

## CASE REPORT

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### The Forensic Science Evidence in the Investigation of the World War II Activities of Dr. Kurt Waldheim

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**REFERENCE:** Crown, D. A., "The Forensic Science Evidence in the Investigation of the World War II Activities of Dr. Kurt Waldheim," *Journal of Forensic Sciences*, JFSCA, Vol. 32, No. 6, Nov. 1987, pp. 1782-1787.

**ABSTRACT:** Dr. Kurt Waldheim, Ex-Secretary General of the United Nations, had claimed that he was a student in Vienna recovering from a war wound in 1943. A newly discovered photograph showed Waldheim in Yugoslavia in 1943 talking with an SS General. The steps in evaluating the physical evidence on the photograph are detailed.

**KEYWORDS:** questioned documents, Kurt Waldheim, physical evidence, photography, historical background

In the usual course of events, forensic science examinations are conducted for purposes of resolving legal issues in civil or criminal cases. On occasion, the forensic scientist serves to provide answers in a very different area—in this case a political-historical issue.

To date, the strange affair of Dr. Kurt Waldheim, current President of Austria, former Secretary General of the United Nations, is not that of commission, but that of omission. At this time, there is no evidence of the commission of any provable war crimes in Yugoslavia and Greece during World War II; however, there is the inexplicable omission of details of his true activities during WW II.

All of Waldheim's biographical statements, up until the time the scandal broke, state in essence that Waldheim was drafted into the German Wehrmacht (Army) after the outbreak of WW II, that he was wounded in the ankle on the Eastern (Russian) Front, that he returned to Vienna in 1942 to recuperate from his wounds, that he returned to the University in Vienna to work on his law degree, that he married in Vienna, and that after he received his law degree in 1944 he returned to the Front. Waldheim also claimed to have joined the anti-Nazi Austrian Youth Movement. Interviews both in German and English, letters to a U.S. Congressman, and Austrian campaign literature all stressed the theme of noninvolvement in WW II during the period 1942 to 1944.

In February 1986, the author was contacted by Mr. Eli Rosenbaum, Esq., General Counsel of the World Jewish Congress, New York, NY, with a request to examine a photograph of Dr. Kurt Waldheim to determine if the photograph was actually produced on or about May

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1943. Time was of the essence in the examination as it was planned to confront Waldheim with the photograph if it could be authenticated.

It is pertinent that the author was Chief of the Questioned Document Laboratory of the Central Intelligence Agency from 1967 to 1982 when he retired from government service. In this capacity, he regularly handled cases involving political forgeries. He has a healthy suspicion of all evidence turning up 43 years later. In the early 1950s, the author also served as a Special Agent of the Counter Intelligence Corps of the U.S. Army in Steyr, Austria.

The object to be examined was a photograph of four men in German uniforms talking in front of an airplane at an airfield (Fig. 1). The photograph was on Agfa-Brovira paper. On the reverse of the photograph (Fig. 2) was a rubber stamp impression of an SS unit, some typed details of the photograph, the date 22 May 1943, and the message, translated into English:

From left to right, Colonel Roncaglia Escola, Italian Commandant of Montenegro, 1st. Lieut. Waldheim, Colonel's Adjutant, Colonel Macholtz and SS (Schutz Staffel) General Phleps at the airfield in Podgorica (Yugoslavia)

The evidence could be examined for indications of photo substitution and photo retouching. The various materials involved could be examined to determine if they had any dating significance. Any aspect of the photograph which was incongruous for 1943 would indicate spuriousness. It would not be possible to state that the photograph was actually produced on a certain date unless there was collateral evidence from that date to compare with and to connect by some type of individuality.

It was reasoned that if everything was consistent with WW II and the date 1943 and if there was nothing from the wrong time period—then there would be no reason to doubt the photograph's authenticity.

The photograph was examined for evidence of photo montage, substitution, or retouching. All shadows were consistent and all facial and body outlines were proper. There was an



FIG. 1—From left to right, Colonel Roncaglia Escola, Italian Commandant of Montenegro, 1st Lieutenant Waldheim, Colonel's Adjutant, Colonel Macholtz, and SS General Phleps at the airfield in Podgorica, Yugoslavia on 22 May 1943.

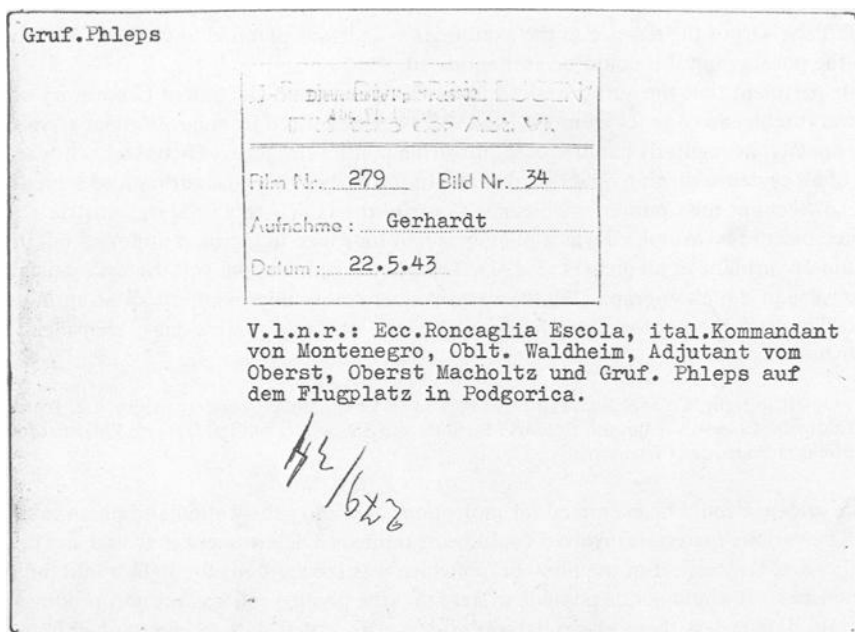


FIG. 2.—Back of photograph in Fig. 1.

unusual background element—a man with Italian cap standing behind Waldheim with shoes visible at the level of Waldheim's knees. The outline of Waldheim's hat against airplane wing was clean without extra lines. The facial features and specifically the nose area of the 1st Lieutenant were compared with later photographs of Waldheim. It was concluded that there was no reason to doubt the integrity of the photograph or to doubt that the 1st Lieutenant was exactly who it was supposed to be, that is, Dr. Kurt Waldheim.

The typing on the reverse of the photograph was accomplished on an Olympia office model or portable typewriter manufactured after 1931 and before 1949. The Olympia typewriter used was in excellent condition, was equipped with a cloth ribbon, and the character outlines were sharp. All these conditions were consistent with a German military typewriter in use in WW II.

The most significant item of evidence was the photographic paper. The paper did not exhibit any fluorescence. The Agfa-Brovira logo on the reverse had double underlinings under each word. While Agfa-Brovira paper is still available today, it is not available with two lines under each word of the logo. Furthermore, photographic paper is produced today with optical brighteners to heighten the "white" appearance of the paper. The optical brighteners were introduced in the late 1940s but were not available during WW II. Storing photographic paper for 43 years is not a very practical idea because of the inevitable fogging even in cold storage.

Various Agfa-Brovira papers were found going back to the mid-1930s, but none of them illustrated the Agfa-Brovira logo with the double underlinings. It was deemed essential to find comparable photographic materials to demonstrate that the photographs were properly of WW II vintage.

A package of photographs from the former files of the Nazi Gauleiter (Governor) of the Steyr, Upper Austria area had been found in Schloss (Castle) Lamberg where the author had had his office when he served as a Special Agent of the CIC. The package had been at the back of a closet in the author's home for 34 years.



FIG. 3—SS Reichsfuehrer Heinrich Himmler at left visiting the Mauthausen Concentration Camp.

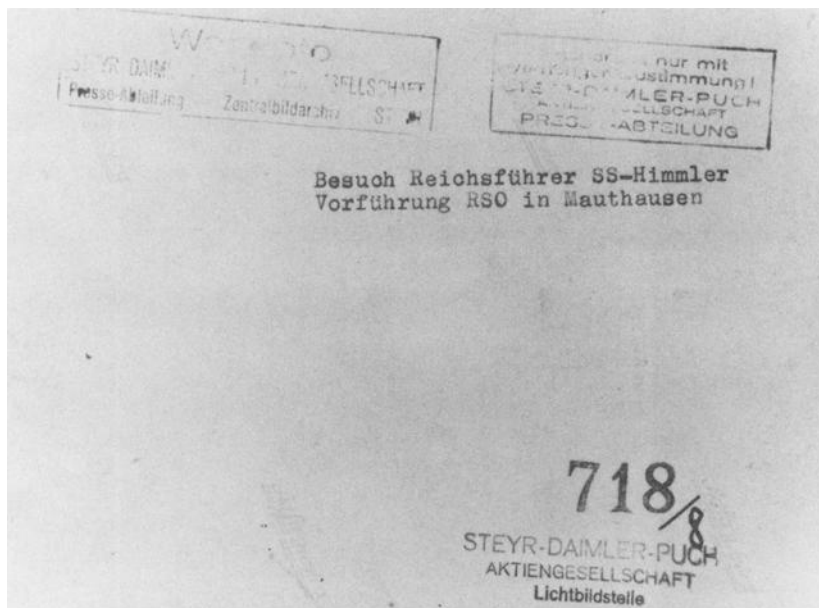


FIG. 4—Reverse of photo in Fig. 3.

A search of the treasure trove revealed a photograph of SS Reichsfuehrer Heinrich Himmler visiting Mauthausen Concentration Camp, which had been located about 30 km northeast of Steyr (Fig. 3). The reverse of the photograph (Fig. 4) had the Agfa-Brovira logo with double underlinings (Fig. 5), and the same and the equivalent lack of background fluorescence.

Additionally, another photograph was located showing Adolf Hitler visiting a factory. The pink fluorescence of the red stamp pad ink on the reverse (Fig. 6) from the Gaupropagandaamt (Regional Propaganda Office) Oberdonau Fotostelle (Upper Austria Photo Center) was consistent with the red stamp pad ink on the back of the Fig. 3 photograph.

Considering the unusual nature of the photographic paper, the agreements in typewriter and stamp pad ink, the absence of any indication that there was anything abnormal about



FIG. 5—Detail from Fig. 4 of Agfa-Brovira logo with double underlinings.



FIG. 6—Pink fluorescent rubber stamp from the Gaupropagandaamt Oberdonau Fotostelle.

the photograph itself, it was concluded that there was no reason to doubt that photograph was produced in the ordinary course of events in 1943.

Shortly after reporting the above conclusion to the requestor, Dr. Kurt Waldheim was questioned about the photograph. He admitted that he was the person in the picture and that he had been in Yugoslavia on 23 May 1943 accompanying Colonel Macholtz to this meeting with an SS General. Dr. Waldheim claimed that it had slipped his mind.

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