

Austrian Government, People Split Over Whether Waldheim Should Resign

VIENNA (JTA) — Austria's governing coalition remained sharply split along party lines over whether President Kurt Waldheim should remain in office.

The Austrian people also appeared to be divided on the issue, according to a poll taken immediately after Waldheim's nationally televised address in which he declared he has no intention of resigning.

Waldheim spoke a week after an international commission of historians submitted its report of an examination of his wartime record. It found the Austrian president had failed to intervene or even protest mass deportations and other atrocities that he knew his German army unit was engaged in when he served as a Wehrmacht lieutenant in the Balkans during World War II.

The panel accused Waldheim of "lying" to conceal his military service, but found no proof that he had committed war crimes.

The poll, taken by the newspaper Die Presse, found that 34 percent of the respondents would vote for Waldheim again if presidential elections were held next Sunday, 45 percent would not vote for him and the balance was undecided.

However the respondents opposed his resignation by a margin of 46 to 37 percent.

Austria's politicians were equally divided.

Waldheim's address was hailed by leaders of the conservative People's Party, which had sponsored his election in 1986. The Socialist coalition partners called the speech disappointing.

People's Party chairman Alois Mock, who is Austrian vice chancellor and foreign minister,

said that Waldheim was trying to contribute to calm and reconciliation. He said tensions with the Socialist Party could be resolved by talks and mutual respect.

Helmut Kukacha, secretary general of the People's Party, said the government should protect Waldheim from unjustified attacks.

But Kukacha's Socialist counterpart, Heinrich Keller, denounced Waldheim's speech for implying that people concerned about Austria are slanderers and liars. "Where is his contribution towards reconciliation?" Keller asked.

Waldheim's resignation was demanded by Johanna Dohnal, the Socialist secretary of state for women's affairs. Her Cabinet colleague, Minister of Education and Culture Hilde Hawlicek, said she heard from many schools that children were removing or damaging

photographs of the president which hang in all classrooms.

Freda Meissner-Blau, head of the opposition Green Party parliamentary faction, said Waldheim's speech should be rejected. "He thinks he can get rid of criticism of his person by emotionally asking for compassion and by prohibiting criticism," she said.

In his speech, Waldheim complained that he was questioned "without mercy" about events of more than 40 years ago and "my accusers called me a murderer, a war criminal and a liar."

He also said, "A head of state must not give in to slander, hateful demonstrations and generalized judgments."

According to a spokesman for the center-right Freedom Party, "Waldheim is on the spot, and with him the whole country."

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Capacity Crowd Expected To Attend Salute To Israel Parade, April 17

A capacity crowd is expected to participate in the 24th annual Salute to Israel Parade on April 17, 1988, at 12:00 p.m. on Fifth Avenue in New York City, in celebration of Israel's 40th year of Jewish statehood, stated Sandy Eisenstat, parade chairman.

"This year's parade will be the central event inaugurating city-wide celebrations of Israel's 40th year of independence," he said. He added that the parade will allow American Jews to rally in a show of solidarity for their brethren in Israel, in the face of recent controversial events. Mr. Eisenstat is the eastern vice president of the America-Israel Public Affairs Committee and is a member of the Board of Directors of the Jewish National Fund, responsible for afforestation and land reclamation in Israel.

Mr. Eisenstat explained, "The current wave of unrest in West Bank and Gaza Strip has presented a serious threat to the Jewish state's security and image abroad. The Salute to Israel Parade will demonstrate the American Jewish community's unyielding support and understanding for Israel's security needs and the centrality of Israel to Jews throughout the world."

The parade will depict Israel's history chronologically, from the pre-state era to the present. Each participating group will present a single event, milestone or achievement from Israel's history. The groups will bring their themes to life through colorful banners, creative props and dramatic costumes. The final result will be a pageant-like tribute to Israel in her 40th year.

Immediately following the parade, Israel Fest, a 40th anniversary celebration, will be held at the Seventh Avenue Armory, on Park Avenue at 67th Street. A capacity crowd of 20,000 is expected at the festivities, which will feature top Israeli singers, dancers, actors, storytellers, clowns and puppeteers. Displays and booths will offer a wide range of Israeli products, while "Rehov Dizengoff," a special cafe, will feature a pot-pourri of Israeli foods.