

Walters Quits As Envoy To Germany

Emissary Served Nine Presidents

By Marc Fisher
Washington Post Foreign Service

BONN, June 24—Vernon Walters, the veteran U.S. emissary who has served nine presidents, announced tonight that he is quitting as ambassador to Germany.

Walters, 74, in a written statement to the German press, said: "All great things must end sometime. Now is the time to give this job over to someone else." He came here just over two years ago.

In a career stretching from the defeat of the Nazis to the reunification of Germany, Walters rose to the rank of lieutenant general in the Army and served as deputy director of the CIA, ambassador-at-large for the Reagan administration and chief U.S. delegate to the United Nations.

Walters, a linguist, took notes for Harry Truman, delivered a key letter to Marshal Tito, translated for Dwight Eisenhower and Charles de Gaulle, sat in vice president Richard Nixon's car as it was pelted with stones in Caracas and made a secret mission to Havana for secretary of state Alexander Haig in 1982.

Arriving here only six months before the fall of the Berlin Wall, Walters found himself embraced by a West Germany grateful to see an ambassador who knew the country and its language. That fondness only grew as Walters became one of the strongest defenders of a quick unification of the two Germanys. One German newspaper dubbed the burly envoy a "U.S. grizzly." Another printed a glowing profile headlined "Diplomat for Freedom."

A teetotaler who lives alone, Walters played only a limited role in U.S.-German relations through the crucial two years of his posting here, State Department sources said. While he spent much of his time doing the ceremonial tasks that made him appreciated by the Germans, his relations with the State Department were sometimes strained, embassy sources said.

In December 1989, only a few weeks after the Berlin Wall opened, Walters predicted that the two Germanys would reunite within five years. As obvious as that seems in retrospect, it brought Walters a sharp rebuke from Secretary of State James A. Baker III.

Limits placed by Baker on ambassadors' responses to journalists often left Walters reduced to repeating old war stories—with his staff sometimes mouthing the words as he spoke them. Walters—who once said "Diplomacy is about making friends, not losing them"—was far from oblivious of his staff's friendly teasing. "It's been said that I'm a guy who speaks a half-dozen languages and thinks in none," Walters once told a reporter.

Walters, who already has written an autobiography, "Silent Missions," is expected to write another book. He said he told President Bush of his plans two months ago and will stay on until a replacement is found.

The Washington Post A16
The New York Times _____
The Washington Times _____
The Wall Street Journal _____
The Christian Science Monitor _____
New York Daily News _____
USA Today _____
The Chicago Tribune _____
Date 25 JUNE 1991