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Madam Secretary: A Memoir

By Madeleine Albright

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Madam Secretary: A Memoir By Madeleine Albright

Madeleine Albright is one of the most admired women of our era and the first in American history to serve as Secretary of State. For eight years, during Bill Clinton's two presidential terms, she was a decision-maker and inside observer of the most dramatic episodes of recent years—from NATO's decision to halt ethnic cleansing in Kosovo, to the pursuit of peace in the Middle East. Now, in an outspoken memoir, she shares her story and provides a ringside view of world affairs during a period of unprecedented turbulence. Albright's story begins with her childhood as a Czechoslovak refugee, whose family fled first Hitler and then the Communists. In America, Albright grew up to be a passionate advocate of civil and women's rights and followed a zigzag path to a career that ultimately placed her in the upper stratosphere of diplomacy and policy-making in her adopted country. Refreshingly candid, *Madam Secretary* brings to life the world leaders Albright dealt with intimately in her years of service and the battles she fought to prove her worth in a male-dominated arena. There are colorful portraits of such leading American figures as Bill and Hillary Clinton, Colin Powell, Jesse Helms, and of a host of fascinating foreign officials—Vaclav Havel, Yasser Arafat, Ariel Sharon, Benjamin Netanyahu, King Hussein, Vladimir Putin, Slobodan Milosevic, and North Korea's mysterious Kim Jong-Il. Besides these many encounters with the famous and powerful, we get to know Albright the private woman: her life raising three daughters, the painful breakup of her marriage to the scion of one of America's leading newspaper families, and the discovery late in life of her own Jewish ancestry and that her grandparents had died in concentration camps. *Madam Secretary* is sure to be one of the signature books of the early years of the twenty-first century—a tapestry both intimate and panoramic, personal and public, a rich memoir destined to become a classic.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Albright proposes to "combine the personal with policy" in these memoirs, a sensible narrative strategy, considering her emblematic struggles as a working mother breaking through the glass ceiling of the foreign policy establishment to become U.N. ambassador and secretary of state. Albright's recollections of her background as a child refugee from Czechoslovakia and its twin scourges of Nazism and Communism (later, she accounts for the belated discovery of her Jewish heritage) suggest a basis for her belief in "assertive multilateralism." Although she laments coining this derided term, it's an apt name for her doctrine that human rights should be protected by the international community, led by American power. In the Clinton administration, this was the hawkish position, opposed by Colin Powell, William Cohen and others more cautious about military commitments. Albright treats these and other rivalries with restraint, but she is relatively candid about policy and personality conflicts, to an extent unusual in a diplomat and welcome in an autobiographer. Pitched at a popular audience, Albright's anecdotal style is engagingly direct, but it's not suited to mounting a comprehensive defense of humanitarian interventionism in light of failures in Somalia, Rwanda and Bosnia. Albright is willing to admit mistakes, though she generally pursues the political memoirist's standard agenda of spinning the historical record. Filled with shrewd character sketches of world leaders, Albright's descriptions of the Balkan conflicts, the Middle East peace process and other critical negotiations are thorough and insightful. This memoir captures the disarmingly blunt purposefulness that made its author an irrepressible force in foreign affairs.

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From [The New Yorker](#)

This memoir by America's first female Secretary of State is a deeply conventional book, full of long accounts of negotiations and reflections on the proper uses of American power. Albright is not out to settle scores (her criticisms of colleagues are mild at worst) and seems, on balance, pleased with the foreign-policy record of the Clinton Administration. This might have made a dull book, were it not for Albright's appealing character—personally ingenuous but professionally sophisticated, earnest but hard-nosed. Her eye for details—clothing, food, travel conditions—helps bring the diplomat's world to life, and her portraits of foreign leaders are lively and evocative. The result is a book that creates a sense of policy made by real people, not by world-bestrident titans.

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Review

"Albright's deft memoir is the quintessential tale of her transitional generation of middle-class American women." -- *The Miami Herald*

"A fascinating mix of the official and the unofficial, the political and the personal." -- *Rocky Mountain News*

"Candid, [she] veers comfortably between the personal and the political. Offers a rare female perspective on diplomatic life." -- *Time Out New York*

"From mother and socialite to professor and secretary of state...she is frank, assertive...straight-shooting." -- *The New York Times*

"Her portraits of foreign leaders are lively and evocative...she creates a sense of policy made by real people." -- *The New Yorker*

"Madeleine Albright has written a different kind of memoir...It's Albright unplugged." -- *USA Today*

"One of the most diverting political bios in recent memory." -- *Entertainment Weekly*

"The fascinating story of a remarkable person who has served her country well." -- *Dallas Morning News*

"Thorough and insightful. Filled with shrewd character sketches of world leaders...Albright's style is engagingly direct." -- *Publishers Weekly*

"Unlike other memoirs, it has hardly a hint of score settling." -- *Time*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Linda King:

In this 21st hundred years, people become competitive in most way. By being competitive at this point, people have do something to make these survives, being in the middle of the particular crowded place and notice simply by surrounding. One thing that occasionally many people have underestimated the item for a while is reading. Yep, by reading a reserve your ability to survive raise then having chance to stand than other is high. For yourself who want to start reading a new book, we give you this kind of Madam Secretary: A Memoir book as nice and daily reading reserve. Why, because this book is usually more than just a book.

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Sandra Wright:

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