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THE POLITICS OF ANTISEMITIC PREJUDICE: THE WALDHEIM PHENOMENON IN AUSTRIA

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Introduction: “Homo austriacus” agonistes

Gaiety, a clear conscience, the happy deed, the confidence in the future---all these depend, for the individual as well as for a people, on there being a line that separates the foreseeable, the light, from the unilluminable and the darkness; on one's knowing just when to forget, when to remember; on one's instinctively feeling when necessary to perceive historically, when unhistorically. The reader is invited to reflect on precisely this sentence: the unhistorical and the historical are equally necessary to the health of an individual, a people and a culture.

—Friedrich Nietzsche^{a)}

Karl Kraus, noted Viennese cultural critic in the early decades of this century, reportedly wrote in 1913, “Through its political disasters, Austria has at last caught the attention of the wider world. No one will confuse it with Australia any more.” Vienna's mayor Helmut Zilk, in New York to open an exhibition of fin-de-siècle Austrian art immediately after Kurt Waldheim's election in 1986, may secretly have wished his name were Bruce and have wanted to exchange his Klimt paintings and Veltliner wine for a boomerang and a can of Fosters. To his everlasting good fortune Zilk was spared the added embarrassment of opening “Dream and Reality” (*Traum und Wirklichkeit*), the title of the exhibition's Viennese predecessor: the scaled-down American version bore the more anodyne name “Vienna 1900.” Reality was definitely not for export.

If mayor Zilk was able to avoid a small degree of discomfiture, however, Austria itself has of late been spared very little. Traces of glycol alcohol were discovered in Austrian wines, millions of tax-Shillings were squandered in misguided oil speculation by a nationalized trading firm, and then Defense Minister Friedhelm Frischenschlager warmly welcomed home convicted war criminal Walter Reder, a man he termed “the last prisoner of war.” Such scandals had served to produce an unwanted patina on the lustre of Austria's international image, cultivated, as it were, to convince the world that Beethoven was an Austrian, Hitler a German.

The fleeting hopes that Austria could quietly corner the antifreeze market with its confiscated wine, with the revenue solve the debt crisis and quietly set about preparing for the Mozart bicentennial were permanently dashed by Kurt Waldheim's reappearance on the international stage. The controversy surrounding the past of Austria's favorite son and the ensuing international attention given to the inconvenient series of anniversaries (“*Anschluss*,” “*Reichskristallnacht*,” etc.) have created a public relations disaster. Images of cherubic young boys, Lipizzaner horses and delectable Mozartkugels have been displaced by those of Wehrmacht soldiers, antisemitic slurs and cheering crowds on “Heroes' Square” (Heldenplatz). The hills of Salzburg, once alive with the sound of music, seemed to reverberate anachronistically with the pounding of jackboots. Austria's rear guard international campaign of artistic self-promotion has done little to assuage this unwanted vitiation of Austria's good name abroad. The dream of what Austria once was has given way to the reality of what under Waldheim it appeared to have become. Basking in the reflected glory of fin-de-siècle artistic brilliance could not obscure the less exalted coeval features of Austria's political past.

It is not as though Austria's public relations peripeteia has not commanded the sedulous attention of politicians great and small. Former Foreign Minister Peter Jankowitsch, whose term in office set a record for its brevity, did his best to prolong his chances of serving the Socialist-Conservative grand coalition by summoning prominent Austrian historians to a campaign against a foreign colleague whose “hair-raising theses” about Austrian history---published abroad---did little more than summarize the findings of Austria's own critical historians.

Jankowitsch's appeal did not enjoy the success of Kurt Waldheim's earlier calls to close ranks against the foreign enemy, but hope apparently sprang eternal on the academic front. During Waldheim's election campaign, several prominent Austrian historians and political scientists put both their intellectual integrity and their political judgment on the line by issuing a statement disparaging ostensible interpretations of documents made by Robert Herzstein, the historian who had discovered the first substantial batch of documents related to Waldheim's past. At least one of the interpretations they ascribed to Herzstein, however, had been invented by the historians themselves. Shortly thereafter, several self-described scholars close to the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP), which had supported Waldheim in the election, offered their own modest contribution to Kurt Waldheim's domestic rehabilitation in the form of a book entitled *Die Kampagne*. Since then both the international historian's commission, established to investigate Waldheim's wartime service, and the solemn commemorations identified with the year 1988 have come and gone. Waldheim has been cleared of responsibility in the deaths of Allied commandos by the British government, but his chances of visiting the Queen have not improved. Meanwhile, attention has shifted eastwards in Europe and official Austria, more embarrassed than incensed about Waldheim's isolation but relieved that the end of his presidency was in sight, has been able to breathe a bit easier.

For his part, Waldheim, sensing an ethical desideratum in the life of the nation, has been devoting himself since his election to reversing the perceived decline in values among his fellow Austrians. As country after country withdrew invitations they had extended to the Austrian president when his name was Kirchschläger, Waldheim, as the West German magazine *Der Spiegel* wrote, "dug himself in." Conveniently displaying discretion in his choice of travel destinations, Waldheim has instead been exercising his moral authority at every local trade fair, garden show and memorial service that would have him. U.S. Attorney General Edwin Meese's "watch list" decision suggested that not everyone's memory was as short as Waldheim's own, and while the Pope's accedence to persistent demands from Waldheim's office to extend an official invitation to the self-described "practising Catholic," Jordanian King Hussein's defiance of "Zionist" circles, or even Waldheim's spectacular "rescue mission" to Iraq after the occupation of Kuwait, may temporarily have broken President Waldheim's diplomatic isolation, he has been unable officially to set foot in any Western European country during his incumbency. And if Waldheim was able to derive some personal satisfaction from his meeting during the Salzburg Festival with presidents Vaclav Havel of Czechoslovakia and Richard von Weiszäcker of Germany, two internationally recognized moral authorities, it did not portend a more promising travel schedule for the Austria president.

Today Austria is but a rump remnant of the once expansive Hapsburg empire, its cultural pretensions correspondingly modest. If, however, the sardonic acerbity of a Karl Kraus seems directed at the rhetorical flatulence of a Kurt Waldheim, then this is perhaps no accident. What binds the age of the *Neue Freie Presse*, arguably the greatest liberal newspaper in fin-de-siècle Europe, with that of its contemporary very pale imitation and legatee *Die Presse*, is not merely the selfsame land mass. It is, rather, an abiding political culture which has survived two republics and two fascist interludes, a "political philosophy of muddling through," as novelist Robert Musil called it, which has created its own distinctive vocabulary and spawned cultural stereotypes so enduring that Kraus's wit rings instantly true even today. Although it is more, it is also the culture of Herr Karl, a fictional but deadly accurate ideal-typical Austrian "little man" immortalized by the late actor and cabaret performer Helmut Qualtinger. Avatar of a certain strain of Austrian *Gemütlichkeit*, that nearly untranslatable Germanic cultural something so inadequately captured by the English "conviviality" or "atmosphere," Herr Karl was always

around: never quite close enough to be blessed with praise, but far enough away not to be tainted with guilt. This is Kurt Waldheim's Austria.

Yet the Waldheim phenomenon in Austria is not merely, and perhaps not even principally, the story of one man's cloying opportunism and his attempts to conceal or deny the more odious forms which this took. Waldheim's election campaign roused many Austrians from the slumber in which the historical fantasies of the post-war Austrian national identity had found such comfortable repose. The international attention given to Austria during and since the election has forced the architects and contemporary bearers of the country's post-war political culture to reckon with a history at odds with the official myth of Austria's collective innocence of a Nazi past. The response to criticisms from abroad was a predictably defensive one, while the idiom they employed, rebutting the impugnation of their past with a catalogue of their virtues in the present, was a familiar one. In the United States this was widely viewed as a particularly egregious moral delinquency; in the provinces of Austria as the legitimate indignation of an unjustly accused innocent, in this case both Waldheim and Austria.

The dictum of Fritz Mauthner, linguistic philosopher in Vienna at the turn of the century, "only that which you are able to express in words are you able to think," was given a manifestly Orwellian twist in the language of the Waldheim candidacy. Although voting for the office of president, Waldheim supporters understood the proper attributive adjective preceding campaign not to be electoral, but vilification. For most of the Austrian press the scandal involved in the exposure of documents casting light on Waldheim's elusive biography lay not in this past and Waldheim's somewhat labile commitment to the truth, but in the act of publication. Campaign slogans which had served as potent electoral assets before the disclosures of the gaps in Waldheim's curriculum vitae were transformed effortlessly into their opposites, and in this new form elicited an even more enthusiastic response. If, prior to March 3, 1986, the date of the first article exposing his hidden past, Waldheim received ovations as "a man who knows the world, and whom the world knows," after the disclosures concerning his years as a student in Vienna and a soldier in the Balkan theater showed that if he knew the world, the world certainly did not know and had not known him, Waldheim, newly packaged as *homo austriacus*, was cheered wildly by those prepared to declare, in a nearly xenophobic frenzy, "now more than ever," "We Austrians will vote for whom *we* want!" Using the slogan "an Austrian the world trusts," Waldheim and his campaign managers wagered that his international experience would redound to his electoral favor. After he had become an Austrian the world distrusted, this "great Austrian" became the symbol of a wounded national pride and the exponent of a rhetorical provincialism and primitive national chauvinism which belied the cool cosmopolitan image Waldheim had until then so assiduously cultivated.

The focus of the international media, as of his principal accuser, the World Jewish Congress (WJC), not surprisingly, has been Waldheim himself. What did he do and when did he do it? The apparent conundrum that Waldheim not only did not forfeit his support but actually improved his electoral chances not despite his past and his bumbling attempts to explain it away, but rather precisely because of them, has been distressing as well as incomprehensible to many inside and outside Austria. This stunned incredulity, however, masks a more profound ignorance of twentieth century Austrian history, and not a small amount of selective moral outrage on the part of those thus perplexed. Edgar Bronfman, president of the World Jewish Congress, came to recognize, somewhat late in the game, that the problem was perhaps not Waldheim himself but Austria, and the unanimity of the hostile reactions to his remarks suggests he was on to something. Kurt Waldheim personally, however, was almost certainly never a

“secret follower” of Hitler, as *New York Times* columnist William Safire representatively wrote. He was, and has remained, the quintessential opportunist, whose overriding sustaining thought throughout has been his own career. Waldheim’s very boast during the campaign, that he has never carried a party card, intended to stress his independence, in fact offers an ironic clue to his strategy for advancement. Irrespective of what authority happened to be in power, Waldheim followed orders, competently, if not necessarily with the passion of the true believer: as Waldheim himself claimed, he just did his duty.

Waldheim’s presidential campaign itself, moreover, encapsulated various themes of the enigmatic “*Lebenslüge*” of post-war Austrian political culture. A combination of delusion and deliberate suppression of unwanted and unpalatable facts which can be rendered insufficiently into English as a (mentally) helpful self-deception, here the term *Lebenslüge* figuratively refers to the account(s) of history which come to be seen as the national history, and the assumptions and values of a political culture which both inhere in them and which such histories “ground” by explaining these values’ genesis and development. In the construction and reinforcement of this specific Alpine variety, all major Austrian political parties, assisted by the former occupying powers themselves, have been complicit. The shared presuppositions about Austrian political culture, moreover, explain both the virtual political paralysis of Waldheim’s Socialist opponents as well as the profound resonance Waldheim’s crude appeals found among many Austrians, particularly those of his generation.

Yet however salient the symbolism of the images chosen by Waldheim’s campaign staff was, however little prominent politicians of the People’s Party as well as Waldheim himself shrank from pandering to the voters’ basest emotions, however grotesque Waldheim’s attempt to equate the violence of the German army against the civilian population of Yugoslavia with the violence of the Partisans against the Wehrmacht might appear, it does not ineluctably follow that this symbolism and these appeals alone accounted for Waldheim’s victory over his rivals. For the assumptions which underlie this view, that Austrian voters both conceived the election in precisely these ethico-political terms and that their votes reflected their respective moral choices, are difficult to sustain. It is the inability to understand this point which has led to such confused hyperbole in the discussions of the entire Waldheim affair.

That both Waldheim’s supporters and his critics pressed their convictions with equal vehemence was to have been expected. Not so, perhaps, that the moral vocabulary would be identical. In Austria, insofar as moral elements were introduced into the campaign, the terms in which these were formulated emanated from the organizers of the Waldheim candidacy and were obsequiously taken up by an overwhelmingly pro-Waldheim majority of the Austrian press. Indeed, the putative ethical arguments which critics in the United States and Western Europe arrayed against Waldheim were but a mirror image of the moral fortitude which sustained his Austrian supporters. This symmetry was not accidental. Though the discourse both inside and outside the Danubian republic stressed righteousness, the assumptions which underlay it were diametrically opposed, even if clearly symbiotic. Thus whereas abroad, “the Austrians” were frequently viewed more or less collectively as morally insensate reactionaries, in Austria itself the criticisms made against Waldheim were successfully portrayed as an (often hypocritical) hostility to “Austria.” If editors of the international press could metaphorically wring their hands at the Austrians’ tolerance of someone whose credibility had been so clearly shattered, politicians of the People’s Party wondered aloud why the U.S. government should tolerate the World Jewish Congress’ “defamation” of so respected an international figure. Finally, the fact that investigations into and the critical reportage on Waldheim’s past had spread to every major

newspaper in Western Europe did not undermine the Waldheim camp's claim that the extensive media coverage given to the Waldheim affair reflected the immense "Jewish influence" in U.S. newspapers. On the contrary, it was seen to prove just how far the tentacles of Jewish power reached.

The Waldheim campaign appealed to the antisemitic prejudices of Austrian voters, while Waldheim himself attempted to render harmless both Nazi crimes and the role of Austrians in their commission. Moreover, it was a fortuitous windfall from which Waldheim could only stand to benefit that the debate centered on Waldheim's service in the Balkans, precisely because the prominent role that Austrians, officially the first "victims" of Hitler, played in the war against the partisans could not but beget moral ambiguities which the myths surrounding the war in the Balkans bedim. However, the problems which in Austria go by the name of "coming to terms with the past" were not the only ingredients in the Waldheim victory. To those familiar with the attempt to remake the U.S. intervention in Vietnam into a "noble cause," for example, Waldheim's claim that he, like thousands of other Austrians, only did his duty during World War II should have come as no great surprise. Nor should the response which such an idiom was able to call forth. Still, the contest for the Austrian presidency seems in the end to have been determined by issues largely independent of Waldheim's past. By examining the election campaign in a more comprehensive historical context, it should be possible to illuminate the conflicting loyalties and political motives which inured Waldheim supporters to criticisms emanating from abroad, irrespective of their content; which made it less important to register a protest against accommodations to antisemitism than to send a message to the Socialist-led coalition government; which enabled many of those who voted for Kurt Waldheim to conceive of their electoral behavior as a patriotic act; or which made the entire discussion of Kurt Waldheim's military past essentially irrelevant.

It is this indifference to the appeals to anti-Jewish resentment, however, which makes the Waldheim election of more than ephemeral significance, for it indicates that the potential for mobilizing political support on the basis of such appeals still exists in Austria more than four decades after the end of the Third Reich. The ways in which antisemitic prejudice was summoned and expressed in the Waldheim campaign forms the principal subject of this book. It makes no claim to be an exhaustive account of either Waldheim's career or the election campaign itself, but rather to show how the events themselves offered the Waldheim camp a favorable context for their propaganda efforts, which were antisemitic in substance even if the language it normally employed was coded and allusive.

Antisemitism was not brought to Austria by German tanks, but had been a constitutive feature of Austrian political culture for decades. Austria's most prominent antisemitic politician prior to the First World War, the mayor of Vienna, Karl Lueger, received fulsome praise in Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, not for his antisemitism, but for his political acumen. Though Lueger's antisemitism, as Hitler recognized, like his politics generally, was highly pragmatic, it was his Christian Social Party which made antisemitism into a popular political force. This party is the direct political ancestor of the conservative Austrian People's Party, which supported Waldheim's officially nonpartisan candidacy. The once thriving Jewish community in Austria has been reduced to a few thousand. However, although few Jews live in the country, and even fewer are in positions of prominence (Kreisky, of course, is an exception, but his is a special case), studies inside Austria itself suggest what was confirmed in a particularly repugnant experiential way during the Waldheim campaign, namely, the existence in Austria of what has been called an antisemitism without Jews and without (acknowledged) antisemites. That Bruno

Kreisky, himself of Jewish background, could become a respected chancellor, is often taken as evidence of the decline in antisemitic attitudes in Austria today. Without wishing to equate contemporary attitudes with those of the 1930s, however, it appears that Kreisky's verbal expression of his own complex relationship to his Jewish origins provided a cloak of respectability to antisemitic utterances otherwise officially tabooed. This book attempts to trace in detail one example of how prejudice against Jews could be expressed and employed politically after Auschwitz. The construction, in other words, of a refurbished Jewish stereotype, a new "*Feindbild`Jud.*"^{b)}

It is important to explain how the various chapters of the book relate to this objective. In the second chapter, we survey briefly the historical context of the Waldheim election, emphasizing those elements of historical consciousness which are particularly relevant to the Waldheim campaign. Our interpretive look at the history of antisemitism is designed to demonstrate the plausibility of two propositions: that antisemitic prejudice historically was a diffuse congeries of beliefs and suspicions for the most part impervious to attempts to introduce sectarian "rigor," and that there is no reason to suspect that anti-Jewish prejudice (as opposed to discrimination) has significantly dwindled, much less disappeared, from post-World War II Austria. The point being that there exists a kind of reservoir of more or less firm beliefs about Jews which, under certain circumstances, might be tapped for political ends short of discrimination. Indeed, ~after Auschwitz an antisemitic politics per se is not even possible. Antisemitic prejudice does not appear as, and thus cannot easily be identified through, explicitly anti-Jewish utterances, much less discriminatory measures. This is so, I argue, precisely because of the negative sanction which in general attaches to such openly antisemitic statements and acts. The expression of anti-Jewish sentiment has thus been displaced from the overtly political arena, only to surface periodically at the level of public discourse, whenever a specific political context offers favorable circumstances and opportunities for the emergence of stereotyped anti-Jewish beliefs to "explain" a series of events whose actual causes were not known or at least not self-evident. Such discursive manifestations of prejudice are a sui generis post-Auschwitz phenomenon I have termed the politics of antisemitic prejudice.

After the historical survey in chapter two, we turn to the election campaign itself. During the early phase of the electoral contest, in which few outside Austria had shown any interest, certain patterns of argument emerged which helped explain (away) discomfiting disclosures---all unrelated to Waldheim's military service---by branding them "slanders" against Waldheim motivated by electoral considerations. The disclosure on 3 March 1986 by an Austrian news weekly of details of Waldheim's membership in two National Socialist organizations and his military service in the Balkans altered the political context of this debate significantly. One day later, similar items were made public by the World Jewish Congress and the *New York Times*, thus introducing an international and a "Jewish" dimension to the discussion. In this changed situation, one account of the origins and reasons for this ostensible anti-Waldheim "campaign" promoted by certain leaders of the Waldheim campaign organization and their media supporters, which could draw upon both the reservoir of anti-Jewish hostilities (our argument in chapter two) and the established argumentative pattern which saw only vilification in such inconvenient inquiries (our argument in chapter three), implied that an international Jewish conspiracy lay behind it. And this, it should be emphasized, unaccompanied by any open professions of hostility to the Jews as a whole, and frequently attended by its obverse.

However, the plausibility of the belief in an international Jewish conspiracy, the indispensable moment of this antisemitic *Feindbild*, could only be retained by neutralizing

information which potentially threatened to disconfirm it. In the Waldheim election campaign, this took two basic forms. In the first place, the Waldheim camp and most sympathetic media accounts systematically distorted the actions and views of the World Jewish Congress as well as the reporting in the *New York Times* on Waldheim's political affiliations during his university days and his assignments and responsibilities as a Wehrmacht soldier in the Balkans. Secondly, closely related to the first, with few exceptions, public discourse in Austria on the Waldheim controversy either imputed or implied iniquitous motives to the World Jewish Congress, on the one hand, and the *Times* and its journalists, on the other. By reading a specific normative intent into the World Jewish Congress' persistent critical stance and the *Times*' perceived editorial recalcitrance, otherwise comprehensible gaps in the detailed knowledge of, and mistaken assumptions about, Waldheim's past could be recast as well-placed tactical thrusts in a much larger common strategic offensive.

In my view, this conspiratorial explanation of the Waldheim affair could not be constructed and maintained from disingenuous insinuations or contrived evidence alone. The irregular and frequently amateur disclosure and interpretation of documents about Waldheim's past meant that there would be unavoidable deficiencies of reliable unambiguous knowledge. Given these conceptual and informational gaps, an account which provided an explanation of both the significance of the evidence itself and the motives of those involved in its disclosure could, in the given political and cultural context, command acceptance and retain tenability among a wide section of the Austrian public. It behooves us, therefore, to examine the structural determinants and avoidable failings which led to such gaps in knowledge, in order to demonstrate how Waldheim and his supporters utilized these first to establish and later to confirm the assumptions underlying the conspiratorial explanation of the "campaign" against him. Thus, in chapter four we investigate the issues raised by the discussion of Waldheim's past Nazi affiliations and his military duties on the basis of the most comprehensive information currently available. This chapter is designed to provide a guide of sorts through the bulk of inconclusive and frequently contradictory evidence about Waldheim's military past, which, it is hoped, will make comprehensible the allusions that turned up in the documents, statements and reports in the course of the election campaign.

Chapter five also addresses the debate on Waldheim's possible criminality, but in a much broader framework. One of the most extensively documented areas of Waldheim's military service deals with the fate of Allied commandos at the hands of Army Group E, at a time when Waldheim served in its military intelligence department. I have chosen to examine one of these cases in depth, both to suggest why Waldheim did not incur criminal liability for the deaths of any of the commandos which have been examined to date and, more importantly, to help clarify some issues which often remained obscure in the debate on Waldheim's military career. My evaluation of Waldheim's possible complicity in the commission of war crimes in chapter four is based on a series of assumptions about criminal behavior in war which are expounded in more detail in this chapter, by means of a critical inquiry into allegations made against Waldheim by the historian C.M. Woodward. However, I believe that my arguments have more than mere polemical force, for it helps elucidate the conceptual framework of the debate in 1986 on Kurt Waldheim's personal role during the Second World War. During his presidential election campaign in Austria, for example, the Waldheim camp itself sought to reduce all questions related to his wartime service to that of his personal guilt for war crimes, a charge far easier to parry or "refute" than allegations of postwar dishonesty. At the same time, Waldheim's critics (such as the World Jewish Congress) who were insisting on this latter charge were made to appear as advocates of the former. Such an amalgamation was plausible not only because of

the lacunae in reliable information, but also because the debate on Waldheim's past and its significance was more frequently characterized on both sides by Manichaeic certainties born of much conviction but substantially less intellectual rigor. A discussion of the broader issues of criminality in chapter five can therefore help explain both why public suspicion of Waldheim's criminal behavior could become so quickly established as well as why such suspicion was largely based on mistaken assumptions. It is, however, also intended to show that Waldheim's exoneration from criminal misconduct during the war merely initiates, rather than concludes the debate on the "moral" issues involving Waldheim's postwar dissimulation.

In chapter six we examine the role of the World Jewish Congress, using its press releases and the documents appended to them as our principal sources. By reconstructing in detail the WJC's disclosures of documents and the evolution of its views about them, it is possible to indicate the nature and content of the Waldheim camp's misrepresentation of the claims and criticisms---particularly on the issue of criminality---the WJC in fact made. The distorted way in which the activities of the WJC were presented in the Austrian public media also helped reinforce corollary stereotyped images about Jews which, we argue later, completed the antisemitic *Feindbild*.

A similar motive informs the analysis of the *New York Times* in chapter seven. It is not merely our task to contrast the *Times*' reporting with the way it was received in certain Austria public media, but also to examine all aspects of the newspaper's coverage of the Waldheim affair for mistaken assumptions or biases which lent themselves most easily to misinterpretation, or, in other words, which most readily appeared to corroborate the *Times*' alleged journalistic malefaction.

The details presented in these chapters suggest that even under the best of circumstances, the barriers to knowledge about Waldheim's past were considerable. The fragility of this knowledge, in turn, favored the adoption in Austria of explanations incorporating a theory of the international Jewish conspiracy whose principal virtue was the dubious one of simplicity. It was all the more favored, as the conceptual framework of the debate had been determined by Waldheim and his supporters, substantially limiting the possibilities for shifting the terms of debate in a way which would call these assumptions into question. Thus in chapter eight we examine in detail the mutations in public discourse in Austria during the Waldheim election campaign itself.⁹ We show how out of the interplay of accident, guess, prejudice and cold-blooded political calculation, the composite antisemitic explanation of the Waldheim affair emerged; in other words, we examine how the Waldheim phenomenon could make the Waldheim affair possible.

Our remarks in chapter nine should be read as an afterword of sorts. In it we attempt to bring the Waldheim controversy a bit up to date, and take up some of the more general issues posed by the Waldheim phenomenon.

This book, which describes what I have termed the Waldheim phenomenon in Austrian politics, is not the story of Waldheim's shifting biography. The debate on Waldheim also offered an important insight into how history is created and revised, and how and why one version of Austria's past conformed to and in important ways confirmed some significant shared assumptions of postwar Austrian political culture. Waldheim's own career before and during the Second World War must be examined alongside the broader questions of duty, collaboration, obedience and resistance under the Nazi dictatorship as well as those features of Austrian

Printquelle: Mitten, Richard: *The Politics of the Antisemitic Prejudice. The Waldheim Phenomenon in Austria*. Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado 1992 (Chapter 1 and 8)

political culture, in particular the traditions of antisemitic prejudice, which proved so receptive a breeding ground for the various Nazi messages. Only then can one explain how an official Austrian “history” became the actual Austrian *Lebenslüge*.

It is true that the specific contours of the debate inside Austria have a unique character, as does the past which is at the center of debate (i.e., the Nazi period), but the discussion of the broader issues can also help illuminate processes by which societies cope with the past through the creation of historical myths. Discussions of the war in Austria are frequently described as an “*Aufwühlung*,” a stirring up of the past, an expression which connotes the disinterring of long-decayed bodies, skeletons which are better left buried, or a rousing of the furies, the consequences of which cannot be foreseen and should therefore be avoided, rather than as a “*Bewältigung*,” coming to terms with that past, a word which, despite its difficulties, in this context implies an honest and informed retrospective look at how things happened and why. It is important to see how Austrians have “coped” with their past, but also to offer an idea of how it might have been different. The very vocabulary employed by the hardline Waldheim defenders, however, is not unique, and this suggests that the relationships between power, values, political culture and history, which the Waldheim affair illustrates so graphically, are problems which do and should involve us all. And in these matters, neither facile moral revulsion nor selective historical amnesia has any place.

Notes

i). Friedrich Nietzsche, *Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben* (1873) (Basel: Diogenes, 1984), p. 12.

ii). I have borrowed the expression “*Feindbild ‘Jud’*” from Leopold Spira’s book of the same title, *Feindbild Jud’* (Vienna: Löcker Verlag, 1981). *Feindbild* is a German word for which there is no real English equivalent. It is the image one has of an enemy, but conveys a certain fixity of the stereotypes which go to make up this picture, and a very strong negative connotation. I have chosen to use the German expression in the text rather than attempt to contrive inadequate English renderings. ‘*Jud’*, of course, is the pejorative German expression for Jew (*Jude*).

iii). The very nature of an investigation such as this necessarily requires one to examine how similar or even identical events or pieces of information were “handled” by various media and politicians in the United States and Austria, making a certain amount of repetition unavoidable. I have attempted to keep this to a bearable minimum, but it could not be dispensed with altogether.

All translations from the German have been made by the author unless cited from English-language secondary sources in which they had already been translated.

From Richard Mitten, *The Politics of Antisemitic Prejudice. The Waldheim Phenomenon in Austria* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1992).

Chapter 8

The “Campaign” against Waldheim and the Emergence of the *Feindbild*

The Contenders for Conspiracy

In principle it is possible to ascribe to nearly any designated agent the power to organize and carry out a major conspiracy. The political, intellectual and ideological traditions of a given culture, however, would tend to privilege some candidates over others. Theories whose remote and usually spurious factual basis could not claim at least some tenability, moreover, would tend either to find too little resonance among those in a position to influence public opinion or would be in danger of being replaced by others considered more compelling. Consequently, we should expect both the broad outlines of the nature of the conspiracy as well as those individuals or groups capable of assuming the role of conspirators against Waldheim to be intelligible to Austrians historically and culturally, and to possess sufficient explanatory power to account for further developments within this preferred interpretive framework.¹

The available possibilities for explaining a “campaign” that ostensibly had been initiated by socialists, led by an organization called the World Jewish Congress and promoted by the *New York Times* were thus somewhat limited.² Conspiracy theories of the modern age have tended to attribute events of international significance whose agent or agents are not otherwise easily identified to international communism or international Jewry, frequently both (or some appropriate substitute such as international Freemasonry).³ They were, moreover, seldom able to point to a specific program of action the conspirators were following, the Protocols of the Elders of Zion being rather the exception. This very vagueness, however, promoted the flexibility necessary to amalgamate otherwise contradictory aspects of reality without endangering the basic beliefs. Both the unbroken tradition of antisemitic prejudice in Austria, the re-educational policies (not) pursued by successive post-war governments, and the general non-confrontational approach of Austria’s political elite towards troubling ideological legacies, would all suggest that a Jewish conspiracy theory, even though articulated in a “post-Auschwitz” idiom, would have good chances of being passively accepted if not actively embraced. And even for those disinclined towards such simplified interpretations, it was at least comprehensible. It was, in any case, there for the taking.

In the hands of the Nazis, the conflation of the international Bolshevik and Jewish conspiracy was complete. Hitler argued in *Mein Kampf*, for example, that “in Russian Bolshevism we can see the attempt of Judaism in the twentieth century to acquire world domination.”⁴ *Der Stürmer*, which published articles such as “Bolshevism and Synagogue,” considered Bolshevism “radical Jewish domination.”⁵ The linking of socialism and Jewry was not, however, a German import. The Austrian Farmers’ League opposed socialism in Austria less because of political differences than because “predominantly Jewish elements are active in the leadership.”⁶ The belief that the press is dominated by the Jews has important antecedents in Austrian antisemitic political culture,⁷ but find contemporary expression as well.⁸ On the assumption that many Austrians also share corresponding prejudices about Jewish power and influence, which all the available evidence suggests,⁹ then the probability that the Jews would be seen as the author of and power behind such a “campaign” rises. The mere constellation of the “facts” of the disclosures about Waldheim along with the limited reservoir of apposite explanatory frameworks would seem, in the Austrian context, to favor a Jewish conspiracy theory even without any explicit references.

Some Austrian newspapers, however, did their part to firm up ambiguities. In the *Neue Kronen Zeitung* (NKZ), which functioned during the election campaign as a sort of self-appointed pro-Waldheim journalistic hit squad, Peter Gnam wrote as early as 6 March 1986: "Exactly two months prior to the presidential election, reports on the ostensibly previously secret Nazi past of Kurt Waldheim appeared in *Profil* and the *New York Times*, and, in order to make the timing perfect, the World Jewish Congress attacked the 'liar Waldheim.'" Gnam's colleague Ernst Trost, for his part, assailed the "poisoners" working "to destroy [Waldheim's] reputation. They were active in Austria and New York, the center of the western news. The *New York Times* was fed a story according to the motto: it matters not whether the charges are accurate, something will stick."¹⁰ Outside Vienna the picture looked similar. Willi Sauberer wrote in the Carinthian *Volkszeitung* on 25 March that "everyone involved in politics knows the channels through which reporters—from *Profil* to the *New York Times*—can be fed material to make certain it is published. Just as one knows what [kind of] power the World Jewish Congress represents, especially in the press sector."¹¹ Viktor Reimann, also of the NKZ, frequently alluded to the "World Jewish Congress and its minions in the mass media" [*ihm hörigen Massenmedien*].¹² In April, 1986, he asked what Israel Singer had hoped to achieve with the "threats" he made against "Austria" in an interview and answered: "Either he greatly overestimated himself or his congress or he wanted to show the world that Jewish influence, above all in the U.S.A., is so powerful that all have to dance to his tune, even when the attacks prove to be unjustified and way below the belt."¹³

The variations on the "Feindbild 'Jud'" which could be found in sections of the Austrian media in 1986 were neither wholly explicit nor even fully elaborated. The explanatory model advanced by the Waldheim spokespersons and articulated by its supporters in the press, ultimately grounded in a Jewish conspiracy theory, did possess a certain logic, which enabled those embracing it to make the revisions necessary to accommodate discrepant facts, but which, like all such models, was immune to falsification proper.¹⁴ One would in any case seek in vain for a systematic exposition of the theory: to claim publicly that "the Jews" were behind the Waldheim affair, or that there was an "international Jewish conspiracy" which controlled the international press, would ordinarily meet with official public censure, while the expression of too openly derisory attitudes towards Jews sometimes even has temporary political consequences in Austria.¹⁵ Many who aided in the construction of the negative stereotypes which emerged in 1986 would protest vehemently their innocence of antisemitic prejudice, and in some cases not obviously insincerely.¹⁶ The point is not to ascribe conscious antisemitic hostility to the politicians and journalists involved, much less to imply that their actions or words reflected antisemitic prejudice in any unmediated sense. It is nevertheless possible to suggest that some journalists and politicians actively participated in, while several others exhibited a studied indifference towards, the construction of this new antisemitic *Feindbild* in Austrian political discourse, since sufficient evidence existed to expose as contrived several of the assumptions of the Waldheim camp's explanation of the controversy surrounding his past. In this chapter we will attempt to reconstruct the various pieces of the mosaic which formed what might be termed the suppositional fundament of an international conspiracy theory. To a certain extent, the discourse about the "campaign" necessarily presupposed notions of a conspiracy. As the "campaign" against Waldheim became causally connected with Jewish organizations, the *New York Times* and the state of Israel, the way was opened for a battery of auxiliary anti-Jewish prejudices which both reinforced each other and ostensibly confirmed the initial premise.

The existence of a directed international "campaign" against Kurt Waldheim, later against Austria, as an explanation of the disclosures about his past, was an assumption which became a

fixed point in the Austrian media. As a consequence, the hunt for those responsible for this “campaign” acquired a new significance. Initially, the SPÖ was seen as the initiator, and although it re-appeared periodically as a mysterious ancillary power behind the disclosures, the WJC became the primary target of abuse.¹⁷ In the face of numerous indications that a “campaign” of this sort had never existed (and could not possibly exist), this assumption persisted, and was rarely questioned.

According to this Waldheimian view, moreover, this was not merely a “campaign,” but a “slander campaign.” If the allegations made against Waldheim by the WJC were untrue, then they were by definition slanders. Those who raised them, and *a fortiori* those who continued to repeat them, could only be perpetrators of a “slander campaign.” A number of strategies were employed by the Waldheim camp to make this corollary assumption persuasive. Most allegations were categorically denied. For some of those remaining, Waldheim and his supporters offered reasonable sounding explanations, but far more frequently the points raised by the WJC and others (who usually remained unnamed) were systematically inflated or otherwise distorted, so as to be able more easily to dismiss or refute them. The information which could be inferred independently from the documents the WJC published was also amalgamated with the WJC’s own interpretations of the documents or its related moral judgments on Waldheim, again in order to show that the criticisms were slanderous. With embarrassing if not necessarily inculpatory documents surfacing nearly daily, but with few around who could reliably interpret what they meant, Waldheim’s own carefully selected exculpatory details helped reinforce the impression that the WJC and the *NYT* were making charges which were self-evidently false. Yet Waldheim and his press supporters were also able to embrace figures like Simon Wiesenthal and Bruno Kreisky, authorities whose statements could be used to discredit the WJC while providing a kind of “Jewish” cover for those who reiterate them. Such a strategy was all the more effective when these Jewish authorities disputed accusations the WJC had not made. Similarly, through a bit of academic legerdemain, some prominent Austrian scholars were able to offer a certain respectability to Waldheim’s claim that the allegations against him made by the WJC were exaggerated, unsupported by evidence, merely untrue or mendacious.

Once in place, this pattern of interpretation heavily influenced the attitude towards any further disclosures by the WJC or the *NYT*. In the first place, so the argument went, those who vilified an innocent man placed themselves beyond the pale of reasoned debate. Additional charges they might make could only be new slanders and therefore unworthy of discussion. The words “documents” and “disclosures,” for example, were frequently written inside quotation marks, as though there were some doubt that the WJC was disclosing documents. These were coupled with the by then ritualized categorical denial or the invocation of the word slander or both.¹⁸ After 24 March 1986, moreover, when an interview with representatives of the WJC became known, which contained passages perceived by many as “threats” against Austria, the “slanders” against Waldheim were portrayed as having been coupled with an attempt to intimidate the Austrian people.

No reasonable person, according to the conception described here, would raise unsubstantiated charges against someone of Waldheim’s integrity, and would certainly not persist in them after everything had been cleared up. That the WJC continued its investigation into Waldheim’s past, however, showed that its interest in Waldheim was somehow not rational. Thus the search for the “real” motives which could explain the WJC’s behavior. The WJC’s spokesmen were described as dishonorable by some, mentally unbalanced by others. Above

all, however, their actions were explained by their thirst for revenge. This, as we will see, dominated the discussion of Israel Singer's alleged "threats" in the Austrian media. The fear of the power of the WJC at the head of the international "campaign," without which the "threats" against Austria could at most be a risible, if unpleasant, irrelevance, was also coupled with attempts to debase the organization and its significance. This apparent antinomy, however, was only apparent, for such a combined strategy enabled one to disparage the WJC for waging a "slander campaign," while erecting another preemptive defense against the charge of antisemitism. (Following the theory that one cannot fear an international Jewish conspiracy if one holds the supposed head of it to be so unimportant.)

All the while, of course, the behavior of the WJC was contrasted with various "good Jews" who were not criticizing Waldheim or who were attacking the WJC. The very fact, however, that other Jews were invoked to isolate the WJC suggests the prejudiced nature of these arguments. If the WJC had been seen merely as a "small private organization," as was claimed, and its being Jewish had been immaterial, why call upon other Jews to condemn them? The idiom used to explain the actions of Israel Singer often assumed him to be representative of Jews in general, or of at least unreconcilable Jews, and blurred distinctions between the WJC, world Jewry and "those outside Austria" (*das Ausland*).

Three days before the second round of the presidential election, Alois Mock, then chairman of the People's Party and later Austrian foreign minister in the grand coalition, appeared on the evening news program of the Austrian broadcasting service. He assailed "that guy Singer [who] travels all over the world and demands, with the pressure of the international media, that documents be examined in archives to which there has been public access for forty years. Some say, okay, we can look at them. We don't want to risk the pressure and the conflict with those men who were also able to count on the services of large international media in their unprecedented man hunt [*Menschenhatz*]." ¹⁹ Mock's comments were a fitting conclusion to the propaganda war with and against "the campaign" which he and his party had so successfully waged. It remains for us to show how he got there.

The Reification of the "Campaign"

As we have seen, the expressions "slander campaign" and "trash can campaign" had been employed as electoral propaganda by the Waldheim camp prior to the disclosures about his past. Although the SPÖ had made similar attempts to cast attacks on Kurt Steyrer in the same mold, these were slogans to which the ÖVP would lay exclusive claim. Inherent in the notion of "slander campaign," of course, is the assumption that there is a centrally directed effort with specific aims, or a "campaign," and need not imply any particular qualifying adjective. That such a vocabulary was readily available may have facilitated its widespread adoption after 3 March. Far more important was the compelling nature of such an explanation: the nearly simultaneous publication of previously unknown but nearly identical documents about Waldheim's past in Austria and the United States presumably could only have been possible by means of an internationally coordinated "campaign" against him. Once adopted, this convenient and not wholly inconceivable interpretive model was never abandoned, and determined the subsequent political debate in Austria on the Waldheim affair.

Die Presse, for example, wrote as early as 5 March 1986 about the "campaign" against Waldheim which the *NYT* had joined. ²⁰ After several foreign newspapers had taken up the subject of Waldheim, the definition of the "campaign" altered. As long as the "slanders," whether

about Waldheim's role in 1968 or about his possible Nazi affiliations were published in Austria (at least as the original source), it was to be expected that the ÖVP would ascribe them to the Socialists. They, after all, had fielded Waldheim's major opponent. This was echoed in several newspapers. Richard Nimmerrichter, one of the most widely read columnists in Austria, by making "certain campaign helpers of the candidate Steyrer" responsible for the disclosures,²¹ continued this line of argument even after it was known that the *NYT* had reported on Waldheim's past. On the whole, however, after the *NYT* itself had apparently joined this "campaign," such an explanation became increasingly less convincing. Even the most paranoid foe of the SPÖ could not seriously believe that the *NYT* acted at the behest of the Socialist Party central office.

Two days after the first article in the *NYT*, *Die Presse* reported on what it termed the "witch hunt [*Kesseltreiben*] against Kurt Waldheim." An article by Hans Wilhelm Vahlefeld on the same page carried the headline "Material Came from the World Jewish Congress." This news report clearly implied that the disclosures were part of a plan. "On Monday of this week, as reported, *Profil* brought Kurt Waldheim's *Wehrstammkarte* . . . on Tuesday, the *New York Times* published reports on Waldheim's presence in Salonika as a Wehrmacht soldier. . . The ÖVP can no longer believe this is mere coincidence."²² Vahlefeld did not concede the possibility that *Profil* and the *NYT* had carried out their investigations independently, but thought it relevant to report on the "lightning fast" transmission of news reports and photos about Waldheim to other U.S. and international newspapers. In an age of mass electronic telecommunications (which makes the statement trivial), emphasizing such a thing can only have reinforced the impression that the action was highly coordinated. In the event, for both the editors and Vahlefeld the "campaign" was a given, while the mention of the WJC as the source of the documents which the *NYT* published as part of a "witch hunt" against Waldheim suggested something sinister.

Two versions of the origins of the "campaign" were formed in the initial reactions to the *NYT* report. The first view saw the SPÖ as author, the WJC merely as the SPÖ's accomplice. Peter Gnam of the *NKZ* wrote of unidentified sources "in Austria" who had given "tips and hints" to unnamed persons abroad.²³ Undisputed was that it was a joint "campaign," organized in Austria. Gnam's aside that the role of the WJC was to provide "the corresponding [media] amplification," assumed that the organization was in a position to make such a contribution: Jewish power in the service of the Socialist presidential candidate Kurt Steyrer. Parallel to this version of the international "campaign" was the view that the SPÖ had probably instigated it, but in the final analysis was merely willing to utilise the "campaign," which it did not lead or control, for its own candidate's advantage. The *Wiener Zeitung*, for example, reported that the ÖVP caucus of the national and federal assemblies had voted unanimously and "filled with rage" to condemn the "campaign of defamation and slander against Dr. Kurt Waldheim" and had demanded that the SPÖ disavow it, which at least implied that the "campaign" was independent of the Socialists.²⁴

Peter Gnam of the *NKZ* entitled his column of 7 March simply "The Campaign." The ÖVP was out to catch whoever had "instigated the Waldheim campaign," which sounds absurd only in translation (The ÖVP, of course, had instigated Waldheim's election campaign [*Wahlkampf*], but was hunting those behind "the campaign" [*die Kampagne*]). Those responsible remained unnamed, for Kurt Bergmann, ÖVP member of parliament and self-appointed chief detective, had no proof, merely an explanation: "In such a matter," he was quoted as saying, "it is enough to light a single match."²⁵ The existence of the campaign was also not questioned by *Die Presse* when it reported on the same day that "the Yugoslav daily *Vjesnik* [had] joined the campaign against Waldheim."²⁶ Or on the following day, when it reported on the "Further Discussion about

Waldheim and the Campaign.” The paper quoted the second president of the National Assembly, Marga Hubinek, about rumors that Socialist Party officials had been involved in the disclosures, while reporters from *Die Presse* had undertaken their own research and discovered close connections between Herbert Lackner, journalist for the Socialist daily *AZ*, and the *NYT*. “Lackner,” it was reported, had “worked as a waiter near New York during the first half of the 1970s.”²⁷

At this point, Waldheim presented himself as a victim of a “campaign” but refused to be pinned down on the specific names of those responsible. Asked by a journalist of the *Salzburger Nachrichten* whether he thought the discussion over his past would harm his chances he replied, “Certainly not. On the contrary, it will improve them. The Austrians will know how to distinguish between an election and a mud-slinging campaign [*Schmutzkampagne*]. And this is a mud-slinging campaign, which has been in preparation for some time. That we know.” He was shown a leaflet which named the SPÖ as the orchestrator of the affair, and stated that although he was unaware of the leaflet, he knew “who is behind the campaign. I will not name names.”²⁸ By downplaying the role of the Socialists, of course, Waldheim had in effect named the WJC as the instigator of the “campaign” against him.

The results of an opinion poll commissioned by the *NKZ* suggested that the Waldheim camp had gotten its message across. Under the headline “Majority of Voters Defend Waldheim,” the paper reported on 9 March that 71% of those asked responded to the question, “Do you consider it a coincidence that these allegations were raised in the midst of an election campaign,” not unexpectedly “No.”²⁹ Though the very formulation of the question was bound to elicit the desired response, this poll did suggest that reporting which took the existence of a planned and coordinated campaign for granted articulated a widely held assumption. The same issue of the paper reported on the connections between Austrians and the *NYT*. Georg Tidl, historian and employee of the Austrian broadcasting company, but not an official of the SPÖ, was named as the source of the documents the *NYT* had published, though this conflicted with the *Times*’ own version as well as other newspaper reports. In addition, the *NKZ* noted that ÖVP party chief Alois Mock had been indirectly warned, by Tidl, that he possessed embarrassing material about Waldheim. These bits of information, which at least should have suggested caution in inferring the existence of a “campaign” of the nature previously reported, had no bearing on the journalists writing for the *NKZ*. Indeed, ÖVP party secretary Michael Graff was quoted afterwards, without any passages qualifying the assumptions of fact in his statement, that “the swine [*Schmutzfinke*] in the SPÖ are deceiving themselves. The trash can campaign is going to blow up in their faces.”³⁰

In his first major television appearance after the disclosures, Waldheim continued his strategy of making allusions to knowing who was behind the “greatest slander campaign in the republic since 1945,” but again refused to be more specific. He emphasized that he did not blame the SPÖ for the “campaign” against him, but would not identify the real culprits. In the context, this anonymity could only be the WJC and the *NYT*, which his outburst about the *New York Times* quoted above clearly indicates.³¹

If Waldheim knew the culprits, most other Austrian papers did not, and the search for the miscreants behind the disclosures went forward. The weekly *Wochenpresse*, *Profil*’s principal competitor, dedicated its 11 March 1986 issue to the “story behind the story.” The *Wochenpresse* journalists discovered several possible candidates for the person who really supplied whom with what.³² The essential point here is that such an earnest search for those

behind a “campaign” must necessarily assume its existence. This belief, moreover, was shared by reporters who attempted to write balanced reports. The *Oberösterreichischen Nachrichten*, for example, reported Kurt Bergmann’s accusation that Hans Pusch, an official in the chancellor’s office, was the person behind the “slander campaign,” as well as then Chancellor Fred Sinowatz’s denial. That there was such a “campaign,” of course, was never doubted.³³

The Waldheim camp appears to have pursued a dual strategy in the affair, in order to cover all bases. On the one hand, ÖVP point man Kurt Bergmann, under the cover of the virtually unconditional immunity enjoyed by Austrian members of parliament, continued to accuse Cabinet Secretary Hans Pusch.³⁴ He published a dossier of the evidence against Pusch and the SPÖ, and in the midday radio news program declared that “for me it is clear that the Chancellor’s office is in control [*Fäden zusammenlaufen*] and that the cabinet secretary [i.e., Pusch] is pulling the strings.” Asked for concrete evidence that this “campaign was begun with the knowledge of [SPÖ] general secretary [Peter] Schieder,” Bergmann became a bit vague. “For us, it is beyond doubt, and there is evidence from SPÖ circles, that in several strategy sessions . . . [it was said] that one must ignite this material.”³⁵ What is remarkable about this exchange is less Bergmann’s allegations than the questions put to him by radio journalist Fritz Pesata. Pesata never once asked whether talk of a “campaign” was perhaps misleading. Indeed, although Pesata himself retained a skeptical distance to Bergmann’s allegations, based as they were on very meager evidence, he conceded the essential point, namely that the various disclosures and interest in Waldheim’s past were all part of a “campaign.”

Mock and Waldheim, however, took some distance from this view. Mock, also quoted on the news program, believed he possessed “genuine indications that this campaign is being sustained in SP circles,”³⁶ which indicated that the “campaign” had an independent existence. On the same day, Mock declared that the new evidence of Waldheim’s membership in the *NS-Reiterstandarte*³⁷ would not affect his party’s support for him. Rather, “we will stay with Waldheim until the very end [*mit allen Konsequenzen durchtragen*]. Someone wants to destroy him with this campaign, but we will prevent it.”³⁸ Waldheim also “regretted” some of the more crude formulations of Bergmann, and said that he held himself aloof from such things.³⁹ This did not prevent him, however, from deploring the “malicious allegations” of the WJC, or describing the disclosure of the Central Registry of War Criminals and Security Suspects (CROWCASS) as “a new high point of the dirty campaign.”⁴⁰

On 20 March 1986, Waldheim invited a few selected journalists to a private briefing, called as part of a media offensive to counter the suspicion regarding his membership in the SA and NSDStB. At the meeting, Waldheim showed those present (no one was allowed to photocopy it) his own personnel file from the foreign ministry. No definitive conclusions can be made about Waldheim’s possible Nazi affiliations on the basis of these documents alone, but *Profil* described it as showing with virtual certainty that Waldheim had been “a member of the SA and the [Nazi] Student Union.”⁴¹ For Waldheim, and for the majority of the journalists invited, however, this document showed conclusively, as the *Neues Volksblatt (NVB)* wrote, that the allegations about a Nazi affiliation had “collapsed.”⁴² “Thank God the file was located,” Waldheim is reported to have said. “There it states in black and white that I was not in the SA and the [Nazi] Student Union.”⁴³ Dieter Kindermann from the *NKZ* repeated the official Waldheim line,⁴⁴ ditto the *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten*⁴⁵ and *Die Presse*.⁴⁶ Even Hans Rauscher, columnist for *Kurier*, who in general maintained a skeptical attitude towards Waldheim, professed his conversion. He “believe[d] Kurt Waldheim” when he said that he had never been a member of any Nazi organization.⁴⁷ The Socialist Party paper *Neue AZ/Tagblatt*

(AZ), which had not been invited to the rendezvous, reported, not unexpectedly, that Waldheim had “refuted himself.”⁴⁸

By 22 March, a broad consensus had formed among important sections of the Austrian press that ambiguities and suspicions surrounding Waldheim’s Nazi affiliations had been conclusively refuted. (By this time in the United States, it will be recalled, the consensus was that they had been conclusively proven.) Apart from *Profil*, which could be dismissed as a maverick publication, the SPÖ paper *AZ*, which had its own partisan interests in criticizing Waldheim, and the *Salzburger Nachrichten*, which was not so easily dismissed, there was virtual unanimity that documentary evidence proved that he had been a member neither of the SA nor of the NSDStB. As such, the “campaign” presumably had, or ought to have, collapsed for lack of evidence. Anyone who continued to accuse Waldheim of having a “Nazi past,” therefore, could only be acting disingenuously, if not simply out of malice. The date is also significant, for at precisely the moment when Waldheim and his supporters were celebrating their public relations triumph, the WJC was holding a press conference in New York at which it released a copy of the CROWCASS, which listed Waldheim as a suspected war criminal.

Just how important this consensus was for the Waldheim camp may be seen by its reaction to a column by Karl Heinz Ritschel, editor of *Salzburger Nachrichten*, a provincial paper whose editorial line has traditionally been close to the People’s Party. Ritschel had been a thorn in Waldheim’s side for some time. In the week following the first article in the *New York Times*, his paper published a transcript of Waldheim’s remarks to *Times* journalist John Tagliabue, in which the former conceded that he could have been a candidate member of the SA.⁴⁹ Two days later, it reported that Waldheim’s wife Elisabeth “Sissy” Waldheim had left the Catholic church in 1938 (the year of the *Anschluss*) and only rejoined just prior to their marriage.⁵⁰ Neither of these disclosures had endeared Ritschel to Waldheim supporters. His column on 22 March 1986, entitled “the candidacy of one without credibility,” however, written in the immediate aftermath of the press briefing of 20 March, unleashed a fury of damage limitation activity on the part of Waldheim and his supporters and showed that any talk of a uniform press support for Waldheim in Austria would be mistaken. “The issue in the ‘Waldheim case,’” Ritschel wrote, “is the credibility of a man who wants to be president. Waldheim has said that he swears never to have been anywhere; he gave his word of honor—he lied to all of Austria.” By his actions, Waldheim had “disqualified himself—by behaving in a frightening, yes, even childish way.” “Who can still believe and trust him?” he queried rhetorically, and concluded that Waldheim’s loss of credibility was “an irredeemable debt.”⁵¹

An Austrian newspaper which could not be accused of having any party political interest in Waldheim’s defeat published a searing criticism of Waldheim’s credibility whose tone and content were not essentially different from the “slanders” expressed by the WJC (or, later, the *NYT*). The danger which such a situation posed to a propaganda line which argued that Austria was under attack from a foreign enemy was apparent, and the reactions tended to mirror this.

In a letter to the *Salzburger Nachrichten*, for example, Waldheim referred to the “various pieces of evidence for the truth” of his statements and added that “not even the research of my slanderers in the central archives was able to turn up any basis for my ostensible membership [i.e., in two Nazi organizations].”⁵² Michael Graff of the ÖVP claimed to be “disappointed that such a respected editor could be so wide of the mark.”⁵³ Richard Nimmermacher of the *NKZ* considered Ritschel’s article “the absolute zenith of the great Waldheim cannibal feast.” Ritschel, “self-styled editor-in-chief of the *Salzburger Nachrichten*, has fired off a broadside compared to which even the attacks of the World Jewish Congress appear as harmless

curiosities.”⁵⁴ The SPÖ apparently viewed Ritschel’s article as a sign that support for Waldheim within the “*bürgerlich*” camp was crumbling, and hoped to use it to drive a wedge between the pro- and anti-Waldheim factions.⁵⁵

Whatever effects Ritschel’s arguments might have had on People’s Party supporters who might still have had open minds⁵⁶ were rendered irrelevant by the events of the next several days. These events, or, more properly, the reception of these events, which could not have been foreseen, shifted the emphasis and vehemence of the “campaign” discourse in Austria. Although at tactically important moments individual figures in the SPÖ continued to be blamed for the “campaign,” and though it is even possible for such a campaign to be dicephalous, the WJC increasingly became the principal villain, while the SPÖ assumed a subsidiary role. But that there was a “slander campaign” about, was never placed in doubt.

The “Slanders” and Their Function

The antisemitic *Feindbild* which emerged in the course of the Waldheim election found a convenient target in the WJC, quite in the manner of the traditional scapegoat. At the head of an international “campaign” against Waldheim and Austria, so the argument went, was an organization which was not beneath slander, mendacity, suborning witnesses and assorted other real or imagined sins. One of the constituent elements in the demonization of the WJC was to portray its continual disclosures of documents themselves as “defamation,” and either disregard or condemn the allegations they raised. In early April, 1986, for example, Peter Klar, columnist for the official ÖVP daily *NVB*, offered a particularly graphic example of this view. Although Klar amalgamated all Waldheim’s critics, his description of the “strategy” they employed indicated clearly the subject he had in mind:

The authors of this trash can campaign against Kurt Waldheim could have been taught by Josef Goebbels. He is known for his recipe: one makes slanderous assertions and supports them with documents which can raise suspicion but which prove nothing. These accusations are not made all at once, but are produced again and again as new “disclosures.” Now since the energy of the opponent is bound up with the need to disprove all the suspicions and accusations, the ever-changing group of accusers maintain tension and a climate of impurity until the entire contrived edifice of lies collapses. Then it is too late for the one affected, because a decision based on the propaganda has already been taken.⁵⁷

Apart from strongly implying that the WJC was no better than the Nazis, Klar also illustrated one of the most compelling weapons in the Waldheim propaganda arsenal, namely, the assertion of the self-evident absurdity of the allegations against him. The explanation of Waldheim’s alleged Nazi past was relatively easy. Not only could Waldheim produce his own documents that “proved” he was not a member of the SA, he could also rely upon the consensus of his fellow citizens that, even had he been a member of these organizations, the charge that he was a “Nazi” was indubitably false.

Waldheim’s service in the Wehrmacht, on the other hand, was far less tractable, in light of the streams of documents which were appearing regularly in several different newspapers as well as at WJC news conferences. The Waldheim camp was able to set the terms for the debate of these issues by itself preemptively introducing the question of criminality, ascribing this allegation to the WJC, and then demonstrating that the WJC could not sustain this “charge” with any evidence. The WJC refused to give up its campaign, it was argued, and carried it on with the most vile slander, namely, by accusing Waldheim of being a war criminal. This approach

also helped cement the corollary accusation that the WJC was attacking Austria: if Waldheim was a war criminal, then all Austrians who served as soldiers in the Wehrmacht would be as well.

One of the few uncontested assumptions in Austria during the presidential election campaign was that the WJC had branded Waldheim a war criminal. Scarcely a newspaper, not even *Profil* or the *Salzburger Nachrichten*, can be exempted on this score.⁵⁸ In Chapter 5, we were able to show how the WJC dealt with the war criminal charge, and established that, whatever ambiguities might have been involved in their choice of words, and however much certain newspapers in both the United States and abroad may have extrapolated on the basis of these, the WJC never actually accused Waldheim of personal involvement in war crimes. It did endorse the reasoning contained in the Yugoslav *Odluka*, and gathered documentary evidence which it believed corroborated it, but on several occasions the WJC explicitly refused to refer to Waldheim as a war criminal. In addition, we have shown that the issue of criminality was introduced before the WJC had released a single document about Waldheim. Campaign press spokesman Gerold Christian refuted thereby a charge that the WJC could not have made, and that Hubertus Czernin of *Profil* had also not introduced.⁵⁹ The issue of possible criminality was a legitimate one, since Waldheim had been suspected of war crimes by both Yugoslavia and the UNWCC. The point is that this question had no necessary connection to the WJC, and at no time did the organization or its spokesmen accuse Waldheim of complicity in war crimes.

Still, this assumption persisted. The speech given by then Austrian President Kirchschräger on 22 April 1986 was constructed in a way which not only clearly accepted this premise, but also defined the issues so narrowly that any further disclosures of documents could be easily portrayed as yet another slander against Waldheim.⁶⁰ The perpetuation of the notion that the WJC was making accusations it could not prove was sustained above all by systematically distorting the accusations themselves, conflating evidence and accusations, and enlisting the support of experts, especially the Jewish ones, and witnesses to Waldheim's character and army service. From the very beginning of the debate on Waldheim's past, inexplicable "errors" appeared in the reporting, even among papers whose efforts seem to have been sincere.

A report in *Die Presse* on the first press conference of the WJC, for example, took some linguistic and journalistic liberties which in the end served unjustifiably to discredit the WJC. The report by "ett." of a UPI agency dispatch transformed the statement of Eli Rosenbaum, then legal counsel of the WJC, that Army Group E had "supervised the 1943 deportation" of the Jews of Salonika into a statement that the unit in which he had served had "sent" them to Auschwitz.⁶¹ It was, of course, of little consequence to the Jews of Salonika whether Army Group E had actually organized or "merely" arranged transport, even if the latter would represent participation in a crime against humanity.⁶² Rosenbaum's remarks need not have been as nuanced as they were, but the rendering in *Die Presse* article suggested a level of involvement which was not part of the WJC's allegation.

In the same paragraph, "ett." reported that "on the other hand, the president of the Central Jewish Council in Greece, Joseph Lovinger, confirmed that Waldheim's name had never been mentioned in connection with National Socialists who persecuted the Jewish community."⁶³ Lovinger's statement that Waldheim was not mentioned "in connection with National Socialists," however, is germane to this issue on the assumption that only National Socialists were involved in the persecution of Jews which, even if Lovinger had believed it, would still not be accurate. The passage in the WJC press release itself concerned the involvement of the Wehrmacht in

the deportations of Jews, a fact which was not contested. It might have been of significance to ask how Waldheim could have served in Army Group E (which he confirmed) without having heard of atrocities and crimes against humanity which units under the command of Army Group E had committed. Instead, "ett." quoted a statement which was largely irrelevant to the issue and, by using the formulation "on the other hand [*hingegen*]," implied that Lovinger's statement refuted Rosenbaum's, in other words, a "charge" of a kind of involvement in the deportations that the WJC had not made.

On the following day, *Die Presse* published a report in which Simon Wiesenthal was quoted extensively. Among other things, the report emphasized Wiesenthal's information that it was not Waldheim's unit which had carried out the deportations. Since the WJC had not made this accusation, Wiesenthal's statement represented a clarification or refutation, not of an allegation of the WJC, but of a position ascribed to it by *Die Presse*.⁶⁴ A report by Peter Gnam in the *NKZ* had much the same effect. Gnam spoke of the "wild sense of outrage" over the "campaign against Waldheim," and presented his version of the background:

The *New York Times* had asserted that during the war Kurt Waldheim belonged to an army group which committed war crimes in Greece and Yugoslavia. Yugoslav partisans and Greek Jews [according to the *Times*] were liquidated. Waldheim has given assurances that he had never participated in such activities and also knew nothing about them. Thereupon, the head of the World Jewish Congress, Bronfman, spoke of Waldheim as "one of the greatest disappointments of our time, because he has denied all of this for forty years." Waldheim considers this "foul and deceitful." He was an interpreter during the time in question.⁶⁵

Gnam's distortion of the *NYT* report was too extensive to have been accidental. His formulation, "the *New York Times* asserted" misleadingly implied that the newspaper was doing something other than printing its reporter's findings. This consorted well with the portrayal of the report as part of a "campaign." The usage also implied that there was some uncertainty as to whether Waldheim had served in the unit, or that troops of this unit had committed war crimes. Yet Waldheim personally conceded that he had served with Army Group E, and never denied that troops under its command had committed war crimes. He merely contested his involvement or knowledge of them or both. Gnam's usage could only obscure these distinctions.

Moreover, both the statement Gnam attributed to Edgar Bronfman as well as the context in which it had been made, were Gnam's inventions. Bronfman's alleged statement that "Waldheim was one of the greatest disappointments of our time, because he has denied all of this for forty years," could not be found in any of the available materials. The *NYT* article does not contain this statement. Though the quotation in this form did not appear anywhere else to my knowledge, the context clearly suggested that it had been taken from the WJC's press release. There Bronfman was quoted of speaking, not of Waldheim's being a "disappointment" (though for Bronfman he clearly was that), but of having engaged in "one of the most elaborate deceptions of our time."⁶⁶ Far more serious than attributing the wrong word to Bronfman, however, was the impression which the placing of the quotation gave. Bronfman's statement, correctly or incorrectly rendered, did not refer to Waldheim's statement that he had "never participated in such actions," as Gnam's introductory adverb "thereupon [*darauthin*]"⁶⁷ implied, but rather to Waldheim's (wanting) credibility, i.e., that he had concealed his Nazi affiliations and military service for 40 years. Anyone reading Gnam's article, however, could only have concluded that Bronfman had implicitly or explicitly accused Waldheim of involvement in war crimes. The manifold inaccuracies that this article contained followed a pattern: they inflated the nature of the WJC's criticism of Waldheim and in doing so linked it to accusations of involvement

in war crimes which it had not made. From such information it is but a short step to the conclusion that the WJC was slandering Waldheim with exaggerated and utterly unfounded charges, and was being seconded by the *NYT*.

If papers like *Die Presse* and the *NKZ* were relatively unabashed in the journalistic assistance they provided to the Waldheim propaganda strategy, distortions of a similar nature befell reporters who by all appearances attempted to approach the questions without preconceived notions about what their investigations would show. Two journalists who then worked for the independent daily *Kurier* interviewed Johann Auf, a Wehrmacht veteran who had served with Waldheim in Arsakli. According to the headline, this one witness was able to explain “which attacks . . . are true and which are false.” Apart from making unwarrantedly immodest claims, *Kurier’s* headline had been formulated in such a way that virtually anything which Auf related about his experience in Greece could be considered a refutation of a “false” attack. In point of fact, Auf did help clarify some details about Waldheim’s service in Arsakli: he was the first to mention that the headquarters of the Army Group E general staff were located in Arsakli rather than Salonika, that Waldheim had been in the Ic department and that his immediate superior officer had been Lieutenant Colonel Herbert Warnstorff, not Alexander Loehr. On 4 March, the WJC presented documents which showed that Waldheim had served in Army Group E, and it alleged that he had concealed this service from the public for forty years. Merely producing documents which showed or suggested that Waldheim had served under Loehr in Army Group E cannot be considered “allegations,” however, unless the documents themselves are not held to be genuine. Not even Waldheim questioned the authenticity of the documents the WJC presented. The failure of the *Kurier* reporters to clarify this point could only have suggested that Auf’s statement had rectified an in fact non-existent false assertion.

Auf’s opinion that Waldheim “did not have a function which was even militarily relevant” was simply false, but no evidence of this was in the article. Moreover, the introduction of Auf’s story about the partisan’s cutting off the genitals of a live captured German prisoner, even if true, in the context could only have been read as neutralizing or cancelling out the atrocities committed by the Wehrmacht.⁶⁸ At the time of this initial interview, there was not enough information freely available to have enabled these journalists to check Auf’s statement thoroughly for accuracy. At the same time, the lack of virtually any critical distance to the details Auf provided, combined with the newspaper’s unjustified pretensions as to what the article showed and the fact that the article addressed not a single actual allegation the WJC had made, could not but have reinforced the impression that the charges against Waldheim were untrue. And those who make untrue statements about someone are slanderers.

The distortions of the allegations made against Waldheim and the employment of tendentious labels to describe undisputed facts which we have examined here, all took place during the first week of the Waldheim affair. The quality of the reporting in Austria, however, in general did not improve. This can best be seen by examining the round of disclosures and their reception between the 22nd and 28th of March. During this week, the construction of the *Feindbild* was able to record a major advance: now fear and resentment engendered by the “threats” made by the WJC against “Austria” were added to the dynamic of exaggerating and otherwise distorting its “allegations” or “attacks,” in order to expose them as groundless and their authors as shameless vilifiers. Again, with few exceptions, prominent politicians and representatives of several non-party newspapers helped the Waldheim camp promulgate its view, which in its broad outlines posited that Austria was under attack by a powerful international Jewish conspiracy, spearheaded by the WJC, against which only a united front of

all Austrians behind Waldheim could succeed. Just as the original “campaign” discourse could not emerge *ex nihilo*, so too did the imprecation of a conspiracy theory require the assistance of a series of coincidences which could be portrayed as confirming notions associated with an international “campaign” against Waldheim. Here it is possible to see how such a meta-reality was both a condition and guarantor of the explanations of the “campaign” against Waldheim.

On Saturday, 22 March 1986, the WJC held a press conference in New York, at which it made available to journalists the CROWCASS of 1948. This list, it will be recalled, recorded that Waldheim was being sought by Yugoslavia for crimes allegedly committed during his service in the Balkans. The first reactions in Austria to this press conference came the following Monday. The ÖVP paper *NVB* led the way. The WJC, it claimed, had accused Waldheim of “having been suspected by Yugoslav authorities of having been involved in war crimes in 1948.”⁶⁹ The *NVB* saw the significance of this “disgusting witch hunt” against Waldheim, which was becoming “dirtier” by the day, as confirmation of the suspicion of a coordinated attack. After high SPÖ officials had charged Waldheim with unspecified “memberships during the Nazi period,” the paper wrote, “at the weekend the World Jewish Congress pounced: Waldheim was sought, ‘suspected of participation in murder.’ Waldheim’s response: ‘A new high point of the mud-slinging campaign!’” According to Waldheim’s press spokesman, Gerold Christian, the allegations were “insinuations sucked out of thin air,” and clearly contradicted “the clear and objective statements of Simon Wiesenthal, Gideon Rafael and Schlomo Avineri, former general directors of the Israeli Foreign Ministry as well as Israel’s former U.N. ambassador, Jehuda Blum.”⁷⁰ It apparently bothered neither Christian nor the *NVB* editors that, of the four Jews summoned forth in Waldheim’s defense, only Wiesenthal to my knowledge ever made a statement about the CROWCASS, and he only on 24 March, i.e., after this article had appeared.

As the *NVB* had done in its report, the headline in *Die Presse*, “World Jewish Congress on Waldheim: Suspected War Criminal in 1948”⁷¹ also misleadingly signalled doubt as to whether Yugoslavia had suspected Waldheim. The WJC had published the CROWCASS, which contained Waldheim’s name. However, to have written, as did the *NVB*, that the WJC, and not the U.S. Army (which had compiled the list), had “reproached” Waldheim for having been on a list, could only make sense if the list itself were not genuine. Yet neither the *NVB* nor *Die Presse* explicitly challenged the authenticity of the document itself, nor do these papers appear to have examined the details of the list, what this implied about Waldheim’s earlier claims that he had only served as an interpreter, etc., all of which had been discussed in the WJC’s press release.⁷² In fact, no formulation in the WJC’s press release is factually inaccurate on the basis of the information they had at the time. The usage in both papers, but not only these,⁷³ implied that the WJC had once again slandered Waldheim by accusing him of war crimes, as the rubric in the article in *Die Presse*, “The Witch Hunt Against VP [People’s Party] Candidate Continues” indicated. The *NKZ* reported that the publication of the CROWCASS indicated that “the campaign about the alleged NS-Past of Kurt Waldheim had reached a new negative high point,” in one fell swoop linking this controversy about Waldheim’s war service to the debate over his former Nazi affiliations and positing the absurdity of both. The paper concluded its coverage by quoting Waldheim as saying that he “would not be bullied by this psycho-terror.”⁷⁴

The Austrian daily *Kurier* did report the contents of the CROWCASS, and distinguished its contents from the WJC’s own allegations. However, the emphasis in the reporting was more on Waldheim’s personal political response than on the possible legal implications of the list. The banner headline of the 24 March 1986 edition of the paper read “Waldheim: ‘I’m not giving up!’” and mentioned in smaller print both that Yugoslavia had placed him on a list of war criminals

and that Waldheim suspected that all officers of his unit had been placed on the list en masse.⁷⁵ On page two, Hans Rauscher wrote an article with the headline, “Waldheim Placed on War Criminals List in 1948—Significance Unclear,”⁷⁶ to which was added, “Document published in New York.” In this report, Rauscher explained the background of the CROWCASS list. His description of the list was by and large accurate, although he stated as fact that “in 1944/45 [Waldheim] had served as a staff officer in the Ic (Abwehr) department of the general staff of Army Group E,” which was not entirely accurate. What was noteworthy about this article was Rauscher’s effortless endorsement of Waldheim’s own line of argument under the guise of independent reporting.

It will be recalled that the headline in *Kurier* noted that Waldheim had suspected that all officers of his unit had been placed on the list. Rauscher wrote that “it is, however, questionable whether this registration on a list means anything. It is entirely possible that the Yugoslavs simply entered all officers of Loehr’s staff or even other Wehrmacht units as a group on a list of those sought and then gave it to the Americans or the U.N. . . . Waldheim himself also considers this a possible explanation.” Rauscher’s guess, portrayed here as an independent opinion with which Waldheim agreed, could have been checked easily enough. Since *Kurier* itself knew of at least one other officer on the general staff, Waldheim’s immediate superior Herbert Warnstorff,⁷⁷ a quick glance at the CROWCASS under the letter “W” (the names were listed alphabetically) could have determined whether indeed all officers had been placed wholesale on the list. Warnstorff’s name was not on it.

In the end, the only point Rauscher considered relevant was one which repeated Waldheim’s own view. Yet if Rauscher’s diminution of the significance of this listing was based upon a surmise which could be (and in this case turned out to be) false, then presumably the charges themselves would have to be taken far more seriously. Rauscher did not concede the possibility that his guess could be checked and thereby be completely wrong,⁷⁸ nor did he examine any of the charges made in the document itself. These journalistic lapses and *Kurier*’s implicit endorsement of Waldheim’s claim that the charges were “absurd,” made forming an opinion on the issues independently of the Waldheim explanation virtually impossible. All the more, as the same issue *Kurier* published an interview with Waldheim in which his remarks “what the World Jewish Congress is doing is absurd, an effrontery, groundless, it is impudence now to want to brand me as a war criminal,” were presented without any kind of qualifying remarks, although it was clear from *Kurier*’s own report that Waldheim’s attack on the WJC was groundless.⁷⁹

ÖVP politicians also assisted in the amalgamation of charges made in a U.S. Army document, whose authenticity was not questioned, with the WJC’s publication of the document itself. Then party head Alois Mock was quoted as saying, with reference to the disclosure of the documents, that “the defamation campaign against Waldheim has assumed the character of a man hunt.”⁸⁰ Michael Graff had gone on the offensive early. Appearing on the televised *Pressestunde* on Sunday, 23 March, Graff denounced the “over-agitated attacks” of the WJC and warned that their behavior “could release emotions in Austria which no one wants,” an implied threat that if the WJC did not stop, it must reckon with a wave of antisemitism in Austria. Apart from his assumption that the behavior of individual Jews could be responsible for antisemitism (without it Graff’s remarks made no sense), his statement in effect meant that the Austrian Jewish Community was being held hostage for the good behavior of the WJC.⁸¹

Some journalists did question the authenticity of the Yugoslav charges. Walter Zeiner wrote a comment in the *Neue Voralberger Tageszeitung* on the publication of the CROWCASS. The WJC, he stated, now accused Waldheim of having participated in murder during the second World War. Zeiner's claim is untrue, but he was consistent enough to imply that the document was not genuine. Yugoslavia would never have voted for Waldheim as U.N. Secretary General, he wrote, if he "had appeared on a list of war criminals." "The question remains," he concluded, "what does the campaign fomented by the World Jewish Congress want?"⁸²

The belief that it had not been the U.S. Army or Yugoslavia, but the WJC which had "attacked" or "accused" Waldheim of war crimes during World War II, was, then, a fairly widespread one. Most reporters did not examine the documents or even the WJC's statement, much less discuss them seriously. Even when the documents themselves and their presentation were not so obviously distorted, the interpretation was either misleading or it accorded with the Waldheim camp line. Even the *Wiener Zeitung*, which had accurately and dispassionately described the documents and their contents, referred to the publication of the documents as "accusations" of the WJC.⁸³

On 24 March, Simon Wiesenthal invited reporters to a briefing at which, among other things, he discussed the CROWCASS listing. In Wiesenthal's view, the fact that Waldheim's name was on the list would not incriminate him without additional evidence. Moreover, he argued, there had been several such lists, and it could be that Waldheim had appeared on one list but was deleted from subsequent versions if the Yugoslav authorities later determined that the evidence was insufficient to sustain an indictment.⁸⁴ Wiesenthal also rejected the accusation that he had assumed the role of an "exculpatory witness" for Waldheim. Wiesenthal said he doubted that Waldheim had been personally involved in war crimes but could not believe he could have been unaware of the deportations of Jews from Salonika. "That must have been the main topic of discussion then, and therefore I do not believe him," he was quoted as saying.⁸⁵ Finally, Wiesenthal confirmed that persons "from Austria" had come to him in the Autumn of 1985 in search of incriminating material against Waldheim.⁸⁶

The tendency in reporting on this briefing depended roughly on how one viewed the Waldheim affair, for Wiesenthal's punctiliously balanced views offered solace to both Waldheim's supporters and his critics. The *Neue Zeit*, the SPÖ paper in Graz, emphasized Wiesenthal's repudiation of the allegation that he was exonerating Waldheim,⁸⁷ while the *Südpost* countered with a headline stating Wiesenthal's ostensible opposition to the anti-Waldheim "agitation."⁸⁸ In several papers in which Wiesenthal was mentioned in connection with the CROWCASS, moreover, the authenticity of the document itself was called into question.⁸⁹ An article in *Die Presse* will illustrate the point. The headline over an article by "HWS" read "Wiesenthal Doubts Waldheim's Guilt." According to the report, Wiesenthal had expressed his doubts as to whether Yugoslavia had even placed Waldheim's name on a war crimes list, which is a very subtle, but immensely significant, "misunderstanding" of what Wiesenthal actually said.⁹⁰ This belief, however, died a slow death. On 1 April, for example, Peter Gnam reported on a statement from the Yugoslav government according to which Waldheim's extradition had not been pursued. This, Gnam argued, "confirmed speculation that, as a member of the staff under General Loehr, Waldheim, like all officers, was initially automatically placed on this list by the Yugoslavs, without having done anything wrong."⁹¹ Even papers not following the Waldheim line subserviently questioned the CROWCASS's authenticity implicitly or explicitly, and this with the apparent imprimatur of Simon Wiesenthal. Because most derivative reports distorted Wiesenthal's remarks, they cannot but have further undermined the

WJC's claims to legitimacy as a participant in the Waldheim debate. If it is possible that Yugoslavia had never suspected Waldheim of being a war criminal, which is what these doubts would logically imply, then the enormity of the slander raised by the WJC would increase nearly exponentially, and the conspiracy against Waldheim would also have to include the U.S. Army. The use and abuse of Simon Wiesenthal's statement served, whether consciously or not, to reinforce the claim, as the *NVB* put it, that the WJC was continuing its "Witch Hunt against Waldheim with New Lies."⁹²

The "Threats" of the World Jewish Congress

Between the WJC's publication of the CROWCASS and the press conference they held on 25 March, the Austrian magazine *Profil* printed an interview with Israel Singer and Elan Steinberg, general secretary and executive secretary of the WJC respectively. We have shown above that the existence of an international "campaign" against Kurt Waldheim led by the WJC and supported by the international press, above all the *NYT*, had become a fixed assumption in Austrian public discourse. Moreover, as we have just seen, the belief that the WJC had accused Waldheim of being involved in war crimes, perhaps even on the basis of forged documents, had also been widely circulated in Austrian papers. It is important to recall this context once again in order to understand the change the dynamic of the debate on Waldheim's past underwent during this week. Below are a few passages out of this interview, which in Austria has become nearly legendary:

Singer: The Austrian population should be clear that the next six years will be no bed of roses for them if Waldheim is elected. If he does not ruthlessly and completely lay bare his past before the election, this will come to haunt him and every Austrian for the next six years. Bitburg was bad enough, but it only lasted for one day. The actions against Waldheim will last six years.

Profil: Aren't you exaggerating your influence?

Singer: It hasn't been a question merely of the work of the WJC for some time now. Jewish and especially non-Jewish organizations all over the world will prepare a proper reception for Waldheim in whichever country he travels to as Austria's representative. . . .

Steinberg: . . . We have received inquiries about Waldheim for several years. But Waldheim is not a war criminal—at least so far as we know now. . . .

Singer: . . . Perhaps it will turn out that Waldheim was really a harmless figure in the Wehrmacht. I would not wish to exclude this [possibility]. But he lied, lied to us all [when he said] that he was ostensibly in the hospital, ostensibly at the university, not in Salonika and not in Serbia, and these are only the examples we are already able to prove and where he has confessed his lies.

Profil: In some Austrian newspapers one could read that by your actions you have become a tool of a [political] party. [And] that the current government and the [consular] representatives here in New York gave you the first hints and provided you with the documents.

Steinberg: That is absolute nonsense and [shows that someone is merely] looking for an easy fall guy [*Haltet den Dieb- Mentalität*] which is unworthy of the Austrians. We don't care who wins the election, from which party he is

Profil: What do you plan to do if Waldheim is elected?

Singer: We aren't planning anything. It then becomes a problem of the Austrians. They have to try to live with it. As far as I know, Austria tries hard to present itself all over the world and especially in the U.S.A. as a tourist spot, a country of technical and cultural exports and as an ideal country for foreign industrial investment. Who do you think will want to have anything to do with this country, whose representative has been exposed as a liar in front of the whole world?

Profil: Will there be a boycott of Austrian goods?

Singer: We are not talking of measures against Austrians. The Austrians set the conditions, they create the facts. They elect a representative, we don't. And it will be perhaps the most important election since 1945. It will show the world whether there is a new Austria, one which has freed itself

from the past. The Austrians must bear the consequences and I can tell you, the next six years with Waldheim will not be easy.

Profil: What do you mean concretely?

Steinberg: What do you think? Do you think we are going to pull back after Waldheim's election? It will naturally continue. We will continue to search. And specialists from the U.S.A., Germany, Yugoslavia, the Soviet Union and Austria will be joining us. Up to now it has been an affair of Waldheim's. But then it will be one of all of Austria. Then the entire world will say that a former Nazi and liar is Austria's representative. Everyone with an Austrian passport will be travelling with this cloud of uncertainty. I can't imagine that the Austrians want such a thing.⁹³

The interview itself contains several contradictory passages. Singer and Steinberg deny any interest in the Austrian elections, yet they made their preferences for the outcome unmistakably clear. Singer claimed that the WJC would do "nothing at all" if Waldheim were elected, while Steinberg asked rhetorically, "Do you think we are going to give up after the election?" Finally, Steinberg stated quite clearly that Waldheim "is not a war criminal," but then added, "as far as we know up to now." The passage where Singer asserted (or predicted) that, if the Austrians elected Waldheim, the six years of his presidency would be "no bed of roses" for them, could be interpreted semantically as a threat, were one so inclined. Both Singer and Steinberg, however, diluted the purely "Jewish" element of the "danger" by emphasizing the "non-Jewish organizations all over the world" who were interested in the Waldheim case and especially non-Jewish American politicians who had "no interest in [who wins] the Austrian presidential election," and "certainly not that a socialist [should] win it," but who would find it outrageous that "a former Nazi and liar [could become] Austria's representative."

There are thus passages in this interview which could be perceived as threats against Austria. Peter Sichrovsky, who conducted the interview, appears to have understood the "bed of roses" passage as such. Moreover, other papers, such as the West German *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, whose reporting on the Waldheim affair was of high quality, apparently also saw it this way. It published an AP dispatch from Vienna with the headline "Jews Warn Austrians Against Waldheim's Election."⁹⁴ As late as November, 1986, Simon Wiesenthal could complain that the WJC's "collective threats against all Austrians have provided resentment against all Jews."⁹⁵ However, Singer's and Steinberg's statements could only in fact be seriously considered threatening if the WJC in fact possessed the power and influence necessary to effect all those measures they had ostensibly threatened. Underlying this belief, however it may be expressed, is a prior assumption about the international power of Jews, in short, the hoary but apparently atavistic notion of the world Jewish conspiracy, which in the course of the Waldheim affair enjoyed something of a revival.⁹⁶ It was above all this cluster of assumptions and associations, rooted in prejudice, fear and hostility, and condensed in the attacks on the WJC, which determined the antisemitic character of the pro-Waldheim political discourse, whether from the mouths of party officials or the pens of sympathetic journalists.

The intensity of the reaction to this interview and the "threats" it contained can scarcely be exaggerated and may be illustrated by an almost arbitrary selection of press reports. The headline of the ÖVP paper *NVB*, "Violent [*heftig*] Threats against Austria because of Waldheim," was emblematic. In the accompanying article, it wrote that the representatives of the WJC had "gone so far as to warn Austria against making a 'Liar' and 'Nazi' president." Michael Graff was quoted as saying that the ÖVP would not allow an Austrian to be destroyed this way and repeated his own implied threat about the "emotions which no one wants."⁹⁷ The *Neue Vorarlberger Tageszeitung*, which supported Waldheim in the election, exhibited unusual virulence and a particularly evocative idiom. In its headline the paper complained that "Jewish

Printquelle: Mitten, Richard: The Politics of the Antisemitic Prejudice. The Waldheim Phenomenon in Austria. Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado 1992 (Chapter 1 and 8)

Council wants Collective Liability. Everyone must Bear the Consequences.” The accompanying unsigned article argued that “with a sort of collective liability in the event of Kurt Waldheim’s election as president, the World Jewish Congress has threatened [that] actions against Waldheim would pursue him and every Austrian for the next six years.”⁹⁸

In *Die Presse*, a paper with pretensions to possession of broad vision,⁹⁹ Ilse Leitenberger availed herself of similar literary techniques, but with vague allusions to the commonality of interests between old Nazis and the WJC. She asks what “prompted the World Jewish Congress—which has entirely different tasks to accomplish—to zero in on a man who has not the slightest thing to do with the affairs of world Jewry?” The WJC, moreover, though it made accusations itself, “considers itself above criticism, but has always been a willing tool of a handful of diehard reactionaries who never miss a chance to trade in a dark past. It is namely they who already bear a considerable amount of blame for the fact that a new antisemitism, whose escalation we cannot yet conceive, can no longer be denied.” Implied is the hypocrisy of the WJC, which attempted to make Waldheim into a Nazi while itself being in league with the genuine old Nazis (the term “*Ewiggestriger*” can only be a reference to these). In any event, the members of the WJC, and the joint interest they have in trading in the “dark past”—the ambiguity of this allusion makes it unclear what is meant precisely—are responsible for the reemergence of a potentially virulent antisemitism, whose existence Leitenberger did not dispute. The vague innuendo and indistinct language give Leitenberger’s piece a somewhat ethereal quality. What is clear is the message that the WJC had no moral right to criticize Waldheim, since this was not an affair concerning “world Jewry” and it should not complain about antisemitism in Austria, for it was responsible for its reemergence.¹⁰⁰

As Leitenberger’s article implied, the antisemitic ambience in Austria was becoming increasingly difficult to deny. *Die Furche*, a weekly which may be broadly characterised as a liberal Catholic paper and whose journalists in the past have taken uncompromising stands against antisemitism,¹⁰¹ publishes a regular column by Herbert Feichtelbauer called “Klipp und klar” (roughly “short and to the point”). In the first issue of *Die Furche* to appear after this interview, Feichtelbauer, as all others who blamed antisemitic prejudice in Austria on the WJC, warned the WJC not to tempt fate by misbehaving:

But just as Auschwitz should never again be, because it should never again be allowed to be, our Jewish friends must see the writing on the wall. What is happening these days begets new evil, where only reconciliation can heal. Whoever fears what is most frightful deep down in the Austrian soul, should not rouse it with wild actions [*berserkend*]! . . . If the representatives of the World Jewish Congress today concede privately that they do not believe Waldheim to be a war criminal, but that he must be taught a lesson for his shilly-shallying, they are playing with fire. If they threaten Austria with a diplomatic, travel, trade and tourist boycott if Waldheim is elected, then they become complicit in the consequences which we dread.¹⁰²

Simon Wiesenthal himself later also added his voice to those blaming the WJC for “reviving antisemitism” in Austria. “It is not their [WJC] revelations about Waldheim’s past” which was the cause, but rather “an interview by Israel Singer . . . telling Austrians that Bitburg was one bitter day for President Reagan and that if Austrians elect Waldheim, the population of Austria is going to get six years of Bitburg.” “This,” Wiesenthal concluded, “makes antisemites of young people—and 70 percent of the population was born after the war.”¹⁰³

Wiesenthal’s words found a wide echo in many Austrian newspapers. Viktor Reimann, columnist for the *NKZ*, was one of many who cited Jewish authorities to attack the WJC: he

Printquelle: Mitten, Richard: *The Politics of the Antisemitic Prejudice. The Waldheim Phenomenon in Austria*. Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado 1992 (Chapter 1 and 8)

mobilized not only Wiesenthal, but Nahum Goldmann, former president of the WJC, against Singer. In a piece published on 25 May, Reimann wrote, “Simon Wiesenthal . . . criticized Israel Singer for having given new sustenance to antisemitism in our country with his threats against Austria. Singer arrogantly stated that antisemitism only stems from antisemites, although he could have learned otherwise . . . from Nahum Goldmann.”¹⁰⁴

It had been open season on the WJC for several weeks, but Wiesenthal’s remarks lent a new legitimacy to an old idea, widespread in Austria,¹⁰⁵ that Jews themselves were responsible for antisemitism. Wiesenthal’s endorsement of it, however, did not make it any less prejudicial, for underlying the belief that the actions of any one individual Jew could be the *cause* of antisemitism is an assumption projecting the presumed personal traits of one member of a group onto the group as a whole. This assumption lies at the heart of all ethnic prejudice.¹⁰⁶ If Singer’s statement had actually been the *occasion* for renewed hostility towards Jews in Austria (which is scarcely to be doubted), this would merely confirm the prior existence of the imputative assumption among those making this claim about the WJC.

Both the Austrian Press Agency (APA) and *Die Presse* reported on 25 March that former chancellor Bruno Kreisky had condemned the “disgusting meddling” and “colossal vileness” of the WJC,¹⁰⁷ and his statement, as was usual in Austria, found a significant response in the papers.¹⁰⁸ In this context, however, Kreisky’s statement seems to have served predominantly to reinforce the allegation against the WJC that its charges were all “slander,” and this by a prominent Jew. This seems at least indirectly confirmed by the reports of newspapers which suddenly found something to applaud in a remark of Kreisky’s. The *Tiroler Tageszeitung*, the paper of the Tiroler Farmers’ Association, for example, not normally given to showing Kreisky in a favorable light, quoted him extensively in an article headlined “Kreisky to Jewish Congress: Improper”: “It is absolutely improper to talk this way. Until now, at least, such threats were not common among serious people in the West. And against a state which alone declared its willingness to provide a transit route for Russian Jews.”¹⁰⁹

More surprising still is the treatment Kreisky received in the ÖVP’s *NVB*. The headline announced simply “Kreisky: Improper Intervention of Jewish Circles.” In the remarks quoted, the former chancellor seemed offended that the WJC had criticized Waldheim, and not Kreisky himself: “The anti-Waldheim campaign of the World Jewish Congress is an exceedingly stupid intervention in our election. Yet what is being done with Waldheim is nothing. If I had run for president, they would have attacked me much more severely.”¹¹⁰ Kreisky cannot seriously have believed that the words of two officials of the WJC constituted an improper intervention in the internal affairs of Austria, because he always prided himself for his views of and solutions to international affairs, which not even the most strident patriot could consider internal to Austria. Moreover, Kreisky did not accord the WJC any possible interest in Waldheim other than hostility to Austrian politicians as Austrians. Apart from any personal motives he might have had, Kreisky’s remarks appear to have been related more to his fear that the attacks of the WJC would rebound to Waldheim’s advantage, and his wish to deny him this patriotic trump. Whatever his reasons, the attacks on the WJC—phrased as his attacks on other Jewish opponents frequently were¹¹¹—provided just the kind of Jewish cover for others with perhaps less subtle dialectical skills. As in the case of Wiesenthal, Kreisky’s statement helped legitimate and thereby positively reinforce the main lines of assault on the WJC and its right to participate in the debate about Waldheim’s past. The insinuation that the WJC might have had tactical political interest in the outcome of the Austrian presidential election was a mere coda to the outpouring of scarcely concealed rage following their interview in *Profil*. A new crescendo

however, was already in the making, even as the reactions to the WJC's "threats" and "meddling" had not yet abated. The ensuing debate over the WJC's disclosures on 25 March indicated that any new act the WJC committed could be, and was, interpreted as a confirmation of the Jewish conspiracy against Waldheim and Austria. As Klaus Emmerich, Washington correspondent for the Austrian Broadcasting Company's news department, stated, "Now, of course, the campaign comprises not only the Waldheim case, ... but rather in the meantime also [comprises] the case of Austria."¹¹²

As we saw above, on the basis of information contained in the CROWCASS, the WJC reported in its press release of 22 March that Waldheim had been listed as an *Abwehroffizier*.¹¹³ This claim was an accurate rendering of the information contained in the CROWCASS, but nevertheless mistaken. However, the WJC mentioned this connection only this once, and for a very simple reason: at their press conference on 25 March, the WJC made public a new set of German army documents which proved conclusively that Waldheim had served as the third assistant adjutant in the military intelligence section of Army Group E, but not as the counterintelligence officer, as the CROWCASS had claimed.¹¹⁴

This latter press conference took place at 10:00 a.m. New York time, which is 4:00 p.m. in Vienna, on 25 March 1986. The noontime radio news program, *Mittagsjournal*, broadcast from noon to 1:00 p.m. on the 25th, carried a number of items on the topic of Waldheim and presented opinions on "accusations" which the WJC had not yet even made (and some of which they never made). The general tone of the program was set in the introductory remarks of the moderator: "the announcement by representatives of the WJC . . . that they would raise further serious charges against the ex-secretary general," he said, "has ushered in a new phase in the discussion."¹¹⁵ Although the press conference was to take place in four hours time, the moderator himself already anticipated the debate, and linked it to the recent attacks on the WJC resulting from the *Profil* interview: "Now, on the one hand, there is the question of Waldheim's alleged involvement, but the discussion has already focused on the question to what extent the WJC has quasi-intervened in internal Austrian affairs."

The moderator could not have known what the WJC would say in its press conference, and thus made vague allusions to "involvement," careful, however, to distance himself from any possible association by utilizing the word "alleged." This is a proper journalistic convention to guard against excessive bias. However, this convention was abandoned in the second half of the statement, in which the moderator identified fully with the wave of hostility among Austrian politicians and in most newspapers. By choosing the formulation "to what extent" the WJC might be intervening, the moderator had conceded the point that the WJC were intervening. On the basis of the same known facts, the question could just as easily have been why politicians and journalists in Austria viewed the publication of genuine documents about a former head of the United Nations as intervention in the internal affairs of Austria. This, however, would have required a more consistent maintenance of journalistic skepticism, which apparently came more easily when dealing with the WJC.

Extensive research on the reporting of the Waldheim affair has shown that, although there were significant exceptions, the Austrian state-owned broadcasting company was on the whole simply not up to the task.¹¹⁶ This failing was particularly striking on 25 March, because the news departments were "reporting" on events yet to occur. For example, then ÖVP general secretary Michael Graff's remarks on the unseen documents and on the discussion as a whole were allowed to stand, without any hint that they contained false or disputed facts and assumptions.

Graff, the moderator stated, “is completely convinced that Waldheim had nothing to do with war crimes. And the documents announced for this afternoon in New York can only serve as a continuation of the obscene campaign [*Sudelkampagne*].”¹¹⁷ Graff was not asked on what he based his judgment that Waldheim had had “nothing to do with war crimes.” From Austrian newspapers, however, it was known that at least two different bodies specifically established to prosecute alleged war criminals suspected otherwise.¹¹⁸ Moreover, Graff’s own transparent strategy was to link the WJC to allegations that Waldheim was a war criminal, and to use this inflated (and untrue) assertion to discredit whatever charges the WJC might actually have raised (they had not yet said anything) at the press conference. The reporter neither rectified Graff’s factual errors nor attempted to relativise Graff’s statement as a contested opinion. Yet this information was freely available.¹¹⁹ In this radio program, not only was the WJC not asked for a statement, but listeners were provided no competing or contrasting interpretive framework for the documents the WJC was to publish.

The press conference did in fact begin at 4:00 p.m. central European time. The WJC, or, more specifically, Robert E. Herzstein, the historian it had commissioned to look into Waldheim’s past, produced and interpreted documents which, among other things, proved beyond any doubt that Waldheim’s claim only to have served as an interpreter in Army Group E was false.¹²⁰ Waldheim had, the documents showed, also served as a staff officer in military intelligence section of the general staff. This was the only point revealed by the WJC and Herzstein relevant to Waldheim’s *position* in Army Group E. Neither Herzstein’s prepared statement nor the WJC’s press release made any reference to Waldheim as an *Abwehroffizier*.

This appears not to have hindered Austrian broadcasting service (ORF) journalist Edgar Sterbenz from claiming, in his report on the press conference broadcast on the evening news program. “Yes, the documents just published by the World Jewish Congress show that in Yugoslavia during World War II, Kurt Waldheim served not only as an interpreter, but also as an interrogation officer of the *Abwehr*.”¹²¹ Radio reporter Fritz Pesata summarized the “charges”: the WJC believed that the allegations that Waldheim “was a Nazi,” that he “had lied for forty years” and that he had “*known about war crimes* and personally taken part in partisan activities” had all been proved (emphasis added). Asked to comment, Waldheim initially repeated his standard perfunctory denial and, without having seen any of the documents themselves, felt in a position to affirm that there would be nothing in the documents that “would be dishonorable or prove any crimes whatsoever.” Although Pesata’s summary of the “charges” was not entirely accurate, Waldheim’s statement was a denial of a charge which the WJC (according to Pesata himself) had not raised.¹²² Knowledge of war crimes is not participation. Pesata’s silence on this point left the impression that the WJC had accused Waldheim of involvement in war crimes, a charge Waldheim effortlessly “refuted.”

Shortly thereafter, Pesata repeated Sterbenz’s error about the press conference. “According to these photocopies of documents presented today you were not only an interpreter but also, and this is new, interrogation officer of the *Abwehr*. Is that correct?”¹²³ To which Waldheim replied, “Now, that’s not right. I was not an *Abwehroffizier*. There was a separate *Abwehroffizier*.” Once again, accusations which the WJC had not made were introduced into the discussion, while the substantive elements of the documents they produced went virtually unmentioned. Waldheim was thereby offered the opportunity not only to “disprove” the WJC’s “charges” (the documents the WJC itself published proved that Waldheim was not the *Abwehroffizier* of Army Group E), but also (and this with the full complicity of the ORF radio

Printquelle: Mitten, Richard: The Politics of the Antisemitic Prejudice. The Waldheim Phenomenon in Austria. Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado 1992 (Chapter 1 and 8)

journalist) to portray the WJC as the purveyor of easily discredited allegations, in other words, as “slanderers.”

Austrian newspapers in general fared little better, and were able to call once again on the support of Simon Wiesenthal. Dieter Kindermann of the NKZ wrote a report on these disclosures which carried the title, “Wiesenthal: Just Hot Air!”¹²⁴ Wiesenthal appears to have read neither the WJC’s press release nor Herzstein’s prepared statement which contained his interpretations of the documents. He was quoted by Kindermann as saying, “Over there are people who have not learned to read German military documents. There was no differentiation between the counterintelligence and the intelligence department, which existed in every division.” Wiesenthal’s claim about the differentiation of the intelligence (Ic) and counterintelligence (*Abwehr*) departments is confusing at the very least. According to the *Handbook for General Staffs in Wartime*, the duties of the Ic and the *Abwehr* were combined (i.e., there was no separate *Abwehroffizier*) in military units subordinate to the command level of “Army,” but in Army groups (such as that in which Waldheim served) the Ic was separate from the *Abwehr*.¹²⁵ There is no indication from Kindermann’s article what exactly Wiesenthal had been referring to, and the point is recondite in any case. Ironically, although it was technically incorrect, Wiesenthal’s statement, if interpreted literally, would have confirmed the charge, falsely attributed to the WJC, that Waldheim had been an “interrogation officer of the *Abwehr*.” The point is this: if there was no differentiation between the intelligence section and the counterintelligence section, as Wiesenthal claimed, then why should one object to referring to Waldheim as an “interrogation officer of the *Abwehr*?” It is not a question whether the WJC or Herzstein interpreted all the documents correctly. Wiesenthal’s claim, that these “people” had not learned to read documents, appears to have been referring to an “error” that the WJC had not made. The authority of Simon Wiesenthal was used once again to underpin the belief that the WJC was making wild accusations it could not prove. Paired with Wiesenthal’s blanket condemnation of the WJC interpretations, and no corrections from Kindermann, Waldheim’s statement that he had never been an “*Abwehroffizier*, a member of the Nazi secret service and certainly [not] a war criminal,” appeared not only irrefutable but also an accurate portrayal of the accusations made against him.¹²⁶

Waldheim campaign officials also did their part in constructing the image of the WJC as slanderers. Heribert Steinbauer, Waldheim’s campaign manager, considered the “most disgraceful aspect” of the documents published was that “war crimes with personal liability” had been construed out of mere service in the Wehrmacht.¹²⁷ The *Tiroler Tageszeitung*, on the other hand, reported on the “charges which had been leveled against him [Waldheim] in the recent past of ostensible membership in NS organizations and participation in war crimes as well as the deportation of Jews.”¹²⁸

Neither ORF journalists nor the other papers cited above attempted to deal with the content of the disclosures the WJC made on 25 March. Some journalists, however, did.¹²⁹ The documents which the WJC presented at its 25 March press conference provided both an opportunity and, since the documents and the related press materials were freely available, something of a litmus test. On 28 March, three days after the press conference, *Kurier* devoted two major articles and a guest commentary to them. Hans Rauscher was the author of one of the articles.¹³⁰ He wrote: “The conclusions which Robert Herzstein, the historian from the University of South Carolina engaged by the World Jewish Congress, drew from the documents are unacceptable.” It is Rauscher’s privilege to claim this, but he apparently based his statement simply on the interpretation of another historian, Erwin Schmidl. Schmidl is the author, among

other things, of a recent study on the *Anschluss*, but there is no obvious reason, and Rauscher did not offer any additional ones, why Schmidl's opinion should be accorded more credibility than Herzstein's, except, perhaps, that Herzstein was from South Carolina, and Schmidl from Vienna. "But the documents which Herzstein presented and which bear Waldheim's signature," Rauscher continued, "show that he compiled and passed on incoming *reports* on interrogations, 'cleansing actions' and 'those shot in punishment.' He must have known of atrocities, but these do not show that he personally took part." (emphasis in original)

Rauscher had once again trained his polemical sights on the wrong target. He stated that Herzstein had accused Waldheim of participation in atrocities, whereas in fact the documents showed only that he gathered and transmitted information about them. What did Herzstein actually say? The statement which Herzstein read at the press conference, and which was distributed to those present, contained a great deal about Waldheim's activities. "A few days later," Herzstein said in one passage, describing a document he had discovered, "Lt. Waldheim compiled a report for his commander and his chief describing 'mopping up' operations north of Tripolis. On July 18, Waldheim reported on more Zervas interrogations. By this time he was responsible for drafting these vital reports; his role had expanded beyond verifying this textual accuracy on behalf of his superior." Later on Herzstein mentioned that "1st Lt. Waldheim continued to report on the enemy situation in a broad arc, stretching from the Balkans to the Mediterranean, from Italy to France . . . Waldheim continued to assist Lt. Col. Warnstorff in preparing high-level briefing reports for the General Staff, concerning 'mopping up' operations and related matters."¹³¹

Neither Herzstein in his statement, nor the WJC in its remarks (which did not diverge from Herzstein's findings), alleged that Waldheim had "taken part" in the activities on which he reported. Rauscher, and Schmidl, insofar as his advice influenced Rauscher, simply erected a straw man: "unacceptable" interpretations, which Herzstein had never made, were ascribed to him and then "refuted" with the very interpretations Herzstein had himself given. The title of Rauscher's article was, incidentally, "WJC in Need of Evidence."

In the same issue, *Kurier* published an interview with Herbert Warnstorff, Waldheim's superior in the military intelligence department of Army Group E's general staff, with the headline "Former Superior Exculpates Kurt Waldheim."¹³² This was true enough, but it was due far more to Rauscher's interview technique and lack of preparation than to the intrinsic merits of the case he presented. For example, merely the fact that Waldheim was, as Warnstorff emphasized, only a "desk soldier" [*Schreibtischsoldat*] and not engaged in combat, need not have exculpated Waldheim in the slightest, as the verdicts of the Nuremberg Tribunal after the war demonstrated. Warnstorff's claim that during his tenure in Arsakli he had "never learned anything about the deportation of Jews" was even less reliable. Warnstorff had said earlier in the interview that he had worked with Waldheim only in the period between spring 1944 and spring 1945,¹³³ i.e., approximately six months after the deportations of Salonika's Jews had been completed. At the time this article appeared, the dispute about Jewish deportations revolved around the question whether Waldheim could have been unaware of the deportations of tens of thousands Jews from Salonika when he was stationed a mere 3 miles away, in the village of Arsakli, the site of the general staff headquarters. These deportations took place between 15 March and 7 August 1943. In March, 1986, everyone involved (including Waldheim himself) assumed that he had been in Arsakli (or in Salonika, since the usage was not very precise) this entire time. Later, as we have seen, it was learned that Waldheim had been away from the area for all but a few days of the period in question. Journalists who had been

exceptionally well informed might also have known about the deportations of the Jews from the areas formerly occupied by Italy, and which took place after Italy's capitulation. Warnstorff himself must have been aware of these latter deportations, as the documentary evidence unequivocally shows. Still, it is not this latter point which shows extreme indulgence on Rauscher's part, but the lack of attention to the presumed dates of Waldheim's presence in Salonika. The question everyone was asking Waldheim was how it was possible for him to have been stationed in Arsakli but not have noticed these deportations between March and August 1943? And it is this question which Warnstorff was personally unable to answer, since according to the interview itself, Warnstorff only came to Arsakli in 1944. Yet not only did the interviewer fail to address this problem, he also missed the most obvious of all. Nowhere is it suggested that Warnstorff, as Waldheim's direct superior, could not implicate Waldheim in deportations or other atrocities without thereby incriminating himself. Taken as a whole, these errors of fact and judgment made the exonerative character of this interview a foregone conclusion. The informative value of this issue of *Kurier* was less than none, for the interpretive schema which guided his research made the information Rauscher turned up highly suspect. The only possible contribution which it and the above article could make to a discussion of the "charges" against Waldheim was to reinforce, with the assistance of superficially impressive evidence, scholarly advice and an eyewitness, the notion that the WJC was recklessly raising baseless accusations.¹³⁴

The manipulative deprecation of the WJC and its research undertakings was also able to enlist scholarly support. In April 1986 Erika Weinzierl, Gerald Stourzh, Horst Haselsteiner, Arnold Suppan, Maximilian Liebmann, Roman Sandgruber, Robert Kriechbaumer and Franz Horner, all established scholars at prominent Austrian universities, took part in an intellectually dishonest attempt to impugn Herzstein's reputation. They issued a "declaration" under the aegis of the Karl von Vogelsang Institute, which could be described as a People's Party think tank, "On the Interpretation by Prof. Robert E. Herzstein of the Documents Relating to Dr. Kurt Waldheim Published by the World Jewish Congress." Among other things, the authors criticized Herzstein's "interpretations, according to which Dr. Kurt Waldheim was a war criminal and had been entrusted with 'special tasks' [*Spezialaufgaben*]" which included executions, imprisonment [*Festnahmen*] and deportations." Herzstein's interpretations were not in their opinion "inferable from the documents." Whatever one may think of Herzstein's assessment of these materials, the claims advanced by these scholars are specious on at least two counts. Firstly, the authors' citation technique was remarkably careless. The Wehrmacht duty roster Herzstein presented contained the entry "*Sonderaufgaben*," which Herzstein correctly translated as "special tasks." Herzstein claimed further, in my opinion erroneously, that the term "special tasks" was a euphemism similar to "special handling" (*Sonderbehandlung*), which "usually concerned secret measures of mass terror or torture, kidnapping and execution." The authors of this declaration, however, who quote the term "*Spezialaufgaben*," apparently amalgamated the latter part of the German compound noun *Sonderaufgaben* with Herzstein's English translation of the first part. To my knowledge the term "*Spezialaufgaben*" appeared on no document discussed by Herzstein, and certainly not the duty roster to which these authors were alluding. Whether or not one agreed with his interpretation of this term, however, Herzstein rendered it into faultless English. Secondly, and far more serious, was the claim by these scholars that Herzstein had called Waldheim a war criminal. This was simply a crude invention. These scholars did not mention any specific evidence (or even the grounds) on which they based their judgment, nor did they cite a single document to support their counter-interpretations. One can only speculate about the motives of historians who criticized a colleague for being unable to support his interpretations with documentary evidence, while in the very declaration, in which

Printquelle: Mitten, Richard: The Politics of the Antisemitic Prejudice. The Waldheim Phenomenon in Austria. Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado 1992 (Chapter 1 and 8)

their indictment appears, they themselves misquoted an important document and offered not a single source to substantiate their own evaluation. It was, of course, better for them to do so: they could not have produced any such document where Herzstein had ever claimed that Waldheim was a “war criminal” or that he “had been involved in criminal activities according to the Hague Convention on Land Warfare.”¹³⁵ These scholars’ use of highly questionable methods to peremptorily malign a colleague are grounds for grave concern in themselves. More fatefully, their efforts *nolens volens* lent academic respectability to the more overtly political portrayal of the WJC as an organization raising slanderous and unsupported allegations against Waldheim. Michael Graff, for example, adduced this “expert opinion” offered by “nine well-known scholars” as evidence that the traducing WJC was repeating, in his redundant phrase, “groundless falsehoods.”¹³⁶

A “Dishonorable Lot?”

One of the inferences deduced from the basic premise that the WJC was making exaggerated allegations against Waldheim unsupported by any evidence was the ancillary proposition that the WJC, a “mafia of slanderers,” as Michael Graff described them,¹³⁷ would stop at nothing to get Waldheim. Though the charge of dishonor against Jews has a long history in Austria,¹³⁸ the allegation in 1986 that the WJC was “dishonorable” appears traceable to the idea that the WJC had reneged on the terms of an agreement made with the then Austrian ambassador to the United States Thomas Klestil or with Austrian President Kirchschräger. On 5 April, George Possanner of *Die Presse* mentioned an “offer” the WJC had ostensibly made. Possanner gave no sources for his report, but claimed that Israel Singer and Edgar Bronfman had agreed to end the WJC’s “publicity campaign” against Waldheim if President Kirchschräger would consent to inspect all the available documents (including the UNWCC file) relating to Waldheim’s wartime past. This deal, reported Possanner, was allegedly struck at the WJC’s fiftieth anniversary celebration.¹³⁹ Five days later, on 10 April, the *NVB* quoted Michael Graff’s reactions to a press conference the WJC had held in London. “Singer’s new attacks, which cannot be supported by any evidence, are considered to be dishonorable and slanderous in Austria.” They were dishonorable, he went on, because they violated the agreement made between President Kirchschräger and Edgar Bronfman, according to which the WJC had consented not to make any further attacks on Waldheim.¹⁴⁰ On the same day, Peter Gnam wrote a column for the *NKZ* in which he claimed, among other things, “One can without hesitation forget about the documents of the World Jewish Congress. For Israel Singer in an interview has again dismissed Waldheim as having known of war crimes even though he had earlier agreed to acknowledge Kirchschräger as an arbitrator and not to interfere any more.” These new attacks, Gnam concluded, “disqualify both him and they devalue the ostensibly compromising material against Waldheim.”¹⁴¹ Gnam’s opinion that the motivation of anyone could or should vitiate the significance of evidence which can be independently verified and interpreted, suggested that his primary interest lay not in evaluating the information about Waldheim’s past. A month later, Gnam’s colleague at the *NKZ*, Richard Nimmerrichter, repeated the same charge, but Nimmerrichter was not certain who had made and broken the agreement with Kirchschräger. The WJC would be presenting new “documents” against Waldheim, Nimmerrichter wrote, “although this private organization, which is completely without authority vis-;aga-vis the still sovereign state of Austria, announced solemnly that it would cease making public material in a piecemeal fashion after it had given a mound of documents to the incumbent President Kirchschräger.”¹⁴²

By 26 April, the opinions about the WJC had consolidated to such an extent that Michael Graff had coined a new descriptive phrase incorporating them. He condemned, he said, the “disgraceful [*infam*] attacks of that dishonorable lot from the World Jewish Congress.”¹⁴³ Graff’s opinion was endorsed two days later by then party chairman Alois Mock, who was quoted as saying that “one must call things by their right names.”¹⁴⁴ The belief that the WJC, apart from resorting to slander against Waldheim, had also acted dishonorably in still other ways, remained uncontested, because it appeared to be based on a legitimate grievance. However, the evidence for the allegation that the WJC violated an agreement is suspiciously thin, while the charge of “dishonor” appears to have been a reflex reaction based on pre-existent prejudices.

Official Austria only really became interested in the documents of the WJC after they had published the CROWCASS on 22 March, which made reference to a file on Waldheim lodged in the archives of the UNWCC. On 26 March 1986, the Yugoslav daily *Vercernje Novosti* published

excerpts from Waldheim's *Odluka*, which had been compiled by the Yugoslav war crimes commission and on which the UNWCC file was based.¹⁴⁵ According to the *NYT* of 2 April, Francois Guilliani, advisor to U.N. Secretary General Perez de Cuellar, stated that only governments could request UNWCC files and that up to that time no government had requested the document.¹⁴⁶ The following day Reuters reported that "Mr. Waldheim . . . welcomed a decision he said the Jewish group [WJC] has made to send documents to the current Austrian President, Rudolf Kirchschläger, as a sign that the organization would not in the future interfere in Austria's internal affairs."¹⁴⁷ There was no mention here of any fixed agreement, merely of a "sign," and the pejorative way in which it was expressed suggested that Waldheim's remark expressed his personal wish.

The Israeli government then requested access to the file and on 4 April it received assurance from the United Nations that this would be granted.¹⁴⁸ On 8 April the *NYT* reported that Austria had also requested permission to inspect the file and that its request had been approved.¹⁴⁹ Both Wolfgang Petritsch from the Austrian embassy and Karl Fischer, Austria's ambassador to the United Nations, were quoted in the article, but neither mentioned any agreement between the WJC and the Austrian ambassador. Rather, both emphasized that the embassy had only requested the documents with Waldheim's approval. Also on this date, the Vienna daily *Wiener Zeitung* published a report in which then Austrian Foreign Minister Leopold Gratz recounted the background to the decision to request the file, but did not mention any agreement. According to the paper, Gratz had empowered Klestil to receive the documents from the WJC. Gratz also recalled that the WJC had expressed to Klestil their complete confidence in Kirchschläger's objective judgment of the documents. The only condition which either side placed on this "agreement," i.e., that the WJC would provide documents to Kirchschläger was, according to Gratz's version as reported, the WJC's insistence that the documents include the UNWCC file.¹⁵⁰

On 9 April, the WJC distributed a press release, "Austrian Government Receives WJC Evidence on Waldheim."¹⁵¹ The press release mentioned that Ambassador Klestil¹⁵² and Fischer had been received in the WJC's offices, where they were given the documents to hand on to President Kirchschläger. In the letter he sent accompanying the documents, Israel Singer wrote, "We are hereby transmitting to you, as a man we trust, the documents we have so far found in open United States archives and ask you to understand our deep concern in this affair. We shall continue our search for as much information as we can. We consider this our duty, since so many have been lax."¹⁵³ Not only did Singer not mention any agreement to stop publishing documents on Waldheim, he announced that the WJC would continue its search. In the press release which told of the Austrians' receipt of the documents, moreover, the WJC announced a further press conference at which it would release more documents.¹⁵⁴ The activities of the WJC would thus appear to preclude its having made such an agreement. It also seems unlikely that the Austrian delegation would have accepted the documents in the face of such a flagrant violation.

What about Kirchschläger? In his letter of 23 April to Israel Singer, Kirchschläger stated that Klestil had been his intermediary in contacts with Edgar Bronfman, and underlined that he himself had given the reasons for receiving and evaluating the documents.¹⁵⁵ It seems reasonable to assume, therefore, that Kirchschläger would have been informed of any possible agreements which Klestil had arranged with Bronfman. In his televised address on 23 April, Kirchschläger had explained the two reasons alluded to in his letter to Singer:

Printquelle: Mitten, Richard: The Politics of the Antisemitic Prejudice. The Waldheim Phenomenon in Austria. Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado 1992 (Chapter 1 and 8)

[By agreeing to take the documents] I wanted to bring some calm to the massive international attention of the mass media, which encompassed the whole of the western and even parts of the third world . . . I have only partially achieved the goal of calming things down. The wave of news reports has assumed a life of its own which is difficult to contain. At least the press conferences of the World Jewish Congress in New York, which were taking place daily or every other day, have stopped. That, in turn, helped realize the second hope I had entertained when I agreed to accept the documents. The tension which had arisen because of a reaction to actions which are being interpreted as an external interference in the presidential election campaign and necessarily had their effect on our Jewish fellow citizens, has tapered off.¹⁵⁶

There was no mention here that Kirchschräger had had reason to expect the WJC to end their press conferences. Indeed, his formulation “at least” [*immerhin*], indicated that the greater distance between press conferences was a welcome, but certainly not self-evident, consequence of his decision to inspect the documents. Kirchschräger’s speech contained at least one implicit criticism of the WJC, which suggests that he was not being excessively charitable to the organization. Moreover, he described his reasoning for receiving the documents in considerable detail. It is difficult to imagine that he would not at least have made some reference to a promise which had not been kept.

There is, then, not a single piece of hard evidence that a commitment by the WJC to end its disclosures had ever been given. This appears a rather meager evidentiary basis upon which to accuse the WJC of having acted dishonorably. Yet neither Michael Graff nor any of the Austrian journalists who had made the claim bothered to check into it. It became yet another apodictic assertion enlisted to support the authentic defamation of the alleged “slanderers” from the WJC.

This interpretive schema stuck, and resurfaced in a far more virulent form shortly before the second round of the election. The news weekly *Wochenpresse* reported in the first week of June that a “contact man” of the WJC had offered someone named Sokratis Chatzisivangelis \$150,000 if he would make a perjured statement incriminating Waldheim.¹⁵⁷ Apart from Chatzisivangelis’s statement itself, there was no evidence for this allegation, which the WJC vehemently denied. Though the accusation could not be proved in any case, in the context of June 1986 it appeared highly implausible, even assuming the basest motives of the WJC. On 29 May 1986, the Zurich *Weltwoche* published an article by Hanspeter Born which retold the story of Jesoua Matza. Matza, 61 years old and living in Israel, was a native Greek Jew who had managed to escape the fate of most other Greek Jews from his hometown of Ioannina by fleeing. Matza, his cousin Michael Matza, Moshe Mioni and Nahum Negrin, all originally from Ioannina, believed they had recognized (from a contemporaneous photograph they saw in 1986) Waldheim as the young German officer who had overseen the collection of the valuables of the Ioannina Jews and, Jesoua Matza believed, the officer who had struck him with his stick. The details of this story are of only marginal relevance here, and Waldheim has up to now had an airtight alibi for the period in question.¹⁵⁸ Here it only bears mentioning that, apart from any other considerations, witnesses claiming to have evidence of Waldheim’s involvement in heinous crimes had already voluntarily come forward and their accusations were in the public domain. The WJC, moreover, had based their investigation from the very beginning entirely on documentary sources. Why, when the WJC’s officials were confident that their case against Waldheim had been established, should they contemplate an act which would discredit all the work they had previously undertaken?

The answer to this question offered by the Waldheim camp was not hard to guess. Again, Michael Graff showed the way. The text of the telegram he sent to Edgar Bronfman and made

public two days prior to the second round of the election, provided a succinct summary of the points made here and requires no additional comment:

Although I am used to your organization's [making] untrue and slanderous accusations against Kurt Waldheim, which cannot in the least be corroborated by ostensible documentary evidence, I would never have assumed that you would go so far . . . I had expected the World Jewish Congress to issue an immediate denial of the report in the *Wochenpresse* and to initiate legal action against Chatzisvangelis, but I have not heard of any such efforts [on your part] . . . If I do not receive a satisfactory explanation within a reasonable period of time, I will have to assume that the World Jewish Congress actually attempted to bribe a witness. The Austrian people will draw the appropriate conclusions.¹⁵⁹

What Motives Could “They” Have?

Everyone seeks explanations of social phenomena, and utilizes available interpretive schema for doing so. Those who accepted the elements of the *Feindbild* we have described here were no different. Once the “what” and “how” of the WJC’s “trash can campaign” against Kurt Waldheim had been established, it was natural to inquire as to the “why.” In this case, the question read, what possibly could have motivated the WJC to wage a campaign of lies and slanders, to threaten Austrians with six years of strife should they dare to elect Waldheim, and to persevere in the face of such obvious failure? Since any reasonable person could see that all the allegations were untrue, so this line of argument went, there could be no rational grounds for investigating the concealed past of a former secretary general of the United Nations who might have had Nazi affiliations and might have known of atrocities committed by the Wehrmacht units in which he had served. Yet the WJC persisted in its “slander campaign” against Waldheim, and commanded not only the international press, but the Israeli government as well. What could be the reasons?

The common denominator in all the explanations on offer was the thirst for revenge. One frequently mentioned candidate for the WJC’s revenge was Waldheim’s policies towards the Middle East while at the United Nations. “The same group,” as the *NVB* formulated it, made “Waldheim responsible for the Middle East policies of the United Nations during his service as Secretary General.”¹⁶⁰ Waldheim himself offered this as an explanation,¹⁶¹ and there were variants. For example, Gerfried Sperl, then writing for the *Süd-Ost Tageszeitung*, believed Arafat’s visit to the United Nations to be “without doubt one of the roots of the attacks of the ‘World Jewish Congress.’” It wanted simply to avenge this deed.¹⁶²

Far more frequent, however, were references to personal revenge or other irrational motives. Michael Graff, as might be expected, had a fitting response. The henchmen of the WJC in Israel, he said via the ÖVP press office, were motivated by “hatred and a craving for recognition.”¹⁶³ The WJC, reported the *NKZ* shortly before the second round of the election, “was becoming ever more dogged” in its slander campaign. It “is smearing and slandering more wickedly than ever, [and] international socialism pours oil on the fire.”¹⁶⁴ Kurt Vorhofer from the *Kleine Zeitung* believed he had located the reason in the psychic imbalance of the Jews after Auschwitz. “Even if one emphatically rejects the methods employed against Kurt Waldheim and Austria,” he wrote, “one should say in these Jewish functionaries’ favor that we are dealing with people who, like so many other Jews, have been psychically severely damaged.”¹⁶⁵ Kurt Seinitz of the *NKZ* explained on 28 March 1986, as the headline over his article says, “Why the World Jewish Congress and Israel Singer are so Angry.” The reason, he suggested, was the personal

revenge of Israel Singer. “Singer’s father,” Seinitz wrote, “had to ‘clean’ the streets of Vienna with a toothbrush in 1938.”¹⁶⁶ Less charitable was Seinitz’s colleague Peter Gnam. The “attacks of the World Jewish Congress on Waldheim,” he wrote, were the result simply of “hatred and blind rage.”¹⁶⁷ Even psychologist Erwin Ringel, a prominent opponent of Waldheim, characterized the behavior of the WJC as “sadistic.”¹⁶⁸

The World Jewish Congress as Political Synecdoche

Public discourse about Jews or things Jewish in Austria since the end of the Second World War has been conditioned by the public taboo against open expressions of antisemitic prejudice. Though, as we have seen, these taboos have not prevented such beliefs finding periodic public expression, usage which recalls the period prior to 1945 has generally been subject to negative sanctions. As a consequence, the expression of overtly defamatory statements against “the Jews” or the invocation of explicit motifs a la *Stürmer* are relatively rare, and seldom occur outside situations where the consent of the audience is presumed (for example, neo-Nazi or some veterans’ organizations or in closed groups of like-minded individuals, so-called *Stammtischgespräche*) or where anonymity obviates personal responsibility and thereby accords speakers a measure of license otherwise wanting.¹⁶⁹ It also means that protestations of the many Jewish friends one has,¹⁷⁰ how strongly one supports Israel, or that one’s attack was limited to the World Jewish Congress, a small private organization, may, and frequently did, disguise unspoken (and perhaps even unconscious) prejudice.¹⁷¹ In the debate over Waldheim’s past, those who assailed the WJC most vigorously were often those who protested their innocence of antisemitic prejudice most vociferously. Michael Graff of the People’s Party represented a sort of textbook example of this phenomenon in official Austrian political culture. Graff’s lengthiest opportunity to answer charges that he had pandered to antisemitic prejudice came in an interview in the late night news program in Austrian television. He was responding to criticisms raised by representatives of the Austrian Jewish community against the ÖVP. Graff’s response was first to establish his party’s credentials as one which was “founded in the year 1945 by men who had come out of the concentration camps and prisons of the Nazi regime.” He then offered his own personal defense in a somewhat rambling fashion:

I always used these expressions [such as “dishonorable lot”] in a context. I always added [that] I meant these officials of the World Jewish Congress, who had broken their word to the Austrian president; who—although they knew otherwise—because they repeatedly came up with the same documents, which do not prove anything other than that Dr. Waldheim was a first lieutenant in the Wehrmacht—[I] always added [that] to it.

In the very next line, however, Graff added, attempting to be funny, “I am not demanding that you show Israel Singer now. Then I would really accelerate antisemitism in Austria.”¹⁷² This was clearly something Graff had not thought through, but it exposed what he had up to then so well concealed: the existence of strong antisemitic prejudice which could be exploited for political ends. The assumption to which Graff’s aside alluded was that the behavior of one single Jew, however offensive it might be felt to be, somehow reflected on Jews as a whole. And the readiness to manipulate this assumption (whether or not Graff believed it himself is immaterial; its political potential was for him a given) informed not only Graff’s own actions in the campaign. The appeal to it, primarily the systematic demonization of the WJC, became a set piece in the Waldheim camp’s propaganda repertoire.

It has been shown above that merely feeling threatened by the interview with two officials of the WJC necessarily presumed beliefs about the power of international Jewry, whether these were articulated openly or not. There were, however, more direct associations made which suggested that the WJC had assumed a representative function, what I have termed political synecdoche, for both the Jews as a whole and for the more nebulous but equally evocative German expression for “abroad” (*das Ausland*).

The discursive manifestations of this idea were varied and could be more or less explicit. Kurt Vorhofer, for example, wrote “Of course it was necessary to answer the monstrous attacks which came from the Jewish side.” Since the WJC were by consensus the principal authors of the “monstrous attacks,” Vorhofer’s description left little doubt that it was conceptually interchangeable with the Jews.¹⁷³ After the first round of the election, the SPÖ paper in Carinthia asked, as its banner headline proclaimed, “Is Waldheim Beholden to World Jewry?”¹⁷⁴ In the context of the election campaign, and the frequently expressed hopes of the ÖVP for a knee-jerk electoral reaction of defiance toward the WJC’s attacks, the implication of the headline, even though (or perhaps because) it had come from a Carinthian paper which opposed Waldheim, was unmistakable. In a similar vein, Kurt Markaritzer of the *Neue Volkszeitung Kärnten Osttirol* wrote, “Now it is not easy to counter Jewish attacks. Spokesmen of this people have a right to excessive tolerance, in light of the frightful horrors of the Nazi period. One need not and should not take what they say too literally.”¹⁷⁵

Similar examples could be found of the direct and explicit association of the WJC with world Jewry or simply Jewry, but it is probably not accidental that they tended to be found in provincial newspapers, where familiarity with the preferred forms of linguistic etiquette might have been less developed. In fact, the WJC also came to stand for the forces from “abroad,” as head of an international campaign against Austria. The Waldheim camp deployed this theme skillfully in its electoral propaganda, and in appealing to Austrians to unite against the foreign (Jewish) danger it could call upon equally potent sources of national identity such as Austria’s being the perpetual victim of international *Diktat*. The amalgamation of the WJC with “*das Ausland*” gave rise to a kind of coded language, in which the eschewing of attacks from “abroad” could become synonymous with the rejection of criticisms “from the Jewish side.”

In the event, the German *Ausland* lent itself particularly easily to such an amalgamation.¹⁷⁶ A word for which there is no exact equivalent in English, *das Ausland* is a singular noun describing everything which lies outside the boundaries which define the country. In some usages, the word *Ausland* could connote an idea of “those out there,” but the normal translation as “foreign countries” implies a plurality of subjects which the singular *das Ausland* simply obliterates. In the debate on the Waldheim affair, *das Ausland* was frequently described as though it possessed capacities of action normally associated with more differentiated individual units, but which in this case could only have helped forge the link between *das Ausland* and the WJC. For example, Dieter Lenhardt of *Die Presse*, alluding to the *Profil* interview with Israel Singer and Elan Steinberg, and the disclosures the WJC had made, wrote of the “now completely unvarnished foreign intervention in the Austrian presidential election.”¹⁷⁷ More concretely, a spokesperson of Waldheim’s campaign office referred to the disclosure of documents as the “meddling of *das Ausland*.”¹⁷⁸ This statement not only assumed that *das Ausland* was capable of intervening in the election (the phrase was not “from abroad” [*aus dem Ausland*], but simply “of abroad” [*des Auslands*]), it connected an amorphous and undefined group with actions which, according to general agreement, the WJC had been carrying out.

Other references to *das Ausland* or some variant which, in the context, could only have been referring to the WJC, also helped forge the chain of associations. The then second president of the National Assembly, Marge Hubinek of the ÖVP, asked rhetorically “whether it is, then, still necessary . . . to elect the president by popular vote, if some few foreign [*ausländisch*] functionaries believe that they can decide who will become Austrian president.”¹⁷⁹ The only “functionaries” who were mentioned in connection with Waldheim and influence on the election, it hardly need be said, were those from the WJC. The *NVB* wrote an article headlined “Agitators in New York in the Final Push against Waldheim.” In the article itself, Michael Graff was quoted as denouncing “the hectic activities of the lobby of the World Jewish Congress,” which not only made the WJC into so important an organization that it required its own lobby, but also signalled to those listening the relevant coded allusions: “The stronger the foreign interventions become, the more the second round becomes an act of patriotism and Austrian self-respect.”¹⁸⁰ “The fact remains,” concurred Walter Salzmann one week later, “that *das Ausland*, and especially the World Jewish Congress, was consciously engaged in this campaign and has unfortunately not understood that they [could] not have done their organization and thereby the Jewish fellow citizens in Austria a greater disservice than to have taken over and to continue leading the chase [*Jagd*] after Kurt Waldheim.”¹⁸¹

On one occasion, Viktor Reimann of the *NKZ* felt obliged to defend his journalistic honor, and in so doing identified clearly against whom he was protecting it. “What we did, and what the sense of journalistic decency required of us, was to defend a fellow citizen, who had certainly not brought disgrace upon our country, from infamous accusations from outside, [which were] possibly initiated in Austria [*Inland*]. What the World Jewish Congress and the part of the American mass media under its influence [have done], will simply not do any longer.”¹⁸² A leaflet published by the “Youth for Waldheim” initiative condemned in a similar bellicose manner “the foreign organizations” who wanted to determine the outcome of the Austrian presidential election by duress.¹⁸³

Perhaps the most compelling evidence of the explicit association of the WJC with Jewry as a whole, however, was visual. In its 1 April 1986 issue, the weekly news magazine *Wochenpresse* carried a long background article on the WJC and an interview with Simon Wiesenthal, in which he expressed sharp criticisms of the organization’s handling of the Waldheim affair. The article on the WJC was not in itself excessively tendentious. Moreover, the editors of the magazine were apparently conscious of the perils of publishing an article on this subject. After much consideration they decided to run it, but were determined to avoid, as Gerald Freihofner wrote, “in any way providing ammunition for latent antisemitism, which is still widespread in the Austrian population.”¹⁸⁴ The cover story, entitled “Waldheim’s Adversaries: The World Jewish Congress,” was accompanied, as such stories are, by a photograph, whose semiotic significance is so obvious that Freihofner’s protestations in the magazine could almost be seen as an April fool’s joke. This photograph showed a male bust figure from the rear, with a yarmulka on his head. In the middle of the yarmulka was an embroidered star of David. An anonymous male figure with a yarmulka could be related to the WJC alone, however, only if it were an identifying feature of the organization or its members. In the popular imagination, of course, a yarmulka is the characteristic which marks off, not the WJC, but “the Jews.” The message this cover photo conveyed was a simple but powerful one: when we say World Jewish Congress, we mean the Jews.

Every new disclosure of documents in New York confirmed the Waldheimian prognoses and increased the hatred against the WJC. An organization which did not shrink from slander

and whose general secretary thirsted for revenge, had truly earned a corresponding reaction. And the WJC received it. That the supporters of Waldheim in the ÖVP and among sympathetic journalists, by joining the crusade against the WJC, fomented real hatred and psychological terror, was taken in stride. This made the question whether their efforts were subtle or coarse, open or adumbrative, intentional or accidental, passionate or merely indifferent, largely irrelevant. They did little to combat the trend. Perhaps some had an inkling of the hatred which ensued. At least for the leading politicians of the ÖVP, the perceived political stakes overrode any qualms which they might otherwise have entertained.¹⁸⁵ They could not have wished for a more appropriate tool than the WJC.

One of Waldheim's election campaign brochures carried the headline "This is How They Wanted to Destroy Kurt Waldheim!" Though out of context the anonymous references might be thought to suggest sciamachy, appearances deceive. "They" were indeed not explicitly defined, and the contradictory references in the brochure to the SPÖ members involved in the "campaign" merely broadened, but did not alter, the principal reference point. The *Feindbild 'Jud'* which had been constructed around the WJC made such details superfluous. For those who had "understood" the events until then had no trouble making the necessary associations and, as Graff put it, drawing "the appropriate conclusions." Richard Nimmerrichter, columnist for the *NKZ*, captured the essence of the matter accurately, but he defined the audience receptive to such appeals (most of whom were readers of his own column) far too narrowly: "For incorrigible Nazis, the World Jewish Congress came as an unexpected windfall, for [in the WJC] they saw the muddled ideas of Rosenberg and Goebbels on the international Jewish conspiracy confirmed in their minds in a way they never would have expected."¹⁸⁶

Notes

1. See Teun van Dijk, *Prejudice in Discourse. An Analysis of Ethnic Prejudice in Cognition and Conversation* (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: Benjamins, 1984), pp. 13-41.

2. For the various usages of the word "campaign" see Chapter 3, note 82.

3. See Norman Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide. The Myth of the Jewish world-conspiracy and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (Chico, California: Scholars Press, 1981 [reprint of 1969 edition]); Johann Rogall von Bieberstein, *Die These von der Verschwörung: Philosophen, Freimauer, Juden, Liberale und Sozialisten als Verschwörer gegen die Sozialordnung* (Frankfurt am Main and Bern: Peter Lang, 1978). The Bishop of Linz, Gföllner, issued a pastoral letter a few days before Hitler was appointed chancellor in Germany in which it states: "Degenerate Judaism [*Judentum*], in league with world free masonry is also the bearer of mammon capitalism and dominant founder and apostle of socialism and communism, the forerunner and pacemaker of bolshevism." Quoted in Anton Pelinka, *Stand oder Klasse? Die christliche Arbeiterbewegung Österreichs 1933-38* (Vienna: Europaverlag, 1972), p. 216.

4. Cited in Kurt Schubert, "Der Weg zur Katastrophe," *Studia Judaica Austriaca* Vol. V. (1977), p. 57.

5. *ibid.*

6. *Volkswohl* (1919), cited in Jonny Moser, "Die Katastrophe," p. 83. See also Leopold Spira, *Feindbild Jud'* (Vienna: Löcker Verlag, 1981), pp. 15-68.

7. The "international Jew press" was a frequent theme of the Christian Social party. See, for example, *Reichspost*, 10 November 1897; 18 November 1897, 12 January 1898, and 15 January 1899. See Sigurd Paul Scheichl, "The Contexts and Nuances of Anti-Jewish Language: Were all the 'Antisemites' Antisemites?" in Ivar Oxaal, Michael Pollak and Gerhard Botz, eds, *Jews, Antisemitism and Culture in Vienna* (London and New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987) p. 91. See also Rudolf de Cillia, Richard Mitten and Ruth Wodak, "Von der Kunst, antisemitisch zu sein," in Karl Albrecht-Weinberger and Felicitas Heimann-Jelinek, eds, *Judentum in Wien. Sammlung Max Berger* (Vienna: Historisches Museum der Stadt Wien, 1987), pp. 94-107.

8. In response to a question from *Le Monde* journalist Claire Tréaean Waldheim replied that the international press “is dominated by the World Jewish Congress. That is well known!” *Le Monde*, 3 May 1986.

9. Hilde Weiss’s 1983 study on antisemitic prejudice showed that many Austrians continue to believe that Jews possess a great deal of power and influence. Weiss did not, of course, ask her respondents whether they thought the Jews controlled the international press. However, a poll conducted by Gallup in 1980 showed that nearly 50% of those questions responded to the statement “The Jews control world politics” with either “agree” or “tend to agree.” Respondents to a questionnaire prepared by Weiss (she conducted the investigation in 1976) expressed similar assent to the statement that the influence of the Jews is underestimated. At the same time, Weiss was able to gather opinions about characteristics traditionally considered typically Jewish, such as solidarity and diligence, by means of questions such as “Jewish solidarity ist exemplary.” In this context it is of secondary interest whether these characteristics were considered positive or negative. The principal goal was to establish the extent to which generalization and stereotyping about Jews along traditional lines has persisted. Out interest in these data is to determine whether statements of politicians or newspaper articles in Austria during the presidential election of 1986 could have suggested, promoted, encouraged or would not have actively combatted a Jewish conspiracy theory. An ancillary interest is, naturally, what kind of (cognitive) responses such allusions could be expected to elicit. Hilde Weiss, *Antisemitische Vorurteile in Österreich. Theoretische und empirische Analysen* (vienna: Wilhelm Braumüller, 1987); Wodak, et al., *Unschuldige Täter*, passim.

10. *Neue Kronen Zeitung (NKZ)*, 6 March 1986.

11. *Volkszeitung*, 25 March 1986.

12. *NKZ*, 3 May 1986; 4 May 1986.

13. *NKZ*, 13 April 1986.

14. On this general characteristic of conspiracy theories see Allport, *Prejudice*, pp. 165-177; 395-409.

15. In November, 1987, Michael Graff gave an interview to *L’Express* journalist Mich;agele Georges. In response to a question about the then upcoming historians’ commission, Graff replied, “As long as it is not proven that he [Waldheim] singlehandedly strangled six Jews, then there is no problem.” See *L’Express*, 13 November 1987. As a result of the uproar over these remarks after they had become known in Austria, Graff was forced to resign as ÖVP Secretary General. Graff today is the official party spokesman for judicial affairs, and for all intents and purposes has been “rehabilitated.” Former Foreign Minister Karl Gruber, who was known as a leader of anti-Nazi resistance in Tyrol, remarked in February 1988, also in an interview with a foreign journalist, that the report of the international historians commission was critical of Waldheim because “one [member] was a socialist and three were of Jewish background.” Given the chance to withdraw his remark over the next several days, Gruber stood by his judgment and protested that he had many Jewish friends. His remark was condemned by Austrian Chancellor Franz Vranitzky, who personally sent apologies to every member of the historians’ commission, and even Waldheim was forced to disclaim Gruber’s remarks. This public expression of fairly crude antisemitic prejudice did not hinder the ÖVP top brass from celebrating Gruber’s eightieth birthday several months later, nor the Austrian broadcasting company from featuring it on the evening news. Gruber’s remarks in the original interview were broadcast on the *Zeit im Bild I* news program. See Ruth Wodak, “The Waldheim Affair and Antisemitic Prejudice in Austrian Public Discourse,” *Patterns of Prejudice* Vol. 24, Nos. 2-4 (1990), pp. 18-33; Projektteam “Sprache und Vorurteil,” “Unschuldige Täter,” Vol. 1, pp. 235- 241.

16. In a televised interview in June 1986, in which he responded to charges made the Austrian Jewish Community that he had enlisted antisemitism in the election campaign, Michael Graff stated that his party “was founded in 1945 by men who had come out of the concentration camps and prisons of the Nazi regime. . . [and that the ÖVP] had always known what a poison antisemitism is . . . and always condemned it.” Apart from being untrue, Graff’s remarks strike one as particularly affected in light of his later remarks. See Projektteam “Sprache und Vorurteil,” “Unschuldige Täter,” Vol. 1, Appendix III.

17. On the attribution of responsibility for the “campaign” in the Austrian newspapers *Die Presse* and the *NKZ*, see Projektteam “Sprache und Vorurteile,” *Unschuldige Täter*, Vol. 2, Part II, pp. 174-76.

18. See, for example, *NKZ*, 12 April and 6 May 1986.

19. Österreichische Rundfunk (ORF), *Zeit im Bild I*, 5 June 1986.

20. *Die Presse*, 5 March 1986.

21. *NKZ*, 5 March 1986.
22. *Die Presse*, 6 March 1986.
23. *NKZ*, 6 March 1986.
24. *Wiener Zeitung (WZ)*, 6 March 1986; The resolution is printed in full in *Neue Zeit*, 22 March 1986.
25. *NKZ*, 7 March 1986.
26. *Die Presse*, 7 March 1986.
27. *Die Presse*, 8 March 1986.
28. *Salzburger Nachrichten (SN)* 8 March 1986.
29. *NKZ*, 9 March 1986.
30. *NKZ*, 8 March 1986.
31. *Pressestunde*, ORF, 9 March 1986, quoted in Chapter 6. See also the reports on Waldheim's appearance in *Kleine Zeitung*, *Kurier*, *Die Presse*, *NKZ*, 10 March 1986; Compare *Süd- Ost Tageszeitung*, 11 March 1986; *WZ*, 11 March 1986.
32. *Wochenpresse*, 11 March 1986.
33. *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten*, 22 March 1986.
34. This line of argument was also supported by the ÖVP paper *Neues Volksblatt (NVB)*, which designated Pusch and SPÖ General Secretary Peter Schieder as "Wire-pullers of the Waldheim Campaign." *NVB*, 22 March 1986.
35. *Mittagsjournal*, ORF 21 March 1986.
36. *ibid.*
37. From the date of this statement, it is clear that Mock was referring to the NS-*Reiterkorps*, not the SA *Reiterstandarte*, but the point is relevant only to show how easily a document could be employed to "disprove" any number of allegations.
38. *Kurier*, 22 March 1986.
39. *Kurier*, 23 March 1986.
40. *Kurier*, 24 March 1986.
41. *Profil*, 24 March 1986.
42. *NVB*, 22 March 1986.
43. *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten*, 22 March 1986.
44. *NKZ*, 22 March 1986.
45. *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten*, 22 March 1986.
46. *Die Presse*, 22 March 1986.
47. *Kurier*, 22 March 1986.
48. *Neue AZ/Tagblatt (AZ)*, 21 and 22 March 1986. See also *Neue Zeit*, 22 March 1986.
49. *SN*, 8-9 March 1986.
50. *SN*, 11 March 1986.
51. *Salzburger Nachrichten (SN)*, 22 March 1986.
52. *SN*, 28 March 1986. It is not clear which "slanderers" Waldheim meant, nor which archives were involved, but in any case his statement was palpably false. See *Profil*, 24 March 1986.
53. ORF, *Pressestunde*, 23 March 1986, cited in *WZ*, 25 March 1986.
54. *NKZ*, 26 March 1986.
55. *Kurier*, 23 March 1986; *WZ*, 23 March 1986 und 24 March 1986. See also *NVB*, 24 March 1986 and *NVB*, 25 March 1986.
56. Whether such disaffection would have had any concrete result is another matter. Waldheim told *Kurier* on 23 March, "I am not considering giving up my candidacy. *Kurier*, 23 March 1986. Michael Graff was quoted as saying that "We [ÖVP] are not considering giving up [on Waldheim]. Our motto is 'Now More Than Ever!'" *NKZ*, 29 March 1986.
57. *NVB*, 12 April 1986.
58. *SN*, 23 April 1986 and especially 1 April 1986; *Profil*, 24 March 1986.
59. *WZ*, 4 March 1986. See above, Chapter 3.
60. The text of this speech is repinted in *WZ*, 23 April 1986. See also Projektteam "Sprache und Vorurteil," "Wir sind alle unschuldige Täter!" Studien zum antisemitischen Diskurs im Nachkriegsösterreich." Project Report, Manuscript, (Vienna, 1989), pp. 207-213.

61. *Die Presse*, 5 March 1986.

62. The distinction is that the formulation “sent” implied an organizational role and command authority which Army Group E did not possess in this question.

63. *Die Presse*, 5 March 1986.

64. *Die Presse*, 6 March 1986.

65. *NKZ*, 6 March 1986.

66. “News From World Jewish Congress” (News from WJC), 4 March 1986: “Bronfman said that Waldheim had engaged in ‘one of the most elaborate deceptions of our time.’” The error possibly relates to the morphological similarities between the German words for disappointment (*Enttäuschung*) and deception (*Täuschung*), though this is not certain.

67. According to Langenscheidts German-English dictionary “daraufhin” can also mean “after that,” “as a result,” “on the strength of it,” “therefore,” “in answer to it,” and “in response.” I have chosen the meaning which suggests the weakest causal relation, but all would confirm the point I am making. See Heinz Messinger and the Langengenscheidt-Redaktion, *Langenscheidts Grosswörterbuch der englischen und deutschen Sprache* (Berlin, Munich, Vienna and Zurich: Langenscheidt, 1982), p. 259.

68. *Kurier*, 6 March 1986.

69. *NVB*, 24 March 1986. The German sentence itself makes it unclear when Waldheim was supposed to have committed the crimes listed or when Yugoslavia had accused him: *von jugoslawischen Stellen, im Jahre 1948 an Kriegsverbrechen beteiligt gewesen zu sein*.

70. *ibid*.

71. *Die Presse*, 24 March 1986.

72. See News from WJC, 22 March 1986.

73. See, for example, *Tiroler Tageszeitung*, 24 March 1986.

74. *NKZ*, 24 March 1986.

75. *Kurier*, 24 March 1986.

76. This was a boxed report. Above it, on the same page, was another headline on the story. The rubric stated “Ex-U.N. [Secretary] General shaken over the ‘new absurd effronteries [*Frechheiten*]” and the headline itself, “Waldheim Emphatically: ‘Have a Clear Conscience!’”

77. See *Kurier*, 6 March 1986.

78. In fact, this listing was far less significant than it would appear. However, this had nothing to do with the objections Rauscher raised.

79. *Kurier*, 24 March 1986.

80. *WZ*, 25 March 1986.

81. *Pressestunde*, ORF 23 March 1986.

82. *Voralberger Tageszeitung*, 25 March 1986.

83. *WZ*, 25 March 1986.

84. *WZ*, 25 March 1986. The CROWCASS combined accused war criminals from various national lists. At the time of this press conference, the Yugoslav file which served as the ultimate source of the allegations which landed Waldheim on the CROWCASS had not yet been made public. Thus Wiesenthal’s wholly justified question about the sequence of Yugoslav lists.

85. *Tiroler Tageszeitung*, 25 March 1986.

86. *ibid*. This, however, was apparently in connection with Waldheim’s service under Pannwitz, not with his service under Loehr. See *Profil*, 24 August 1987.

87. *Neue Zeit*, 25 March 1986.

88. *Südosst Tagespost*, 25 March 1986.

89. See *WZ*, 25 March 1986; *Neue Vorarlberger Tageszeitung*, 25 March 1986; *SN*, 25 March 1986.

90. *Die Presse*, 25 March 1986.

91. *NKZ*, 30 March 1986.

92. *NVB*, 26 March 1986.

93. *Profil*, 24 March 1986. The interview was conducted in English in New York by Peter Sichrovsky. The original transcript of the interview is not available. The above passages are a translation of the German text as it appeared in *Profil*.

94. *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 25 March 1986; 1 April 1986. See, however, the column by Anthony Lewis on 12 June 1986. In this piece, Lewis wrote, among other things, “Those of us who think there is an

eternal obligation to remember what Nazism meant are free to express our moral revulsion at the Austrian's choice. The opportunity to do so, and the responsibility, lie especially with those in the public eye whose acts may have an impact on the Austrian imagination." What Lewis saw as an individual's duty to protest one's disfavor at Waldheim's election, of course, could also be interpreted as a "threat" against Austria, but only under certain assumptions. In any case, there is more than one interpretive possibility for such statements.

95. Quoted in *International Herald Tribune*, 4 November 1986.

96. See in this connection the interview with Kurt Schubert, Professor of Judaic Studies at the University of Vienna, in the *SN*, 15 April 1986.

97. *NVB*, 25 March 1986.

98. *Neue Vorarlberger Tageszeitung*, 25 March 1986. It is difficult to convey the real flavor of this passage in English. The word "Judenrat" is, in Germany and Austria, very reminiscent of usage from the Nazi era. "Jewish Council" is in fact a major edulcoration. The German "Sippenhaftung," a much stronger word than guilt by association would normally imply, describes a situation in which all members of a group (a family, for example), are held collectively responsible for the behavior of any individual member. What made this passage particularly unsavory is that this sort of collective liability is known to most Austrians because of its application to families of political opponents or deserters by the Nazis. Normally it functions as one explanation why there was so little active and passive resistance to Nazi rule, and as such is convincing. However, in this context, because it is such an uncommon word, its usage suggested parallels between the Nazis and the WJC.

99. *Die Presse* advertizes itself as "the broad horizon [der grosse Horizont]."

100. *Die Presse*, 25 March 1986. I have translated the WJC as "it" rather than "they," which I otherwise prefer, to avoid causing confusion in tracing the referents to the pronouns in this exceptionally convoluted passage. Not even Leitenberger's turgidity, however, can explain Helmut Gruber's misreading of her as arguing that "the Jews trade in a dark past" ["*Die Juden machen Geschäft aus ihrer Vergangenheit*"]; Gruber's interpretation can be excluded on simple grammatical grounds. See Helmut Gruber, *Antisemitismus im Mediendiskurs. Die Affäre "Waldheim" in der Tagespresse* (Wiesbaden: Deutscher Universitäts-Verlag, 1991), pp. 215-217, 253-254.

101. See *Die Furche*, 31 July 1971, quoted in Spira, *Feindbild*, p. 136.

102. *Die Furche*, 28 March 1986.

103. *Philadelphia Enquirer*, 19 May 1986. See also *New York Daily News*, 16 May 1986 und *NYT*, 17 May 1986.

104. *NKZ*, 25 May 1986.

105. But by no means unanimous. Gerhard Steininger of the *Salzburger Nachrichten*, for example, wrote that "We have latent and acute antisemitism among us once again. Heaven forbid that we should have anything against our Jewish fellow citizens, just against those 'certain Jewish circles,' best exemplified by Israel Singer. Is antisemitism thereby even a trace more harmless if it conjures up only one or a few scapegoats?" *SN*, 5/6 April 1986.

106. See Allport, *Prejudice*, pp. 9ff.

107. Austria Presseagentur (APA)-dispatch 25 March 1986; *Die Presse*, 25 March 1986.

108. *NKZ*, 26 March 1986; *Kurier*, 26 March 1986; *AZ*, 25 March 1986, among others.

109. *Tiroler Tageszeitung*, 25 March 1986. In February, 1980, the then editor of this paper, Rupert Kerer, wrote an article on the relationship between the Catholic Church and antisemitism. In this commentary, Kerer wrote: "The destruction of taboos by Jewish minds [*Geister*] has become fateful for humanity; laws, without which humanity would sink back into anarchy and its primitive nature." Kerer then catalogued the Jewish culprits, who (counting the honorary Jews as well) included Freud and Marx and Engels, Oppenheimer and Adorno, Brecht and Marcuse. "The 'Lexicon of Judaism' counts among its many steps forward for humanity, many which were actually steps backward into barbarity. The Jews will not enjoy reflecting on this role in world history, but it is here that the roots of antisemitism are to be sought." Quoted in Spira, *Feindbild*, p. 29.

110. *NKZ*, 26 March 1986.

111. For this aspect of Kreisky's politics, see Martin van Amerongen, *Bruno Kreisky und seine unbewältigte Gegenwart* (Graz: Styria Verlag, 1977), passim; Spira, *Feindbild*, pp. 133-153; Robert Wistrich, "The Strange Case of Bruno Kreisky," *Encounter* (May, 1979) pp. 78- 85; and Ruth Wodak,

Peter Nowak, Helmut Gruber, Johanna Pelikan, Rudolf de Cillia and Richard Mitten, *„Wir sind alle unschuldige Täter!“ Diskurshistorische Studien zum Nachkriegsantisemitismus* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1990), pp. 282-299.

112. *Zeit im Bild I*, ORF 25 March 1986, cited in Wodak, et al., *Unschuldige Täter*, p. 180.

113. News from WJC, 22 March 1986. The point is significant in that the Counter Intelligence section of Army Group E was *ceteris paribus* more likely to be involved in activities judged to be criminal. On the *Abwehr* in Army Group E, see Hans Kurz, James Collins, Jean Vanwelkenheuzen, Gerald Fleming, Hagen Fleischer, Jehuda Wallach and Manfred Messerschmidt, *Der Bericht der internationalen Historikerkommission*, Manuscript 202pp plus addenda, Vienna, 1988. The report was printed as supplement in *Profil* 15 February 1988, pp. 8-11.

114. News from WJC, 25 March 1986.

115. *Mittagjournal*, ORF 25 March 1986. This broadcast is analyzed in greater detail in Projektteam „Sprache und Vorurteil,” *„Unschuldige Täter,”* Vol. 1, pp. 323-333.

116. See Projektteam „Sprache und Vorurteil,” *„Unschuldige Täter,”* Vol. 1, pp. 182-206.

117. *Mittagjournal*, ORF 25 March 1986.

118. See, for example, *Kurier*, 24 March 1986.

119. In my opinion, false or misleading statements made by a journalist cannot be excused merely because he or she has not taken the trouble to research an issue. In point of fact, however, not only the press release of the WJC on 22 March 1986, but also *Kurier* contained all the information one needed to expose Graff's statement as crass and fallacious political propaganda. I cite the Austrian source(s) here principally to erode possible objections that the WJC's press releases were too difficult for Austrian journalists to come by. This is a rather flimsy excuse, but the point stands *a fortiori* when the information was easily accessible in one of the major Austrian daily papers which every ORF journalist reads. See News from WJC, 22 March 1986 and *Kurier*, 24 March 1986.

120. As we have seen, there is room for dispute as to how consistently Waldheim had maintained this position, but it was widely believed at the time that Waldheim had indeed made this claim.

121. *Abendjournal*, ORF 25 March 1986. The “headlines” of the main evening television news program repeated the identical formulation “interrogation officer of the counterintelligence section.” *Zeit im Bild I*, ORF 25 March 1986.

122. Unless, of course, Pesata considered all “partisan activities” to be war crimes, which in the context seems unlikely.

123. One need only look at this duty roster to see that the formulation “interrogation officer of the *Abwehr*” is nonsense. “Interrogation” appears only in the sections describing the duties of the military intelligence section (Ic), but is not listed as a task of the counterintelligence section (*Abwehr*). Moreover, the duties of the *Abwehr* section appear on a separate page altogether. Neither the WJC nor Herzstein had claimed that Waldheim was an “interrogation officer of the *Abwehr*.” See News from WJC, 25 March 1986; Robert Herzstein, “Prepared Statment of Prof. Robert E. Herzstein on the Wartime Activities of Kurt Waldheim,” 25 March 1986. The two relevant portions of this duty roster are reproduced in Karl Gruber, Ralph Scheide and Ferdinand Trautmannsdorff, *Waldheim's Wartime Years. A Documentation* (Vienna: Carl Gerold's Sohn, 1987), pp. 190-191.

124. *NKZ*, 26 March 1986.

125. *Handbuch für den Generalstabsdienst im Kriege*, cited in Kurz, et al., *Bericht*, p. 8.

126. *NKZ*, 26 March 1986; see also *Kurier*, 3 April 1986.

127. APA-dispatch, 27 March 1986. Steinbauer employs the passive, but the internal evidence leaves no doubt as to who was doing the construing.

128. *Tiroler Tageszeitung*, 5-6 April 1986.

129. In this connection it must be recalled that our analysis here concerns predominantly daily newspapers. *Profil* journalist Hubertus Czernin, who first broke the Waldheim story, provided high quality weekly analyses of the documents which were appearing. Writing for a weekly magazine is not the same as meeting daily deadlines, and one should not set unrealistic standards for the latter. However, the reports of *Profil* belie any notion that the astoundingly low quality of the reporting on the Waldheim affair in Austria was due to lack of sufficient information.

130. *Kurier*, 28 March 1986.

131. Herzstein, "Prepared Statment of Prof. Robert E. Herzstein on the Wartime Activities of Kurt Waldheim," 25 March 1986, pp. 8, 9-10.

132. *Kurier*, 28 March 1986.

133. This statement is inaccurate. Warnstorff became Ic in August 1943, while Waldheim was serving in Athens, and was Waldheim's superior from October, 1943, after he had returned to Arsakli from his temporary assignment in Athens. See Hanspeter Born, *Für die Richtigkeit. Kurt Waldheim* (Munich: Schneekluth, 1987), p. 102.

134. Rauscher's efforts were, as far as can be ascertained, undertaken in good faith, and other articles of his showed that he was capable of serious critical journalism. The point here is that in the situation we have described, any such lack of critical scrutiny contributed to the construction or reinforcement of the *Feindbild*. See *Kurier*, 7 May 1986.

135. The declaration is reproduced in Andreas Khol, Theodor Faulhaber and Gunther Ofner, eds, *Die Kampagne. Kurt Waldheim—Opfer oder Täter? Hintergründe und Szenen eines Falles von Medienjustiz* (Munich and Berlin: Herbig, 1987), between pages 160-161; see Herzstein, "Statement," p. 8.

136. See the APA dispatch 22 April 1986 and *NVB*, 23 April 1986. To her credit, Professor Weinzierl has since repudiated the use to which the declaration was put.

137. *NVB*, 2 June 1986.

138. To cite but two examples: The empress Maria Theresa rejected an application of a Jew for a residency permit for Vienna with the words, "I know of no more wicked plague for the state that this nation [which] drives people into poverty by means of fraud, usury and financial transactions and all other unpleasant activities, before which an honorable man would recoil in disgust." Quoted in Nikolaus Vielmetti, "Vom Begin der Neuzeit bis zur Toleranz," in Anna Drabek, Wolfgang Häusler, Kurt Schubert, Karl Stuhlpfarrer and Nikolaus Vielmetti, *Das österreichische Judentum. Voraussetzungen und Geschichte* (Vienna and Munich: Jugend und Volk, 1974), pp. 59-82, here p. 81. In 1902, the Austrian duelling fraternities passed a resolution at a meeting in Waidhofen which established the eponymous principle, according to which duelling with Jews was proscribed because, being dishonorable, one could not achieve "satisfaction" from them. The resolution is quoted in Dirk van Arkel, "Antisemitism in Austria." Dissertation, University of Leyden, 1966, p. 176.

139. *Die Presse*, 5 April 1986.

140. *NVB*, 10 April 1986.

141. *NKZ*, 10 April 1986.

142. *NKZ*, 6 May 1986.

143. *NVB*, 26 April 1986.

144. *WZ*, 29 April 1986.

145. *Kurier*, 26 and 27 March 1986; News from WJC, 27 March 1986; *NYT*, 27 March 1986.

146. *NYT*, 2 April 1986.

147. *NYT*, 3 April 1986.

148. *NYT*, 5 April 1986.

149. *NYT*, 8 April 1986.

150. *WZ*, 8 April 1986.

151. News from WJC, 9 April 1986.

152. The WJC press release does not mention Petritsch, which suggests that either the *NYT* reporter or the WJC was mistaken.

153. Letter from Israel Singer to President Rudolf Kirchschräger, 8 April 1986. attached to News from WJC, 9 April 1986.

154. News from WJC, 9 April 1986.

155. Letter from Kirchschräger to Israel Singer, 23 April 1986.

156. *WZ*, 23 April 1986. See Projektteam "Sprache und Vorurteil" *Unschuldige Täter*, Vol. I, pp. 207-213.

157. *Wochenpresse*, 3 June 1986.

158. See *Weltwoche*, 29 May 1986. For the evidence for and against Matza's allegations, see Born, *Richtigkeit*, pp. 9-13.

159. Quoted in *NVB*, 6 June 1986.

160. *NVB*, 24 March 1986.
161. See, for example, APA-dispatch, 25 March 1986.
162. *Süd-Ost Tagespost*, 27 March 1986.
163. ÖVP press release: "Graff: Israels Justizminister soll auf seinen Staatspräsidenten hoeren." 22 May 1986.
164. *NKZ*, 31 May 1986.
165. *Kleine Zeitung*, 27 March 1986.
166. *NKZ*, 28 March 1986. At an exhibition of photographs of Viennese Jews, which ran during the meeting of the WJC in Vienna in 1985, Singer recognized his father in a photograph of Jews being forced to scrub the streets by gangs of SA members.
167. *NKZ*, 28 March 1986.
168. *Club 2*, "Unser Wahlkampf," ORF 3 April 1986. See Ruth Wodak, "Wie über Juden geredet wird," *Journal für Sozialforschung* Vol. 28, No. 1 (1988), p. 128.
169. See Projektteam "Sprache und Vorurteil," *Unschuldige Täter*, Vol. 1, pp. 53-60; 86-111; and especially pp. 214- 293.
170. Or variations like the following from Waldheim: "I am on very congenial terms with the president of the Jewish community organization [*Kultusgemeinde*] and with a number of prominent Jewish fellow citizens, and I would regret it deeply if such [i.e., antisemitic] feelings were aroused." Quoted in *Wochenpresse*, 29 April 1986.
171. Gordon Allport called attention to what he called a "refencing device," which enables people to hold to pre-judgments even in the face of contradictory evidence. According to this view, by making exceptions for a few favored cases, the negative rubric may be retained intact for others. See Allport, *Prejudice*, pp. 23-24.
172. This interview is analyzed in depth in Projektteam "Sprache und Vorurteil," "Unschuldige Täter," pp. 201-206. The transcript of the interview is attached as Appendix III. Alois Mock had offered a similar line of argument in *Mittagsjournal*, ORF 26 May 1986.
173. *Neue Voralberger Tageszeitung*, 13 May 1986.
174. *Kärntner Tageszeitung*, 13 May 1986.
175. *Neue Volkszeitung Kärnten Osttirol*, 28 May 1986.
176. The German dyad *Inland/Ausland* is similar in function to the English interior/exterior, but the latter is not automatically associated with political or cultural units. Since there is no real expression which conveys its meaning, I will employ the German *das Ausland* when nothing else will do, without, however, artificially declining for case variations which do not exist in English.
177. *Die Presse*, 27 March 1986.
178. *SN*, 27 March 1986.
179. APA-dispatch, 27 March 1986.
179. *NVB*, 22 May 1986.
180. *NVB*, 29 April 1986.
181. *NKZ*, 3 May 1986.
182. Leaflet (no date), "Jugend für Waldheim," File "Waldheim" VIII, Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstandes, Vienna.
183. *Wochenpresse*, 1 April 1986.
184. Austrian Jewish community representatives held a press conference on 25 March 1986, at which their spokespersons characterised the appeal not to arouse "feelings which no one wants" as "a warning, which we can only interpret as a threat." *AZ*, 26 March 1986. On the following day Alois Mock appeared on the noontime radio news program *Mittagsjournal* and said, ". . . and I also appeal to the rational forces inside the World Jewish Congress to consider stopping this campaign and not [thereby] arouse feelings which none of us want." *Mittagsjournal*, ORF 26 March 1986.
185. *NKZ*, 27 March 1986.