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C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 16681

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR

TEXT

TAGS: PREL, IS, GR
SUBJECT: EUROPEAN JEWISH CONGRESS MEETS IN ATHENS
- SEPTEMBER 5-7

REF: ATHENS 16501
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1. (C) SUMMARY. THE EUROPEAN JEWISH CONGRESS MET FOR THE FIRST TIME IN GREECE SEPTEMBER 5-7. CONGRESS OFFICIALS HAD HIGH-LEVEL MEETINGS WITH GOG OFFICIALS AND MET WITH THE PRESS OVER THE SENSITIVE ISSUES OF GREEK DE JURE RECOGNITION OF ISRAEL AND THE CONTINUING INVESTIGATION OF AUSTRIAN PRESIDENT WALDHEIM'S ALLEGED ROLE IN WAR CRIMES. EC COMMISSIONER CHEYSSON PARTICIPATED IN THE LAST DAY OF THE CONFERENCE. THE GOG WAS MORE RESPONSIVE TO THE CONGRESS PROCEEDINGS THAN MIGHT HAVE BEEN EXPECTED, SUGGESTING THAT THE CLIMATE FOR GOG DE JURE RECOGNITION OF ISRAEL CONTINUES TO IMPROVE. END SUMMARY.

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2. (U) THE EUROPEAN JEWISH CONGRESS, WITH DELEGATES FROM NINE COUNTRIES, MET FOR THE FIRST TIME IN GREECE SEPTEMBER 5 TO 7. CONGRESS OFFICIALS HAD MEETINGS WITH FOREIGN MINISTER CAROLOS PAPOULIAS AND MINISTER OF JUSTICE LEFTERIS VERIVAKIS AND HOSTED ALTERNATE FOREIGN MINISTER FOR EC AFFAIRS THEODOROS PANGALOS AND EC COMMISSIONER CLAUDE CHEYSSON AT A DINNER SEPTEMBER 7. A BROAD RANGE OF TOPICS WAS DISCUSSED, INCLUDING GREEK DE JURE RECOGNITION OF ISRAEL, THE INVESTIGATION INTO AUSTRIAN PRESIDENT **KURT WALDHEIM'S** WAR-TIME ACTIVITIES AND ISRAEL'S RELATIONS WITH THE EC.

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3. (U) ACCORDING TO THE SEMI-OFFICIAL ATHENS NEWS AGENCY BULLETIN (ANA), THE FOREIGN MINISTRY ANNOUNCED THAT PAPOULIAS' SEPTEMBER 5 MEETING WITH CONGRESS PRESIDENT THEO KLEIN AND RABBI JOSEPH LOWINGER, PRESIDENT OF THE CENTRAL BOARD OF JEWISH COMMUNITIES IN GREECE, WAS HELD IN A "FRIENDLY ATMOSPHERE." THE ANA REPORTED THAT AT THE OPENING SESSION OF THE CONGRESS, KLEIN STATED THAT:

- DISCRIMINATIONS MADE BY EC MEMBER STATES IN
- DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH COUNTRIES WITH WHICH
- THE EC HAS LINKS "MIGHT BE INTERPRETED AS
- DETRIMENTAL TO THAT COUNTRY;"

- ISRAEL HAD REJECTED THE PROPOSAL OF GREECE'S
- MILITARY DICTATORSHIP FOR FULL DIPLOMATIC
- RELATIONS IN 1971 BECAUSE DEMOCRACY DID NOT
- EXIST IN GREECE AT THE TIME;

- "ANY COUNTRY'S ATTEMPT TO REACH AN AGREEMENT
- WITH TERRORISTS IN THE HOPE THAT TERRORISM WILL
- TAKE PLACE ONLY IN NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES
- INDICATES A LACK OF SOLIDARITY AND IS A
- DELUSION."

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LOWINGER REMARKED, IN A Milder VEIN, THAT THE GOG "HAS SHOWN THE RIGHT APPROACH" TO THE SUBJECT OF DE JURE RECOGNITION OF ISRAEL. VERIVAKIS STATED THAT THE GOG BELIEVES "THIS MOMENT (THE CONGRESS) TO BE OF PARTICULAR IMPORTANCE AND HOPES IT WILL BE RECOGNIZED AS A MILESTONE BETWEEN THE TWO PEOPLES." IN A PRESS CONFERENCE AFTER THE PAPOULIAS MEETING, KLEIN CONTINUED HIS REMARKS ON GREEK DE JURE RECOGNITION OF ISRAEL SAYING THAT THE GOG NON-RECOGNITION "WEAKENED" GREECE'S INFLUENCE IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND GAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT "GREECE IS HOSTILE TO ISRAEL." HE CONCLUDED THAT IT "WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND" GREECE'S LACK OF FULL DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS AT A TIME WHEN GREECE HOLDS THE EC PRESIDENCY (LAST HALF OF 1988).

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4. (U) THE ANA REPORTED THAT CONGRESS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ELAN STEINBERG RELEASED THREE GERMAN WAR DOCUMENTS, ALLEGEDLY SIGNED BY WALDHEIM, AND OBTAINED FROM THE U.S. NATIONAL ARCHIVES, WHICH PROVE WALDHEIM'S "PARTICIPATION IN WAR CRIMES AGAINST NON-JEWISH GREEK CIVILIANS AND RESISTANCE FIGHTERS." REPORTEDLY, THE DOCUMENTS IMPLICATE
C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 ATHENS 16681

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WALDHEIM IN THE DEPORTATION OF GREEK CIVILIANS, THE USE OF GREEK HOSTAGES AND CIVILIAN SLAVE LABOR AND COUNTERMEASURES AGAINST GREEK PARTISANS. STEINBERG URGED GREECE, AS A MEMBER OF THE UN WAR CRIMES COMMISSION, TO SUPPORT THE OPENING OF THE UN WAR CRIMES FILES AND TO TURN OVER ALL RELEVANT DOCUMENTS IN ITS POSSESSION TO THE AUSTRIAN COMMISSION BEING ESTABLISHED TO INVESTIGATE THE WALDHEIM AFFAIR. LOWINGER COMMENTED THAT THE GOG HAD OPENED UP ITS ARCHIVES BUT NO INCRIMINATING DOCUMENTS WERE FOUND AND URGED THAT THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT EXTRADITE ADOLPH EICHMANN'S COLLABORATOR, ALOIS BRUNNER, NOTING THAT THE GOG HAD MADE SUCH A REQUEST BUT RECEIVED NO RESPONSE.

5. (U) THE LAST DAY OF THE CONGRESS WAS ESPECIALLY INTERESTING AS EC COMMISSIONER CLAUDE CHEYSSON, WHO CAME TO ATHENS TO ADDRESS THE MEETING, MET WITH THE PRESS TO DISCUSS EC-ISRAELI ECONOMIC RELATIONS AND THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS, WHICH HE SAID COULD NOT MOVE FORWARD WITHOUT THE PARTICIPATION OF SYRIA, ISRAEL AND THE PALESTINIANS. ON GOG RECOGNITION OF ISRAEL, CHEYSSON TOOK THE POSITION THAT ALL EC MEMBER STATES HAD GOOD RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL, BUT THAT IT WAS THE "SOVEREIGN RIGHT" OF ANY GOVERNMENT TO SPECIFY THE LEVEL OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS IT WISHES TO HAVE WITH OTHER COUNTRIES. SPEAKING AT THE SAME PRESS CONFERENCE, ALTERNATE FOREIGN MINISTER FOR EC AFFAIRS THEODOROS PANGALOS STATED THAT:

-- "THE POLICY OF THE GOG HAS ALWAYS BEEN TO
-- ENCOURAGE ALL THE EC'S ACTIONS AIMED AT THE
-- FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THE COMMUNITY'S TIES
-- WITH ISRAEL. WE HAVE BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH
-- ISRAEL AND OUR TIES ARE CONTINUALLY EXPANDING.
-- WE WISH A FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THOSE CONTACTS
-- AND OF NEW FORMS OF COOPERATION."

6. (U) THE CONGRESS CONCLUDED BY PASSING A RESOLUTION EXPRESSING ITS "CONFIDENT HOPE" THAT THE GOG WOULD SOON "REMEDY THE SITUATION" WITH RESPECT TO RECOGNITION OF ISRAEL. THE RESOLUTION

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ALSO URGED GREATER EUROPEAN GOVERNMENTAL EFFORTS IN COMBATTING TERRORISM, PROMOTING THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS AND IN PERSUADING THE SOVIET UNION TO ALLOW SOVIET JEWS TO EMIGRATE TO ISRAEL. THEY REFERRED TO THE FAILURE OF THE HOLY SEE TO ESTABLISH DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL AS A "DISTURBING FACTOR" AND REAFFIRMED THEIR COMMITMENT TO STRENGTHENING INTERFAITH RELATIONS IN THEIR OWN COUNTRIES.

7. (C) COMMENT. CONSIDERING THE SENSITIVITY FOR THE GOG OF THE ISSUES OF DE JURE RECOGNITION OF ISRAEL AND THE HARD-HITTING REMARKS OF CONGRESS OFFICIALS, THE GOG WAS MORE RESPONSIVE THAN MIGHT HAVE BEEN EXPECTED TO THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE EUROPEAN JEWISH CONGRESS. THE MEETINGS WITH PAPOULIAS AND VERIVAKIS AND CHEYSSON'S AND PANGALOS' REMARKS WERE WELL-COVERED IN THE ANA AND IN THE PRESS. ISRAELI AMBASSADOR TO ATHENS, MOSHE GILBOA, COMMENTED TO POLOFF THAT PAPOULIAS WAS "KIND, UNDERSTANDING AND SYMPATHETIC" IN HIS MEETING. GILBOA ADDED THAT WHILE CHEYSSON'S MESSAGE WAS "DIPLOMATIC," HIS ATTENDANCE AT THE MEETING HAD CONVEYED THE EC'S INTEREST IN THE RECOGNITION ISSUE. (GILBOA ALSO NOTED, AS AN ASIDE, THAT THE JERUSALEM POST REPORTED THAT EDGAR BRONFMAN, DIRECTOR OF THE WORLD JEWISH CONGRESS, REFUSED TO ATTEND THE ATHENS MEETING BECAUSE HE FELT PAPOULIAS HAD PROMISED HIM IN NEW YORK LAST YEAR THAT GREECE WOULD EXPEDITIOUSLY ACT ON RECOGNITION.) ALTOGETHER, THE CLIMATE FOR DE JURE RECOGNITION OF ISRAEL BY THE GOG SEEMS TO CONTINUE TO IMPROVE. IT IS PARTICULARLY NOTEWORTHY THAT ALL THE POSITIVE RHETORIC OF THE LAST FEW DAYS FOLLOWS DIRECTLY UPON PLO SPOKESMAN KADDOUMI'S SEPTEMBER 3 VISIT TO ATHENS (REFTEL). END COMMENT. KEELEY

ADMIN
END OF MESSAGE

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