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**DIRECTORATE OF  
INTELLIGENCE**

# Intelligence Memorandum

*Kurt WALDHEIM of Austria*  
*Secretary General of the United Nations*

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THE WALDHEIM FAMILY

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AUSTRIA

Kurt WALDHEIM

Secretary General of  
the United Nations



Kurt Waldheim, a career diplomat, was sworn in as Secretary General of the United Nations on 22 December 1971. He succeeds U Thant of Burma, who declined to run for another term because of failing health. From October 1970 until his current appointment Waldheim served as Austria's Permanent Representative to the United Nations. He had previously held the same post from 1964 to 1968. Between UN assignments he served as Foreign Minister (January 1968-March 1970). Waldheim's fellow diplomats describe him as skillful, astute and persistent, with an enormous capacity and will for hard work.

Representatives to the UN General Assembly elected Ambassador Waldheim by acclamation following his nomination on the previous day by the Security Council. He became the Council's choice during its third secret session. Up until a few days before the voting it was felt that Waldheim's chances were slim. None of the five permanent members of the Security Council considered him his number-one choice; however, the USSR preferred him after it was certain that U Thant would not run again. Additional support for Waldheim developed when it became apparent that he was the only candidate who could get the requisite nine votes without a veto by one of the permanent members.

*This memorandum was prepared by the Central Reference Service and was coordinated within the Directorate of Intelligence.*

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At a news conference following his election Waldheim said, "I think the charter of the United Nations gives the Secretary General a lot of possibilities, and if he uses these possibilities I think there is a big chance for him to do something in the right way--in an active way." He also said he thought that the United Nations had an important role to play in international affairs. If it does not produce results, he said, "I think it not the fault of the United Nations [but] of the members."

In June 1971, at a meeting of the UN Correspondents Association, Waldheim revealed his thoughts concerning some of the problems facing the United Nations. He said he opposed the idea of weighted voting systems and supported the admission of divided states like the two Germanies. In response to a question about the expansion of the permanent membership of the Security Council, Waldheim opposed changing the charter. He felt that it would be better if states such as Japan were to serve on the Council more often.



PRESENTING CREDENTIALS TO U THANT, OCTOBER 1970

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### Attitude Toward the United States

Ambassador Waldheim is a devoted friend of the United States, and he has been very cooperative and helpful in promoting US interests. When he was Foreign Minister his personal cooperation was particularly effective in confidentially working out Austrian formulations acceptable to the United States covering such subjects as Vietnam, the Middle East and European security. His long service in the United States has given him an understanding of American thinking and foreign policy objectives.

### Early Life and Career

The son of a civil servant, Kurt Waldheim was born on 21 December 1918 in St. Andrae-Woerden, Province of Lower Austria. His father was imprisoned by the Nazis during World War II. After graduating from the Consular Academy of Vienna in 1939, Waldheim studied law at the University of Vienna. During the war he served in the German Army and was wounded in the right leg. In 1944 he returned to the university and received a doctorate in law. Concurrent with his law studies, he worked as a court official, attaining the rank of assistant judge. He joined the Foreign Service in 1945 and was appointed secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. In 1948 he was assigned to the Embassy in Paris as First Secretary. Returning to the Foreign Office in 1951, Waldheim served for the next 4 years as chief of personnel.

Waldheim was named Permanent Observer to the United Nations in 1955 and held the post of Permanent Representative for a few months following Austria's admission to membership that same year. In March 1956 he was appointed Ambassador to Canada. He returned to the Foreign Office in 1960 and served as head of the Political Department West (1960-62) and as director general for political affairs (1962-64).

During Waldheim's 1964-68 stint at the United Nations, he served effectively as Chairman of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and as President of the First UN Conference on the

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Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (1968). Ambassador Waldheim has attended all sessions of the General Assembly since his country was admitted to the United Nations.

In June 1970 the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Governors' Council unanimously elected Waldheim President of the Safeguards Committee. This committee dealt with the preparations of bilateral agreements between the IAEA and individual countries on the basis of Article III of the nuclear test ban treaty.

Early in 1971 Waldheim made an unsuccessful bid for the Austrian Presidency, running as the candidate of the conservative People's Party. Despite a lack of experience in running for political office, he waged an aggressive campaign and displayed a good deal of political charm.

### Performance as Foreign Minister.

During his short tenure as Foreign Minister, Waldheim provided quite a contrast to his rather flamboyant predecessor, Lujo Toncic-Sorinj. He showed a preference for quiet reexamination and tackling of problems and avoidance of diplomacy by headlines. The major foreign policy achievement under Waldheim's tutelage was the accord reached between Italy and Austria in the longstanding dispute over South Tyrol. On 30 November 1969 Waldheim and the Italian Foreign Minister signed a two-part agreement that gave South Tyrol increased self-government and wider scope for German-language speakers and greater use of German as an official language.

### Travel

Despite his assertion that the Foreign Minister should "stick to his desk," Waldheim traveled extensively. He attended the UN Conference on Trade and Development in New Delhi (February 1968) and visited the Soviet Union (March 1968), the United States (April 1968), and Turkey and Lebanon (December 1968). He headed an Austrian goodwill mission to several African countries in September 1970.

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### Personal Data

A thoughtful and dignified man, Waldheim is softspoken and exudes great personal charm. He possesses an unusual degree of objectivity but at times becomes quite excited and emotional. Senior officials of the US Embassy who dealt with Waldheim when he was Foreign Minister described him as a forthright and uncomplicated person, who displayed great energy and efficiency. They say he is a skilled diplomat, careful to conceal personal feelings that would be detrimental to achieving his goals.

For relaxation Waldheim likes to spend time at his Austrian lake district Tyrolean cottage, which he designed and helped build. He enjoys reading light literature. In 1962 he was reported to be suffering from a heart ailment.

In March 1971 Waldheim's book on Austrian foreign policy since 1918, *The Austrian Way*, was published. The Secretary General speaks fluent English, with a strong German accent, and good French.

### Family

Waldheim is married to the former Elisabeth Ritschel, a charming and attractive brunette. They met while both were studying law at the University of Vienna. Mrs. Waldheim speaks excellent English. The couple has three children, Liselotte, 26, Gerhard, 23, and Christa, 12. Liselotte is an assistant political affairs officer at the United Nations in Geneva. In September 1970 she served as assistant secretary for the special session of the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs held in Geneva. Gerhard is working on his doctorate in economics.



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