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E.O. 12356: N/A

TEXT

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: WALDHEIM

THIS MORNING'S SWISS HEADLINES INCLUDED "WALDHEIM HANGS ON" (LA SUISSE), "WALDHEIM WON'T CHANGE HIS MIND" (ZURICH TAGES-ANZEIGER), "WALDHEIM WON'T RESIGN" (BERNER ZEITUNG), AND "WALDHEIM SEES NO GROUNDS FOR RESIGNING" (BASLER ZEITUNG).

EDITORIAL COMMENT INCLUDED THE FOLLOWING:

LA SUISSE (CENTRIST), GENEVA: "WALDHEIM HAS ALWAYS MAINTAINED HE KNEW NOTHING OF WAR CRIMES. IT SEEMED EXCUSABLE; WHO HASN'T SINNED BY OMISSION AT SOME TIME OR ANOTHER? THE DIFFERENCE IN KURT WALDHEIM'S CASE IS THAT HE WAS ELECTED TO A HIGHLY SYMBOLIC FUNCTION; EMBODYING

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NATIONAL PRIDE AND CONTINUITY.

"THE AUSTRIAN PEOPLE SEEMED PLEASED TO ELECT HIM IN THE FACE OF WORLD OPINION, AS IF TO SAY, 'WE WILL ELECT WHOM WE PLEASE; IT IS NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS.' BUT NOW NATIONAL PRIDE WOULD BE BETTER SERVED BY WALDHEIM'S DEPARTURE. THE AUSTRIANS COULD THEN SAY, 'YOU SEE THAT WHEN WE MAKE A MISTAKE, WE ARE ANXIOUS TO RECTIFY IT OF OUR OWN VOLITION, WITHOUT ANYBODY NEEDING TO PUSH US.' YESTERDAY, THEY WERE PROUD TO ELECT WALDHEIM IN THE TEETH OF WORLD OPINION; TODAY, CIRCUMSTANCES HAVE CHANGED, AND ONLY BY BIDDING THEIR PRESIDENT GOODBYE CAN THEY HOPE TO RECOVER THEIR NATIONAL PRIDE."

TAGES-ANZEIGER (LEFTIST), ZURICH: "WALDHEIM IS HARMING HIS COUNTRY'S INTERESTS BY STAYING IN OFFICE. HE IS RENDERING AUSTRIA UNGOVERNABLE. AND HEAVEN KNOWS THE GOVERNMENT HAS PLENTY ON ITS PLATE AT THE MOMENT: BUDGETARY REFORM, THE CHALLENGE OF POSSIBLE E.C. MEMBERSHIP, A CLEANUP IN NATIONALIZED INDUSTRIES. AUSTRIA CANNOT CONTINUE AS A SORT OF 'FAULT LINE' OF POTENTIAL POLITICAL EARTHQUAKES; THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ANSCHLUSS TO BE MARKED NEXT MONTH STANDS AS A WARNING. THE THREAT OF HAVING A DESTABILIZED AUSTRIA IN CENTRAL EUROPE CANNOT LEAVE AUSTRIA'S NEIGHBORS INDIFFERENT. IT IS A JUSTIFIED EUROPEAN DEMAND THAT WALDHEIM SHOULD GO BEFORE HE INFLECTS IRREPARABLE DAMAGE ON HIS COUNTRY."

DER BUND (CENTRIST), BERN: "IF WALDHEIM STAYS, AUSTRIANS WILL HAVE TO LIVE NOT ONLY WITH THE PRESIDENT BUT WITH HIS WARTIME PAST. HE EMBODIES A DARK PERIOD IN AUSTRIA'S PAST--AND THE DESIRE TO BURY IT. THE LATTER CONSIDERATION, THE POLLS SUGGEST, IS WHAT PROMPTED MOST AUSTRIANS TO ELECT HIM IN THE FIRST PLACE AND NOW TO KEEP HIM IN OFFICE. NEXT MONTH WILL BE THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ANSCHLUSS--WITH WHICH MANY AUSTRIANS HAPPILY WENT ALONG. THIS STATE OF MIND HAS BROKEN OUT AFRESH IN AN ALARMING MANNER RECENTLY. COMING TO TERMS WITH THE PAST IS SOMETHING WALDHEIM HAS SHOWN HIMSELF INCAPABLE OF DOING. THAT IS A FAR MORE SERIOUS REPROACH TO HIM THAN CHANCELLOR VRANITZKY'S COMPLAINT THAT THE CONTROVERSY IS IMPEDING GOVERNMENT BUSINESS."

24 HEURES (CENTRIST), LAUSANNE: "AUSTRIA HAS BEEN IN INTERNATIONAL QUARANTINE SINCE WALDHEIM'S ELECTION AS PRESIDENT. ON TOP OF THIS, CAN IT AFFORD A MAJOR POLITICAL CRISIS IF THE CHANCELLOR ACTS ON HIS THREAT TO RESIGN IF WALDHEIM DOESN'T? CAN IT RISK BEING DIVIDED INTO TWO CAMPS, PRO AND CONTRA THE PRESIDENT? IT CERTAINLY CANNOT. ONLY WALDHEIM'S DEPARTURE WILL RESTORE CALM TO A TROUBLED COUNTRY."

BASLER ZEITUNG (LEFT-OF-CENTER): "KURT WALDHEIM HAS LEARNED NOTHING FROM EXPERIENCE--THAT WAS CLEAR FROM HIS TELEVISED ADDRESS MONDAY NIGHT. HE SAYS HE WAS ELECTED BY A MAJORITY OF AUSTRIANS; QUITE TRUE, BUT AT THAT TIME HE DID NOT TELL THE VOTERS THE WHOLE TRUTH AND HAS NOT

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APOLIGIZED FOR IT SINCE. HE IS DRAGGING HIS COUNTRY'S REPUTATION IN THE MUD, AND WHAT IS MORE, RISKS SPLITTING THE NATION IN TWO." (2/16/88)
NEUE ZUERCHER ZEITUNG (CENTER-RIGHT): "KURT WALDHEIM INSISTS THERE ARE NO GROUNDS FOR HIS RESIGNATION. STEADFASTNESS IS OFTEN AN ENVIABLE QUALITY IN DEMOCRACIES, WHERE PUBLIC OPINION CHANGES SO RAPIDLY. UNCLAS SECTION 02 OF 02 GENEVA 01540

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BUT IS IT REALLY RECOMMENDED IN WALDHEIM'S CASE? THE PRESIDENT HAS TO REPRESENT HIS COUNTRY DOMESTICALLY AND ABROAD, WATCH OVER THE CONSTITUTIONALITY OF THE LAWS, AND APPOINT AND DISMISS GOVERNMENTS. CAN AN ELECTED HEAD OF STATE STILL PERFORM THESE AND OTHER TASKS IF THROUGH HIS OWN BEHAVIOR HE HAS LOST POLITICAL CREDIBILITY? WOULD HE NOT BE DOING HIS COUNTRY AND THE CAUSE OF DEMOCRACY A BETTER SERVICE BY PLACING HIS OFFICE AT THE DISPOSAL OF SOMEONE WHO ENJOYED MORAL AS WELL AS ELECTIVE LEGITIMACY?

"CLINGING TO OFFICE IS NOT A VIRTUE IN ITSELF, NEITHER WOULD RESIGNATION BE A CONFESSION OF GUILT. TO PUT SOMEONE IN OFFICE IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE VOTER. THE DECISION TO REMAIN THERE IS A MATTER FOR THE PERSON ELECTED. A WELL-FOUNDED RESIGNATION WAS NEVER A VIOLATION OF DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES." (2/13-14/88) HENZE

ADMIN
END OF MESSAGE

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