

NEW YORK TIMES  
9 February 1985

# New Man at the U.N.: Global Trouble-Shooter and Skilled Linguist

## Global Trouble-Shooter

By ELAINE SCIOLINO

Special to The New York Times

UNITED NATIONS, N.Y., Feb. 8 — In "Silent Missions," his memoir, Gen. Vernon A. Walters relates a conversation he had at a reception in 1954 with the Soviet Ambassador to Brazil.

**Man in the News** The Ambassador complained to General Walters, then the United States military attaché in Brazil, that Americans always wanted to speak English. Even when they try to learn a foreign tongue, he continued, they suffer because they do not have the Slavs' ear for languages.

General Walters, a gifted linguist, bluntly switched to Russian, asking him if he would like to speak Portuguese instead. The Ambassador, insulted, replied, "Walters, you may be good soldier, but diplomat you are not."

### Interpreter to Presidents

Now Vernon Anthony Walters, 68 years old, the 6-foot-3-inch former soldier and Ambassador at Large, will have the opportunity to prove his diplomatic skills as successor to Jeane J. Kirkpatrick as chief American delegate to the United Nations.

The highly visible, Cabinet-level job will mean a new challenge for the man who has made his reputation as a global trouble-shooter who does not call attention to himself. General Walters speaks seven foreign languages, five of them fluently, and has served part-time as interpreter to five Presidents.

Of his outspoken predecessor, the general said in a recent telephone in-

terview: "She's done a terrific job of restoring the position of the United States in the U.N. Everyone has a different style, but it's the same President and basically the same policy."

Supporters of General Walters say they are confident he will bring both candor and loyalty to the United Nations job.

"He's been everywhere in the world, speaks all the languages and can debate very effectively," said William E. Colby, former Director of Central In-

telligence. "When he worked for me, he was fearless in expressing his views and totally loyal once a decision was made. I used him as a total alter ego."

But critics assert that although he has been effective when acting under instructions, he has never been called upon to craft policy or make major policy judgments.

A practicing Roman Catholic and fervent anti-Communist, he is also an unabashed American flag-waver who has called the Vietnam War "one of the noblest and most unselfish wars" in American history. He says his world view is determined by what he calls his "certain idea about the United States — that it is the last best hope for mankind."

Human rights advocates, like Lawrence Birns of the Council on Hemispheric Affairs, a private study group, have criticized what they characterize as his lack of concern for human rights abuses and his long history of warm relations with extreme right-wing military governments, such as the Pinochet Government in Chile and Argentina's former military junta.

Some rights advocates say they recall his response to a reporter's question in 1981 on Guatemala's poor human rights record. He said: "There are some problems that are never resolved. One has to define a solution that respects a being's right to live without fear. But as I see it, the best way to do that is not to impose the ideas of one nation on top of another."

Born in New York on Jan. 3, 1917, the youngest of three children, he attended French and English Catholic schools but dropped out at the age of 16 to work in his British-born father's insurance company.

He enlisted in the Army in 1941 and is fond of telling friends: "Adolf Hitler did at least one good deed in his life. He got me out of my father's insurance company — with my father's blessing."

Within a year he was a second lieutenant. As a bright aide who used his linguistic abilities to befriend foreign generals and diplomats, he rose rapidly through the ranks. In World War II, he was assigned to be a liaison officer with the Brazilian forces fighting in the United States Fifth Army in Italy under Gen. Mark Clark. His language abilities brought him to General Clark's attention, and ultimately to the attention of Gen. Alfred M. Gunther, the Fifth Army's chief of staff. He was aide-de-camp to General Clark during the liberation of Rome.

From military attaché in Rio de Janeiro and Paris, he rose to become a senior officer of the Defense Intell-

gence Agency. After 35 years in the service, he retired as a three-star general.

Although he may not have made history himself, he has certainly seen it firsthand. He served as W. Averell Harriman's aide in the early years of

the cold war, accompanied President Truman on his historic meeting with a defiant Gen. Douglas MacArthur and shuttled with President Eisenhower to a series of summit meetings from Geneva to White Sulphur Springs, W. Va.

As translator for Vice President Nixon during his good-will tour of Latin America in 1958, General Walters was cut in the mouth by broken glass when a mob stoned their car in Caracas.

Later, as military attaché in Paris, General Walters is remembered for smuggling Henry A. Kissinger in and out of France for clandestine meetings with Le Duc Tho of North Vietnam.

"He was great as our James Bond, getting us in and out secretly, even giving us code names," said Winston Lord, president of the Council on Foreign Relations, who accompanied Mr. Kissinger to the secret talks with the Vietnamese.

Just weeks after becoming deputy director of the C.I.A. under President Nixon, General Walters carried out instructions from the White House chief of staff, H. R. Haldeman, to warn the F.B.I. that the Watergate investigation could compromise intelligence opera-

tions in Mexico. "It simply did not occur to me that the chief of staff to the President might be asking me to do something that was illegal or wrong," he wrote in his memoirs.

He sat out the Carter years, becoming a private consultant, including among his clients an American company interested in selling arms to Morocco. He gave up the lucrative work when President Reagan offered him the job of roving Ambassador in 1981.

Since then, General Walters has visited 100 countries and logged an average of 10,000 miles a week as the Reagan Administration's chief trouble-shooter.

A lifelong bachelor who does not smoke, drinks little and has an acknowledged weakness for good chocolates, General Walters combines straight talk with a raconteur's charm. "I've always felt I could get more done with no publicity," he said in the interview.

"This is further than I ever expected to get," General Walters said of his new job. "Maybe I'm not so much of an amateur as the Soviet Ambassador thought I was."

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NEW YORK TIMES  
9 February 1985

# Walters, Longtime Diplomat, Gets Kirkpatrick Post at U.N.

## To Hold Cabinet Rank

By BERNARD WEINRAUB

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Feb. 8 — Gen. Vernon A. Walters, an experienced envoy and former Central Intelligence Agency official, was nominated by President Reagan today to succeed Jeane J. Kirkpatrick as chief United States delegate to the United Nations.

After the announcement, the 68-year-old retired Army general told reporters at the State Department, "I will do my best to continue the superb work that Ambassador Kirkpatrick has done in the United Nations to restore and enhance the position of the United States."

### Speaks Seven Languages

In accepting the post, General Walters made it clear that he would hold Cabinet rank, as had Dr. Kirkpatrick. In recent weeks, Administration officials have said Secretary of State George P. Shultz was seeking to remove the post from Cabinet status.

The general said, in response to a question, "My understanding is the position is the same as it was in the case of my predecessor."

Since 1981, General Walters, who speaks seven foreign languages, has served Mr. Reagan as an Ambassador at Large. He has visited about 100 countries, the State Department said, usually on secret missions.

A diplomat who shuns personal publicity, he has worked for five Administrations in the last 40 years and has been involved in missions in Europe, the Middle East, Africa, Asia, South America and Central America.

He said today that he considered his appointment to be the pinnacle of his long career. "It is a great honor to have received this mark of confidence," he said.

In response to a question, he said: "I think the United Nations is necessary for the world. Otherwise, I wouldn't consider accepting this job."

Discussing Dr. Kirkpatrick, one of the most prominent conservatives in the Administration, he said: "I think she's done a fantastic job. I think the position of the United States today in the United Nations is quite different from what it was four years ago.

"If I can do half as well," he said, "I will be quite pleased."

### Kirkpatrick Leaves in March

Dr. Kirkpatrick is planning to leave the United Nations post in March and return to Washington to resume her academic career. Although she had sought a high-level foreign policy job in the Administration, she apparently was not offered a post she wanted.

Although General Walters undertook many confidential journeys in recent years, he said today that "none of these missions have really been secret per se."

He added: "I've never traveled under false names or under disguise. I haven't sought any publicity. I have come to the conclusion that there's no amount of good that you can't do if you don't care who gets the credit for it.

"It's sometimes frustrating because I am not a modest man," he said, remarking that his travels in the last four years have totaled about a million miles.

### Was Deputy Chief of C.I.A.

The White House statement on his appointment said, "His special assignments included serving directly under Presidents Truman, Eisenhower and Nixon."

General Walters was Deputy Director of the Central Intelligence Agency under Presidents Nixon and Ford. He played a minor part in the secret diplomacy ending American involvement in Vietnam, and he also took part in ne-

gotiations leading to the renewal of United States ties to China. He was an aide to W. Averell Harriman at the Marshall Plan headquarters in Paris, and served as an assistant to President Eisenhower on his foreign trips.

The three-star general, who retired from the Army in 1976 after 35 years' service, has published memoirs, "Silent Missions," on his dealings and experiences with many world leaders.

In recent years, he went to Cuba to explore the possibility of improving relations with Fidel Castro, and in 1982 he visited Argentina to explain why the United States supported Britain in the conflict over the Falkland Islands.

### Voiced Concern to D'Aubuisson

Last year his missions took him, insofar as is known, to El Salvador, Sri Lanka and several African countries. The secret mission to El Salvador was to voice concern to the rightist leader, Roberto d'Aubuisson, about rumors of an assassination attempt against the United States Ambassador, Thomas R. Pickering. The general apparently asked Mr. D'Aubuisson to use his influence to halt any such attempt.

General Walters is especially known for his linguistic skills. He speaks French, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, German, Dutch and Russian.

It has been reported that he preferred to slip into a country unannounced before diplomatic discussions so he could ride buses and brush up on local slang.

He had told the White House that he would decline the United Nations post unless it held Cabinet rank, Administration officials said. The White House announcement said he, like Dr. Kirkpatrick, would serve on the National Security Council as well as hold "Cabinet rank."

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ON PAGE A-1WASHINGTON POST  
9 February 1985

# Reagan Nominates Walters To Be Ambassador to U.N.

By John M. Goshko  
Washington Post Staff Writer

President Reagan yesterday named retired lieutenant general Vernon A. Walters, a former deputy director of the Central Intelligence Agency and the State Department's chief diplomatic troubleshooter since 1981, to succeed Jeane J. Kirkpatrick as ambassador to the United Nations.

The nomination had been expected since last week when Kirkpatrick announced her resignation. If confirmed by the Senate, Walters would emerge from the shadowy world of intelligence and secret diplomatic missions into the limelight of public diplomacy for the first time in his 44 years of intermittent

government service. Walters, 68, has undertaken missions for presidents of both parties. But his strong anticommunist views and wide-ranging contacts with foreign military leaders, particularly in Latin America and Africa, have made him a favorite of conservative Republican administrations.

Thus, his outlook on global affairs strongly resembles that of Kirkpatrick, who was well-liked by conservatives for seeking a tough U.S. response to leftist insurgency in Third World areas such as Latin America. Kirkpatrick is known to have endorsed Walters' selection. And, when reporters yesterday asked his opinion of her performance at the United Nations, Walters replied, "I

think she's done a fantastic job . . . . If I could do half as well, I would be well-pleased."

However, administration sources said it is unlikely that Walters will function like Kirkpatrick, who had considerable influence with Reagan and who seemed at times to be an independent in the Cabinet, frequently at odds with moderates such as Secretary of State George P. Shultz.

Shultz was the leading advocate of giving the U.N. post to Walters, who, as ambassador-at-large, has been a Shultz subordinate and is regarded as loyal to the secretary's policies. Shultz also had argued for dropping the U.N. ambassador's Cabinet status so as to bring the post under

State Department control. But even though the secretary lost that battle, Walters hinted yesterday that he expects to take his lead from Shultz.

"I do not intend to be just a messenger boy," he said in a brief appearance before reporters. "But I do not intend to make difficulties for the policymakers of the United States."

Walters first drew attention as a gifted linguist whose mastery of eight languages caused five presidents and many other important officials to use him as an interpreter in meetings with foreign leaders. One of his closest relationships was with Richard M. Nixon, whom he accompanied to Caracas in 1958, when the then-vice president was besieged by a mob.

Nixon appointed Walters deputy CIA director in May 1972, and a month later Walters became embroiled in the Watergate controversy. At the request of H.R. (Bob) Haldeman, Nixon's chief of staff, Walters tried to wave the Federal Bureau of Investigation off the Watergate case by telling FBI Director L. Patrick Gray that continued investigation might expose CIA operations in Mexico.

A few days later, after looking into the matter, Walters told White House counsel John W. Dean III that the Watergate investigation posed no danger to CIA activities. Walters later wrote in his memoirs, "Silent Missions": "It simply did not occur to me that the chief of staff to the president might be asking me to do something that was illegal or wrong."

In 1964, when the Brazilian army overthrew the civilian government, leftists in Brazil charged that Walters, then the military attache at the U.S. Embassy in Rio de Janeiro, had encouraged the coup. Walters denied the charge, and no evidence has been offered to support it.

Later, while military attache in Paris in the late 1960s and early 1970s, he arranged secret negotiations between then-national security affairs adviser Henry A. Kissinger and North Vietnamese diplomats.

Early in the Reagan administration, Walters made a secret trip to Cuba to explore the possibility of improved relations with President Fidel Castro. Last year, after rumors that supporters of the rightist Salvadoran political leader Roberto D'Aubuisson were plotting to murder

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