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SUBJECT: ISRAELI AMBASSADOR COMMENTS ON WALDHEIM AND THE ABSENCE
OF ANTI-SEMITISM IN AUSTRIA

1. CONFIDENTIAL -- ENTIRE TEXT.

2. SUMMARY: ISRAEL'S AMBASSADOR TO VIENNA DOES NOT KNOW WHY THE
VATICAN HONORED KURT WALDHEIM. HE IS STRUCK BY THE ABSENCE OF
ANTI-SEMITISM IN AUSTRIA. END SUMMARY.

ISRAEL SURPRISED

3. ISRAEL'S AMBASSADOR TO VIENNA, YOSEF GOVRIN, COMMENTED
PRIVATELY ON AUGUST 12 THAT THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT WAS "SURPRISED"
BY THE VATICAN'S AWARD TO FORMER SECRETARY GENERAL AND FORMER
PRESIDENT KURT WALDHEIM. GOVRIN EXPLAINED THAT THE PAPAL NUNCIO IN
ISRAEL WAS ASKED TO EXPLAIN, BUT THAT HE HIMSELF HAD NOT TALKED
WITH THE PAPAL NUNCIO IN VIENNA. HE NOTED THAT PRESENTING THE
AWARD MAY HAVE BEEN INTENDED TO PARALLEL THE HONOR EXTENDED TO

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GERMANY'S PRESIDENT VON WEIZSACKER, BUT THE ANALOGY WAS FALSE. GOVRIN WONDERED WHY THE PRESENTATION CAME YEARS AFTER WALDHEIM RELINQUISHED THE AUSTRIAN PRESIDENCY, AND NOTED THAT THE AUSTRIAN MEDIA HAD PLAYED DOWN THE AWARD -- A POSITIVE SIGN, HE CONCLUDED.

4. GOVRIN EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE AUSTRIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY HAD ATTEMPTED TO INTERPRET THE AWARD AS TREATING WALDHEIM GENEROUSLY BECAUSE HE WAS "AN OLD MAN." FROM GOVRIN'S PERSPECTIVE THIS OBSCURED THE REAL ISSUE, WHICH IS NOT SIMPLY WALDHEIM'S WAR RECORD, BUT HIS IMAGE THROUGHOUT THE WORLD AS SOMEONE WHO ATTEMPTED TO HIDE HIS ROLE IN THE WAR. AGAIN CHARACTERIZING ISRAEL'S REACTION AS ONE OF SURPRISE, GOVRIN NOTED THAT GIVEN HIS OWN EXPERIENCE AS A WITNESS TO THE HOLOCAUST, THE POPE SHOULD HAVE BEEN MORE "SENSITIVE." GOVRIN NOTED THAT THE PUBLIC DID NOT DISTINGUISH WALDHEIM FROM AUSTRIA, AND THAT FOREIGN MINISTER MOCK NEEDED TO UNDERSTAND THAT ANTI-WALDHEIM PRESS REPORTS WERE ANTI-AUSTRIAN REPORTS WHICH FED IMAGES OF AUSTRIA AS ANTI-SEMITIC.

5. CONTINUING, GOVRIN RECALLED THAT IT HAD BEEN FM MOCK WHO NOMINATED WALDHEIM FOR THE PRESIDENCY, AND THUS MOCK HAD TAKEN THE DEBACLE OF WALDHEIM'S ELECTION AND PRESIDENCY TO HEART. THIS POSSIBLY MADE THE FOREIGN MINISTER LESS OBJECTIVE THAN HE SHOULD BE REGARDING WALDHEIM. HOWEVER, GOVRIN EMPHASIZED, ERHARD BUSEK, THE OVP PARTY CHAIRMAN, REALIZES THE GREAT DAMAGE DONE TO AUSTRIA BY THE WALDHEIM EPISODE, AND IS TRYING TO OVERCOME THE PERIOD.

ANTI-SEMITISM NOT RAMPANT IN AUSTRIA

6. GOVRIN NOTED THAT THE INTERNATIONAL IMAGE OF AUSTRIA IS THAT OF A COUNTRY IN WHICH ANTI-SEMITISM IS WIDESPREAD. THIS IS CERTAINLY THE IMPRESSION IN ISRAEL. FROM HIS OWN EXPERIENCE, HOWEVER, GOVRIN FOUND THIS A FALSE IMAGE. GOVRIN UNDERScoreD THE FACT THAT NO ANTI-SEMITIC INCIDENT HAD OCCURRED IN AUSTRIA IN A YEAR, AND THAT THE GOA WAS ENGAGED IN AN ACTIVE PROGRAM TO EDUCATE AUSTRIANS ABOUT THE 1938-1945 PERIOD AND AUSTRIA'S ROLE IN THE HOLOCAUST. GOVRIN SPOKE IN COMPLIMENTARY TERMS ABOUT THE CHANCELLOR AND THE EDUCATION MINISTER, BOTH OF WHOM TALK OPENLY AND DIRECTLY OF THE AUSTRIAN ROLE IN THE PERIOD AND BOTH OF WHOM URGE AUSTRIANS TO ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES AND GUILT FOR THE EVENTS OF THE ERA.

7. GOVRIN CONTINUED THAT PARLIAMENT HAS ADOPTED STRINGENT LAWS AGAINST NEO-NAZI ACTIVITIES, AND THAT THE COURTS ROUTINELY IMPOSE HAQRSH SENTENCES WHEN CASES COME TO TRIAL. AS FAR AS GOVRIN COULD SEE, IT IS "CLEAR CUT GOVERNMENT POLICY" TO ELIMINATE ANTI-SEMITISM. HE ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT THIS DOES NOT MEAN THERE ARE NOT INDIVIDUALS WHO HARBOR SUCH FEELINGS. THE AMBASSADOR NOTED THAT THE BOMB ATTACK ON MAYOR ZILK IN DECEMBER HAD SHOCKED THE GOA, AND ALMOST CERTAINLY, HAD NEGATED EVEN THE REMOTE POSSIBILITY OF FPO ASSOCIATION WITH THE GOVERNMENT, DESPITE THE FACT THE FPO WAS NOT IMPLICATED IN EXTREMIST VIOLENCE. THE AMBASSADOR DESCRIBED THE MAYOR AS A BRAVE MAN, AND ONE WHO IS TRYING HARD TO REPAIR THE IMAGE OF AUSTRIA. HE NOTED THE ACTIVE ROLE THE MAYOR HAS TAKEN IN ESTABLISHING THE JEWISH MUSEUM IN VIENNA AND IN CHAMPIONING TOLERANCE IN THE CITY.

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NOSTALGIA FOR THE JEWISH HERITAGE

8. GOVRIN SPOKE OF HIS OWN IMPRESSIONS AS THE FIRST ISRAELI AMBASSADOR FOLLOWING THE WALDHEIM PRESIDENCY, NOTING THAT AN ATTITUDE, WHICH COULD ALMOST BE DESCRIBED AS NOSTALGIA, EXISTED ABOUT THE JEWISH CONTRIBUTIONS TO AUSTRIAN CULTURE. HE POINTED TO THE MUSEUMS MAINTAINED IN VARIOUS LOCATIONS IN AUSTRIA, INCLUDING VIENNA AND EISENSTADT, NOTING THAT THE NOSTALGIA WENT FAR BEYOND REFERENCES TO FREUD, AND INTO ACADEMIC SEMINARS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. SPECIFICALLY HE CITED THE ST. POLTEN INSTITUTE FOR JEWISH HISTORY ESTABLISHED THREE YEARS AGO, MINISTER SCHOLTEN'S PRESIDENCY OF THE SECOND GENERATION OF HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS ORGANIZATION, A TEXTBOOK REVISION COMMISSION, AND THE TEACHING PROGRAM IN THE SCHOOLS.

9. GOVRIN BEMOANED THE FACT THE GOVERNMENT OF ISRAEL COULD NOT FIND SUFFICIENT NUMBERS OF TEACHERS TO FULFILL GOA REQUESTS FOR AUSTRIAN SCHOOLS. HE NOTED THAT HIS EMBASSY FIELDDED NUMEROUS REQUESTS FROM THEOLOGICAL SEMINARIES FOR INSTRUCTION IN JUDAISM AND JEWISH CULTURE. HE ATTRIBUTED THIS RECEPTIVITY TO THE TONE SET BY AUSTRIAN CARDINALS KOENIG AND GRUENER, AND TO THE POLICY OF THE GOA.

10. IN PASSING, GOVRIN SAID PRESIDENT KLESTIL WOULD VISIT ISRAEL IN NOVEMBER. CORBETT

ADMIN
END OF MESSAGE

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