

Eye on Washington by Nicholas F. Benton

Austrian lawmakers defend Waldheim

Two leaders of the Volkspartei, the conservative wing of the ruling coalition in Austria, granted an exclusive interview to *EIR* during a visit to Washington April 8 aimed at improving U.S.-Austrian relations, especially in light of the U.S. offense against Austria based on false information about President Kurt Waldheim's role as a soldier during World War II.

Dr. Friedrich König, the floor leader for the Volkspartei in the Austrian Parliament, and fellow parliamentarian Dr. Josef Hocht, told *EIR* April 8 that the charges that Waldheim was involved in Nazi war crimes originated with his Social Democratic opponents in Austria, and have been answered by a thorough inquiry by an independent, international commission.

They said that a falsified document from Yugoslavia, published in the West German magazine *Der Spiegel*, has been discredited, and that *Der Spiegel* was forced to print a retraction. As a result, they said, the Waldheim issue has now disappeared from the headlines in Austria, even though the United States continues to insist on its abhorrent policy of refusing Waldheim entry into this country.

The two parliamentarians spoke of Austria's frustration at U.S. actions in this matter. "There is a danger to democracy here which should not be

overlooked," Hocht said. "When a people vote 54% for the candidate of their choice, and the U.S. ignores that in its dealing with the legally elected head of state of that country, then the people begin to think that democracy doesn't have any meaning."

Why the U.S. government, by blacklisting Waldheim, would so deeply insult an ally that stands on the front lines of the defense of Western Europe, has most leaders in Austria puzzled. One theory is that the scheme of former National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski for a "military free zone" as a buffer between East and West in Europe would run into its stiffest opposition in Austria. Although Austria is neutral, as Dr. König pointed out, it is neither indifferent to the East-West division (it clearly favors the West), nor unable to defend itself militarily.

Therefore, it is speculated that the anti-Austria campaign is aimed at stirring up Americans against any attempts by Austria to resist this "neutral zone" idea, which has the support of Sen. Sam Nunn (D-Ga.), and may surface in a major way during conventional arms control talks.

The campaign has included the disgusting U.S. coverage of the 45th anniversary of the Nazi "Anschluss" takeover of Austria. The U.S. media characterized the Austrians as eager to embrace the occupying Nazis and as full, witting collaborators in the atrocities of Hitler. When the Austrian ambassador wrote a letter to the editor to the *New York Times* to try to correct this distortion, the *Times* refused to print it.

Dr. König and Dr. Hocht said that, in reality, the family of President Waldheim was distrusted and harassed by the Nazis. Hocht, who comes from the same district as Waldheim, gave a detailed account of this. He said that Waldheim was forced, as a very young

man, to join the army, as everyone was at that time, but had absolutely no role in Nazi atrocities.

More important, he pointed out, was the role that Waldheim played since the war in the name of peace and justice, including as Austrian foreign minister and as Secretary General of the United Nations. "It should be known to citizens of the U.S. with how much esteem Mr. Waldheim is held in the Third World today for his contributions," he said.

It should also be known, he added, what a prominent role Austria plays in receiving refugees from the East bloc. As the head of the Human Rights Commission of the Austrian Legislature, Dr. Hocht said that no fewer than 278,000 Soviet Jews have found their way to freedom through Austria, as well as 116,000 Jews from other East bloc countries. He said about two-thirds of these subsequently choose to go to the United States, and one-third to Israel.

SDI office grovels before Nunn

Spokesmen for the Department of Defense and its Strategic Defense Initiative Office conceded April 7 that the latest scheme by Sen. Sam Nunn (D-Ga.) to derail the SDI has been taken under "serious review" by the SDI office. The proposal, called the "Accidental Launch Prevention System" (ALPS), would fundamentally alter the first-phase deployment of a ballistic missile defense system, making it a point-defense against a hypothetical accidental launch of a single warhead.

Asked by *EIR* if they weren't worried that this was just another ploy by Nunn to curtail the SDI, the Pentagon's Dr. Kent Stansbury said during a press conference, "We don't want to say anything to aggravate Senator Nunn."