

CIACR

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Kurt WALDHEIM  
(Phonetic: VAHLThime)

AUSTRIA

Secretary General of the  
United Nations (since  
January 1972)

Addressed as:  
Mr. Secretary General



The quintessence of the professional diplomat, Kurt Waldheim is serving his second five-year term as UN Secretary General, having been reelected by acclamation in December 1976. During his first term he earned a reputation for fairness and objectivity that contributed to his reelection. Waldheim believes that his main role is that of a mediator, and he resents being held accountable for events that are neither his responsibility nor within his limited powers to control. In his opinion, there is simply no alternative to the United Nations, and he is dedicated to its survival. He regards reducing the gap between the world's rich and poor nations as the greatest challenge to international statesmen. According to a close friend of his, Waldheim would like to be remembered in the history books as the Secretary General who brought about the beginnings of a constructive North-South dialogue. (C)

Performance and Personal Views

The indefatigable Waldheim thrives on work and usually puts in long hours at his job. In carrying out the duties and responsibilities of his office he has traveled throughout the world. Although he occasionally makes pessimistic pronouncements on the activities and future of the United Nations, he undoubtedly enjoys serving as Secretary General and is confident that he has done and is doing a good job. He is almost equally as confident of his chances for reelection in 1981: a high-level UN official has said that Waldheim is already running for reelection and that he believes he has the United States, France and the United Kingdom "in his

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DECLASSIFIED AND RELEASED BY  
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
SOURCE METHODS EXEMPT (ON 3828)  
NAZI WAR CRIMES DISCLOSURE ACT  
DATE 2001-2007

Original classification by 013787  
Review on 10 August 2000  
Excluded beyond 4 years by 013787  
Approved CGS (11/02)

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pocket." The official added that the Secretary General was less certain of the support of the Soviet Union and China and expressed his belief that Waldheim had accepted the appointment of "so many" Soviet nationals to senior posts in Geneva in order to gain their support. (C)

Like his countryman, Chancellor Bruno Kreisky, Waldheim believes that no comprehensive solution to the problems of the Middle East can be found without the participation of the Palestine Liberation Organization. On the subject of Iran, he has stated that the United Nations must wait for the situation to "clarify itself" before it can act as an interlocutor because there is no central power in Iran with which to deal. (U)

Career and Personal Data

The Secretary General, 61, has a doctorate in law from the University of Vienna. He was Austrian Permanent Observer to the United Nations during 1955-56, Ambassador to Canada from 1956 to 1960, Permanent Representative to the United Nations during 1964-68 and 1970-71, and Foreign Minister from 1968 to 1970. The picture of Old World gentility and charm, Waldheim is married and has three children. He enjoys skiing, fishing, gardening, and listening to classical music. He speaks fluent English. (C)

20 August 1980