR WOULD HAVE A DISASTROUS IMPACT ON AUSTRIA AS SITE OF INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES, AS WELL AS ON AUSTRIAN TOURISM AND TRADE, CONCLUDED PORTISCH.

5. PRESS COMMENTARIES:

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EDITORIAL COMMENTATORS HAVE GIVEN VENT TO "SHOCK", AND "CONSTERNATION" AT THE DECISION. THEY SPEAK OF A "DEVASTATING BLOW" AGAINST AUSTRIA, OF A "CATASTROPHE", AND OF A "MEDIEVAL INQUISITION", AS WELL OF A CONTAMINATION OF U.S.-AUSTRIAN RELATIONS. VRANITZKY WILL HAVE TO "WEIGH THE CONSEQUENCES" IN LIGHT OF HIS UPCOMING U.S. VISIT, SOME PAPERS URGE. THE SOCIALIST "AZ" CALLS UNCLAS SECTION 02 OF 02 VIENNA 06784

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THE U.S. MOVE "A HEAVY BURDEN" FOR AUSTRIA AND IMPLIES THAT ONLY A WALDHEIM RESIGNATION COULD RESOLVE THE ISSUE.

6. "DIE PRESSE":

THOMAS CHORHERR, EDITOR OF THE CONSERVATIVE DAILY "DIE PRESSE", IN A BRIEF COMMENT, EMPHASIZED THE AMBIGUITY OF THE DECISION IN DIFFERENTIATING BETWEEN WALDHEIM AS PRIVATE PERSON AND AS HEAD OF STATE. THE MOVE WAS BITTER FOR EVERYONE WHOSE FRIENDSHIP FOR THE UNITED STATES WAS DEEPLY FELT. IN THE FIRST INSTANCE, IT WOULD BE CHANCELLOR VRANITZKY -- WHO PLANNED TO MAKE AN OFFICIAL VISIT TO THE U.S. -- WHO WOULD HAVE TO CONSIDER THE CONSEQUENCES, CONCLUDED CHORHERR.

7. "KURIER":

THE MASS TABLOID "KURIER" SPOKE OF A "BAD DAY FOR AUSTRIA" AND OF A "CATASTROPHE" IN CONNECTION WITH THE DECISION. THE PAPER ALSO STRESSED THE ROUGH TREATMENT POLITICIANS IN THE U.S. RECEIVE FROM THE PUBLIC AND THE MEDIA, WHICH WALDHEIM WAS EXPERIENCING NOW AS WELL. "KURIER" DID, HOWEVER, ALSO DETECT A LACK OF KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING IN THE U.S. FOR EUROPE'S HISTORY.

8. "KRONENZEITUNG":

"KRONENZEITUNG", THE PAPER WITH THE HIGHEST CIRCULATION IN AUSTRIA, CARRIED A HIGHLY CRITICAL COMMENTARY BY FOREIGN POLICY EDITOR KURT SEINITZ. SEINITZ EXPLAINED THAT THE U.S. GOVERNMENT HAD GIVEN IN TO PRESSURE FROM "CERTAIN CIRCLES" WHICH HAD THREATENED THE ADMINISTRATION WITH CONSEQUENCES IN THE UPCOMING U.S. PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IF IT HAD TRIED TO AVOID THE WALDHEIM ISSUE WITH A "NO-DECISION" OUTCOME. "ALL THE PROVOCATEURS IN NEW YORK AND VIENNA WHO ARE WAITING FOR INTEMPERATE (AUSTRIAN) REACTIONS WHICH COULD PUSH AUSTRIA INTO INTERNATIONAL ISOLATION WILL, HOWEVER, BE DISAPPOINTED", ARGUED SEINITZ, SINCE AUSTRIANS HAVE ALWAYS SHOWN BALANCE AND CONSIDERATION IN ROUGH TIMES AND WOULD PROVE "THOSE CIRCLES WRONG WHO PRODUCED THIS SKEWED DECISION ACCOMPANIED BY HYPOCRITICAL BALLYHOING".

9. SOCIALIST "AZ":

THE SOCIALIST "AZ" WAS THE ONLY VIENNESE PAPER WHICH SUGGESTED WALDHEIM'S RESIGNATION AS A POSSIBLE SOLUTION.

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EDITOR MANFRED SCHEUCH NOTED THAT THE DECISION WAS "A
HEAVY BURDEN ON AUSTRIA, WHICH WALDHEIM CAN RELIEVE WITH
A COURAGEOUS MOVE". LAUDER

ADMIN
END OF MESSAGE

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