
Documentation

Madeleine Albright on Her Debt to H.G. Wells

In 1998-99, President Clinton was faced with a Synarchist insurgency, including from inside his own Administration, following his and Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin's moves towards a "new, global financial architecture." In the same time period, as Clinton was faced with an impeachment assault on the Presidency, the Albright/Holbrooke/Gore crowd in the Administration staged the Kosovo War. At the time, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright openly boasted of her "Wellsian democracy" roots.

In an Oct. 14, 1999 address to the Institute of International Education in New York City, Albright avowed her faithful debt to the doctrines of H.G. Wells. Prior to President Franklin Roosevelt establishing diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, the IIE was one of the most prominent back channels between the Wall Street and State Department circles and Moscow. In the 1930s, the IIE formed the Emergency Committee for Displaced German Scholars, through which the entire Frankfurt School apparatus of social revolutionaries and subversives was brought to the United States, and placed in American universities and research centers.

Here are excerpts from Albright's IIE speech.

... I am, indeed, a long time fan of the IIE for many job-related reasons. But I also have a personal one. When my family first came to America in 1948, my father, who had

been a Czechoslovak diplomat, needed to find a new line of work. And Ben Carrington, who was one of the patron saints of IIE, was at the University of Denver and he is the one who brought my father out to Denver where my father and our family thrived. . . .

About the time that IIE was founded, British author H.G. Wells wrote that history is a race between education and catastrophe. Helping people to value democratic principles of tolerance and openness is a good way to aid us all in winning that race. . . .

In relatively closed societies, IIE programs provide a rare chance to establish outside contact and explore wonderfully dangerous ideas, such as freedom. In transitional countries they provide a means of educating future leaders about the nuts and bolts of democratic institutions. And in every nation they touch, they help open the door of opportunity to minorities and women. . . .

It is also appropriate because the IIE is a champion of free expression, training journalists in many key countries. But even more important, freedom of speech and expression are fundamental to the principles and values that America promotes around the world. The universal declaration on human rights provides that everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and to impart and receive ideas through the media. The very importance of this right is what causes dictators to want to suppress it. For, to dictators, the truth is often inconvenient and sometimes a mortal threat. And that's why so often they try to grab the truth and leash it like a dog, ration it like bread or mold it like clay. Their goal is to create their own myths, conceal their own blunders, direct resentments elsewhere and instill in their people a dread of change.

Consider, for example, Serbia. For years Slobodan Milosevic, now an indicted war criminal, has fed his people lies while repressing and terrorizing those who sought the truth. Slavko Curuvija, a newspaper owner and critic of Milosevic, was murdered this Spring after being harassed repeatedly by Serb authorities. Other independent voices, such as the opposition newspaper, Glas Javnosti, have also been fined or temporarily shut down. . . .

Around the world Americans may be proud that our diplomats regularly stress the importance of free speech and a free press. Both publicly and privately we urge that the rights of journalists and other reporters be respected. One place where we've made a special effort is Kosovo. . . .

As we scan the horizon we see the ongoing problems of intolerance in the Balkans and the obstacles to a free press created by organized crime in Russia. We see the clashes in Iran and China between those who favor greater openness and those who fear it and the tendency in so many countries still to censor ideas rather than debate them. We're reminded daily that the quest for free expression must confront many hurdles and remains a long-distance race. But with H.G. Wells' aphorism in mind, we must and will continue to educate, advocate, and insist that global norms be respected. . . .