

CONFIDENTIAL

DOCUMENT_ID: 35107768
INQNO: DOC19D 00130022
DOCNO: TEL 005858 91
PRODUCER: VIENNA
SOURCE: STATE
DOCTYPE: IN
DOR: 19910611
TOR: 045103
DOCPREC: P
ORIGDATE: 199106110836
MHFNO: 91 4443796
DOCCLASS: C

STATE DEPT. DECLASSIFICATION REVIEW
 Retain class'n
 Declassify
Change/classify to _____
with concurrence of _____
after _____
EO 12958, 25X
IPS/CR/IR by SI Date 8/30/01

HEADER
PP RUEAIIB
ZNY CCCCC ZOC STATE ZZH
MSI2995
PP RUEHC
DE RUFHVI #5858 1620836
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 110836Z JUN 91
FM AMEMBASSY VIENNA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1296
RUFHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV 4095
INFO RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN 1178
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 0097
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS 1138
BT

CONTROLS
CONFIDENTIAL VIENNA 05858

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR

TEXT
TAGS: PREL, AU, IS
SUBJECT: SENIOR AUSTRIAN MFA OFFICIALS VISIT ISRAEL

REF: VIENNA 05462

1. CONFIDENTIAL ENTIRE TEXT.

2. SINCE THE 1986 ELECTION OF KURT WALDHEIM AS AUSTRIA'S PRESIDENT, RELATIONS BETWEEN AUSTRIA AND ISRAEL, NEVER CLOSE, HAVE BEEN ESPECIALLY DIFFICULT. ISRAEL HAS REFUSED TO SEND AN AMBASSADOR TO AVOID HAVING TO PRESENT CREDENTIALS TO WALDHEIM. AUSTRIA KEPT ITS AMBASSADOR IN TEL AVIV FOR SEVERAL YEARS BEYOND HIS NORMAL TOUR TO AVOID A DECISION ON WHETHER OR NOT TO RECIPROCATE THE ISRAELI ACTION. IN THE END, THE AUSTRIAN AMBASSADOR LEFT LAST YEAR AND VIENNA REPLACED HIM WITH A CHARGE, MIRRORING THE ISRAELIS.

3. MFA SECRETARY GENERAL THOMAS KLESTIL AND POLITICAL DIRECTOR ERNST SUCHARIPA VISITED ISRAEL MAY 29-JUNE 1,

DECLASSIFIED AND RELEASED BY
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
SOURCES METHODS EXEMPTION 3B2B
NAZI WAR CRIMES DISCLOSURE ACT
DATE 2001 2007

NAZI WAR CRIMES DISCLOSURE ACT
2000

CIA HAS NO OBJECTION TO
DECLASSIFICATION AND/OR
RELEASE OF CIA INFORMATION
IN THIS DOCUMENT

CONFIDENTIAL

THE HIGHEST RANKING AUSTRIAN VISITORS SINCE WALDHEIM'S ELECTION. SUCHARIPA HAS BRIEFED US ON THE TRIP, THE MAIN PURPOSE OF WHICH WAS A MUTUAL EFFORT AT REBUILDING BILATERAL RELATIONS. SUCHARIPA DESCRIBED THE VISIT AS "FAIRLY SUCCESSFUL" IN THIS REGARD. AFTER AN EARLY DISPUTE (WHICH THREATENED AT ONE POINT TO DERAIL THE TRIP) OVER THE LEVEL AT WHICH KLESTIL WOULD BE RECEIVED, DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER BENJAMIN NETANYAHU SPENT A HOUR WITH THE AUSTRIANS. THE AUSTRIANS SEEMED PLEASANTLY SURPRISED THAT THE TONE OF THE ENTIRE TRIP WAS FRIENDLY AND THERE WERE "NO REPROACHES" FROM THE ISRAELIS FOR AUSTRIA'S DECIDEDLY PRO-ARAB POSITION ON MOST MIDDLE EAST ISSUES.

4. BESIDES GOI OFFICIALS, KLESTIL AND SUCHARIPA ALSO MET WITH OPPOSITION POLITICIANS (PERES AND RABIN) AND WITH PALESTINIANS. THEY GOT A FULL DOSE OF THE OFFICIAL GOI POSITION ON THE STATE OF THE PEACE PROCESS, BUT THEY FEEL THEY ALSO GOT A FEEL FOR PALESTINIAN CONCERNS. IN FACT, SUCHARIPA SUGGESTED THAT THE AUSTRIANS CAME AWAY FROM THE VISIT WITH EVEN MORE SYMPATHY THAN BEFORE FOR THE PALESTINIAN CAUSE.

5. A CONTACT IN THE ISRAELI EMBASSY HERE HAS ALSO DESCRIBED THE KLESTIL VISIT AS SUCCESSFUL. HE SAID THAT BOTH ISRAEL AND AUSTRIA ARE TRYING TO IMPROVE RELATIONS, THE LATTER IN ORDER TO CLAIM MORE CREDIBLY AN EVEN-HANDED POLICY TOWARD THE MIDDLE EAST. ACCORDING TO THE ISRAELI, THE PLANNING FOR THIS TRIP BEGAN WHEN AUSTRIA SPOKE OUT EARLIER AND MORE STRONGLY AGAINST THE IRAQ SCUD MISSILE ATTACKS ON ISRAEL THAN MOST EUROPEANS. THE ISRAELIS TOOK THIS AS A SIGN OF A DESIRE FOR IMPROVED RELATIONS AND SENT A MID-LEVEL MFA OFFICIAL TO VIENNA SEVERAL WEEKS AGO. THE NEXT STEP WAS THE AUSTRIAN PROPOSAL FOR A KLESTIL VISIT. OUR ISRAELI CONTACT ALSO SPOKE FAVORABLY OF THE ATMOSPHERICS OF THE TRIP, AND HE MENTIONED AUSTRIAN EFFORTS, AS THE CURRENT EFTA CHAIRMAN, TO WORK OUT AN EFTA-ISRAEL ECONOMIC AGREEMENT.

6. COMMENT. DEEP SUSPICIONS REMAIN ON BOTH SIDES IN THE AUSTRIAN-ISRAELI RELATIONSHIP. FOR MANY ISRAELIS, KURT WALDHEIM AS AUSTRIAN PRESIDENT IS SYMPTOMATIC OF A COUNTRY WHICH HAS REFUSED TO FACE UP TO ITS NAZI PAST; THEY ALSO SEE AUSTRIA'S PRO-ARAB BIAS IN THE SAME LIGHT. MANY AUSTRIANS, NOT LEAST IN THE FOREIGN MINISTRY, SYMPATHIZE WITH THE PALESTINIANS FOR THEIR OWN SAKE AND THUS WITH THEIR ARAB SUPPORTERS. ISRAEL EARNED A GOOD DEAL OF GENUINE SYMPATHY IN AUSTRIA DURING THE GULF WAR, AND THERE IS A GOOD PROSPECT THAT WALDHEIM WILL NO LONGER BE PRESIDENT WHEN HIS TERM ENDS NEXT YEAR. THERE IS THUS SOME BASIS FOR AN IMPROVEMENT IN RELATIONS. THE KLESTIL TRIP WAS A STEP IN THAT DIRECTION, BUT THERE IS STILL A LONG WAY TO GO.
HUFFINGTON

CONFIDENTIAL

ADMIN
END OF MESSAGE

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

Page 3