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TEXT

SUBJECT: SPECIAL REPORT: WALDHEIM COVERAGE OF FEB. 21

1. AUSTRIA'S LARGEST DAILY "NEUE KRONENZEITUNG" (SUNDAY CIRCULATION 1,293,900), WHICH UNTIL NOW HAS FERVENTLY SUPPORTED WALDHEIM, CARRIED THE FRONT PAGE HEADLINE "NATION SHALL DECIDE ON WALDHEIM! RESIGNATION - YES OR NO" ON SUNDAY, FEB. 21. THE FRONT PAGE TEXT SAID: "THE DISCUSSION REGARDING FEDERAL PRESIDENT DR. KURT WALDHEIM HAS BECOME A CRISIS. THE CAMPAIGN HAS REACHED WORLDWIDE DIMENSIONS.... A CLEAR-CUT DECISION HAS TO BE TAKEN.... WE THINK THIS IS THE ONLY WAY OUT OF THE DEAD-END STREET.

HANS DICHAND, THE PAPER'S OWNER, WROTE ONE OF HIS (RARE) EDITORIALS UNDER HIS PEN NAME "CATO" ENTITLED "A WAY OUT"; EXCERPTS FOLLOW:

... WALDHEIM'S OPPONENTS HAVE MAINLY ONE CHANCE:

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WHENEVER JUSTICE STANDS AGAINST INTEREST, THE LATTER USUALLY WINS. WALDHEIM IS SURELY NO LIAR. THAT IS THE ONE ACCUSATION LEFT OVER FROM ALL THESE INCONCEIVABLE CALUMNIES AND FORGERIES, BECAUSE THIS PRESIDENT DOES NOT DEFEND HIMSELF ENERGETICALLY ENOUGH. IN THE PAST HE RISKED HIS LIFE BY GOING TO TEHRAN IN AN ATTEMPT TO RESCUE THE AMERICAN HOSTAGES FROM THE FANATIC "REVOLUTIONARY GUARDS," BUT WHERE HE HIMSELF IS CONCERNED, HE SEEMS TO LACK THE WILL TO CONFRONT THE DEFAMERS AND FORGERS EFFECTIVELY.... NOW HE PRACTICALLY STANDS ALONE, SINCE THE (CONSERVATIVE) PEOPLE'S PARTY IS IN THE PROCESS OF DESERTING HIM. BUT THAT IS LIKELY TO ADD TO HIS STRENGTH.... IF HE DECIDED TO LINK HIS POLITICAL FATE TO A REFERENDUM - AS WE SUGGEST - THIS WOULD ONLY STRENGTHEN HIS POSITION AS DEMOCRATIC HEAD OF STATE....

2. ALSO ON FEB. 21, THE AUSTRIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION ORF AIRED AN INTERVIEW WITH ECONOMIC AFFAIRS MINISTER ROBERT GRAF (PEOPLE'S PARTY) ON A SUNDAY TV PROGRAM CALLED "PRESSESTUNDE".

GRAF SAID THAT HE IS "VERY CONCERNED" ABOUT THE WHOLE SITUATION, BUT REFUSED TO MAKE ANY COMMENT REGARDING A POSSIBLE RESIGNATION OF THE PRESIDENT. ACCORDING TO GRAF, THERE ARE TWO FACTS WHICH HAVE TO BE TAKEN FOR GRANTED IN THE PRESENT SITUATION: FIRST, PRESIDENT WALDHEIM WAS ELECTED BY A MAJORITY OF AUSTRIANS; AND SECOND, THE PRESIDENT SAID HE WILL NOT RESIGN. THESE TWO FACTS HAVE TO BE ACKNOWLEDGED, AND FURTHER DISCUSSIONS HAVE TO BE BASED ON THEM. GRAF SAID HE HOPES AND WISHES THAT THE PRESENT COALITION GOVERNMENT CAN FUNCTION NORMALLY THROUGHOUT THE REGULAR TERM OF OFFICE, ALTHOUGH THE PRESENT SITUATION CONSTITUTES A STRAIN ON THE GOVERNMENT.

WHEN ASKED FOR HIS OPINION ON THE SUGGESTED REFERENDUM GRAF SAID THIS MAY BE POSSIBLE, BUT REPEATED THAT ONLY PRESIDENT WALDHEIM HIMSELF CAN MAKE A DECISION. WITH REGARD TO THE ACT OF STATE PLANNED FOR MARCH 11 IN COMMEMORATION OF THE GERMAN "ANSCHLUSS" IN 1938, GRAF SAID HE FAVORS CANCELING THE EVENT ALTOGETHER. HE STRESSED THE FACT THAT HE DOES NOT WANT TO EXCLUDE THE PRESIDENT, BUT THAT HE IS AFRAID SUCH A COMMEMORATIVE EVENT WOULD NOT HELP TO UNIFY THE COUNTRY, BUT WOULD DEEPEN THE DIVISION OF THE TWO CAMPS. GAF SAID THAT AUSTRIA CANNOT IGNORE THE VIEW TAKEN ABROAD, AND HAS TO STRUGGLE TO IMPROVE IT. ACCORDING TO HIM, EVERY CITIZEN - INCLUDING THE PRESIDENT - HAS TO STRIVE FOR A BETTER IMAGE OF THE NATION ABROAD, WHICH WOULD REQUIRE A DISCUSSION PROCESS THAT THE PRESIDENT HAS TO INITIATE VIS-A-VIS THE NATION. O'CONNOR

ADMIN
END OF MESSAGE

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