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TEXT

SUBJ: AUSTRIA: RISING STRAINS OVER WALDHEIM. (U)
DOI: 17 FEB 88 (AS OF 1840 EST)
TEXT: 1. (S/NF) THE AVOWED INTENTION OF **KURT WALDHEIM** TO REMAIN PRESIDENT OF AUSTRIA, FOLLOWING THE HISTORIAN COMMISSION'S REPORT ON HIS WARTIME ACTIVITIES, HAS EVIDENTLY DEEPENED THE GULF BETWEEN HIS SUPPORTERS AND DETRACTORS.
2. (S/NF) AS THE LEADER OF THE COALITION'S MINORITY PARTNER PEOPLE'S PARTY (OVP), WHICH SUPPORTED WALDHEIM'S PRESIDENTIAL BID, VICE CHANCELLOR MOCK HAS CALLED THE REPORT A VINDICATION OF THE NATION'S LEADER, WHILE SOCIALIST (SPO) CHANCELLOR VRANITZKY DISMISSED IT AS AN INADEQUATE RESPONSE. THE CHANCELLOR HAS NOT CALLED DIRECTLY FOR WALDHEIM'S RESIGNATION, BUT HE HAS ASKED THE PRESIDENT TO CONSIDER THE NATION'S INTERESTS IN LIGHT OF CONTINUING INTERNATIONAL OSTRACISM. COMPOUNDING THE GRAVITY OF THE SITUATION, VRANITZKY MADE AN IMPLICIT THREAT ON 14 FEBRUARY TO RESIGN IF THE CONTROVERSY CONTINUES TO ABSORB MOST OF HIS TIME TO THE DETRIMENT OF HIS MORE PRESSING DUTIES.
3. (S/NF) COMMENT: THE HISTORIAN COMMISSION'S REPORT APPEARS TO HAVE DEEPENED THE RIFT BETWEEN THE CHANCELLOR AND VICE CHANCELLOR. VRANITZKY, HOWEVER, IS UNLIKELY TO RESIGN SOON, IF AT ALL. IN FACT,

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THE SPO MIGHT TOLERATE THE REPERCUSSIONS OF THE AFFAIR IN ORDER TO WEAKEN THE RIVAL OVP. ITS RATIONALE IS THAT THE STORM OVER WALDHEIM IS PARTICULARLY DETRIMENTAL TO THE OVP, WHICH CHAMPIONED HIM AND CONTINUES TO DO SO. EVENTUALLY, THE CONTROVERSY WILL EITHER SUBSIDE AND AUSTRIA WILL NO LONGER BE SHUNNED BY WESTERN EUROPE, OR DOMESTIC PRESSURE AND CONTINUING INTERNATIONAL ISOLATION WILL COMPEL VRANITZKY TO ENCOURAGE OR TO FORCE THE PRESIDENT TO RESIGN. IN EITHER CASE, THE OVP COULD PAY A POLITICAL PRICE FOR ITS SUPPORT OF WALDHEIM. MOCK, IN PARTICULAR, STANDS TO LOSE SOME OF HIS POLITICAL STATURE. ALTHOUGH THE COALITION IS UNLIKELY TO COLLAPSE, THE OVP COULD BE SUFFICIENTLY WEAKENED, SO LONG AS IT EXPENDS INORDINATE ENERGY ON WALDHEIM, TO ALLOW THE SPO TO PUSH THROUGH ITS AGENDA.

ADMIN

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DECL: OADR

END OF MESSAGE

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