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E.O. 12356: N/A

TEXT

TAGS: PGOV, PREL, AU

SUBJECT: WALDHEIM TO SPEAK AT ANSCHLUSS COMMEMORATION

1. (LOU) SUMMARY: AFTER MONTHS OF CONTROVERSY OVER IF AND HOW PRESIDENT WALDHEIM MIGHT PARTICIPATE IN AUSTRIA'S OFFICIAL 50TH ANNIVERSARY OBSERVANCE OF THE ANSCHLUSS, THE GOVERNMENT STRUCK A COMPROMISE LAST FRIDAY THAT WILL ALLOW HIM TO DO SO. ALONG WITH CHANCELLOR VRANITZKY, FOREIGN MINISTER MOCK AND THE PRESIDENTS OF PARLIAMENT, WALDHEIM WILL DELIVER AN ADDRESS

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AT A "CEREMONY OF STATE" (BUT NOT BEFORE PARLIAMENT) ON MARCH 11. LONG INTENDED AS AN OCCASION SIGNIFYING A MORE CANDID CONFRONTATION WITH THE NATION'S PAST, THE EVENTS INSTEAD RISK HIGHLIGHTING THE AMBIGUITY OF AUSTRIA'S ROLE UNDER THE NAZIS THAT WALDHEIM'S PRESIDENCY HAS COME TO REPRESENT. MOREOVER, THE MARCH 11 ANNIVERSARY WILL COME IN THE WAKE OF THE REPORT EXPECTED FEBRUARY 8 OF THE HISTORIANS COMMISSION INVESTIGATING THE AUSTRIAN PRESIDENT'S WAR SERVICE. WALDHEIM'S DEFENDERS (MAINLY IN THE PEOPLE'S PARTY--OVP) WILL PRESUMABLY ARGUE THAT THIS REPORT UNCOVERED NO CLEAR EVIDENCE OF HIS PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR ATROCITIES WHILE HIS MORE OUTSPOKEN DETRACTORS (PRIMARILY AMONG THE SOCIALISTS--SPO) ARE LIKELY TO CLAIM REVELATIONS OF HIS INVOLVEMENT IN UNSAVORY ACTIVITIES, AND HIS CONCEALMENT THEREOF, HAVE MADE HIM UNFIT FOR OFFICE. THE WILLINGNESS OF THE SOCIALISTS TO ACQUIESCE IN WALDHEIM'S PARTICIPATION IN THE ANNIVERSARY CEREMONIES HAS BEEN STRONGLY INFLUENCED BY THE APPARENT CONSENSUS OF THE LAST MONTH OR SO THAT, FOR WANT OF COMPELLING EVIDENCE AGAINST HIM, THE WALDHEIM PRESIDENCY WILL HAVE TO BE ENDURED. END SUMMARY.

2. (U) MARCH 11 EVENTS:

FOR SOME MONTHS THE QUESTION OF WALDHEIM'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE GOA'S MARCH 11 EVENTS COMMEMORATING THE 50-YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF THE ANSCHLUSS HAD BEEN THE SUBJECT OF POLITICAL CONTROVERSY BETWEEN THE SOCIALISTS (SPO) AND THEIR PEOPLE'S PARTY (OVP) PARTNERS IN THE GOVERNING COALITION. THE OVP INSISTED ON ALLOWING WALDHEIM TO ADDRESS A SPECIAL MEETING OF PARLIAMENT ON THAT DAY, WHILE THE SPO OPPOSED WALDHEIM'S INVOLVEMENT, WARNING THAT SOCIALISTS AS WELL AS OTHER MP'S (I.E. GREENS) WOULD WALK OUT OF SUCH A SESSION. LAST FRIDAY (JANUARY 22), THE FOUR PARLIAMENTARY PARTIES AGREED IN A MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENTARY PRESIDUM THAT THE NATIONAL LEGISLATURE'S COMMEMORATION OF THE MARCH 11 ANNIVERSARY WOULD TAKE THE FORM, NOT OF A JOINT SESSION OF BOTH HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT, BUT RATHER A MEETING IN THE HALLS OF PARLIAMENT TO BE ADDRESSED BY THE PRESIDENTS OF BOTH HOUSES. WALDHEIM WILL SIMPLY ATTEND THIS PARLIAMENTARY MEETING.

3. (U) AT THE GOVERNMENT'S CEREMONY, HOWEVER, WALDHEIM WILL SPEAK. IN ACCORDANCE WITH A COMPROMISE WORKED OUT BY THE COALITION PARTIES, A "CEREMONY OF STATE" ("STAATSAKT") INVOLVING THE NATION'S "LEADING OFFICIALS" WILL BE ADDRESSED BY PRESIDENT **KURT WALDHEIM**, CHANCELLOR FRANZ VRANITZKY, FM ALOIS MOCK, AND THE PRESIDENTS OF THE TWO HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT, LEOPOLD GRATZ AND HERBERT SCHAMBECK. FOREIGN MINISTER AND OVP CHAIRMAN MOCK, WHO HAD FOUGHT DOGGEDLY FOR WALDHEIM'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE MARCH 11 EVENTS, EXPRESSED HIS SATISFACTION WITH THE COMPROMISE AND TERMED THE AGREEMENT "NECESSARY FOR THE AUSTRIAN STATE". THE DECISION DEMONSTRATED, ACCORDING TO MOCK, THE ABILITY OF THE COALITION TO SHOW UNITY IN THE NATIONAL INTEREST.

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4. (U) HISTORIAN COMMISSION:

MEANWHILE, THE LAST MEETING OF THE HISTORIANS COMMISSION ON WALDHEIM BEGAN TODAY (JAN. 26) IN VIENNA. THE COMMISSION IS EXPECTED TO QUESTION WALDHEIM IN PERSON ON THURSDAY (JANUARY 28). COMMISSION CHAIRMAN HANS RUDOLF KURZ HAS ANNOUNCED THAT THE COMMISSION'S REPORT WILL BE PRESENTED ON FEBRUARY 8. THE REPORT WILL PRESUMABLY BE THE SUBJECT OF DISCUSSION AT THE REGULAR CABINET MEETING ON THE FOLLOWING DAY. IT IS EXPECTED THAT THE COMMISSION WILL INFORM THE PRESS ABOUT THE REPORT ONE OR TWO DAYS
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SUBJECT: WALDHEIM TO SPEAK AT ANSCHLUSS COMMEMORATION

AFTER ITS PRESENTATION TO THE GOVERNMENT.

5. (LOU) COMMENT: ALTHOUGH WALDHEIM'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE ANSCHLUSS COMMEMORATION EVENTS IS OBJECTIVELY AN EMBARRASSING COMPROMISE--SINCE THE SOCIALISTS SUCCEEDED IN KEEPING THE PRESIDENT FROM ADDRESSING A JOINT SESSION OF PARLIAMENT--IT STILL MARKS ANOTHER VICTORY FOR THE DEFENSE LED BY MOCK. THE OUTLOOK IS FOR ADDITIONAL CONTROVERSY IN THE WAKE OF THE HISTORIANS' REPORT, BUT WALDHEIM HAS REFUSED TO LET HIMSELF BE FAZED BY PAST HUMILIATIONS OF THIS SORT AND LOOKS READY TO RIDE THIS ONE OUT, AS WELL. GRUNWALD

ADMIN

END OF MESSAGE

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