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TEXT

TAGS: PGOV, PREL, AU  
SUBJECT: POLITICAL REACTION TO WATCH-LIST DECISION

REF: VIENNA 6785

1. SUMMARY:

THE SPECTRUM OF INITIAL REACTIONS ON THE PART OF AUSTRIAN POLITICAL FIGURES TO THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT'S WATCH-LIST DECISION HAS RANGED FROM ANGER AND BITTERNESS AT THE U.S. TO CALLS FOR REMEDIAL WORK ON THE AUSTRIAN IMAGE IN THE WORLD, AND EVEN TO SUGGESTIONS OF A WALDHEIM RESIGNATION. MANY HERE ARE CALLING FOR A LEGAL CHALLENGE TO BE MOUNTED IN THE U.S. TO THE MESESE DECISION. END SUMMARY

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2. GOVERNMENT:

FOLLOWING THE PRESENTATION OF THE GOVERNMENT'S DECLARATION ON THE WATCH-LIST DECISION (REFTEL), IN WHICH THE GOA FULLY SUPPORTED WALDHEIM, CHANCELLOR VRANITZKY AND FOREIGN MINISTER MOCK COMMENTED FURTHER ON THE ISSUE. CHANCELLOR FRANZ VRANITZKY STRESSED THAT, "IN SPITE OF A DECISION WHICH HITS US SO GRAVELY, WE WOULD NOT WANT TO PURSUE A POLICY WHICH LEADS AUSTRIA INTO ISOLATION". AUSTRIA'S GOOD RELATIONS TO A SIGNATORY POWER OF THE STATE TREATY HAD NOT BEEN TERMINATED BY THIS DECISION. WHAT WAS AT ISSUE NOW WAS TO ADDRESS WHAT HAD HAPPENED IN A CONSTRUCTIVE WAY, SAID THE CHANCELLOR. EFFORTS ON THE PART OF BOTH GOVERNMENTAL PARTIES WOULD NOW BE NEEDED IN ORDER TO SHOW AUSTRIA'S FRIENDS ABROAD THAT THE COUNTRY REMAINED A STABLE POLITICAL INTERLOCUTOR.

3. VICE-CHANCELLOR AND FOREIGN MINISTER ALOIS MOCK STRESSED THE GOVERNMENT'S UNITED FRONT IN SUPPORTING THE AUSTRIAN HEAD OF STATE. MOCK ALSO REITERATED THAT THE U.S. ACTION WAS IRRECONCILABLE WITH THE AUSTRIAN CONCEPTION OF JUSTICE, SINCE THERE EXISTED ONLY SUSPICIONS, WITHOUT FACTS OR EVIDENCE. AT THE SAME TIME, MOCK STRESSED THAT AUSTRIA HAD CAREFULLY AVOIDED GIVING MISLEADING DIPLOMATIC SIGNALS.

4. SOCIALIST PARTY (SPO):

SPO CHAIRMAN FRED SINOWATZ STRESSED THAT "WE HAVE TO BE DEEPLY CONCERNED" OVER THE PRESENT DEVELOPMENTS CONCERNING PRESIDENT **KURT WALDHEIM**, SINCE BOTH AUSTRIA'S REPUTATION AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO ITS MOST IMPORTANT PARTNER IN THE WESTERN WORLD WAS AT STAKE. IN TERMS OF AUSTRIAN LEGAL STANDARDS, THE U.S. JUSTICE DEPARTMENT'S DECISION WAS DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND, NOTED SINOWATZ. SPO FOREIGN POLICY SPOKESMAN PETER JANKOWITSCH STRESSED THAT AUSTRIA COULD NOT ACCEPT DISCRIMINATORY ACTIONS WHICH DELIBERATELY, IT WOULD APPEAR, CREATED GAPS OF SUSPICION AND MISUNDERSTANDING BETWEEN AUSTRIA AND ITS TRADITIONAL PARTNERS IN THE WEST.

5. SPO YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS:

THE SOCIALIST YOUTH (SJ) AND THE ASSOCIATION OF SOCIALIST STUDENTS CALLED FOR WALDHEIM'S RESIGNATION. SJ CHAIRMAN ALFRED GUSENBAUER CONCEDED, HOWEVER; THAT WALDHEIM COULD PROVE HIS INNOCENCE BY BRINGING SUIT IN THE U.S. SOCIALIST YOUNG GENERATION (JG) CHAIRMAN MARIA BERGER DEMANDED THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A COMMISSION OF EXPERTS TO CLARIFY WALDHEIM'S PAST.

6. PEOPLE'S PARTY (OVP):

OVP MP FELIX ERMACORA, EXPERT ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND INTERNATIONAL LAW, SAID WALDHEIM SHOULD SUE ATTORNEY GENERAL EDWIN MEESE. WALDHEIM SHOULD ASK FOR ONE MILLION US DOLLARS IN LIBEL DAMAGES FOR HAVING BEEN ACCUSED OF ,BEING A WAR CRIMINAL. WALDHEIM SHOULD ALSO HAVE SUED THE WORLD JEWISH CONGRESS, ADDED ERMACORA.

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7. FREEDOM PARTY (FPO):

THE SHARPEST REACTION TO THE WATCH-LIST DECISION CAME FROM FPO CHAIRMAN JOERG HAIDER, WHO SAID THE ACTION WAS AN UNACCEPTABLE COLLECTIVE ACCUSATION AGAINST THE ENTIRE AUSTRIAN WAR GENERATION. CHANCELLOR VRANITZKY SHOULD RECONSIDER HIS PLANNED VISIT TO THE U.S., ACCORDING TO HAIDER. FPO FOREIGN POLICY SPOKESMAN NORBERT GUGERBAUER, UNCLAS SECTION 02 OF 02 VIENNA 06836

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ON THE OTHER HAND, EXPRESSED HIS CONSTERNATION OVER A DECISION WHICH HE TERMED UNACCEPTABLE. GUGERBAUER ALSO CALLED FOR A MEETING OF THE FOREIGN POLICY COUNCIL, AN ADVISORY BODY INCLUDING REPRESENTATIVES FROM WITHIN AND OUTSIDE THE GOVERNMENT.

8. GREENS:

GREEN LEADER FREDA MEISSNER-BLAU SAID THE DECISION WAS ONE OF HYPOCRISY IN SERVICE OF POLITICAL INTERESTS. MEISSNER-BLAU WARNED, HOWEVER, AGAINST TURNING THE ISSUE INTO A QUESTION OF PATRIOTISM. THE GREENS' EXECUTIVE BOARD CALLED ON WALDHEIM TO "PROVE HIS INNOCENCE IN PUBLIC, TO PRESENT HIS PAST CLEARLY AND TO ESTABLISH AN INDEPENDENT INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION OF HISTORIANS".

9. COMMUNIST PARTY (KPO):

KPO CHAIRMAN FRANZ MUHRI CALLED WALDHEIM A "BURDEN ON (AUSTRIA'S) FOREIGN POLICY" AND AN "OBSTACLE TO AN ANTI-FASCIST COMING TO TERMS WITH THE PAST". THE U.S. ADMINISTRATION, ON THE OTHER HAND, HAD BEEN INTERESTED IN SETTLING AN OLD SCORE WITH THE FORMER UN SECRETARY GENERAL.

10. JEWISH COMMUNITY:

SIMON WIESENTHAL, HEAD OF THE JEWISH DOCUMENTATION CENTER, EXPLAINED THAT WALDHEIM SHOULD HAVE SUED AMERICAN MEDIA A YEAR AGO, AND SHOULD ALSO HAVE ESTABLISHED AN INDEPENDENT INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION OF HISTORIANS TO EXAMINE HIS WARTIME ACTIVITIES. THEREBY, WIESENTHAL ARGUED, WALDHEIM COULD HAVE PREVENTED THE WATCH-LIST DECISION. ACCORDING TO WALDHEIM'S SON, THE AUSTRIAN PRESIDENT HAD, HOWEVER, BEEN TOO PROUD TO SUE THE AMERICAN MEDIA FOR LIBEL. WIESENTHAL HOPED THAT THE WATCH-LIST DECISION WOULD NOT LEAD TO A NEW WAVE OF ANTI-SEMITISM IN AUSTRIA. LAUDER

ADMIN

END OF MESSAGE

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