

Review of Madam Secretary by Madeleine Albright

The book I would like to review is Madam Secretary by Madeleine Albright.

It's a memoir written by Albright herself. On 624 pages she shares her path from being a daughter of a politician in pre-war Prague to becoming the Secretary of State in the USA.

Her story is set in many locations. It begins in Prague in the year 1937 when Marie Jana Korbelová is born to the family of a democratic politician Josef Korbel and his wife. Soon after, when WWII hits Europe in full scale, the family flees to London. Their return to the post-war Czechoslovakia is promising. It doesn't last long, though. Josef Korbel soon foresees the events following the communist putsch in February 1948. His family flees to the USA, this time for good.

Madlenka immediately becomes Madeleine and with the change of her name she becomes an American as well.

Let's skip a decade. Albright has graduated from university. She is now married and has her own ambitions. Nevertheless, it's the 50's in the USA. Women are perceived as housewives and husband supporters. Whole chapter is dedicated to the struggle after Albright's daughters are born. Her husband seems to be supportive, childcare is available, and yet it is not easy for Albright to start career. When her twins turn two years of age she enrolls in doctoral studies of political science and international affairs. Her topic is post-war development in Russia. Studies take her 3 times longer than it's usual due to her family responsibilities. Following the events on 21 August 1968 in the Czechoslovakia she gets in touch with dissidents and expatriates to help her write thesis about what led to the occupation of the country by Warsaw Pact Troops. The years 1968 and 1989 bring many memorable characters to Albright's life. She is befriended with Jiří Dienstbier, Meda Mládková, Václav Havel and many others.

Albright's political career starts to develop in the 80's and takes a real spin in the late 90's. Between the years 1997 and 2001 she serves the country as the Secretary of State in the administration of Bill Clinton.

I truly enjoyed my time with this book. I felt like listening to a friend telling her life story. I would certainly recommend this book to all women who strive to balance family and career. Albright is smart, supportive, both ambitious and caring. She sure is a woman to look up to.

Whether or not you are a woman with ambitions, this book will lift you out of your everyday life.

ALBRIGHT, Madeleine. Madame Secretary. Perennial, 2013. ISBN 978-0062265463.