

US Secretary of State showers praise on Suharto

Barry Grey
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At a May 20 speech to the US Coast Guard Academy in Connecticut, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright used the language of diplomacy to increase the pressure on General Suharto to resign. She urged him to “preserve his legacy as a man who not only led his country, but provided for its democratic transition.”

While Albright’s remarks were aimed at nudging Suharto out of office—less than 12 hours later the general announced his resignation—they were nonetheless gushing in their praise for the despot. “President Suharto has given much to his country over the past 30 years,” she declared, “raising Indonesia’s standing in the world and hastening Indonesia’s economic growth.”

Albright went on to characterize an agreement by Suharto to step down as “an historic act of statesmanship”—under conditions in which hundreds of thousands of students are demanding that he be hung and millions of Indonesians identify him with repression, nepotism, self-aggrandizement and mass social misery.

It is worth noting when the United States, which always cloaks its diplomatic intrigue and military aggression in the trappings of peace and democracy, hails the legacy of a man who came to power over the corpses of 500,000 to 1,000,000 Indonesians and ran a police state for more than three decades, enriching his family and political cronies while bringing an economic and social disaster crashing down on the general population. Nor should one omit from Suharto’s legacy the invasion and military occupation of East Timor, enforced by means of torture and mass murder.

Indeed, “democratic” Washington has reportedly drawn up contingency plans to offer exile to Suharto, or at least safe transportation out of Indonesia aboard an American military plane.



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