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AUSTRIA

Kurt **WALDHEIM**
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President (since July 1986)

Although his image has been clouded by alleged involvement in Nazi war crimes, Kurt **Waldheim** decisively won his second bid for the largely ceremonial post of president. He is not a member of any political party--a fact that he stressed throughout his campaign--but he has the backing of the Austrian People's Party (%4OVP) and supports its conservative views. **Waldheim** intends to carry out his duties independent of party affiliation, as is traditional with Austrian presidents. (C NF)

Waldheim has stated that Austria's reputation has not suffered as a result of his election and that the controversy over his past has been exaggerated. Despite widespread concern among politicians and officials that traditional consensus politics has been severely damaged, **Waldheim** rejects the idea that the election campaign split Austrians. Strong postelection criticism from abroad and from the domestic opposition, however, has prompted him to stress his commitment to bridge party differences and to seek reconciliation with his critics. His efforts to restore consensus politics will emphasize his value as an international representative and his sensitivity to Austrian concerns while downplaying the rift that his war record has caused. We believe that, despite **Waldheim's** self-promotion, foreign sensitivity to his past may limit his effectiveness in an international role. (C NF)

Drafted into the German Army during World War II, **Waldheim** was wounded on the Russian front and later served in the Balkans. He earned a doctorate in law in 1944 and joined the Foreign Service the following year. **Waldheim** served as Ambassador to Canada and as director of the Foreign Ministry Department of Political Affairs before becoming Permanent Representative to the UN in 1964. He was Foreign Minister from 1968 until 1970, when he resigned to run as the %4OVP presidential candidate. Unsuccessful, he returned to the UN and served again as Permanent Representative until his election as Secretary General in 1972. After leaving the UN in 1982, **Waldheim** lectured on international issues at several US and European universities. (U)

Waldheim, 67, speaks French, Italian, and fluent but heavily accented English. Cautious, he tends to make decisions by compromise and consensus. He is also very protocol conscious and, according to a former colleague, led the UN as a "royal" Secretary General. He has written several books on the UN and international politics and an autobiography *©m in the Eye of the Storm©m*. His interests include classical music, skiing, fishing, and collecting antiques. Married to the former Elisabeth Ritzel, he has three children. (C NF)

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72

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