“CHALLENGES TO DEMOCRACY IN THE NEW ERA”

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INTRODUCTION

The National Endowment for Democracy’s 1993 world conference, “Challenges to Democracy in the New Era”, held in April in Washington, D.C., was the largest meeting of this kind ever convened by the Endowment. Democratic activists from over 60 countries took part in the event, along with a number of Americans who are working to promote democracy around the world.

It is remarkable and, we think, most significant that people from so many different countries could meaningfully conduct a common discussion about democracy. Although most international political conferences focus on a particular country or region, this conference addressed the issues being faced by activists in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Latin America, Eastern Europe, and the former Soviet Union. These conversations could not have been coherent, yet alone successful, if the participants had not shared a common political language, the language of democracy. Participants were thereby able without difficulty to communicate across different cultures and experiences. This communication was inspiring in that it demonstrated that certain struggles are indeed universal.

The panelists’ remarks reprinted in this book convey the spirit of the event. Their presentations were not based on abstract theories about the democratic ideal, but rather on the experiences of real people who are struggling to build democracy and give it life. Among the panelists were a Yemeni woman campaigning for election to parliament who was attacked by Moslem extremists who object to a woman’s seeking political office; a man who after ten years in prison on Robben Island is today a leading lawyer and advocate of reconciliation in South Africa; the former president of Lithuania, whose courageous leadership in 1990 and 1991 has won him recognition as the father of his country; and the editor of a Sarajevo newspaper who keeps publishing despite incessant bombarding, the loss of several of his journalists to sniper fire, and lack of electricity, water, and supplies. We salute these individuals and others like them who continue to make sacrifices to achieve freedom and democracy.

The Endowment was greatly honored by the visit of the President of the United States at the conference’s concluding Democracy Award Dinner honoring democratic activists from China, Serbia and Kenya. President Clinton’s presence and his eloquent remarks in support of free and democratic institutions demonstrated the commitment of the United States to democracy worldwide and also represented a splendid vote of confidence in the Endowment and its work.

The success of the conference was the result of support and assistance received from individuals too numerous to list here. We wish, however, to recognize the following financial donors whose contributions made possible the 1993 event: Air Products and Chemicals, Inc., The American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations, The American Federation of Teachers, The Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation, Esther Coopersmith, The Hurford Foundation, The International Ladies Garment Workers Union, The International Union of Bricklayers and Allied Craftsmen, Kriebel Associates, Matsushita Electric Industrial Company, The John M. Olin Foundation, Ross, Dixon & Masback, and The Whitehead Foundation.

John Brademas
Chairman

Carl Gershman
President
His Holiness The Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, is the spiritual and temporal leader of the Tibetan people. In 1959 he left Tibet, followed by more than 100,000 Tibetan refugees fleeing brutal suppression. Since 1960 he has resided in Dharamsala, India, the seat of the Tibetan government in exile. He has traveled the world speaking on the need for compassion and peace, his consistent message being a peaceful resolution with China based on tolerance and respect for his people’s religious, historical and cultural identity. He has received numerous honors and awards, including the 1989 Nobel Peace Prize.

I am extremely happy to be here today to speak on the universality of democracy. I consider it a great honor and would like to take this opportunity to thank those who made it possible.

I consider it of great significance that on the first day of my visit to Washington I am attending this conference, because as the Dalai Lama, I have dedicated most of my life to learning more about the value of democracy. Even so, I do not consider myself an expert. I am not a politician, and when we eventually gain our freedom, I will not be the leader of a nation. I have already decided I will be only a simple Buddhist monk. Nonetheless, I can speak about my own experiences and my feelings about freedom and democracy.

It is my deepest conviction and belief that every human being, in spite of differences in culture or education, is the same. Everyone wants the same thing, which is to be happy. Happiness is our common goal. Modern democracy is based on the principle that all human beings are essentially equal and that each of us has an equal right to life, liberty and happiness.

Everyone has the potential to create a positive future, and within the community of individuals of humanity, each of us has the potential to create a happier world. Sometimes there are obstacles or hostilities that diminish our ability to see that nature in other human beings. We may be discouraged, but under no circumstances should we ever give up our hope that we will achieve happiness.

I also believe in human kindness and a good heart, without which there is no community. Basically I think human nature is a modest, gentle nature based on compassion and friendship, drawing human beings closer together and creating the essence of community. No system of government is perfect, but democracy is closest to our essential human nature. So it is in all our interests that those of us who already enjoy democracy actively support everyone’s right to do so.

Freedom and democracy must exist if these qualities are to be fully realized. Respect for others’ views and attitudes is also essential. I am convinced that democracy is not just a good thing from a moral standpoint, but in fact it is the key to the world’s future.

When there is a lack of pluralism, unnecessary and unfortunate things happen. Problems are created by the disregard for others’ beliefs. For example, I myself am a Buddhist monk. I
therefore believe in certain things. Yet at the same time I know I cannot speak for everyone. I cannot say that Buddhism is best for everyone. Therefore I respect and accept the value of other religions. Only with such an attitude can we develop harmony and genuine respect.

In today’s modern age, no one is really a foreigner. The world is becoming smaller and smaller and the reality is that others’ interests cannot be neglected. We are being drawn together by grave problems of overpopulation, dwindling natural resources and environmental crises. The concept of universal responsibility is therefore not only desirable but essential to human survival.

The greatest obstacle to democracy is totalitarian dictatorship and the instrument of dictatorship is military establishment. I deeply believe in non-violence. Human nature is compassionate, so the very idea of violence is against human nature. Very often violence solves one problem but creates another. Therefore our future goal is disarmament. Of course this cannot be achieved immediately. We must have a clear idea of how to achieve it step by step. Even now I can imagine some circumstances that would require military involvement. We should therefore create some kind of regional or international organization so that if something happens and it is really necessary to use force, it can be done collectively. This idea of demilitarization is very complicated but I have discussed it with many people, and even some who wear uniforms and carry guns can fathom it. It is my belief that this demilitarization is necessary in order to save democracy.
As panel chairman Harry Barnes noted in his introductory remarks, it was not so long ago that people believed there were some regions of the world immune to or exempt from democracy—the Arab world was one of those. While panelists’ views represented both positive thinking about democracy and the development of civil society as well as pessimism about the future of democracy in the region, the fact that democracy is now even being discussed as an alternative demonstrates the universal power of the democratic ideal. In many respects it is also a product of the end of the Cold War and the Persian Gulf War, and the fact that democracy is beginning to be seen as the most viable alternative to authoritarianism and religious fundamentalism.

I shall try in my remarks to present an overview of what is happening in the region. As Ambassador Barnes pointed out, the Arab world is a region that since the 1950s has captured sensational headlines. When it comes to the Middle East, all that the rest of the world hears about is wars, revolutions, coup d’états, extremism, assassinations and terrorism. All of these sensational headlines have, quite probably for good reason, overshadowed some of the other trends that have been at play in the last ten years. During the last decade, our region, while one of the most troubled in the world, has in fact been witnessing a slow but steady march in the area of respect for human rights and democratization.

Back in 1983, a group of human rights activists, myself included, tried to establish an Arab organization for human rights. We could not find a single Arab capital that would allow us to convene such a gathering. In despair, after one year of searching, the only place we could find to hold our founding assembly was outside the Arab world, in nearby Cyprus, and it was there that the Arab organization for human rights was born. A few days ago, an Arab congress for human rights was held in the city of Cairo. I mention these two episodes to demonstrate the important changes that have taken place in the last ten years.

**Saad Eddin Ibrahim** is chairman of the Ibn Khaldoun Center for Developmental Studies in Cairo, Egypt. He is also a professor of political sociology at the American University in Cairo and president of Cairo’s Union of Social Professions. The author of over 100 scholarly articles, some of which have been translated into as many as 13 languages, he formerly served as director of the Center for Arab Unity Studies in Cairo, Secretary General of the Arab Organization for Human Rights, and Secretary General of the Arab Thought Forum in Amman, Jordan.

Ladies and gentlemen, it gives me great pleasure to take part in this very distinguished forum and to be here with those who are fighting for democracy, freedom and human rights around the world. In your presence, I am very humble but also very inspired.
Ten years ago there was hardly any government in the Arab world that even pretended to be democratic. Today, despite the fact that most of the 21 Arab countries are still non-democratic, at least nine of those 21 have either the reality or the pretense of participatory politics. Elections have been held in Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, and Yemen. We also have had promises of shura councils in some of the countries where the words “consultation” or “participatory politics” are taboo. Last year, six Gulf states, including Saudi Arabia, announced that they will start to have some kind of popular participation. Again, ten years ago this would have been unthinkable. So despite the difficulties of the democratic transition from authoritarianism or autocratic traditional rule, the Arab world has come a long way in the last decade.

What then are the prospects for the future? Our region faces challenges similar to those in Latin America and in East Asia, but it also must address its own specific issues. It is a region with less than 10 percent of the world’s population, yet it has appropriated about 40 percent of all the armed conflicts since 1945. It is a region in which foreign powers play a heavy role that is often very destructive. Wars and armed conflicts have taken a great toll and have delayed the democratization process. In the last 35 years, our region has spent roughly two trillion dollars on wars. Some 20 million people have been either killed, wounded or displaced. Many of our autocratic leaders have used these statistics to delay, postpone, maneuver and circumvent our democratic development. Therefore, I believe the prospect of further democratization in the Arab world is contingent most importantly on the achievement of peace in the region. Equitable peace will allow us to save money which can be earmarked for social and economic development efforts that will be necessary in order to sustain democratization.

Asma Khader is a human rights lawyer in Jordan. She is a member of the Royal Committee for the founding of the Jordanian Center for Freedom, Democracy and Human Rights, of the special committee for human rights education of the Middle East Council of Churches, and of the National Committee for the Protection of Children. She has organized seminars and given numerous lectures throughout the Arab World, the United States, Europe and Japan on human rights, women’s rights and democracy. A long-time advocate for the emancipation of Arab women, in 1990 she received an award from Human Rights Watch USA for her role in defending human rights.

I think that from the beginning of time the values of freedom, equality and justice have been the main values at the center of the human struggle. Democracy is perhaps the modern meaning given to these values. People in our region have faced many political, economic and social challenges in attempting to achieve these goals.

In spite of political and economic challenges, we in Jordan have begun a new type of democratization process which we believe can succeed. We know that we have to address the challenge posed by Islamic political organizations that have caused some bad experiences in other Arab countries such as Egypt and Algeria. In my opinion, the authorities in those countries have dealt with the Islamic organizations in the wrong manner. In Jordan, the Islamic organizations are being allowed to participate in our political process. As a result, they have not had to resort to violence in order to make themselves heard.

Political Islamic groups elsewhere in the region sometimes use their religion as a title for their political actions. In Jordan, the King has wisely differentiated between Islam as a religion and the Islamic organizations’ political activities.

Another important point about the new democratization process in Jordan is that the King named 60 people representing different
bodies of Jordan’s political society to draft a national charter regarding democratization and multiparty politics, and that group included representatives of the Islamic political movement in Jordan.

We are also addressing the problems involving women and the democratization of our society. There are people who are against the rights of women and try to use Islam to support their position. We have tried to show that there are different ways to read Islam. For example, when you review the family laws in different parts of the Arab world, you will discover discrepancies. In Tunisia, a man is forbidden to have more than one wife, while in Jordan, a man can marry four women without question. Both of these laws are based upon the Koran and Shari’a. Traditionally, those who were reading the Koran were always men. Now, we want women to read the Koran to learn for themselves about the values of equality, justice, and the rights of women.

I will conclude by stating again my belief that the values of equality, humanity, justice and freedom can be found in any culture or religion as long as there are people who truly believe in those values and want to bring about change. I believe that we have a good chance of continuing our successful move toward democracy in Jordan, but it will not be easy. There are people opposed to democracy who are well-organized and still hold a lot of power. Activities like today’s conference, where we can share with each other our experiences, can help us to continue our movement toward democracy and freedom.

Haydar Ibrahim Ali is the director of the Sudanese Research Center based in Cairo, Egypt. Born in Sudan, he has been a professor of sociology at several major universities throughout the Middle East. From 1990-92 he served as head of the research unit of the National Council for Arab Culture in Rabat, Morocco. He is the author of numerous articles on fundamentalism, Sudanese intelligence, minorities and democracy and civil society.

In addressing the question of whether or not democracy has any chance in the Middle East, I would respond that bearing in mind the present conditions in Middle Eastern societies, there is no chance for democracy in the Arab world in the next two decades.

For the moment, we are in a real dilemma of having to choose between two alternatives: ineffective, corrupt regimes and elites on the one hand and fundamentalist Islamic groups on the other. The first group manipulates democracy, calling themselves democrats so as to impose more repression, exploitation and corruption. The Islamists want to eliminate democracy by using the means of democratic elections. That was the case in Algeria, where the Islamists claimed that it was God’s will that the December 1992 elections would be the last.

The other question that must be addressed has to do with the universality of democracy. Democracy as an idea or concept is universal, however, democracy as an institution or practice is not. It is very important to differentiate between the two. For example, in Sudan, there are many parties that claim to reject “West-
minister” democracy, or the model of democracy as held by the British, Americans and French. Many Islamic groups consider democracy to be an idea imported from outside the Arab world. They use this argument to convince people that they can reject democracy because it is “western.” It is for this reason that they search for a “cultural alternative” to “western” democracy, thereby seeing this issue as a kind of cultural conflict between the West and the Arab world.

A third and final issue to be addressed has to do with the position of democracy in Middle Eastern or Arab-Islamic culture and society. As I have just stated, democracy is not really a political issue in the Arab world—it is more of a cultural issue. Therefore we don’t find democracy as a priority in Arab-Islamic thought. Priority is given to unity, not to democracy or freedom, which in one way or another, might mean discord. In Islamic tradition there is a saying that “a century of unjust rule is better than one hour of discord.” The fact that cultural unity is more important than democracy or pluralism is a very important point.

It is impossible to establish democracy without democrats, and the culture of the Arab world does not produce real democrats. Dictatorships are not confined only to governments or regimes—there are many other dictatorships among the intelligentsia, trade unions, and professional unions. Therefore it is not easy to achieve democracy. In this cultural aspect, we have to internalize and assimilate democracy, to make it a part of the individual as well as national character in the Arab world. This is a very important condition that will determine the future prospects for democracy in the Arab world.

We must also recognize that it is rather difficult in Islamic thought to draw the line between divine rights and human rights. This is a major obstacle to democracy in our region. Another obstacle which makes the prospect of democracy in the Arab world rather gloomy is connected with a kind of comprehensive development that must take place in order to mobilize the masses and give them a chance to establish a real civil society.

None of this means that it is impossible to have democracy in the Arab world or that the Arab world is not a suitable environment for democracy. Rather, I think it will be some time before those things take place that will give democracy a good chance for survival in the region.

Raufa Hassan is the head of the Communication and Information Department at Sanaa University in Yemen. For the past 15 years she has provided assistance to local women’s organizations throughout Yemen on projects involving women’s development. Her activities have included work in the areas of literacy, rural education and family planning. In April 1992 she ran as a candidate in Yemen’s first parliamentary elections.

My colleagues have just presented for us the two major trends of thought regarding the future of democracy in the Arab
world. I myself have just been through the electoral process in Yemen, a country whose experience can prove either that it is possible for a society in the Middle East to develop the idea of democracy, or that it is simply impossible to do so.

Yemen’s unification took place on 22 May 1990. The two years and nine months that followed has been a transitional period, during which we have tried to combine two systems, one socialist and the other a little more pro-capitalist, into a new democratic system.

After unification, the parliaments of the north and south were combined into one body. It should be noted here that the parliament of the north was formed following 1988 elections in which women were not allowed to participate. The parliament of the south was formed in 1986 in a one-party election in which 11 women won seats. Thus, after unification, a huge parliament with only 11 women, all from the south, tried to legalize the whole system for the new, unified country. That’s the process which brought us to the election that’s going to take place tomorrow—a process designed to forever unify the country and establish a peaceful, multiparty democracy.

I can’t predict what’s going to happen after tomorrow. But, as a candidate, I can say that the last two years and nine months has been an educational period for the whole country. We’ve been learning about democracy and about the democratic process. During this period, there has been growth in the independent media from five newspapers daily to 117 newspapers and magazines, weekly and daily. We have seen the change from one party ruling in the south and another party ruling in the north to the existence of 45 political parties (even though it’s true that among the 45, only eight are really strong enough to possibly have seats in the coming parliament).

In all, the experience of Yemen and the educational process that people have gone through indicates that a civil society is emerging and it might be possible for democracy to exist. It’s true that the Islamic fundamentalists are capable of creating obstacles to the democratic process, but there are other civil groups and political parties which could prevent such obstacles. Of course it’s also possible that the elections will bear out the more pessimistic view expressed by my colleague, Hayder Ibrahim.

For me personally, it’s not easy being a woman candidate. It’s just like women everywhere in the world—they have to prove twice that they are credible and capable of being politicians in order to be accepted. For me it was three times worse because men said, “We have enough qualified men, so why have a woman presented as a candidate?” Just the day before yesterday I was physically attacked in the street at my rally by someone who they tell me is part of a fundamentalist group. It was good to see that people at the rally reacted against that kind of Islamist attitude. He’s already in jail now, thanks to the law, which means we have a law that is enforced and that can protect women like me. I actually was able to get a fetwah from the mufti of the republic that says there is nothing in the Islamic law and nothing in the prophet’s sayings that prevents a woman from being a leader and receiving votes from men and women. In 1988 there was another fetwah that said no woman could be a candidate and run for election. So you see, Islam can be used for or against human rights.
Raghid el-Sohl is co-founder of the Project for Democracy Studies in the Arab Countries. A Lebanese political scientist, he is also a member of the Governing Board and the Research Committee of the Centre for Lebanese Studies in Oxford and chairman of the Oxford Arab Committee, which organizes seminars and lectures on a variety of topics related to Arab and regional affairs as well as to Arab-European relations. He is author of numerous articles and his new book, Britain's Two Wars with Iraq, will be published this year. His most recent work is a report on "Human Rights Associations in the Arab World—Present Situation and Future Prospects" to be presented to the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna next June.

The challenges to democracy in the Arab world are embodied in social forces and political actors in the past associated with pro-Western, upper class, conservative elites. At present, they are projected as indigenous, anti-Western, radical, fundamentalist, counter-elites, representing the poorer social classes. This belief needs to be reassessed and scrutinized. It seems to me that the challenges to democracy in the Arab region actually come from a variety of sources. To illustrate this mosaic, allow me to outline very briefly these actors and forces, focusing on their attitudes toward an issue that is central to the debate on democracy in the Arab world, namely, whether or not this system of government is suitable to the Arabs. These forces can be divided into two main schools of thought: the particularists and the universalists.

The particularists tend to highlight the specific conditions of the region; to emphasize attributes and features which separate the region from other areas and nations; and to dwell on what they believe to be its unique character. The particularists can be divided into two main groups, the first one comprising those who believe that democracy is alien to Arab societies. This group can in turn be divided into two sub-

groups, the first of which suggests that the main issue is not whether or not Arab societies are capable of adopting what they term Western-style democracies, but whether or not it is right to do so. Their answer to this question is that Arabs should steer away from this system because it does not suit them. The Western-style democracies' basic principles are seen as incompatible with the dominant cultural heritage and prevalent social conditions in the Arab world. Alternatively, what seems to suit the Arabs is authoritarian rule, whose record with regard to civil liberties, economic progress, social equality and national defense, is, to say the least, questionable.

The other sub-group believes the Arabs are incapable of applying the principles of democracy even when they want to. They also highlight cultural and social differences between the Western and Arab societies in order to explain the lack of prospects for democracy. The historical failure of various experiments in quasi-parliamentary and multiparty systems in the Arab region is considered to be evidence of the fact that Arab societies cannot endure or sustain a democratic experience. This group believes that attempts to democratize the Arab region are a waste of time, an exercise in futility whose end result would be chaos, social and political disorder, widespread misery and frustration. This pessimistic view does not provide convincing arguments regarding the inherent and everlasting enmity of a member of the human race towards democracy.

The second group of particularists includes those who voice their approval of the democratic, multiparty system of government, yet have their own way of interpreting it. A number of these people believe that sometime in the future, Arab societies will be able to implement the principles of democracy, but for the moment, because of economic, social, educational and political conditions, it would be deemed inappropriate. They advocate a period of transition that would come to an end when the people are duly prepared for democracy. The duration of this transitional period is usually left undefined;
however, it is generally assumed that it would end once Arab societies attain the level of development that exists in the advanced democracies. How soon this gap between Arab societies and advanced democracies will be closed is a matter of speculation. Meanwhile, the transition period seems to be more permanent than one would assume.

Another sub-group of the particularists suggests that because Arab societies have had different historical experiences from those societies that have adopted democratic systems, democratic practices in the Arab world should also be different. But these differences rarely lead to widening the political freedom of citizens. They end up, almost inevitably, in more restrictive regimes.

The universalist school of thought tends to focus on a single model of democracy. They show little concern with the differences between nations and societies and cast their attitude towards democracy in an internationalist mantle.

Among the several sub-groups in this school are those who adhere to a host of religious and secularist ideologies and view the democratic, multi-party system as a global menace that should be opposed not only in the Arab world, but everywhere, and replaced by a different system of government. The proponents of this internationalist and salvationist view have yet to prove that the system they endorse is superior to democratic rule.

Another group of universalists includes those who, on the contrary, are pronounced democrats, and who tend to equate democracy with certain paradigms which exist in Western societies. The advocates of this line also diverge into sub-groups, one of which believes that it is only a matter of time before the march of history replaces authoritarianism with multiparty democracies among Arab nations. Though this forecast may instill self-confidence in the minds and hearts of the Arab democrats, it is a deterministic view that could lead to complacency and inaction. A second sub-group suggests that neither history nor the Arabs themselves can bring democracy to the Arab world; rather it has to come via an external force. This sub-group is in effect calling for a revival of the post Great War mandatory system in the Arab region, which was supposed to lead the Arabs in the east Mediterranean along the path of self-rule and democracy. In actuality it was a colonialist rule which led to the undermining of the democratic system of government.

These forces pose serious challenges to democracy in the Arab region. In the desperate attempt to confront these challenges and obstacles, some Arabs might be tempted to solicit the support of external powers. At certain points this course of action may be legitimate and useful given the fact that we are living in an international village, and that the challenges to the democratization of the Arab world are partly external. However, it seems to me that the excessive reliance of the movement towards democracy in the Arab world on external support might harm its cause by turning it, in the minds of the public, into an instrument of external policies in Arab affairs. To avoid this pitfall, this movement should maintain the following safeguards:

- Concentrate on building its indigenous support, and on mobilizing domestic and regional resources. It seems to me that the democrats of the Arab world have not yet sufficiently and efficiently tapped these resources.
· Look for friends and allies whose main concern is to promote the cause of democracy and human rights, and who are ready to acknowledge the legitimate national rights of Arabs, such as Palestinian statehood, Arab integration among the states, and economic development.

· Attempt to achieve the objectives through self-reliance and by considering realistic options and adopting the proper strategies and tactics.

These safeguards will help the movement towards democracy to expand its field of action while maintaining its credibility among public opinion.
While Latin America today is probably more democratic than it has ever been, the democratic gains made in the last decade are not fully secured. Panel chair Susan Kaufman Purcell pointed out that there will be an unprecedented number of elections in the region in the next two years and that even in countries like Argentina, which has managed to maintain progress toward democratization while also implementing a series of economic restructuring measures, there are still challenges in terms of institution-building and addressing human rights issues. Starting from the assumption that a great deal of progress has been made, panelists focused their remarks on the remaining challenges and problems to be faced if further democratic gains are to be realized.

Jose Zalaquett is a Chilean lawyer and human rights practitioner who recently served on the National Commission for Truth and Reconciliation in his country. Following the 1973 military coup in Chile, he organized and led the legal office of the Committee for Peace, which provided legal aid to thousands of political prisoners. In 1975 he was imprisoned because of his advocacy work and the following year he was expelled from the country by the Chilean military junta. During his ten years in exile, he was active in Amnesty International as chairman of the International Executive Committee and as deputy secretary general at the international secretariat in London. He remains active in Amnesty International and currently chairs the International Human Rights Internship program.

I have been asked to give an overview of the situation in Latin America, and because of time constraints, I will try to be very schematic in my presentation. Generally speaking, it can be said that while some democratic gains have been made in Latin America, much remains to be done, the danger of setbacks exists, and there are many pitfalls down the road. I would like to make some general points, and then focus on the existing major impediments or problems to be addressed.

The general points are the following: first, it is very hard to talk about Latin America as a whole. For each country, one has to take into consideration the past as well as the current impediments to establishing or sustaining democracy. Some countries lack a democratic tradition or a tradition of the rule of law. Others have experienced a marginalization or disenfranchisement of large sectors of the population. In still other countries a tradition of democracy was interrupted by political polarization and divisions which eventually led to coup d'états. Therefore, at the present time in Latin America, a variety of situations exist, including:

- convalescing democracies that may still be fragile, but are making progress toward full re-establishment;
- elected governments where democratic institutions, and indeed the regime, may be in danger because of internal armed conflict, corruption, gross inequalities or organized crime;
- democracy is being tried for the first time in a long time, or for the first time ever, and the institutions need to be built up and an awareness of democratic practices developed; and lastly,
- countries where democracy still has to be recovered or established.

A second general point is that although one may analyze several major factors that were impediments to full democratic development in the region, it’s important to focus on one ideological, value-related factor that has led to major changes in recent years. Before the 1960s, democracy was never contested as a value in the region. From Jefferson to Bolivar it was the pre-
were human rights and social justice. Now you hear both sides of the political spectrum talking about all four issues, with different emphasis. There is a recognition that democracy requires a democratic approach to all four issues. As a result, there is more maturity politically, although not yet enough such maturity. We may look at the issues with hope, but we have to be weary of backlashes and problems. I will list these problems.

First, a key problem is associated with the political transition to democracy in countries where elected civilian rule has been recovered but a legacy of massive past human rights violations still looms over society. Many countries in the region have dealt with this problem, including Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina, Chile, El Salvador, Guatemala, and to a lesser extent Bolivia. This problem is also likely to arise in Haiti and Cuba in the future. It’s not a problem exclusive to Latin America. In Eastern Europe and the republics of the former Soviet Union, it’s a serious issue, as it is in Chad, Guinea, and Ethiopia, in the Philippines and in Cambodia. This is a major ethical question of our time which needs to be seriously addressed. A responsible approach to the issue must take into account principles as well as political realities.

Another major issue is how to develop a democratic approach to problems of security, peace, law and order. It has been easy for human rights organizations to criticize anything coming from the military or police. But there is a legitimate military and police function in a democratic society. The third challenge is strengthening democratic institutions, the rule of law, the judiciary, local government, free press, unions and avenues for political participation. The fourth is transforming the energy of human rights movements to address the endemic problems of society, such as discrimination, lack of integration of secular societies, or deficiencies in the state apparatus, such as prison conditions, police brutality, or lack of proper justice. Finally, the question of socio-economic rights and development deserves serious attention. So far these questions have been approached in a
fundamentalist way and with more rhetoric than substance. The critical factor is to distinguish the real next steps that may allow us to advance more in fulfillment of socio-economic rights rather than generalizations.

The last issue I will raise concerns corruption. Throughout the region, new citizens movements are emerging against political corruption. People want democracy, but they want a functioning system, not a corrupt one. In Brazil, a citizen's movement led to the impeachment of the President. In Venezuela, however, such action could be dangerous because anger against the government could also lead progressive people to support military adventures. That's a serious problem. All of these issues need to be tackled first and foremost through a vigilant citizenry. I imagine my colleagues on the panel will address how that can be accomplished.

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Sergio Aguayo is president of the Mexican Academy of Human Rights and a professor at the Center for International Studies at the Colegio de Mexico in Mexico City. He has written extensively on issues relating to Mexico's national security as well as refugees and displaced persons in Central America. Mr. Aguayo is a founding member of the newspaper La Jornada, where he is currently an advisor to the General Director and a member of the Board of Directors. He has lectured throughout Mexico, the United States, Latin America and Europe.

I was fascinated by the discussions during the last panel on how to measure democratic advances. That is not an easy thing to do, because by using different measurements one can reach quite different conclusions regarding a country's state of democratic development. For example, I would question including Mexico, Guatemala and Peru on a panel entitled "Securing Democratic Gains." Perhaps we should instead include those countries on the panels on "The Struggle for Freedom" or "Troubled Transitions." For example, in Mexico we have advanced in some aspects but we are still not a truly democratic country. We do not really have fair elections, and we have a very strong military which leaves a big question mark on the issue of freedom. I don't have any easy answers to this fundamental question of how we measure democratic advance so I would like in this presentation to address a more general issue, that of the emergence of civil society.

In most of the transitions to democracy of the last few years, civil society has played a crucial role. This emergence of civil society (social organizations, churches, and other institutions) poses important theoretical and political challenges for all of us, because during the current epoch of transition, these institutions are challenging the traditional ways of addressing society's problems.

At the same time that we are experiencing a growth in civil society, we are witnessing a worldwide phenomenon of the decline in the credibility of political parties, politicians and governments. Traditional institutions are losing credibility because they have not been efficient enough in tackling citizen's day-to-day problems. For example, the election of Jean Bertrand Aristide in Haiti was the result of the efforts of a coalition of small organizations throughout the country, not traditional party apparatus. This is happening all over the world and is an important element of the transition to a new era.

Another important issue during this epoch of transition is the fact that while the globalization of the economy is having a major impact on how world affairs are being conducted, there are many issues for which there are no global answers. In order to solve these problems, we need to look for answers at the local level, in the grassroots community.

One of the most important elements of the new era is the revolution in communications. For the first time in history, a small organization can be part of a global network, through which it can share information and ask for solidarity and
support. This is having a profound impact on how international relations are conducted. One recent example was the important role that the reaction among the societies of Canada, the US and Mexico played in the debate on the North American Free Trade Agreement.

During this transition period we must address many questions regarding the role of governments, civil society and political parties, such as whether the answer to development and democracy lies in strong or weak political parties. I am not proposing that the establishment of one thousand political parties is a solution, but we must start to think about new ways of balancing civil society, political and institutional life, governments and so forth. I am not arguing that civil society or non-governmental organizations can substitute for organized life, or that they provide all the answers. But in this new universe of global economy and global society, civil society plays an ever-increasing role. I believe we must address in a serious and systematic way the issue of what that role will be in democratic societies of the future.

In closing, I want to return to my original point that in order to secure democratic gains, one first has to have a clear idea of what the criteria are for defining and measuring those gains. In that context, for the next conference, we should examine where Mexico fits on the agenda, because in my opinion it has not yet gained the right to be on this panel about consolidating democracy.

Maria Oyhanarte is a lawyer and president of Citizen Power, a non-partisan Argentine organization dedicated to promoting government responsiveness and accountability through greater citizen involvement and democratic participation. Her effort was motivated by her investigation and pursuit of the case of her husband, a prominent Argentine businessman who was kidnapped by military and later police forces. She has just published (in Spanish) a book entitled How to Exercise Your Citizen Power, which deals with the importance of civic participation and the experiences of the Citizen Power organization.

I come from a country that has suffered long periods of authoritarian rule. We have suffered internal conflict, repression and setbacks, and those years don’t go by without leaving footprints. With the advent of democracy ten years ago, we entered a period of enchantment. We believed that democracy would bring with it quasi-magical solutions to our problems, and that the consolidation of this new system should be the exclusive responsibility of the government. With the government and the governed still enmeshed in the authoritarian culture, we failed to understand that democracy in itself was not enough. Rather, it provided a formal context that would allow us to live together in peace, correcting past errors and opening up the possibility of finding the best path to social and economic development. We believed that democracy had triumphed, when in
fact what had triumphed was the idea of democracy.

We soon realized that real democracy would have to be built over time along with the essential element of the power of the citizen. Power is central to personal social transformation. Its sources and uses mark the boundaries of our existence. Rapid changes are taking place in the world—relations between parents and children, men and women, employers and employees, representatives and represented are not the same as they were a few decades ago. Civil society is beginning to reclaim the powers it was once delegated. One means of accomplishing this is through the decentralization of power, returning it to units smaller than the state. Another path is privatization, which is the world’s tendency to return power to the market. A third path is returning power to individuals as citizens. Assuming this power is difficult—the responsibility, self-consciousness and freedom are dizzying. But at the same time it brings us clarity and energy.

If we imagine ourselves in a position from which we can observe the totality of earth, space and time, we see its inhabitants reproducing, moving from place to place and transforming themselves at ever-increasing speed. From that position we can also see new scientific and social paradigms arising that meet in a powerful alchemy and form a new kind of society. In different societies many aspects of human activities are experiencing similar simultaneous change. We are all affected by these problems and we can all take a path leading to a better way of life. This society in which we live, whether we call it post-industrial, technological, consumerist, information age or post-modern, belongs to us. We are all part of history in this exact second and can all participate in this cultural reformation.

In Argentina, we asked ourselves how this might be done. First of all, we realized, let’s not be “idiots.” In democratic Greece, which projected to eternity the splendor of its civilization, the existence of the city was a condition of life. In the Greek’s political universe, the city carried out the same function as our modern states. The Greek considered himself to be a citizen above all and all activity was based on the principle that the Greek’s civic duty always came first. One who did not participate in community projects and led a private life only for oneself was called an idiot, from the Greek idios. This stemmed from the belief that one who leads an isolated life gains little knowledge, is ignorant and simple-minded. Over the centuries, the term idiot gained the pejorative connotation it has today. So now we can say it’s time to stop being idiots and start being citizens.

A group of Argentines with special interest in encouraging citizen participation got together in 1988 and founded a non-profit group called Poder Ciudadano, or Citizen Power. As a founding member of this nonpartisan group, I was committed to finding new ways of democratic participation in Argentina, ways for citizens to take action to defend and improve the quality of life. One of the ideas Citizen Power wants to convey is that modern democracy isn’t only the act of electing representatives. Above all democracy is what happens between elections, when citizens play a significant role in defining and upholding the aims and direction of the
community. Argentines are not accustomed to being able to exercise their civic rights, but as citizens we don’t need a legal license to act on our beliefs. If we take upon ourselves the task of responding to needs, we are creating authority for ourselves and strengthening community ties. Citizen Power organized community-wide dialogue to allow citizens to go beyond just talking about their problems and really getting to know our options and limitations. This knowledge changes individuals, ultimately making them capable of more effective action sparked by social energy. This social energy is the power of the citizen.

We are learning that freedom grants us the possibility of expressing our thoughts and acting according to our will. Freedom also means recuperating our spontaneity, becoming social artists and realizing that our own history can change. To convert ourselves into social artists we must keep our civic conscience alert. There is no simple recipe for how this can be done, but certain basic ingredients such as community and responsibility are necessary. We are working to develop these elements in Argentina, in order to achieve what all advanced societies seek—economic well-being, knowledge, justice, security and peace. We are sure that no one will give us a paradise as a gift—we need to learn to build it.

**Gustavo Gorriti** is a Peruvian journalist who is currently a senior research associate at the North-South Center of the University of Miami. He was recently a research associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Following the April 1992 “self-coup” in Peru, Mr. Gorriti was detained for 48 hours by the country’s security forces. He is a well-known reporter and analyst in Peru, noted for his widely praised book on Sendero Luminoso and his writings about narcotics trafficking, terrorism, and human rights issues. Mr. Gorriti was a Neiman Fellow at Harvard University and has received many citations for his journalistic work from the Overseas Press Club, the Fund for Free Expression and, most recently, the Maria Moors Cabot Price prize from the Columbia School of Journalism.

I am a journalist who believes in the analytical value of gossip and anecdotes and the transcendence of paradox. This serves me quite well in a country which, in a period described by some as “the end of history,” managed to produce Fujimoris instead of Fukuyamas. Peru’s recent experience makes one believe that instead of moving toward the end of history, we’re running in circles most closely toward its beginning.

I will focus my remarks on the current situation in Peru and speak about several of the problems we face relating to the viability of democracy and the barriers it now confronts.

Let me begin with an anecdote that illustrates the lack of real democracy in Peru. In July of last year, a number of university students and a professor were arrested and then just disappeared from a campus that was under military control. This naturally led to a certain amount of suspicion about their disappearance. In a recent meeting of the largely government-controlled parliament, (nicknamed by some of us in the opposition as the “geisha” parliament), a denunciation was made that the students had been assassinated, and the officers responsible for the assassination were named. This prompted the formation of an investigative commission that called army chief General Hermosa to testify. After his testimony, General Hermosa came out and read a very threatening public pronouncement in which he said that the armed forces would not permit any kind of insult to the institution of the military and that the investigation was being contracted by Peru’s internal enemy, Shining Path. The next day, Peruvians watched as a military parade of generals in aging Soviet tanks rode through the streets of Lima demonstrating
their support for General Hermosa. That’s the real extent of democracy in Peru—no human rights investigations, but a military parade rumbling through the streets of Lima.

How did this come to pass? In attempting to answer that question, we have to understand that since the Second World War, there has been a certain pendularity roughly every ten years, between the processes of democracy and dictatorship. In the 1950s we had dictators; in the 1960s, the Alliance for Progress; in the 1970s, dictators and national security doctrine; and the 1980s brought democracy and high expectations. Illusions and expectations were probably higher in Peru than anywhere else in Latin America. These expectations were promptly shattered by the reality that drugs and terrorism magnified the problems of debt and poverty. The drug problem deeply divided the country. This problem, which as in very few other cases can be described by the phrase “the enemy is us,” rent the country. It was, paradoxically, also the main economic issue.

At the same time, we had to deal with the Shining Path insurgency, which grew in Peru at a moment when elsewhere in Latin America there were wide trends toward resolution of 30 year old conflicts. Despite all early predictions to the contrary, Shining Path kept extending its control over ever-widening areas and populations and the response of the state was to create a de-facto dictatorship in those areas under military control. One very clear lesson of that experience is that the kind of doctrine a democracy uses to confront an insurgency might not determine the outcome of the conflict, but it might well determine whether or not democracy will survive. The doctrines applied to counter insurgency in Peru were totally structurally opposed to the democratic regime. Add to that economic collapse and tremendous problems of governability and one has to marvel at the resiliency with which democracy survived at all.

In the end, democracy was overthrown in a very atypical way—it was subverted by a leader who had been elected by popular vote, who thanks to mechanisms of democracy had come from non-entity to power in a very few weeks in a situation that was not unique to Peru but was accentuated because the population seemed willing to trade liberty and freedom for a sense of order and a certain amount of economic progress.

We have to accept the strange reality that those in power who are actively seeking to bring back true democratic rule in Peru are a distinct minority. Fortunately, the Peruvian press has maintained its independence and persistently calls for democratic programs. The situation reminds me of what happened at one point in Eastern Europe, when all the normal mechanisms of organized opposition were eliminated, and only the written word, with its capacity to mobilize, held the opposition together so that it might in the end prevail.

Ricardo Stein is the senior program officer at the United Nations Development Programme—Guatemala, in charge of technical cooperation initiatives dealing with peace and reconciliation, with regional responsibilities for issues related to uprooted populations. He formerly served as deputy executive director of the Fundacion Salvadorena de Desarrollo y Vivienda Minima, a non-profit organization dedicated to community development through low
income housing projects, as director of the Center for Information and Documentation at the Universidad Centroamericana (UCA) in San Salvador, and as a member of the International Commission for Central American Reconstruction and Development (Sanford Commission).

It must be underscored that the advancements of the last decade toward attaining democracy in Central America are integrally related to the movements toward attaining peace. Our national dynamics are marked by the threat of conflict exploding again. Freedom, democracy and human rights acquire different meanings when couched in these environs.

Since August of 1987 Central American countries have placed their efforts to obtain peace in the region along three main lines of action:

- the resolution of border situations, particularly as they relate to the problems of thousands of refugees uprooted by internal conflicts;
- resolution of internal conflicts through political negotiations involving the complex issues of national reconstruction and addressing the social and economic rehabilitation of populations in areas affected by the conflict, which means restoring the social fabric, particularly relations between the state and civil society, and creating a material and attitudinal environment toward compliance with the terms agreed upon. (In Nicaragua, this process has not been carried out to the extent that it should; while in El Salvador, where the international community is playing a positive role, it is being successfully achieved.)
- Creating the necessary guarantees and securities that would provide unquestionable legitimacy to the government resulting from political contests; in other words, negotiating the rules of the political democratic game and creating the conditions for their exercise, particularly the rule that says the losers must accept the results.

Central America must now confront the major issue of how to make democracy compatible with prosperity, efficiency and governance without losing what has been achieved towards peace. The major obstacles and difficulties in this process could be summarized as follows:

- the persistence of an economic crisis whose resolution is attempted through structural adjustments with perverse effects on all sectors of society;
- the increase of violence of all types, not only political violence, but more frequently, violence linked to narcotics and common crime linked to social fatigue and increased poverty;
- the perception of generalized corruption and the relaxation of public service morale (a current joke says that the only thing democratized during the last decade in Central America was corruption);
- the difficulties and tense relations between civilian authorities, civil society and the military;
- the complex panorama of establishing observance of human rights; and

Ricardo Stein
the crisis of credibility of political parties and the political process in general.

Consolidating peace in the region will depend on the advancement of three factors: first, the integral promotion of human rights, including specific rights of women, children, ethnic minorities and indigenous populations. This means advancing from the pure denunciation of transgressions to the principle that it is the ordinary citizen who, when organized and educated, can best participate in the defense of his rights. Support must be provided to the institutions that have emerged throughout the region in defense of human rights, such as the ombudsman’s offices, the civilian police and the movement for citizen education on basic rights and the procedures to exercise them. Reform, particularly when linked to the rule of law, should be the result of insufficiencies identified through practice, not a substitute for the practice. We must make the system work and in order to do so we have to educate the citizenry.

A second factor would be the enhancement and enlargement of spaces for economic participation, including participation in decision-making and the debate over aspects relating to a more equitable distribution of social wealth, as well as the social processes required to straighten out national economies. It is important to recognize that one cannot make a mortal somersault from internal armed conflict to structural adjustment without severely risking peace itself or the fragile social consensus that has brought about that peace.

The final factor would be the strengthening of democratic institutions, not only the mechanisms of formal democracy and elections, but more importantly, the strengthening of local power and true grassroots participation. This move from a representative democracy to a more participatory democracy requires that we confront the difficult issues of de-militarizing without disturbing the military and of re-ordering the institutionality in society so that the military plays the role of the military and not the church; the church plays the role of the church and not political parties; and political parties play the role of political parties and not public institutions.

I would conclude by saying that those of us who have been either assertive critics or activists must now move to a new role and put forth constructive proposals. We must stop pushing for total structural changes that are already taking place and begin taking advantage of the political space to expand, consolidate and advance.
NED President Carl Gershman introduces former President of Lithuania Vytasnas Landsbergis (r.) to NED Chairman John Brudemas (L) as NED Board Treasurer Ed Donley looks on.
What Professor Samuel Huntington has called the “third wave” of democratic advance in the world has left standing in its wake many dictatorships. Panel chairman Fred Ikle pointed out that the largest number of these regimes remain in Asia, with North Korea, Burma, Vietnam and China existing under brutal authoritarian rule. In those countries and others, the struggle for freedom continues as courageous individuals fight for human rights and democratic values.

Vo Van Ai is the founder and president of Que Me, a Paris-based organization dedicated to promoting democracy and human rights in Vietnam. He is also vice president of the International Federation of Human Rights, a nongovernmental organization accredited by the United Nations, the Council of Europe and UNESCO. A leading figure in the non-communist Third Force during the Vietnam War, he is well known in Vietnam as a writer and philosopher. Since 1975, he has emerged as one of the most influential political theorists and a leading figure in the movement for democracy in Vietnam. He has published a number of books on the democratic struggle, notably The Battle for Democracy in Vietnam, which is in its third printing, as well as books of poetry, essays and philosophy, and studies of Buddhism and Vietnamese history.

As I was leaving Paris to come to this conference, I came across a front-page article in the Hanoi official newspaper, Quan Doi Nhan Dan, which really shocked me. Under the title “A Humane Policy for Human Rights,” the article was an indignant diatribe against critics who accuse Hanoi of “violating human rights and democratic freedoms.” According to the article, some “tens of thousands of reactionaries” were detained in re-education camps after April 30, 1975 not by way of punishment, but “in order to avoid a bloodbath and to protect them from the vengeance and hatred of the population” with whom they had a “debt of blood.” Let me quote just one paragraph, which describes the idyllic conditions enjoyed by the inmates of these camps: “Party cadres and camp officials only had 13 to 15 kilos of rice per month, whereas the detainees’ monthly ration was 15 to 30 kilos.
Apart from political education and manual labor, their activities in the camp included organized games and entertainment, reading, watching television and listening to the radio. Every camp had three or four “happiness rooms” equipped with double beds and comfortable mattresses so that wives could sleep with their husbands during visits. There were even some children born from these happy reunions in the camps.”
I don’t think I need go on quoting any further. The whole world now knows the horrifying truth about the re-education camps, and all other gulags, which spread from Siberia to Vietnam.

In 1977, when Que Me released our first reports about human rights violations in Vietnam, we estimated there were at least 500,000 political prisoners in the gulags of Vietnam (ten times more than the figure advanced by Hanoi). No one believed us then, and Hanoi hotly denied our claim. It was not until 1985, when Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach told The Washington Post that two and a half million people had been released (far more than Hanoi claimed to have arrested in the first place), that the true perspective began to emerge. The 500,000 announced by Que Me so many years before was but a shadow of the truth.

The fact is that Hanoi cannot be trusted. It is impossible to uncover the truth unless there is a free flow of information, guaranteed by mechanisms that protect freedom of speech and freedom of the press in Vietnam. In Vietnam today, there are 192 newspapers and magazines, all of which are under the direct control of the Communist Party. There is not one single
independent publication in Vietnam. Two million Party members impose a monolithic control over a population of 70 million people.

In 1992, during the three months of April, May and June alone, more than 50 intellectuals, writers, journalists, human rights advocates and religious leaders were arbitrarily arrested and sentenced to prison terms of 20 years, simply because they expressed non-violent opinions in favor of democracy and human rights. Only last month, on March 30, Professor Doan Viet Hoat was sentenced to 20 years in prison, along with seven other activists in Vietnam. Their so-called crime was publishing a circular, the “Freedom Forum,” which called for a peaceful transition to pluralism and democracy in Vietnam. When I heard this news, I was in Bangkok for the United Nations Asia-Pacific Conference on Human Rights. Ironically, on the same day, the Hanoi delegate reported to the conference on Hanoi’s spectacular progress in the sphere of human rights.

While Hanoi has the power to silence and isolate dissidents on an individual level, it cannot bring mass movements, particularly the religious communities, to tow the party line. The most representative of these movements is the Buddhists, under the leadership of the unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam, better known as the Quang Pagoda. The Unified Buddhist Church has a twenty-century-long tradition in Vietnam, and represents 80 percent of the population. Yet since 1975, Hanoi has systematically repressed the Unified Buddhist Church, arresting its leaders and banning all Church activity. Recently, Security Police have stepped up harassment and intimidation of Buddhist monks, especially against the new church leader, Thich Huyen Quang, who has been under house arrest in Vietnam for the past ten years.

By suppressing religious freedom and persecuting the Buddhists, Hanoi is not only committing grave violations of human rights, it is eliminating from the process of national reconciliation perhaps the only force that has sufficient numbers and moral authority to impose itself as a guarantor of peace in the transition towards democracy in Vietnam.

One of Hanoi’s aims in suppressing political dissent is to demonstrate to the West that they have no human rights problems, and that the only issue at stake in Vietnam is that of economic reform. Furthermore, Hanoi wants the West to believe that the Party is the only force capable of maintaining economic and political stability, and that if Communism is overthrown, the country will plunge into chaos. This concept of *apres moi le deluge* (“after me there will be chaos”) is the war-cry of dictators. We should not forget that over the past 40 years, there has been a succession of militarist, then totalitarian governments in Vietnam. Vietnamese democrats have never been given an opportunity to participate in the reorganization of civil society.

In its current approach to Washington, Hanoi is not seeking to learn from America’s democratic experience. Hanoi’s leaders are only interested in an end to the US trade embargo and a sharp injection of American capital in order to rescue the Party and the regime. This explains why Hanoi centers all of its propaganda on the campaign for “renovation” and reforms in the Vietnamese economy. But the fact is that Vietnam does not have an economy. What appears to be a relative economic revival boils down to rampant corruption and a rocketing black market. Money is poured into building more cafes, bars, and night-clubs, whereas schools are in total disrepair and hospitals badly lacking. Against this backdrop, there has been a
drastic decline in moral standards. “Sex tours” organized with the connivance of state officials have become increasingly widespread, and a growing population of 600,000 prostitutes, 800,000 drug addicts and the beginnings of an AIDS epidemic make Ho Chi Minh City worse than Saigon at the height of the Vietnam War.

The general picture is extremely grim. Nature is being devastated, and the people along with it. One of Vietnam’s richest resources, which Hanoi is willfully squandering, is its people, notably its overseas diaspora. Over two million overseas Vietnamese, half of whom live in America, represent a formidable source of grey-matter which could be mobilized to the people’s advantage. But Hanoi mistrusts these people, considering them to have “betrayed” their country. Hanoi views overseas Vietnamese simply as a source of revenue, not as a dynamic potential for national reconstruction.

Hanoi is trying to prove an old argument that development equals democracy. But this has long been disproved by other Asian countries. Although the market system does stimulate growth, which is an important element of development, it is wrong to imagine that, given time, a free market will lead to a free society. In concrete terms, this means Hanoi must release its totalitarian grip on the population, and make the first move on the road to democratic progress. I would like to suggest three basic steps that could be taken to put this idea into practice.

First, a conference should be organized among Vietnamese to discuss national reconstruction, with the participation of all political and religious families from inside and outside Vietnam, including of course, the Hanoi government. The conference would not deal with ideological issues, but would be a sincere initiative to pool all available national resources to solve the basic problems facing Vietnam today. The conference could be organized in a neutral capital, either in Asia or in a Western country acceptable to all sides. I would be happy for Que Me to undertake the organizing of this initiative, with the assistance of Vietnamese organizations overseas. Second, Hanoi should allow the publication of a private, independently-run newspaper in Ho Chi Minh City. By providing a free source of information, this newspaper would play a vital part in stimulating a real debate of ideas in Vietnam.

Third, free and fair general elections should be organized in Vietnam with the participation of all social, political and religious currents, regardless of their political opinions or affiliations, to elect a National Assembly truly representative of the people. In order to assure their impartiality and fairness, these elections could take place under the supervision of the United Nations.

Democratic movements inside Vietnam are ready to support these initiatives. To achieve them, we need the cooperation and support of the international community.

Liu Binyan is senior fellow of the Princeton China Initiative and editor of China Watch. As an investigative journalist in China, his outspoken criticisms of the Communist Party bureaucracy and the lack of press freedom resulted in his being expelled from the Party and silenced for 22 years. After his rehabilitation he continued writing to expose corruption and abuse of power. A prolific writer, his autobiography is entitled A Higher Kind of Loyalty. He has been a visiting scholar at Princeton, Harvard, Trinity and the Woodrow Wilson Center.

I think that of the many questions asked about China, the one of most interest to the world is why the Communist Party regime in China has survived while those in Russia and Eastern Europe have collapsed. There are many reasons, but I will focus on just one. It was precisely the collapse of the regimes in Russia and Eastern Europe that helped Deng Xiaoping not only to survive but even to succeed in creating spectacular economic development. The Chinese people themselves were frightened by
the changes in Russia and Eastern Europe. They began to fear that China’s fate might be similar to the internal chaos, economic difficulties, and wars plaguing Russia and Eastern Europe.

Perhaps what I’m going to say will explain somewhat the present situation in China. It is very clear that the denouement started from the beginning of this year when the Communist Party started to speak publicly about the crisis in the countryside of China. For more than 40 years, the Chinese Communist Party of Mao Zedong was very skillful in governing China and in covering up the whole truth of that period. For example, as many as 30 million people, mostly peasants, died from starvation because of Mao Zedong, but that tragedy was not disclosed until recently. There are still very few Chinese who know that figure. Now the Party leaders are repeatedly warning officials to pay attention to the problems in the countryside. Wan Li, one of the leaders of the Party, and former partner of Hu Yaobang, has even said that everything is ready in the countryside of China for an insurrection, except for the fact that the people have no leader.

Some people may be suspicious of that statement, because there is a very popular, widespread view that the peasants in China were the ones who benefitted most from the reforms launched by Deng Xiaoping. That was true until 1985, but since then the income of the peasants has either stagnated or declined. An increasing burden has been put on the shoulders of the peasants, with all kinds of taxes and so-called donations and fines imposed, and in some provinces reaching as much as 35 or 40 items. That has made the peasants in several provinces stand up and either peacefully protest or violently confront the regime.

I believe that the people who are fairly optimistic about the future of China tend to ignore its uniqueness. I don’t think there is any country in the world where the disparity between the cities and the countryside or between the rich provinces and the poor provinces is so large. In China this gap is still widening. In one-third of the country, the average income of the peasants is the equivalent of $30. As the coastal provinces are getting rich, in the internal provinces, such as Gansu, the people are cursing Deng Xiaoping and the Communist regime, because their provinces can’t compete. Living standards have improved for maybe 30 percent of the residents in the cities, but in other parts of the country the majority of people still rely on their fixed salaries.

In 1991 the head of the Asian Department at the World Bank stated in a speech at an international conference in Pakistan that China was going to be another Singapore, and that we shouldn’t put any pressure on Deng Xiaoping’s regime to produce political reform, but instead just let China run its course, and everything would be alright. I want to tell you that is not the truth. The people in a society tend to be ignored by economists. The people of China have changed so much—for a time they were killed or silenced by the authorities that historically kept the stability of China. There was only one authority, that of the party of Mao Zedong. In reality, the only authority that’s respected by the Chinese is the people’s desire, and that cannot be ignored.

Nor can we ignore the increasing numbers of Chinese people desperately attempting to get out of China. In just one month, as many as 6,000 to 8,000 legal Chinese refugees arrive in New York City. It won’t be long before the world is facing great numbers of boat people fleeing China, many more than ever fled Vietnam.
Alexander Aris is the son of Aung San Suu Kyi, the leader of Burma’s National League for Democracy and winner of the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize.

I have been invited today to represent my mother, Aung San Suu Kyi, but I would like to make it clear that I am not her official spokesman. What I will be saying today is based upon my own knowledge and on what is generally known about the struggle for democracy in Burma.

Although they did not attract the same amount of attention as similar events in Eastern Europe and China, the peaceful demonstrations for democracy which took place in Burma in August of 1988 were the vanguard of widespread movements which swept the world calling for an end to totalitarian systems which ride rickshaw over justice and human rights. It has been estimated that thousands of people in Burma lost their lives when security forces fired on unarmed demonstrators throughout the country in August and September of that year.

On 18 September 1988, the military, under the name of the State Law, Order and Restoration Council (SLORC), took control of state power. The SLORC promised free and fair elections and an early transfer of power to a democratically-elected government. Subsequently, many ambiguous and contradictory statements were made by the authorities, which, together with the appalling numbers of democratic activists arrested and sentenced to substantial terms of imprisonment without the benefit of due process, cast much doubt on the intentions of the SLORC. The elections in May of 1991 were, however, surprisingly free and fair. The results were also surprising for those who had underestimated the commitment of the people of Burma to a democratic system of government. The National League for Democracy (NLD), co-founded by my mother, won a landslide victory, gaining more than 80 percent of the 485 seats contested. This was so in spite of many difficulties imposed by the active hostility of the authorities and the arrest of the NLD’s top leaders. It then became obvious that the SLORC had no intention of relinquishing power. Official pronouncements became more ambiguous, conditions that had to be met before there could be a transfer of power to a civilian government were increased, and many elected NLD representatives were thrown into prison or forced to flee across the border to avoid prosecution.

Some political prisoners were released in April of 1992, but many, including my mother, still remain under arrest. In July of 1992, selected members of the opposition were invited to a meeting with the SLORC, an occasion which produced little beyond formal statements without substance, although a few brave delegates attempted, without success, to initiate some form of meaningful dialogue.

A national convention to discuss the future constitution was scheduled for early 1993. Well before the start of that convention, the authorities openly stated that the constitution should perpetuate a dominant role for the military in the government of Burma. The national convention was inaugurated on 9 January 1993 and is now adjourning for the second time. It is difficult to predict at this stage whether it will lead to a constitution that reflects the will of the SLORC or one that truly reflects the will of the people. There have been reports that among the delegates, all hand-picked or approved by the SLORC, are a substantial number who are prepared to pull out indefinitely against a constitutional clause which would give the military a prominent role in the government of the country. Such reports are, of course, strenuously denied by the authorities.

What then is the current state of affairs of the movement for democracy in Burma? The SLORC claims that Burma is proceeding toward its own kind of democracy at its own pace. It has rightly been pointed out that the greatest tribute nondemocratic governments pay to the idea of democracy is the adoption of democratic rhetoric in their constitutions. Even though they shamefully abused the rights of their citizens,
Hitler, Mussolini and Stalin all insisted that their governments were "democratic." The lip service such leaders pay to democracy is a form of flattery, after all, but it also corrupts the vocabulary of democracy. The danger of such corruption is particularly great when governments start defining democracy in terms that suit the policies they wish to adopt. It is for this reason that those who wish to see in Burma truly democratic institutions that enjoy the mandate of the people have little faith in the kind of constitution that could be expected to emerge from a national convention of delegates chosen by the authorities.

There is a school of thought which holds that democracy can only come through evolution, not revolution. There is also the well-known argument that democracy is a Western invention, unsuited to Asian nations. Others would argue that democratic practices and institutions cannot be introduced until economic performance has been successfully implemented. The case of Japan provides a practical example of the general fallacy of all three of those propositions. With particular regard to Burma, the traditional Buddhist values of the country harmonize very well with the democratic ideals of today. As has been pointed out by my mother and by others who have written on the subject, the struggle for democracy in Burma is part of the continuing political endeavor for a government of the people, for the people, and by the people, which can trace its origins to the decade after the First World War, when the first stirrings of nationalistic movement began. This evolutionary process suffered a setback after the military takeover of 1962. However, the democratic aspirations of the people of Burma were never destroyed. They were merely driven underground, to emerge with full force in the revolution of 1988. Thus it can be said that the movement for democracy in Burma is both evolutionary and revolutionary in character.

There has been considerable publicity about current economic reforms in Burma, but there are no convincing signs that these have resulted in an improvement in living standards for ordinary citizens. In fact many Burmese are of the opinion that the present economic policies do not favor the emergence of a strong middle class that might provide the backbone for a sound democratic tradition. There seems to be a widening gap between the rich and the poor, and that is a sure recipe for social instability and unrest.

If my mother were here today to give her opinion on democracy in Burma, I am certain she would say, as her father, Aung San, said before her, that democracy is the only political system fit for an independent nation and that she is confident that the people of Burma have the capacity to shape the destiny of their country with wisdom and courage.

Kanan Makiya is currently a fellow at Harvard University’s Center for Middle East Studies. Born in Baghdad, Iraq, he studied architecture in the United States and went on to design and construct many major projects throughout the Middle East. He is the author of Republic of Fear, a portrait of Ba'athist terror. In October 1992 he acted as the convener of the Human Rights Committee of the Iraqi National Congress, a transitional parliament based in northern Iraq. His latest book, Cruelty and Silence, published in April 1993, seeks to transform the Arab discourse
by confronting the rhetoric of Arab and pro-Arab intellectuals with the realities of political cruelty in the Middle East.

Four features come to mind when characterizing the dictatorship in Iraq today. First, this is a dictatorship with one of the worst human rights records in the world. That is not just an individual observation by an active, known opponent of the Ba'athist regime in Baghdad. It is the conclusion of the United Nations special rapporteur on Iraq in several reports on this subject issued after extensive investigations of many months duration.

Secondly, this is a dictatorship that no longer controls some 20 percent of its territory or some 33 percent of its population. (I am including here the four to five million inhabitants of northern Iraq and the one and half to two million exiles abroad.) Moreover, it is a dictatorship that does not control large chunks of its own territory in the South — cities, towns and villages certainly in parts of the Shiite areas in southern Iraq are "no-go" areas where the army barracks itself in at night and does not dare to go out.

The third feature of the current situation surrounding the dictatorship in Iraq is that since the end of the Gulf War we have an unusual, new phenomenon on the Iraqi political scene. One of the most closed countries in the world, one of the most absolute totalitarian systems in modern Arab politics, has been opened up from the inside. During the Iraqi uprising that followed the Gulf War, tons of documents from the secret service files of the Iraqi police were carted off by the rebels. Human rights organizations, Iraqi activists and others are now busy studying those documents. The stories that Iraqis are now prepared to tell about what life was like under this regime are coming tumbling out. They are an unstoppable force.

The fourth feature of the dictatorship in Iraq is that it has completely lost its political authority. It rules by brute force and guns alone. It is the 150,000 armed men around the inner circle of the Iraqi elite that control the situation in Iraq. They have no popularity— they rule by naked, brutal violence.

I would characterize Iraq as a rotting dictatorship. Moreover, I would say the rot is irreversible. The idea put forth by misguided Arab regimes and Arab intellectuals that this rotten state should be propped up to face some greater threat is a failure on two counts. First, it is morally indefensible in the face of what we know to be true. Second, it is stupid, because as I said before the rot is irreversible and this state is eventually going to go. This may take a very, very long time. I am not making a prediction that tomorrow Saddam is going to fall. I am saying that the curve of development of the polity in Iraq is in the direction of what I am calling "rot."

Under these conditions, the problem is how to make the transition to a better and more stable — notice that I did not say democratic — political order. At this point, the problem of the future Iraq is not really one of democratic systems. It can be more concretely stated as a problem of how to bring about justice. For many years now, administrative decrees issued by the revolutionary command council have simply been implemented and all notion of procedure in the administration of justice has therefore disappeared. Let me give you an example of one of the laws of the state of Iraq.

Kanan Makiya
When the Ba'athists “reformed” the criminal code in the Legal Reform Law of 1977, they included a definition of “the people,” and excluded from membership in that category, “all persons who take a political, economic or intellectual attitude hostile to the revolution and its program,” and further stated that “the status of these people shall be defined by the laws and measures taken by the authorities concerned. Revolutionary political consciousness shall play a decisive role in immunizing public opinion toward that.” Such laws have ended justice, as a practice and as a tradition, inside Iraq.

To avoid a slide into anarchy during the transition from such a deeply deformed order, to allay the legitimate fears of so many Iraqis inside the regime itself, and to avoid bloodshed on an inordinate scale, the people of Iraq are desperately in need of help from the outside world. The problem of Iraq is not that there has been too much intervention, the problem is that there has been too little. The great danger during the transition from dictatorship in Iraq is that individuals and/or groups, with very legitimate grievances, acting alone or as members of self-appointed organizations, will take it upon themselves to wreak vengeance upon those who they believe have victimized them. This reaction against an original violation does not put an end to the consequences of the original violation. On the contrary it permits the creation of a chain reaction with a terrible self-destructive logic. This is what happened in Lebanon and it is what is happening in Yugoslavia today. It is what will happen with ever more reinforced violence in Iraq unless we steer our way through the very difficult waters of change. Vengeance is not justice. The danger is that vengeful action in the form of so many trials, executions, anarchic acts and street violence, could develop a momentum of its own that would be detrimental to the future of all individuals inside Iraq and pose a great threat to the integrity of the country and the unity of the Iraqi state.

Extremely great crimes have been committed inside Iraq. Perhaps three-quarters of a million people, or five percent of the population, have died in the last 12 years, through the actions of their own state. If such crimes are left unpunished, a terrible injustice is perpetrated upon the survivors, and the suffering of the victims is not honored by their society. This is bound to leave a legacy of bitterness and pain that will live to haunt the Iraqi body politic for generations to come. Therefore, the welfare of the victims and of future generations of Iraqis demand that justice be done. On the other hand, the nature of the Ba'athist system is such as to have made very large numbers of Iraqis complicit in the perpetration of these crimes. Tens of thousands of Iraqis were either willing or unwilling participants in what was done during the 1980s. Large numbers of people informed on one another or stood by while their neighbors were humiliated, imprisoned, abused, deported, tortured, made to disappear and killed in countless horrible ways. Virtually every adult male has had to serve long terms in an army that has consistently brutalized both its own soldierly and ordinary Iraqi citizens. The multi-layered, highly secretive security organizations which regularly employed hundreds of thousands of people, (677,000 in 1980 alone, by my count) amount to one-fifth of the economically active urban population who were institutionally charged with inflicting violence in one form or another on their own citizens.

Panel Chairman Fred Isle
The conclusion then, is that many Iraqis are simultaneously victims and victimizers. Under such circumstances the collective interest of all Iraqis cannot possibly translate into the prosecution of everyone who is in fact guilty. This brings me to my last point. The other side of punishment is forgiveness. Unlike vengeance, but like punishment through due process, forgiveness in the shape of a general amnesty for all who committed such crimes is a necessary tool of the Iraqi opposition. Only by steering through this difficult precipice can the country be held together to withstand the fear of ever greater violence in Iraq in the future.

Sebastian Arcos Cazabon is a 31-year old Cuban human rights activist who in 1982 spent a year in Castro’s political prisons. His father, Sebastian Arcos Bergnes, is one of Cuba’s most prominent dissidents. Arcos Cazabon arrived in the United States in the fall of 1992.

I would like to thank the National Endowment for Democracy for giving me the opportunity to speak on behalf of all those who are now risking their freedom, their security, and even their lives, fighting for the respect of human rights and democracy in Cuba. Since 1987, we have seen many groups of human rights activists developing inside Cuba. Year by year, little by little, we have continued to work and have finally achieved the adoption of a resolution in the United Nations Human Rights Commission in Geneva against the violations of human rights by the Cuban government.

I had hoped today to deliver a message from inside Cuba, but unfortunately I am not able to do so because it is almost impossible to communicate with anyone inside my country. That is just one example of the very difficult situation we are now facing inside Cuba. The government is completely closed—closed to the changes taking place throughout the world, mainly in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union; closed to democracy; and closed to reason. They only want power and they are doing everything possible to retain that power.

We have prisons full of people who are living in horrible conditions. Sometimes six or seven men are sleeping in cells designed for only two or three. They are fed only ten ounces of white rice daily and water with a little bit of sugar. They are living like that day by day, many of them with sentences of 20 years. My father was sentenced last year to four years and eight months in prison for alleged crimes of “enemy propaganda,” which is the government’s term for the denunciation of human rights violations and the fight for respect of human rights.

Today, we Cubans more than ever need the support of the international community. We need strong actions against Fidel Castro to push him to a peaceful solution of our crisis. We are trying to reach a peaceful solution to our problems and to avoid a bloody civil war.

In the name of all Cubans unjustly imprisoned, I would like to thank you and to say that they are the ones who deserve to be here speaking to you today.
Freedom House Chairman Bette Bao Lord talks with Democracy Award recipient Han Dongfang of China.

Bona Mahwal of Sudan makes a statement from the floor.
Panel chairman Larry Diamond pointed out that Africa was not part of the sweep of democratic euphoria of 1989-90, and that even though some democratic progress has been made, the hard work in terms of making democracy real remains to be done. Obstacles to transition include entrenched political and economic interests, massive bureaucracy and corruption, destructive civil conflicts, poverty and the absence of strong civil institutions. In spite of these obstacles, there is tremendous democratic ferment, as exemplified by the extremely courageous actions of individual democratic activists throughout Africa.

Sadikou Alao is founder and president of the Study and Research Group on Democracy and Development (known by its French acronym, GERDDES-Afrique), a Benin-based civic organization which has conducted civic education programs and workshops on election monitoring techniques for organizations in several West African countries. Capitalizing on his organizing skills, Alao has recruited more than 2,500 volunteers for the organization, which now has chapters in 20 African countries.

The first thing I would like to do is thank the National Endowment for Democracy for its efforts in bringing together democratic activists from around the world. We believe that this type of convention helps to strengthen and enhance our common cause.

I would like to examine the question of whether the democratization process in Africa is blocked, particularly in francophone Africa, after what has happened in Zaire and Togo. In examining the situation in francophone Africa, we have to keep in mind that since we achieved our independence in the 1960s, activities in the region have been dominated by France. The French government has accepted the existence of all sorts of dictatorships and in some cases even helped maintain them.

We have, however, seen some changes in the French approach since the Socialist government took power in 1991. Jean-Pierre Cot, former Minister of Population, wanted to bring about a change in France’s traditional practices in its relations with former colonies. Unfortunately, he did not last in that position because some African leaders did not like him and they asked the French government to remove him from office. Even so, with the end of the Cold War, we are now seeing a very big change in the French government’s attitude. One way to understand this change in French policy is to look at it through two different democratization experiences: the process in Benin, which was successful, and the process in Togo, which was not.

Why did the process succeed in Benin? To begin with, Benin has been lucky enough to have a population which has never accepted the
Kerekou dictatorship. At the same time, it must be acknowledged that the democratization process in Benin has also benefitted from external international support. The first type of international support came from the French government, which convinced the various parties (the government, the political parties, the opposition leaders and the non-governmental organizations) to come together for a National Conference in the hope of finding a solution to their problems. The French government should be given credit not only for assisting in the creation of the National Conference, but also for supporting the conference during its proceedings, which on several occasions were on the brink of collapse. In spite of the fact that people began criticizing the French government’s policy in Benin, the French government continued to support the work of the conference through to the transition period. It even gave President Kerekou certain guarantees for his protection if he was not re-elected.

Additionally, the French government only conditionally provided bilateral assistance. France always made sure that the Kerekou government remained behind the democratization process before releasing its aid. The French government also supported the World Bank and the IMF’s conditionality. This made things very difficult for Kerekou’s regime because he lost all his credibility and he had no money to take care of the current affairs of the country.

We also have to pay some homage to US policy in Benin. The US government not only supported the conditionality of the World Bank and France but also undertook a program of assisting the democratic civic organizations to give the democratization process in Benin a very strong foundation. That is something that the French government has never done in over 30 years and which I don’t think it is prepared to do even now.

Given that a similar situation existed in Togo, one might ask why the democratization process there did not succeed. While it is true that all of the elements I have just talked about exist in the Togolese situation, there are some additional elements which complicate its democratization process. First of all, the experience in Benin that led to Kerekou’s departure from power made other regimes in Africa realize that these democratization exercises could also lead to them having to give up power. This created a sort of solidarity among certain African leaders and Eyadama benefitted greatly from it.

Secondly, we must recognize that Eyadama’s army consists of people from his village and his tribe and is strongly united behind him. Thirdly, the democratic elite in Togo are not really unified and do not have an international strategy for assisting the Togolese democratization process.

That said, one might ask whether the democratization process is blocked in Africa. We democrats do not think so. For the first time, pluralism in Africa is now a reality. Words like democracy, human rights and free elections are now what we call in French the “droits de cité” (household words). In the past in francophone Africa, you could not talk of democracy and human rights without being considered someone who wanted to overthrow the government. Now you can speak about democracy, and civic organizations like GERDDES can work in legality.

One of the last things that I would like to note is that in the work of democracy promotion we find that solidarity is very important. That is why GERDDES is trying to establish chapters in each African country—to create a solidarity among African democrats. We really hope that the National Endowment for Democracy will promote a type of association for human rights and democratic organizations from all over the world so that we can have a forum and a sort of institution where we can measure the degree of democracy in each country. GERDDES is strongly behind the creation of such an institution by NED.
Fikele Bam is a lawyer and former director (1985–91) of the Legal Resource Center in Port Elizabeth, South Africa. He was imprisoned for ten years on Robben Island and while there established an adult education committee to teach illiterate and poorly educated inmates. He also served as chairman of the prisoners committee.

The tone and content of my remarks are going to be somewhat different than what I anticipated when I first received the invitation to address this conference, because several things have happened in the last few weeks to change the situation in South Africa. Just two weeks ago, when we thought there was some stability and sense coming to South Africa, someone assassinated Chris Hani, one of the favorite heroes of our negotiation efforts. That immediately changed the entire situation in South Africa. Just as he was about to be buried, other evil forces massacred 19 people in a place called Sebokeng in the eastern Transvaal. And just two days ago on my way here, I heard that one of the stalwarts of the South African struggle, Oliver Tambo, who spent many years abroad in exile, finally died after a long illness.

Therefore what I want to say is this: South Africa, as many of you know, is the mother country of apartheid. Apartheid, which is discrimination taken to its logical conclusion, has produced, on the governmental side, the most closed society that you could imagine.

As for the people who inhabit South Africa, we have always had a fair measure of our own tribalism, ethnicity, different languages, customs, and traditions. For some reason I don’t really understand, both the white and black people in South Africa were taught that these separate tendencies represented civilization as God meant it to be. And so one might understand that the transitions which are taking place are so troubled because we were actually brought up to believe that being close to one another yet being separate was correct.

It was not necessarily a belief in non-violence that led us to try to settle our differences peacefully. It was simply that at a certain point, long after we had taken the road of armed struggle and of violence, we suddenly came to the realization that if we continued to pursue that course, we were sure to destroy each other, and it would be a hollow victory for whoever won the day. We learned this from experiencing the struggle itself and from watching the pain and the price paid by some of our neighbors.

This attempt to move from what was virtually a closed society to some kind of open society is not an easy process. It has really just begun and I want to briefly identify some of the problems involved. I’m not going to offer solutions because at the moment there are none and many people are busy trying to find them.

“Negotiations” is now the term being bandied about in the country. In other words, we have finally decided to resolve the struggle not by means of violence but by talking across the table. A date has provisionally been demanded for the first-ever democratic elections in South Africa. When I say “first-ever” democratic elections, I mean that everyone who is an adult South African citizen will be eligible to vote. To the extent that the majority of the people in the country have never voted before—and that
includes Nelson Mandela—it obviously means that there is going to be some imbalance in the election, an imbalance which indeed characterizes just about everything I am going to talk about.

In other words, although I’m talking about negotiations, the parties who are negotiating are unequally balanced. There is a great legacy of the apartheid system itself which tends to bedevil all of our efforts. On the one hand, there are the expectations that the very transition engenders among those who have been without privileges for so long. On the other hand, the very attempt towards democratization tends to send off messages of fear and anxiety among the other partners. So whichever party is chosen in the elections, one side is going to make quite certain that there are measures taken in the constitution to ensure that the majority never actually gets into control and that there are “entrenched protections” for minorities and for other groups. And so it goes on. The government itself is not going to be a government in the sense that whoever wins is going to occupy all the positions within the cabinet. It’s going to be a government of national unity, the idea being that various groups and tendencies have got to be accommodated and that you won’t have a nationalist majority which would oppress a minority group. This imbalance persists and is reflected in the sorts of questions being debated all of the time, in the realm of education and economics as well as politics.

Let me offer just one hopeful note. Of late, there has been a tendency to extend the negotiating. Initially, the main participants were the African National Congress on the one hand and the government and its allies on the other. Recently, other elements who had earlier said that they would not participate in the process have begun to do so. There has been, for some time, an ascendancy of the role of the courts and of the rule of law and in organizations such as the Legal Resources Center, which has been allowed to operate now for almost 12 to 13 years, something which would have been completely unthinkable in the heyday of apartheid.

So there are certain glimmers of hope here and there in all of the gloominess. I’m glad to say that when I listened to some of today’s speakers, particularly from the Arab countries and from Latin America, I ended up more hopeful that even we in South Africa will be able ultimately to succeed.

Daniel Haile is an Ethiopian lawyer who is currently a Fulbright visiting scholar at Cornell Law School in Ithica, New York. He has served as legal consultant to the United Nations Department of Technical Cooperation for Development and to the UN Economic Commission for Africa. He is a member of the National Law Review Commission, the Board of Directors of the International Third World Legal Studies Association and of the Plenum of the Supreme Court of Ethiopia.

It is a privilege for me to be here and to share some of my views on a subject that is of particular relevance to the whole African region. This morning we have been listening to several distinguished panelists and speakers expressing their views and concepts of democracy, their motives for establishing a democratic form of government and their expectations from such a system. What comes out very clearly is that this concept of democracy varies from one region to another. I do not intend to narrate or to catalogue all those differences, but in order to set the record straight, let me pinpoint two major misconceptions that seem to prevail in the African region.

The first misconception about democracy is that most African governments view it as a set of established institutions which need merely to be transplanted. Certainly, many nations have incorporated civil liberties into their constitutions. As we know, as far as the creation of a democratic form of government is concerned,
such incorporations do not necessarily achieve their desired result.

As a result of such a static concept of democracy, many governments have also believed that democracy is something that is monolithic and highly structured—a perfect system, which it certainly is not. In my view, democracy must be viewed as a process whereby the individual is to be empowered, his wishes are to be represented and his interests enforced. If it is viewed in such a fashion, appropriate strategies can be laid out for achieving that goal, and certain rosy expectations, which normally are followed by disillusionment, will not materialize.

As far as I am concerned, democracy is not a perfect system. If there is one thing that distinguishes democracy from other systems, it’s probably the built-in self correcting mechanism of its pluralistic organizational structure. I would like today to address how a very innovative attempt is being made in Ethiopia to create such a pluralistic system, or what we call a civil society.

As you are all aware, in May of 1991, the Marxist regime of President Mengistu was ousted by the Ethiopian People’s Democratic Revolutionary Forces. Two months later, a peace conference was organized in which all parties opposed to the Mengistu regime came together and signed the Transitional Period Charter, the equivalent to the constitution for the transitional period, which is expected to come to and end in December 1993.

I would like to look at two strategies that have been adopted in the Transitional Charter and to assess their impact on the creation of civil society. The first strategy is what we normally call the freedom of association or the freedom to form political parties. According to the charter, everyone has the right to form political parties. In the past, there has been an attempt to prohibit the formation of such parties because the general attitude was that their existence would create disunity, social disharmony and discord.

The second innovative departure concerns the recognition of collective rights. In the past, many constitutions recognized only individual civil rights. What the Ethiopian Charter does is recognize linguistic, ethnic and religious groups as subjects of collective rights. They have the right to exist, to preserve their identity, and even more dramatic, they have the right to secede. If a nationality or a people feels that its rights have been trampled, it has the right to secede. This challenges the conventional wisdom in Africa. I haven’t come across any other constitution or national charter that recognizes the right of secession. The Ethiopian Charter is particularly innovative because it challenges this traditional belief.

As far as I am concerned, the national instability in Ethiopia was created not by the recognition of ethnicity and ethnic groups but by their non-recognition. As a result of the failure to recognize the existence of these diverse groups, we had endless wars of liberation, a fratricidal war that lasted 17 years and ended up with the ousting of the regime of President Mengistu.

Experience has shown that the recognition of ethnically-based political groups has not resulted in what was feared. It has instead resulted in the unexpected. My position is that we have to try new, innovative methods. Ethnicity and multiculturalism are the realities in many African countries. We must accept that reality and build on it. Sweeping it under the carpet will not resolve the problem but simply aggravate it.
Gitobu Imanyara is a Kenyan lawyer, human rights activist and editor of the Nairobi Weekly, a publication dedicated to human rights advocacy and nurturing a civil society in Kenya. Repeatedly arrested and harassed, he has unceasingly protested against the erosion of rights guaranteed in the Kenyan constitution. He is currently the Secretary General of the Forum for the Restoration of Democracy—Kenya, which seeks to encourage the transition from one-party authoritarian rule. He is the recipient of numerous awards, including the 1990 International Editor of the Year from the World Press Review.

The Kenyan government spends several million dollars per year paying professional public relations firms in many Western countries, but you won’t read what I will say today in the bulletins issued by those firms.

For decades Kenya was “the darling of the West, the hope of Africa, a sea of political and economic stability in the midst of chaotic turmoil.” These were pre-Cold War characterizations and descriptions that had been crafted by Western nations, including the United States, to obscure the real Kenya—a nation as undemocratic and as repressive as South Africa before F.W. de Klerk.

The stability, hope and economic prosperity cited by the Western media obscured the fact that thousands of Kenyans were living as refugees in Uganda and Tanzania, and thousands of others had been internally displaced in a well-disguised, government-sponsored ethnic cleansing exercise that was designed to remove such major ethnic communities as the Kisii, the Luo, the Kikuyu and others from the Rift Valley region and leave it for President Daniel arap Moi’s Kalenjin community and its tribal allies. Thousands of Kenyan Somalis became second-class citizens, required to carry special identity passes. This was in utter disregard of the country’s constitution, which specifically forbids discrimination on tribal or ethnic grounds. Several hundred of these Kenyan Somalis were massacred in a government-sponsored clan genocide at Wagalla in the Wajir district.

None of this appeared in international headlines because we in Kenya were always seen in comparative terms: after all, wasn’t Kenya infinitely better off than her northern and northeastern neighbors, Ethiopia and Sudan? We were always being reminded that Kenya had avoided the vicious and murderous cycles of violence and state terrorism of Uganda. In the international political marketplace of the times, Kenya was a reliable ally in the battle to contain communism.

For close to 30 years the United States and the West condoned flagrant abuses of human rights and one of the most authoritarian one-party regimes in Africa, all under the guise of support for democracy and human values. In spite of massive evidence, some tendered in the hallowed committee rooms of the United States Congress, as well as in newspaper accounts and reports of human rights organizations such as Amnesty International, Africa Watch, the Committee to Protect Journalists, Index on Censorship, Article 19, International Pen, and the United Nations Human Rights Committee, the free world watched and applauded Moi as he entrenched dictatorial values on Kenyan society.

As the effects of the winds of change precipitated by President Mikhail Gorbachev’s
policies in Eastern and Central Europe and inside the Soviet Union began to be felt in the African continent; as the effects of the communications revolution began to be felt, most visibly on CNN screens and from correspondents' live reports on the BBC and VOA radios; President Moi began making cosmetic concessions to the demands of the time. He released from prison a handful of the better-known political prisoners and dissidents, lifted the ban on The Nairobi Law Monthly, which I edited, and with a little help from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, Kenyans forced Moi to repeal the notorious Section 2A of the Kenyan constitution that outlawed opposition parties.

It was against this background that President Moi agreed to conduct elections. The United States and the West contributed to and must accept their own share of the burden of responsibility for Kenya's troubled and increasingly doubtful transition to democracy. Despite the fact that US Ambassador in Nairobi Smith Hempstone was instrumental in unleashing the democratic wind of change sweeping the Kenyan political landscape, his public statements were never backed up by concrete and material support such as, for example, that given to Jonas Savimbi's terrorists, described by some as "freedom fighters."

While the opposition parties in Kenya warned the international community, the IMF and the World Bank that there was no level playing ground for holding free and fair elections, we were pressured into going into a general election under a one-party political and economic superstructure that could never allow the holding of free and fair elections. Why did President Moi refuse the National Democratic Institute of the United States the opportunity to observe and monitor the elections? Why did he deny a team sent by the Robert F. Kennedy Center for Human Rights visas to travel to Kenya to observe and monitor the elections? Why did he not invite the International Human Rights Law Group? Were these not organizations and institutions that had prepared themselves well in advance, sending pre-election observer units to assess whether there was level playing ground for the conduct of free and fair elections? And why did he choose December 29 for the elections when he knew that date would inconvenience not only election monitors but thousands of Kenyan voters who would be away on holiday from places where they had registered to vote?

In any event, elections were held under circumstances that were purposely designed to legitimize President Moi's autocratic, undemocratic and highly corrupt administration. He "won" the elections and the international observer teams that met President Moi's terms of entry into Kenya were very quick in giving their seal of approval because they did not want Kenya to slide into the chaos that reigns supreme in Liberia and Somalia. To them I can only say: You haven't seen anything yet. And to the thousands of ordinary Americans, individual Congressmen and women, human rights groups and the new administration of President Bill Clinton, we in Kenya can only plead that you maintain the pressure and don't abandon us.

Ayoola Madupe Obe is the vice president of the Civil Liberties Organization of Nigeria, an organization that carries out extensive human rights programs throughout the country, and whose efforts have helped improve prison conditions as well as obtain the release of jailed students. She is a lawyer whose practice has included extensive civil litigation and constitutional cases.

If the transition in Nigeria had gone according to the declared intention of the Babangida administration when it seized power in 1985, we should by now have been the largest practicing democracy in Africa. The administration seized power in 1985 promising to return to civilian rule in 1990. The previous administration declared that return to civilian rule was not its priority, so the new military administration recognized that it must, as a first
step, make that declaration. The real intentions behind those declarations are another matter.

The transition that was set in motion had as its ultimate aim a truly democratic, responsive government in a truly democratic society. But after nearly eight years and several billion of naire spent, the mood in the country is one of depressed and increasingly angry cynicism about whether the forces of the declared despot will in fact hand over the power as scheduled on 27 August 1993.

The government stated it would hand over power in October 1992. This was in itself already a disappointment as opposed to the 1990 date which had been promised. But a program was clearly set out, with progression from local government elections, to state elections, to national elections. It was felt that the stated aim of building democratic institutions from the grassroots up was a genuine one. But since then the date has been changed from October 1992 to January 1993 and now again to August 1993.

When the government published its program for return to civilian rule they made it almost an article of faith that nothing would be done to disrupt the transition program. But the astonishing thing is that the government in fact has been continually undermining, disrupting and postponing the return to civilian rule. The government suddenly ditched its originally-stated policy of keeping the old politicians from competing in the political process. It said that the only people who would be allowed to compete for political office would be new breed politicians. Then, after apparently turning a blind eye to the fact that most of the old politicians were nothing more than puppet masters, the government suddenly turned around and ditched its policy and allowed them to compete. That in itself was disruptive, but then after that two sets of presidential primaries were cancelled, and the government turned around and banned all the presidential aspirants, blankly, without any attempt to discover who was guilty of what offense, if any.

The government also introduced what it described as an open ballot system but was in fact nothing more than “cue” voting. There wasn’t a ballot at all, and that was the single largest factor in the corruption of the political process. It was an open secret that all you had to do was to show up and you would be given money then you would go to whichever cue (line) you were paid to go to. One is not necessarily condemning the voters for that, but the point was that since the voting was open, you couldn’t take the money and do as your conscience dictated. So the system, having been declared to be something from the grassroots and not from moneybags, became completely captive of the moneybags. The government continued to issue blanket bans, which made it such that anyone entering the political process never felt that he would be brought to account for his particular transgression. The belief was that if everybody was banned, everybody would go together. We all know that no truly democratic society can emerge from the present deeply-flawed transition. What we do hope for is that we will have a change from the arbitrary whimsicality of the one-man dictatorship which is what President Babangida is now running in Nigeria, to the situation of constitutional rule. It’s not a matter of a level playing field, it’s more a
matter of fixing the moving goalposts, so that we can attempt to make the transition to a properly democratic society. The difficulty that we have is that we’re not certain the August date will become a reality. There are several straws in the wind. The first one is that the government has sat by completely idle while a group calling itself the Association for a Better Nigeria has openly campaigned for four more years of Babangida’s government. I say that the government did nothing. At a time when a women’s civic organization could not even organize a tax seminar for women, the Association for a Better Nigeria, which is obviously attempting to disrupt and completely derail the transition program, has been allowed well-funded activities and public newspaper advertisements, none of which the government did anything to interfere with.

Another straw in the wind is the creation for the first time in Nigeria of a National Guard and its deployment to the states of the federation. Nobody can see any purpose for that other than the suppression of insurrection in the event that the transition period is extended once again.

Another issue is that the government has established two political parties after throwing aside the efforts of Nigerian people to meet the impossible criteria for the formation of political parties. The government has established political parties which are just the equivalent of the state-run trade unions in the Eastern European countries in the old days. There is no independence and there is nothing natural about their formation. In fact the two presidential candidates emerged under the executives of the parties who had all been appointed by the government.

The whole idea of transition is very much up in the air. If power is handed over, all we expect is the shell of democratic institutions. The actual democracy is going to be a long time in the making. The task of building a civil society in Nigeria will be addressed after the transition to civilian rule. Then the goalposts will be fixed and we will be able to work on creating the democratic institutions and the democratic awareness which will hopefully lead to a true transition to a democratic society.
Abdumannob Pulatov of Uzbekistan makes a statement from the floor.

Smaranda Enache of Romania greets Sandor Tarazovics of the Committee for Danubian Research.
The collapse of communism in Central and Eastern Europe in 1989 was one of the seminal events of our time. It brought to an end an era of ideological and military confrontation between East and West, and ushered in a period of uncertain transition. Hanging over the whole process of establishing liberal economic and political systems is the challenge of nationalism. As panel chair Paula Dobriansky pointed out, nationalism is clearly a necessary ingredient in the reconstruction of former captive nations, but when it takes an extreme form, as it has in the former Yugoslavia, it undermines the transition process and potentially leads to dangerous regional instability.

Kemal Kurpsahic is the editor-in-chief of Oslobodenje (Liberation) newspaper, the major independent daily published in Sarajevo, Bosnia. He describes the paper as symbolizing “the multi-ethnic, multi-racial, multi-religious Bosnia.” Its multi-ethnic staff of Muslims, Serbs, and Croats must often stay in the nuclear bunker below the paper’s destroyed headquarters for days because of shelling and snipers in order to bring what is the only daily news to the people of the besieged Bosnian capital. Since the start of the war, Kurpsahic and his courageous staff have managed to publish the paper daily in spite of incessant bombing, lack of electricity, water and phone lines, and a severe shortage of paper. Five of the paper’s journalists have been killed, and Kurpsahic himself suffered a severe leg wound from sniper’s bullet. In February of this year Oslobodenje was named newspaper of the year by the British Broadcasting Corporation.

Bosnia-Herzegovina unfortunately no longer faces the “challenge” of nationalism, but instead the nationalistic beast at its worst, which is killing and massacring people, driving them from their homes and forcing them to leave behind everything they ever had. Many would question how this could possibly happen in what was once a multi-cultural, multi-religious society. In response, I would say that the virus of nationalism was imported and artificially planted among Bosnians, mostly through the “Greater Serbia” project developed by Slobodan Milosevic’s party, which, since taking power in the late 1980s, intended to expand Serbia’s territory. This is important to note because it shows how the nationalistic policy is being carried out by outsiders, by people who never really belonged to the Bosnian tradition of different ethnic groups living together. It’s also important to note that the forces that are carrying out these policies are the forces of the former Yugoslav army, which used to be fourth in size and strength in Europe.

This nationalistic beast has been planted through years of systematic media terror intended to produce an attitude that can be best described in the phrase “us against them or them against us.” The Serbian nationalists invented some kind of worldwide anti-Serbia plot in which first the Vatican and later Islamic fundamentalists and Western imperialists took part. The media terror also helped to silence any opposition to the expansionist policy by labeling anyone raising his voice against it as a traitor to the sacred national cause. That produced a kind of mass paranoia. Milosevic has trained the public to blame everyone else—this was demonstrated again by the response to the new set of sanctions introduced yesterday.

The international reaction against Serbian aggression means Bosnia-Herzegovina must also face another challenge of nationalism—that of greater Croatian aspirations. The fighting in central Bosnia-Herzegovina is part of a plan to divide Bosnia between Serbia and Croatia designed at secret meetings held between Milosevic and Tudjman before the war started. If events develop so that the Croatian community is carrying out the same kinds of policies as the
Serbsians with respect to ethnic totalitarianism and domination, the situation becomes very dangerous and has the potential to explode in a conflict that is hard to control.

Those who massacre Bosnia today need to be sent a strong message. To solve the crisis several measures are needed. First, there should be air strikes against the artillery positions around Bosnian cities from which civilians were massacred on a regular basis all last year. Second, the arms embargo should be lifted against the legitimate Bosnian army, which hasn’t any means to respond to the brutal force being implemented against the country. Third, there needs to be real implementation of sanctions adopted—those adopted previously were not efficient and did not work at all. Fourth, there must be a demonstration of political will not only to propose but to impose a just political solution for the region. In my opinion the Vance-Owen formula has some weaknesses, but during a transition period with some peace we might be able to improve that plan. Fifth, it is absolutely necessary to stage war crimes trials against those responsible for the atrocities committed in order to re-establish any atmosphere for living together.

Western powers often ask why action should be taken in Bosnia. I believe there is a moral imperative to act when one sees the concentration camp images, the mass graves, or the child in Srebrenica. I think there is a much stronger case for Bosnia than there was for Desert Storm. There are strategic interests to consider as well. This Serbian aggression might set a long or short term precedent for all others who would like to expand their territories and change the borders in the region. It would produce violence of terrible magnitude if it also started in Albania, Turkey, Greece, Bulgaria and maybe even in Russia.

Is there a future for Bosnia, as massacred as it is? Personally, I believe there is. I think that cities like Sarajevo might serve as examples that living together is not only a possibility but the only possibility. Give us just one day of peace in Sarajevo and I am sure that there will once again be Serbs, Muslims and Croats sitting together sharing their coffee, in fact, sharing their lives. I believe that in spite of all the destruction that has taken place, the spirit of togetherness that once existed cannot be destroyed. We will have a difficult transition period, but I believe in the future.

Vesna Pesic is the director of the Center for Anti-War Action in Belgrade, Serbia. For over 20 years she has been active in the movement for human rights and parliamentary democracy. She was a founding member of the Belgrade Helsinki Committee and of the Association for a Yugoslav Democratic Initiative, which in 1989 called for a democratic transformation of the former Yugoslav federation. An opponent of nationalistic ideologies and an open critic of the militant policies of the ex-Yugoslavia’s nationalist leaders, her work has included efforts to initiate and encourage a democratic dialogue among different political organizations and ethnic groups in Serbia, as well as projects aimed at promoting the culture of peace and human rights.

To understand the very important phenomenon which we now call
nationalism, we must first understand its recent re-appearance in the context of the dissolution of the bipolar world and the breakdown of communism. These two very important changes unleashed certain animosities and we now have widespread instability throughout the whole continent of Europe. I am certain that the future of European countries depends upon how we treat the most dramatic case of nationalism in the former Yugoslavia. I think what is done to solve the Yugoslav situation will also have an important impact on what is going to happen in Russia. I believe that the fact that Yeltsin’s politics are anti-imperialist is the most important pre-condition for the development of democracy in Russia.

The nationalism that has developed in Eastern Europe is an anti-democratic nationalism, within which there are fascist elements based upon ethnic, social and economic difficulties that Eastern European states have been encountering since the breakdown of communism. This anti-democratic nationalistic ideology is somewhat similar to communist ideology because they are both built on collectivist ideas where the individual is not the foundation of the state or the society. This collective ideology made it easy for nationalists to gain momentum and power. In that sense I agree with Adam Michnik that nationalism is the last stage of communism.

The anti-democratic nature of Eastern European nationalism is also affected by the concept of the nation itself. As American political philosopher Dr. Julie Mostov has noted, nation states in Eastern Europe are based upon cultural or national identities. These states are not built on a constitution or the equality of each individual, but upon a group identity that automatically puts other groups in society in a deprived position. This concept of the nation is the essence of the aggressive anti-democratic nationalism that we are now seeing in Europe.

In Eastern Europe, and especially in the Balkans, because you have many mixed people living together, when you start to build a nation or a state on one national background, all other minorities and nationalities then become second-rate citizens. Therefore you have internal conflict because all states have their own minorities, yet there is no actual basis for the rule of law or the protection of each individual.

In such situations, pluralism is impossible. If you have an ideology based upon ethnic or religious origin, then opposition parties are treated as marginalized. If you ask for democracy or even for everyone to be treated equally, you are treated as a traitor to the nation. In other cases, the opposition parties themselves are overrun with nationalism and in that respect, cannot really play important roles. In the case of the former Yugoslavia, the problem is further complicated by the fact that once war began, all of these small states were then militarized. Even though parliaments exist, everyone knows that it is actually only through the use of force that any decisions are being made.

During the process of disintegration of the former Yugoslavia, anti-democratic nationalism was used by the political elites to establish new nation states on a purely ethnic basis. This idea of a homogeneous population based on religion or ethnic origin leads to aggressive and expansionist nationalism, and is, I think, the main reason that we are witnessing the fight over the borders in the former Yugoslavia.

Sometimes it is said that we are experiencing a civil war between different ethnic groups, but I would deny that. I believe that this war is just

[Vesna Pestic]
pure territorial fighting. As Mr. Kurshaphic has said, the problem in Bosnia is that Serbia and Croatia want to divide Bosnia between them and enlarge their national states. One cannot really say it is a civil war because there are people on the grass-roots level who lived quite normally before the anti-democratic nationalism was introduced by the intellectual elites through the manipulation of the media. Of course, once you start a war, you then have people who are attacking in order to defend themselves and then a vicious cycle develops where all sides are fighting.

Many people fear the changes in society that must be faced in the wake of the breakdown of communism. The transition to market economy, liberal values and parliamentary democracy are frightening to some people because under the old regime people enjoyed a lot of social security and welfare and they are not necessarily ready to accept changes in such systems. Anti-democratic nationalists are using these fears to stop the transition and to create some kind of mythical identity where religion and culture are playing an important role.

In the Balkans, especially, history is full of bad experiences—the people have never really lived in peace, and some, like the Serbs in Croatia during the Second World War, even experienced genocide. It is easy for the nationalists to play on the memory of old animosities, using half-truths and claiming that some other nation can destroy you. This causes people to become quite fearful of other nations and instantly conveys a very aggressive nationalism.

In conclusion, I would say that we are confronted with two ways of dealing with the war in progress in Yugoslavia. Either we can respect the borders, democratic ideals and individual minority rights; or we can decide to change the borders and restructure the Balkans. I think that this second option of recognizing force to change the borders is very dangerous, not only for the Balkans but for other possible future cases in Eastern Europe. I would prefer that we choose to respect borders and individual rights.

Martin Butora, a Slovak writer and sociologist, is associate professor at the Faculty of Social Sciences at Charles University in Prague and Faculty of Human Sciences at Trnava University in Slovakia. He is a member of the Board of Directors of the Milan Simecka Foundation. Co-founder of Public Against Violence (VPN), the leading movement of the democratic revolution in Slovakia in November 1989, he co-authored the VPN political platform “A Chance for Slovakia” published in 1990. From July 1990 to July 1992 he was human rights adviser to President Vaclav Havel. He writes on nationalism and transformation issues, and has published several studies on nationalism, ethnic conflict resolution, volunteerism, problems of transition and human rights.

I come from a country that for a time served almost as a symbol of the transition from communism, having Vaclav Havel as a President and Alexander Dubcek as a Chairman of the Federal Parliament. The Velvet Revolution seemed to embody both a revolution of fundamental social change and the continuity of the reformist efforts symbolized by Dubcek, who was the propagator of the Prague Spring in 1968. It was generally expected that, along with Poland and Hungary, Czechoslovakia would provide a core example of successful democratic transition.

Now that we have the “Velvet Divorce” instead of the Velvet Revolution, the question arises of whether the dream is over. My answer is “yes” if we perceive this experience as a dream, and “no” if we think of it in the more modest political perspective of democratic development.

On this panel we are attempting to evaluate possible solutions to ethnic and national disputes within multi-national states. If we for a moment put aside the issues of ethnic cleansing and repression, I think that there are several lessons that can be drawn from the Czechoslovak experience.
Czechoslovakia has demonstrated a certain faith in power sharing. Indeed, for the first two and a half years after the renewal of democracy, we witnessed different attempts at this powersharing: the re-vitalization of federations, mutual vetoes, and anti-majoritarianism guarantees on the parliamentary level.

These attempts failed in part because of the troubles involved with creating a political nation. This is true not only for Czechoslovakia—it’s probably a more general experience for the region, whether it be during the time of the first Czechoslovak republic between the two wars or in the last decades of the Hungarian Kingdom and the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.

So then, the “Velvet Divorce” may have been less a result of excessive Slovak nationalism or suddenly emergent Czech separatism than of the insufficient consciousness of a Czechoslovak “we.” Such a “we” represents shared hopes and a common perception of past and future.

Instead, Slovakia’s mentality has been that of the permanent loser, the permanent victim. While I would say that I have some concern about the fact that many Slovak youngsters are horribly undereducated, I cannot understand the reasoning of certain Slovak writers who would advocate a so-called “language act” that would prohibit the Hungarian minority in Slovakia from speaking their own language. Such a mentality has led to language in the newly-adopted constitution of the Slovak Republic on the “centuries of struggle for our own statehood.” This is simply a distortion of the past, because in fact historically no real Slovak political representation ever envisioned a completely independent state.

I would also like to touch briefly on the role of the international community in the negotiated split of the Czechoslovak state. The Czech and Slovak politicians got a clear message from the international community that a split would be accepted as long as it did not result in violence or human rights violations. The international community sent a message that it would be prepared to produce assistance for the newly-emerging states but at the same time would seriously monitor developments there.

The June 1992 elections that led to the split were also influenced by a mentality very similar to that which Vesna Pesic has described, of people threatened by the changes that an open society would bring, using nationalism to advance their position.

But even though nationalistic rhetoric was used as a tool at the time of the elections, today you do not meet as many nationalists in Slovak streets as you do teachers, health care workers, entrepreneurs and trade union representatives who are protesting because the government has failed in its promise to rapidly solve all of Slovakia’s economic troubles. I do not believe, however, that this means that nationalism is on the decline in Slovakia. The nationalist influence will bear itself out not only in elections but in the periods between them.

Until now, the law of majoritarianism has prevailed in Slovakia, and we therefore have a constitution without constitutionality, plurality without cooperation and self-determination in the sense of national identity but not really in the sense of democratic liberty.

In such a situation, one really cannot overestimate the role that the free press plays in making people sensitive to democratic ideas. Of equal importance are the non-governmental organizations, human rights groups and foundations for the education of democracy which play a role in helping the Slovak citizens to understand democratic values and which somehow create hope that this very complicated
transformation from “inhabitants” to “citizens” will work. It is the obligation of the democratic leadership to overcome the single interest lobbies and work toward coordination and common purposes that represent our future.

Smaranda Enache is the founder and co-president of the Liga Pro Europa in Tîrgu-Mureș, Romania. She has been actively involved in the human rights movement and the democratic transition in Romania, as founder of the Civic Alliance Party and member of its National Committee, responsible for human and minority rights questions.

It is very common to declare that nationalism is only a post-communist phenomenon in eastern and central Europe. In my view, it is a historical phenomenon which reappears at times when social conditions worsen. Using ethnicity instead of citizenship as the basis of a state is one of the constants in this part of the world. The model of an ethnically-based nation state was, in a way, permanent, due in part to the lack of democratic traditions and models.

Romania, like most European states, is a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural society, consisting of a Romanian majority and many minorities. There are, however, several factors that make Romania a special case in this part of Europe. Romania experienced the most repressive national communist dictatorship, and had the only bloody revolution in the region in 1989. Romania is also the only East European country where former communists remain in power after two parliamentary elections (one in May of 1990 and another in September of 1992). It is the only country in the region where police documents are not accessible to journalists or to the general public. It is a country where many of us wonder if the transition has in fact begun.

There was no organized dissident movement against communism in Romania. The revolution in 1989 was spontaneous, and it had two different groups of participants. On the one hand there were those who simply opposed Ceausescu’s regime; and on the other were the party nomenclatura, the army and the securitate organizing a coup d’état. Nationalism, therefore, is being used to preserve power and to gain historical legitimacy during this transitional period.

The most dangerous phenomenon is that these ultra-nationalistic parties are part of the coalition government currently represented in the Romanian parliament. When we look at what is happening in the former Yugoslavia, it becomes very clear that wars actually begin before the first person dies. They begin in the press and in the media, with a psychological preparation for the confrontations to come. Unfortunately, in Romania many extremist newspapers exist and they have direct financial relations with the former securitate people. These newspapers are promoting hatred, anti-semitism, xenophobia and are openly against minorities. In parliament one of the representatives of the party in power even declared that installing camps would be a good idea to finish off some of the minorities. It is absolutely clear that this situation, while it is not
only Romanian, is dramatic in Romania because the extremist groups are part of the government coalition and they have free access to television, which is government controlled.

I will not pretend here that only the ruling parties and the governmental coalition are using nationalism. Unfortunately, some of the opposition parties, looking for historical legitimacy, are using the same instruments, even if they are more discrete.

In this situation, it is very difficult to survive in an ethnically mixed area. It is the duty of civil society to try to do something. I myself come from Transylvania, an area in Romania where in March of 1990 we had open street conflicts between Romanians and Hungarians. I am here representing a group created by people belonging to different ethnic groups who want to try to promote dialogue and to educate people from a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual society. I do not know how strong this group may be or for how long they will be able to oppose official politics but I am sure that especially in Transylvania, the concern of all the citizens is to have peaceful coexistence.

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Balint Magyar, an Hungarian sociologist and historian, is a Member of Parliament from the Alliance of Free Democrats and serves on the foreign affairs committee. After joining the Hungarian democratic opposition movement in 1979, he was associated with the underground journal, Beszelő and worked to promote Hungarian-Polish solidarity. He has written several works on the post-1945 economic history of Central Europe, including a documentary film script which won an award at the 1988 Hungarian Film Festival.

Participating in this conference dedicated to monitoring and investigating the state of democracy all over the world reminds me of when I get the flu, and thinking that it is really unbearable, go to the doctor. Once there, I see a lot of other people with diseases, many more serious than my own, and then feel a bit ashamed. So I go home thinking that it’s okay, this flu is bearable and I can live with it.

I would like to begin by listing several major reasons for the re-emergence of nationalism in Central and Eastern Europe. The first is an historic one based on the delayed establishment of nation states in the region. In the history of the region, we more often find empires than nation states. The people of these nations therefore do not have the nation state experience which is common to other parts of Europe. The second cause is that nationalism is an unfortunate counter-reaction to the fact that during the post-war decades of communist rule, national feelings were suppressed.

Because of the lack of democratic traditions in the region, nationalism has served as the most natural rallying point for members of the newly liberated societies. Nationalism is the most easily identified cohesive force for members of society. It is an easy emotional way of creating the feeling of belonging together.

In the post-communist period, professing nationalistic views became almost a litmus test
for any aspiring politician in the region, especially for those who had worked in the previous non-democratic regimes and wanted to continue their political careers. It was the only means for the old guard to survive in the new system.

It is also important to remember that general nationalistic mudslinging serves very well the purposes of any regime experiencing economic difficulties or social tensions by turning public attention away from those issues.

One might ask then what principles should be followed in dealing with the question of national minorities. First, I would say that the problems of national minorities cannot be solved by any attempt at changing the borders. These regions are characterized by ethnically mixed territories, so, even from a practical point of view, pure nation states cannot be created. Therefore, I am convinced that fences must be torn down, not relocated, especially at a time when most of the countries in the region would like to join the European Community, where borders are becoming less significant.

The second point is that monitoring the situation of national minorities and speaking out against the abuse of their rights is the moral and political duty of the motherland itself. International organizations share this responsibility. Guaranteeing minority rights cannot be an exclusive internal affair of any country. In this respect, the situation is analogous with the treatment of human rights.

The third principle would be that democratic organizations representing minorities need to determine what kind of minority rights they want and how to exercise them within their particular state.

My last point is that we have to admit that there is no panacea for minority complaints. Solutions require tolerance, mutual trust and empathy and must combine individual and collective rights. We sometimes meet with a lot of suspicion from western European countries when we speak of collective minority rights, because most of the west European experts think that collective rights have immediate territorial implications. I don’t believe that this is necessarily the case. For example, the democratic organization of Hungarians in Vojvodina in Serbia just developed a new concept of so-called “personally based autonomy,” which tries to ensure collective rights for minorities without having direct territorial implications.

Finally, I would like to say a few words about the Hungarian legal regulations dealing with minorities. First, the constitution itself, beyond ensuring the rights of minorities, has an anti-discrimination clause which creates a constitutional base for affirmative action with respect to minorities. At the same time, the constitution ensures minorities the right to collective participation in public life as well as the right to establish local and national self-governing bodies vested with legal status. It is also worth mentioning that the constitution contains a provision for the establishment of an ombudsman in the parliament to investigate possible violations of minority rights. The Hungarian parliament is currently discussing a minority rights act which would regulate all of these items as framed in the constitution.
THE FORMER SOVIET UNION:
NATION-BUILDING AND DEMOCRACY

The fall of communism in the former Soviet Union represented not just the collapse of a political system but the disintegration of the world’s last remaining empire. In a vast region that has never known democracy, new nation states face the awesome challenge of building stable democracies upon the ashes of a system that destroyed the elementary institutions of civil society. Panel chairman Mark Palmer noted that there is no formula for building new nations in the wake of such destruction, and there are no certainties other than the fact that the process of reconstruction will be long and difficult.

Vytautas Landsbergis is the former president of Lithuania who has been recognized internationally for his role in the peaceful restoration of Lithuania’s independence. Since November 1992 he has served as parliamentary leader of the opposition in the Lithuanian Seimas. He is also a member of the Lithuanian delegation to the Parliamentary Association of the Council of Europe. In 1989 he was elected chairman of the Lithuanian Reform Movement Sajudis. Following his election to the Supreme Council of Lithuania in 1990, he presided over the session of parliament which proclaimed the independence of Lithuania.

In speaking about democracy and nation-building in Lithuania, it is important to note that Lithuania and the other Baltic countries of Latvia and Estonia existed as nation states until 1940. We have always proclaimed the continuity of the independent Lithuanian republic. Legally, we were never a constituent part of the USSR. Therefore, I speak to you today on behalf of a country that is not a former Soviet republic but rather a victim of Soviet occupation and annexation.

This restoration of sovereign statehood underlines our different status among the Soviet republics. I have always suggested to Western politicians that there never were 15 Soviet republics but rather, 12 republics plus the three annexed Baltic states.

In 1989, Lithuanians were already predicting the restoration of our state. Some fundamental laws were created pertaining to Lithuanian (rather than Soviet) citizenship, ethnic minorities’ rights, municipal government powers and parliamentary elections that eliminated the participation of Soviet soldiers.

In March of 1990, two constitutional acts were set forth regarding the restoration of the state, their foundations based upon Lithuanian heritage as well as the current historical situation. The first act proclaimed the validity of the Lithuanian constitution of 1938. The second act created a new temporary constitution for the Republic of Lithuania, (used from 1990-92), setting forth laws regarding the structures governing the state, private property, investments, and educational reform. Of special importance were the statements on serving in the foreign (Soviet) army; and the generally adopted concept of recognition of private property confiscated or expropriated by the former Soviet Union.

Another law was passed stating that resistance against the Soviet occupation is not considered a crime against Lithuania and all rights are restored to those so accused. Of equal importance were laws governing privatization, political parties and the free flow of information. All of this contributed to the re-establishment of a democratic Lithuanian state. The primary democratic right approved by Lithuanians was the right to elect their own government. Unarmed Lithuanians defended their government’s consistent rejection of Gorbachev’s ultimatums about the validity of the Soviet constitution in
Lithuania. This massive action by Lithuanian citizens was transmitted worldwide by the electronic media as an extraordinary example of direct democracy.

In June of 1992, a referendum was held on the quick withdrawal of Russian troops, followed by an agreement with Russia for their withdrawal by August 1993. This referendum was followed in December 1992 by elections in which the Lithuanian people again affirmed their basic right to democratically change the government. During that same vote, the new constitution of the reborn Lithuania was adopted.

So we now have new power and a new constitution but unfortunately we still have the old behaviors of the ruling party. We now realize that democratic institutions are not sufficient guarantors of democracy. They can also serve an autocracy or corrupted bureaucracy. Limitations on democratic freedoms can be democratically adopted in the parliament on behalf of the working people. For example, limitations are being put on the constitutional right to private property which has not been returned to owners after its expropriation by foreign regimes decades ago. Moreover, the equal right to state property expressed in privatization decrees has been re-arranged, and decisions are now made not through auctions, but by state officials.

At the moment, criticism of the government is looked upon as evil and destructive. It is for this reason that the authorities have not allowed the Lithuanian opposition in parliament to appear on state television for some time now. As of ten days ago, it was agreed that not one minute of uncontrolled transmission would be allowed for the opposition. Other abuses are also appearing, but if the opposition speaks about such activities its statements are proclaimed as “slander against the native country.” This type of mentality is one of the first signs of a turn towards a more closed society. But even more characteristic is the argument given to the opposition by the state-run television board that “nobody wants to listen to your bloody information, your comments on the laws or your views—the people are tired of politics.” This firm paternalism is a return to the well-known times when the Communist Party was the conscience and wisdom of the working people. This paternalistic political and social experience can be generalized in rather simplistic, authoritarian sentences—“authorities know better” or “don’t distract the driver.” Of course, we will distract the driver and continue to resist this old Sovietism.

Galina Staravoitova is a member of parliament in Russia, active in the Human Rights Committee of parliament as well as the Commission on the New Constitution. An expert on nationality issues, she has been particularly responsive to minority rights and grievances, often speaking on behalf of Crimean Tatars, Jews and other minorities. In 1988 she accompanied Andrei Sakharov on a trip to Armenia, Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh in an attempt to reconcile the bitter controversy in the region.

It is a great privilege for me to be here and to witness the efforts of the National Endowment for Democracy to promote democracy around the world. It’s a privilege to learn about the experiences of the different
countries in their liberation from totalitarian regimes, to be aware of how different people work to promote democracy, political pluralism, and free market economies. It’s of special interest and importance for us in Russia to know how this is being done in the countries of Eastern Europe because they are ahead of us in the transition to democracy by one or two steps.

Since the breakup of the Soviet Union, we in Russia have been trying to implement three peaceful revolutions at the same time. First of all, there is the transition to the market economy; second, we are trying to shape the new institutions of democracy; and third, we are trying to implement the transition from empire to the Commonwealth of Independent States, or to some other kind of free configuration for those newly independent states who wish it. A more solid core for the Commonwealth was created by those countries that signed the mutual defense treaty.

The Soviet empire had some peculiarities which made it different from its historical predecessors. First of all, the colonies of this empire were situated not overseas but on neighboring territories, which caused a great ethnic mixture in the population. A second peculiarity is that the mother country sometimes had worse living standards than its colonies.

As a result of the breakup of the Soviet Union, 25 million Russians now live outside of Russia. Unfortunately, in some new states, they are oppressed. They are an ethnic minority, a position to which they are not accustomed, and they live as representatives of the formerly dominant nation. This creates many psychological problems. Russian nationalists attempt to use this concept of a great people divided in their political game. We all remember the consequences of this concept in the Weimar republic. It is a great test to our newborn democracy in Russia.

Soon after the August 1991 coup, the newly democratic Russia voluntarily recognized the independence of the other states, and refused the so-called role of “big brother.” But our neighbors still remain very suspicious about the good will of the Russian state, and unfortunately, they have some valid reasons for such a point of view.

We have met with serious challenges to democracy and the market economy in Russia. That is because three generations of our people lived under a totalitarian regime—we suffered for more than 70 years—not 40 years, like Eastern Europe. The second reason democracy has been challenged relates to our special geographical situation. Russia is one of two states in the world which is situated on both the continents of Europe and Asia. During our history, there have been contradictions between the orientations to European values and to some sort of Asiatic values.

During the abortive coup of 1991, the Russian people fought for the values of democracy. In those tremendous days, unarmed men and women stood together near our Russian White House against tanks, against violence. I hope it became clear to people all over the world that Russians now are oriented to common democratic values. This psychological process is irreversible.

The political opponents of liberal reforms in our country use the concern for the integrity of Russia as a whole to question the suitability of
the Western model for Russia. They raise this issue in our parliament, in the mass media and with the public. But despite all the difficulties of the first period of their shock therapy, the Russian people have demonstrated patience. They were reasonable enough to vote yes in the referendum two days ago, and they gave the mandate of confidence to President Yeltsin for continuation of the reforms.

We are very grateful to the people all over the world who were ready to help us in this decisive moment, and we are especially grateful to the people of the United States and to their leader, who behaved as a friend in need. But the political struggle is still not over in Russia. Those who would like to restore the communist regime in Russia remain influential and we can easily predict their warped interpretations of the results of the referendum.

Our constitution does not give the president the right to dissolve the parliament. When the legislature in Russia was elected in March of 1990, the so-called article number six in Stalin–Brezhnev’s constitution had not been revoked, and the elections were held under the total control of the Communist Party. Therefore 87 percent of our deputies were communists, and the majority of them had a high rank of nomenklatura in the Party. Only one year and four months after the parliamentary elections, President Yeltsin was elected in quite a different context, with a truly multiparty system. The fact that Yeltsin’s supporters hold only a parliamentary minority is a problem and a paradox.

Building democratic institutions in Russia is difficult because the new political parties, which are rather numerous now, are not influential enough. They are not popular, because the very notion of a party was compromised during the 70 years of domination by the power of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Grassroots movements like Democratic Russia are more popular in our country now. Many factions exist in our parliament and they do not represent real political parties. Recently I read an article in the International Herald Tribune, describing the Russian parliamentary situation entitled, “It’s parliament-like, but it’s Russian.” This estimation may be offensive to some, but it’s true. This political situation, in combination with the economic crisis, remains the cause for potential political instability in our country.

Still, I do not believe that any attempt to restore the old order would succeed, because a decisive majority of the Russian people have expressed their view in favor of the irreversibility of the reforms.

I think that the new generation of politicians in Russia are already growing up. We are going to start preparations for elections at all levels of the government. But the success of our reforms depends on your understanding, your cooperation, and your confidence.


ghe Nodia is head of the philosophy department at the Institute of Philosophy of the Academy of Sciences in Tbilisi, Georgia. He is also a senior research fellow at the Research Center for Inter-Ethnic Relations and serves as Chairman of the Caucasian Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development. His recent studies have focused on the interdependence of democracy and nationalism in light of the recent communist and post-communist experience.

The current political development of the former Soviet Union can be characterized as a change from the romanticist to the realist stage of democratic development. This realist period is predictable and normal, although perhaps a bit boring when compared to the period of the fight against communism, which was accompanied by the feeling that something exceptional was happening. Never before had communist systems been dismantled, so the people fighting communism took heroic stances, which sometimes may have been in vain politically, but were nonetheless morally important.
Now that communism has been surprisingly easily dismantled, we are facing the routine problems that are common to building any democratic nation state. We are attempting to solve these problems under the watchful eyes of international experts who are familiar with electoral systems, constitutional law, market economy and so on. Of course there are some things that are peculiar to our situation, particularly because it is the first time that the transition is beginning with ideological status, not with traditional institutions in society. Still, there are many problems of transition that are the same. I was especially impressed and even encouraged by the earlier discussion on Latin America because it demonstrated that fact.

There is a general consensus among democrats that democracy, human rights and a market economy are good ideas, but with regard to nationalism, democrats are more divided. On one hand, the so-called “romantic nationalists” were convinced that striving for independence was part and parcel of a democratic movement, while resistance to independence could only be understood as part of imperialist communist policies. The “romantic anti-nationalists” were convinced that only personal freedom was worth-while and anything that appealed to collective identities was hostile to democracy. Both of these views gave birth to illusions of nationalism, the basic one being that since lack of independence was the main problem, all other problems would be easily solved after independence was obtained. Of course that is not true. A deeper and more dangerous illusion was the faith in the belief that because a cause is just, those who support it cannot possibly do anything wrong. I have heard this sentiment expressed by radical nationalists in Georgia who, when something bad happens concerning ethnic minorities, explain it by blaming it on some third force, such as the KGB. This issue is complicated by the fact that in some cases the KGB was actually involved in aggravating ethnic problems. The truth about their involvement therefore fed the concept of romantic nationalism that “it’s not our fault, it’s somebody else’s.”

While they could not ignore the fact that democratic movements in the non-Russian republics were nationalistic in the sense that they were fighting for independence, the anti-nationalistic romanticists saw new possibilities for future integration under the same roof of the former Soviet Union. Now I think we are in a new period of realism, and both sides understand that things are not so simple.

In attempting to solve the problems we face, I would use a German phrase and say I think it is especially important to maintain a certain political geschmacht, or taste, which means mixing the right amounts of nationalism, market economy, social programs and so on to create and sustain a normal life.

In addressing post-communist nationalist problems, we must take into account the convergence of two major factors. The first is that the main legacy of communism is irresponsibility. Everything was dependent on the state, so people did not have to take responsibility for anything. The second relates to the new world order, in which conflicts are “internationalized” and are solved by the international community. There are times, such as in cases of ethnic cleansing or the murder of
children, when the international community must of course intervene. On the other hand, this international action feeds the tradition of irresponsibility on the national level because national leaders hope that their problems will be solved by some international patron and don’t think much about looking for viable solutions on their own. Instead they present themselves as victims. Once again balance is necessary if we are to address the problem and move forward.

Taabaldy Egemberdiev is the territorial chairman of the Democratic Movement of Kyrgyzstan and an official in the Free Information Society of Kyrgyzstan, which is promoting the development of independent democratic mass media in the republic. At the time of the Osh riots in 1990, he took part in the mass peaceful demonstrations which played a large part in the fall of Communist Party boss Absamat Masaliev and the election of Askar Akaev. In 1990 he quit his job in order to devote full time to political activities and the attempt to create a democratic Kyrgyzstan.

I have the honor at this forum of representing a tiny little island of democracy in the geopolitical region of Central Asia. There is no time to give you a detailed account of how we achieved democratic freedoms in Kyrgyzstan, and perhaps there would be no point either.

People assume, although they are wrong to do so, that Kyrgyzstan was able to establish a democratic system because the democratic forces in the country are stronger and more organized than they are in the neighboring republics. That is incorrect. What occurred in Kyrgyzstan is a testament to the role that chance and the personal qualities of the leader can play in a Central Asian society. The part played by chance is that the last totalitarian ruler of Kyrgyzstan, Absoman Masaliev, had no desire to be elected President of the republic. Absolutely unable to act on his own initiative, Masaliev decided to wait until the issue was resolved by Moscow. He was afraid or ashamed to become a President before Gorbachev did. Fate did not forgive him this mistake when he later agreed to seek the Presidency, instead turning its back on him and his comrades from the Communist Party. It was Askar Akaev that fate smiled on instead, Akaev who three days before he became the Republic’s first president was not even thinking of such a possibility. I would like to think too that fate smiled on Kyrgyzstan, in giving the country a man such as Akaev, who is an embodiment of Plato’s dictum that the world should be ruled by philosophers. Our President is a scientist by profession, a philosopher by inclination, and a political leader by the dictates of fate.

Once this unusual man came to power, our political and social situation also became unusual, in a way perhaps without analogue in world political history. Akaev brought with him complete freedom of the press and of speech, the freedom to hold meetings and demonstra-
tions—all of which are the primary attributes necessary for the full development of democracy. We, the democratic forces, immediately lost interest in trying to influence politics through mass demonstrations. The displaced rulers found that their predictions that democratic freedom must inevitably lead to cataclysm were unfulfilled.

The USSR tried for many years to overtake America and failed, collapsing from the effort. Kyrgyzstan, though able to overtake America instantly in freedom of the word and press, remains well behind in the culture of how this freedom should be used. It has been some time since there have been forbidden topics in our press. The President has become an object of almost constant criticism. Whether our republic will be able to survive this rapid evolution of democracy is something that only time will show, and only God can know. However, we democrats feel ourselves to be rather comfortable in Kyrgyzstan, even if our bellies are steadily growing fatter.

Akaev’s tragedy, although it may also be his greatest virtue, is that he has no reliable support, such as a political party might provide. Having rejected the ideas of socialism, Akaev has acquired a strong political enemy in the Communist Party of Kyrgyzstan. The young democratic movement in Kyrgyzstan, which did an excellent job of creating the moral and political background during the palace revolution which brought Akaev to power, has not subsequently been able to make itself into a strong, organized political force, capable of giving real assistance to the President’s democratic reforms. People’s illusions were dissipated. Carrying out practical, constructive work in conditions of freedom has turned out to be much more complex than holding mass demonstrations in conditions without freedom.

The democratic movement that was relatively united and amicable in the fight against totalitarianism has split now into political parties. There are now four parties that might be called “democratic.” While supporting the President’s policies in words, the democratic parties also criticize him severely for his mistakes in personnel appointments, which include people of responsibility from the former Party nomenklatura. At the same time the President suffers a storm of criticism from the Communist Party, which says that he is not making enough use of the potential that the former nomenklatura represents.

Our President is trying to effect his reforms by balancing relations among political forces, relying upon and trusting the advice of a small circle of his close acquaintances, who for the most part are fellow-thinkers and friends, their number enlarged somewhat by representatives of the various regions for balance. The President is always open to conversation and cooperation with the democratic forces. The leaders of the democratic forces have opportunities to meet and discuss with the President, almost at will, without obstacle. Such discussions frequently take the form of mutual criticism and argument, with the President frequently seizing the initiative by forcing the democrats to the wall, demanding their constructive and practical assistance in achieving the reforms with which they are more or less in agreement.

Such is our situation. We move according to God’s plan. The tree of democracy is acclimatizing to our mountainous reality, extending deep roots into the cracks of our national consciousness. The multiparty system has become a way of life for us. The young democratically-inclined political parties, born after too-short and too-incomplete a gestation period, are struggling to survive, but conditions for their survival are hospitable. The process by which political parties are established and grow into a real political force is proceeding slowly, with difficulty and contradictions—but it is proceeding. The role of radicalism is declining, while that of constructivism is growing. The parties are going through a period of intellectualism, a re-thinking of their role in society. The illusion of rapid change has passed. A new generation of thinkers is emerging, who will soon, I believe, begin to move their own leaders out into the political arena. It is then that
political parties will be able to take a worthy place in our life. We are helped a great deal, both in a theoretical sense and in a practical one, by the seminars and meetings which are organized by the National Democratic and National Republic Institutes of America, and I would like to take this chance to thank our American friends for this invaluable assistance.

In comparing our situation to the tragedy of Tajikistan, I would like to note three circumstances. First, in Kyrgyzstan the opposition between democrats and communists is not openly and bloodily hostile. Second, we do have in the republic regional tribal and clan interests, but these interests do not predominate over the idea of our national unity, a unity passed on to us by our ancestors, and by our ancestral epic, Manas. We may not have a written history, but we do have our oral history, Sanzhyr, which says that all nations spring from one root, one founder. Thirdly, the inter-ethnic problems which exist in our republic are well offset by the national character of the Kyrgyz people, who since ancient times have been noted for their loyal and peaceable relations with other peoples. Unlike the states around us, we have chosen the thorny path of simultaneous democratic and economic reform. We are willing to accept some suffering in the economic sector, if that is necessary to make democratic reform survive. It is our hope that today’s economic difficulties will prove justified when democratic reforms begin to show some return.

More than a year ago, the people of Ukraine finally won their independence from Moscow. Ukrainians at last achieved what they had dreamed about for centuries—statehood and the right to their native land. The final legal and political threshold was crossed on 1 December 1991, when the people of Ukraine confirmed by vote their desire for total independence. At that time, unanimity existed among “national-democrats” and communists in parliament in relation to the question of Ukraine’s independence. As a result, the “national-democrats” achieved the goal of an independent state, but the communist nomenklatura, who previously rejected the demand for an independent Ukraine, also managed to remain in power. The independence proclaimed on 24 August 1991 has not given any real power to the democratic forces. Presidential elections were held simultaneously with the referendum on independence, and the former ideologist leader of the Communist Party of Ukraine Leonid Kravchuk was elected president.

The failure of the coup d’état in Moscow became a death sentence for the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Having spent enough time on the fence during the coup, Ukrainian Communist leaders, facing the danger of the political death of their organization, have grasped at the idea of the political independence of Ukraine. This idea became an oxygen mask for Leonid Kravchuk and his dying team within the Communist Party of Ukraine.

In such a fashion, Kravchuk and his team, riding the “pro-independence horse,” managed to create an illusion within Ukrainian society that the power in Ukraine belongs to the true democrats. The majority of the people in Ukraine still believe in this illusion and therefore blame democrats and not President Kravchuk or the ex-
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communist-dominated Supreme Soviet of Ukraine for all the ills in society.

In reality, neither the democrats nor the reformers have any real power in Ukraine. Those members of the democratic bloc (Narodna Rada) who joined up with the ex-communists within the state structures do not wish to recognize the essence of the role that they have played in the political metamorphosis in Ukraine. Having chosen to collaborate with Kravchuk and his ex-communist team, a number of democratic representatives have ceased to function as a real political opposition capable of influencing the process of democratization of Ukraine.

As a result, Ukraine has experienced a phenomenon described by George Soros as a “nationalist dictatorship.” In Ukraine, the anti-communist nationalists and the new nomenklatura nationalists are in coalition. This ought to yield a solid parliamentary majority for a nationalist dictatorship regime except for one saving grace: the regime is unable to cope with economic problems.

At this point, I would argue with Vesna Pesic’s statement that “nationalism is the last stage of communism.” Analyzing the Ukrainian situation, I will never believe that President Kravchuk is a nationalist—I will always believe that he is a communist, because the situation in our country has not been common with national dictatorship or nationalism in its essence. One might also raise the question of whether nationalism is antagonistic to democracy. I do not believe so, because I myself presume to be nationalist and at the same time to be democratic. As a nationalist, I am very proud to represent a nation which has won its independence from Moscow. As a democrat, I am very ashamed of the fact that when Ukraine achieved this independence, it became a reserve for communists.

With regard to national minorities, the regime which exists in Ukraine continues to deprive those who are the main ethnic group in Ukraine—Ukrainians. The large national minority of Russians are not deprived of their cultural or religious rights, nor are any other minorities, whether Hungarian, Polish, or Jewish. The only group which continues to be humiliated or whose rights are deteriorating are Ukrainians. I have a number of examples of how language, political and even religious rights are violated by the ex-communist regime, which has nothing in common with a nationalist one. I regard this regime as the ex-communist, post-communist, totalitarian, authoritarian regime.

There is a serious danger that the ex-communists, who are members of the Socialist Party of Ukraine, will regain full power. The Socialist Party of Ukraine is not of the kind that exists in Lithuania, Hungary, or Spain. The Ukrainian Socialist Party is a synonym for the Communist Party: it opposes market economy and reforms.

I am not an artist, and I have used only one black color to depict today’s Ukraine. I am simply a politician who still remains optimistic about the future of Ukraine because in reality, democracy in Ukraine, while still fragile, is in the process of putting down its roots. What then should be done in order to prevent Ukraine from creeping into an undemocratic future? In order to prevent one of the worst scenarios, great support is needed from the West, especially aid for developing and strengthening democratic institutions and mechanisms in our country.

It is also very important that Ukraine be treated by the West as a sovereign national state.
Ukraine has 52 million people—more than Poland, or any other Soviet republic, except for Russia. It is also strategically located as a buffer with Eastern Europe. It is rich in natural resources, and still home to a large stockpile of strategic nuclear weapons. Congressman Richard Gephardt recently stated that the West needs to demonstrate that it values Ukraine as a distinct and independent nation, and is willing to support Ukrainians in their efforts to cement political independence. He said, "We must show that our relationship is about values that run far deeper than nuclear dismantlement." I'd like to express my assurance that those values are the values of democracy.

Panel Chair Mark Palmer

Congressman Steny Hoyer greets Kemal Kuršpahić of Oslabodenje newspaper, Bosnia as NED President Carl Gershman looks on.
CONCLUDING LUNCHEON

Congressman Steny Hoyer (D/MD) is Chairman of the Helsinki Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe and a member of the Board of Directors of the National Endowment for Democracy.

When the nations of Eastern Europe said goodbye to decades of communism, many were captivated by the new political landscape that the eye of the twenty-first century promised. “New” was the word of the hour, with a new decade, a new Europe and the contours of a new world order at hand. New, yet brutal threats to human rights and dignity were unleashed with the process of democratization, among them, extreme nationalism and the resulting violent ethnic clashes. Consequently, many who have placed their hopes in the democratic process now confront not only its fragility, but also the important reality that free elections and majority rule do not necessarily guarantee justice. Democratic principles can be used by a majority to pursue ends that cast aside the concerns and voices of minorities.

Happily, the majority of people in our world today are living in free or partly free countries. But much suffering endures—Communist regimes still strangle human freedoms in China, North Korea, Vietnam, Tibet, Cuba and Laos. In Cambodia, the Khmer Rouge is still waging a brutal war to regain the power it once wielded under the genocidal Pol Pot. In Africa, Kenyans have been struggling for multiparty democracy, and millions of innocent people have been starved to death by brutal thugs in Somalia, Ethiopia and Sudan. Civil war in Tajikistan has claimed tens of thousands of lives and created up to half a million refugees. Armenia’s bloody war with Azerbijan over Nagorno-Karabakh is now in its sixth year, with little hope of an end in sight. In far too many places, demagogues posing as patriots use extreme nationalism to sweep reason aside. Unresolved historical injustices are resuscitated, atrocities invite revenge and new hatreds are passed on to the next generation. This new era poses enormously complex challenges to the democratic community as to exactly how it should respond.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the former Yugoslavia. As we know all too well, the war there has created millions of homeless civilians. Between 100,000 and 200,000 innocent people are dead. Hundreds of thousands are injured or missing. Even as we speak, ethnic cleansing is the genocide of the Muslim population of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

How has the international community responded? Despite all the rhetoric and resolutions, in the final analysis, Europe and the United States have so far acquiesced to the Serbian aggression. Our message to the Bosnians has been, “we will not take your fleeing refugees, we will not defend you, and we will not let you defend yourselves.” We have been held hostage by a lack of political will to act. In my opinion, what we need now, and have needed all along, is a multilateral military intervention taking the...
form of air strikes to knock out the ability of the Serb forces to wage this cruel war on innocent civilians.

The will and conscience of the international community have no relevance if they lack implementation. Without concrete action, the principles governing relations among states and between a state and its citizens become no more than empty rhetoric.

Last week, I attended the official dedication of the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, a museum built with privately-donated funds so that the victims of the Holocaust shall be remembered and the living shall know how and why—if there is a why—they died. But as Elie Weisel so eloquently cautioned, the responsibility of the living is not merely in remembering. We are also responsible for what we do with those memories. If memories are no more than reminders of the past, then the museum houses no more than artifacts. But if we assume the responsibility, as so many of you in this room have done, so that the memories become our guide to action and provide the ethical weight to political decision making, the moral imperatives and lessons of those memories will not remain encased in glass. They will serve as our arms and our shield as we confront the challenges of a new era.

I am not, however, entirely pessimistic about the future, and the reasons are right here in this room. You who number among the world’s leading human rights activists have for many years, often at great risk and with incredible courage, taken the cause of protecting human dignity and fundamental freedoms with you to prisons, to private apartments, to back streets and to the central plazas of capitals. You have battled oppressive governments, even when the very governments that provided you with the principles with which you fought look away. You, individually and collectively, are most responsible for the wave of democracies emerging on the eve of this, the twenty-first century. It is your courage, your commitment and dedication to the cause of improving human rights throughout the world, that is the source of whatever optimism we may have about the new era.

Bronislaw Geremek is a historian and parliamentary leader of the Democratic Union, the largest of the post-Solidarity parties in Poland. A member of the founding committee of the Solidarity trade union movement in 1980, he was later arrested for his activism and released under the general amnesty of July 1983. A key advisor to Lech Walesa from the earliest days of Solidarity, he participated in the historic roundtable discussions which led to Poland’s first free elections in 1989 and has served in the Polish parliament since that time.

First of all, I would like to thank the National Endowment for Democracy. I consider it not only a privilege to address this gathering, but also a duty, because during very hard times, when the issue of Polish freedom was not yet widely debated, the Endowment helped us, providing assistance to the free trade union movement, the underground universities and newspapers. So it is not an exaggeration to say that free and independent Poland owes a great debt to the National Endowment for Democracy.

I will begin my presentation by quoting Samuel P. Huntington, whose somber book on democratization processes over the last two decades begins as follows: “The third wave of democratization in the modern world began, implausibly and unwittingly, at 25 minutes after midnight, Thursday, April 25, 1974, in Lisbon, Portugal, when a radio station played the song ‘Grandola Vila Morena’ thus signaling the start of the military coup that would overthrow Portugal’s 50-year old authoritarian regime, and, after 18 months of turmoil and uncertainty, pave the way for democratic stability.” The disintegration of communism in Europe could be similarly described: it started on a sunny August day in 1980, when in the Lenin Shipyard in
Gdansk, Poland, an agreement was signed between the Communists, who had ruled as the self-appointed workers’ party, and a bold group of real workers, who knew not only how to rebel but also how to get organized in their struggle for bread and freedom. Courage, persistence and the people’s determination got the better of the totalitarian power and smashed Europe’s communist system, which was, like nazism, the shame of our century.

The feat was accomplished without violence. The change of systems took place without resort to the classic arsenal of revolutionary means and involved no bloodshed. As British historian Timothy Garton Ash has written, “No bastilles were stormed, no guillotines erected. Lamp posts were used only for street lighting.” I believe this is extremely important, because while it is not in the tradition of Central European history, we knew at the time that we had no choice but to act without violence or bloodshed. In our time, paradoxically, the sweeping change of systems and transformation of societies seem to require not a revolution but a process of adjustment that dispenses with head-on clashes. This could perhaps be termed a posthumous triumph of Edward Bernstein over his orthodox Marxist adversaries. One is even tempted to say that violence, Marx’s dictum to the contrary notwithstanding, is not the “midwife of history.” Within Polish society, this change meant a return to freedom, democracy and a normal economy. But as our century winds to a close, the Polish experience may also be considered as a sign of hope regarding the transformation of authoritarian systems.

And hope means first and foremost that democracy, even with its obvious failings, so far has no rival among political systems. As the experiences of the fledgling post-Communist democracies indicate, it would be illusory to think that democracy is a natural and obvious solution accepted by the societies involved, superseding as it does a fossilized system. On the contrary, democracy gives rise to constant doubts and calls into play for choices to be made. History suggests that democratic countries do not launch wars. Therefore, in order to build a new and peaceful international order, we should first of all support democratic development, because democracy is the only basis on which such an order can be created. Political calculations that used to prompt the acceptance of, and even support for, non-democratic systems in the name of political realism and international stability have proved shortsighted. Support for democracy is an imperative dictated not only by ethical consensus but also by political pragmatism.

In contemporary politics attention tends to focus on economic matters. Modern political strategists and policy makers give priority consideration to the issues of protectionism versus free trade, state interventionism versus free play of market forces, and sound money versus balanced state budgets. In fact, the future of democracy also hinges on economic success. But one need not invoke the obvious truth that democracy is not all tantamount to material prosperity. The basic yardstick with which broad circles of the population will evaluate the systemic change, (that is, a switch to democracy), is economic effectiveness and their own material situation.

Thus, the Poles in 1989 said: “Deal with the economy first!” The result was “shock therapy,” a sweeping reform sometimes criticized as too radical an instrument of change. But it was a success: inflation slowed, the Polish zloty rose in value and became convertible; lines in front of stores vanished while their shelves filled with goods. This process of economic transformation has, however, exacted a drastic and painful price: a marked drop in living standards and a massive surge of unemployment, with over 2.5 million workers still jobless in 1993. Nevertheless, after three years of transformation, important signs of economic dynamism can be seen: the index of economic growth for 1992 was positive, and almost one half of the GNP now comes from the private sector. This indicates that the movement away from the communist economy is indeed irreversible, not only in Poland, but throughout the entire Central European region.

Economic transformation opens up opportunities for democracy. History indicates that freedom
and a democratic public life are unlikely to develop in the absence of market economy or where the state sector predominates. But one cannot say that a market economy is sufficient for the creation or preservation of democracy. Democracy cannot exist without the market economy, but a market economy without democracy still seems possible.

In Eastern Europe, the enthusiasm that accompanied the recovery of freedom helped to foster the acceptance of the social costs that had to be paid. The Poles, for example, accepted a marked drop in their living standards because they occurred during the first moments of the emotional commitment to political reform. At that time, everything seemed possible. Now people’s patience is running out and frustrations are mounting ever more. Much of the social frustration is concentrated in large industrial enterprises where workers fear losing their jobs. Farmers are afraid of agricultural modernization which, while increasing the area of industrial farms, drastically reduces the work force in the farming sector. This frustration can be dangerous for the future of democracy in all our countries.

With hopes fading and the future looming uncertain, the sowers of demagoguery may have a field day. Appeals for sacrifice and summons for the acceptance of the social costs required by the ongoing reforms are disappearing from the politicians’ vocabulary. More attractive now is language full of promises and accusations, while the hunt for scapegoats is crowding out rational political thought. Political extremists employing leftist social demagoguery or rightist nationalist fundamentalism are exploiting social frustrations and creating the danger of destabilization.

Could it be that launching the deep-cutting economic reforms was too risky, triggering, as it did, the rise of the unhealthy political psychology I have just described? In my opinion, the answer is no. Political exploitation of social frustrations can also erupt in places where no shock therapy is being employed—this is evidenced by the drama unfolding before our eyes in the former Yugoslavia. These issues of economic reform and resulting hardship raise questions that go beyond the experience of post-communist countries and involve the general model of modernization and economic growth. The marginalization of vast numbers of people resulting from dwindling demand for labor while its supply is mounting prompts one to question the rationality of the link between economic growth and unemployment. From this perspective, one should also address the issues of how people spend their time respectively at work, at learning, and during their leisure.

We should set about designing and subsequently implementing mechanisms to prevent the frustration imposed on men and women by their marginalization as well as their social exclusion. Doctrinaire liberalism sometimes counsels that a deaf ear be turned to the wails and clamors coming from those harmed by, and excluded from, the modern world. Such behavior undermines democracy and saps its stability. Expansion of social rights coupled with active social policies modeled on the concept of “social market economy” propounded by Germany’s Christian Democrats and Social Democrats should be part of the new democratic order. Such a set of policies equips democracy with an immunological defense system of its own.

In hard times, when sacrifice is necessary, democracy may seem to be a dysfunctional
system: by seeking the approval of the majority, the process of reforms may well be blocked. This question is also being debated in the West, where in the 1970s an idea was put forth in influential political and economic circles that low-levels of voter turnout and participation in political life should be perceived as positive phenomena, tending to produce political stability and reasonable social and economic strategies. This train of thought seems to gather strength in post-communist countries, where there is fertile soil for demagoguery and confidence in the institutions of democratic life and trust placed in any political authorities are rapidly eroding. Under such circumstances, one may also fear that an enlightened reform program will fail to win the support of the people at large. Would it not be wiser, therefore, to accept the dictum that a minimum of popular involvement in public affairs is best?

I do not view this merely as a rhetorical question, but rather as one that expresses a real manner of political thinking. I would reply to it by insisting that citizens' involvement in politics minimizes the dangers that democracy faces and augments its chances for success. Apathy, passiveness, and political "retreatism" can cure nothing. To be sure, the gains made in former East bloc countries by populism, neo-nazism, and even a certain breed of "nationalism-communism" are worrisome. But such tendencies are not exotic traits of post-communism alone; election campaigns in West European countries, and even in the United States, show the hazards of anti-political demagoguery. Under communism, apolitical postures and refusal to participate in the system and its pervasive untruths were forms of moral defense against totalitarianism. In the democratic context, anti-political discourse functions in just the opposite way, blocking the evolution of the democratic system.

While I have outlined the threats that loom on the political horizon of democratic countries and of the infant post-communist democracies in particular, I do not mean to be a pessimist and my voice is not that of a prophet of doom. On the contrary, I believe that one must be aware of these threats in order to combat them. Poland's experience since 1989 can perhaps be viewed as a model: communism has been smashed and a determined and deep-seeded transformation is continuing within a framework of a relatively stable democratic process. Looking beyond my own country, I think that most of Central and Eastern Europe is on the right track, and that we can succeed—provided, of course, that we maintain a clear view of all the perils that attend our journey.

In conclusion, I would say that democracy is much more than an efficient method of government, a political regime or a set of institutions. It represents a particular type of relationship between citizens and those who govern, where mechanisms of checks and balances are applied to power, the state is ruled by law, and where while one may not govern against the will of the majority, each majority can be judged by its relationship to the minority. Democratic politics must involve a commitment to certain values, above all a respect for the dignity of the human being. Democracy thus understood should be a matter of common concern that transcends the frontiers of states or even continents. It truly merits our collective dedication and offers the best hope of replacing harsh and even violent distinctions between "us" and "them" with a common spirit of solidarity.
Congressman Howard Berman, NED Chairman John Brademas, Secretary of State Warren Christopher, NED President Carl Gershman, and Assistant Secretary of State and former NED Chairman Winston Lord.

Carl Gershman and representatives of Conciencia Argentina and Conciencia Ecuador.
STATE DEPARTMENT RECEPTION

Below are remarks by Secretary of State Warren Christopher, who hosted a reception in the Diplomatic Reception Rooms of the Department of State for the international participants attending the conference.

I am delighted to welcome all of you here to the State Department. This rainy night is overcome by the smiles I see on the faces of the people around the room.

It's a great pleasure for me to be a part of this fourth world conference of the National Endowment for Democracy. As John Brademas just noted, our Department has benefited greatly by having some people on our team who have had close associations with the National Endowment for Democracy before joining us. It's no accident that, in my recommendations to the President, I was much moved by the contributions these individuals had made in the Endowment as far as training for background for the roles they now have.

I salute the work of all of you on behalf of democracy. The National Endowment for Democracy embodies America's broad-based and bipartisan support for freedom. The Endowment's pioneering programs are models of how democratic principles can be given practical expression in every single region of the world.

Your creative programs are helping to lay a foundation for tolerant, pluralistic, civil societies in every region of the world. And as I look around the room, I see representatives from so many of the regions giving tangible and practical effect to the commitment of the Endowment.

Two hundred years ago, when the United States was a new nation, our founders called our country a great experiment, a laboratory for democracy. Today, the whole world is a laboratory for democracy. People everywhere are inspired by democratic ideals, as His Holiness the Dalai Lama said to you in his remarks this morning.

Among the participants to this conference, for example, are the initiator of a women's organization in Yemen devoted to teaching democratic values; the founder of Africa's first independent radio station; and the Polish coordinator of centers encouraging tolerance throughout Eastern Europe. Those are only illustrations of the many inspiring examples as I look around the room.

These and other pathbreakers are creating conditions for worldwide protection and promotion of fundamental freedoms, for the rule of law, for legitimate political processes, for representative, accountable government, open legislative processes, for free trade unions and for independent media. In turn, an ever-widening circle of democracies is forging a freer, more prosperous and more peaceful international community.

It is commonplace to say that we are in an era of profound transition, but amidst the uncertainty one thing remains clear: the protection of human rights is the first responsibility of every
government. Indeed, the condition of human rights in a country is a good measure of the quality of its government. And the free exercise of human rights is the best safeguard against the abuse of national power.

Great strides can be made for democracy and human rights in this new era, nowhere more so than in Russia. In my judgement, ensuring the success of the Russian people in building an open society and a free and vibrant economy is the pre-eminent security challenge of our time. I know that we are all happy that the early returns from yesterday’s referendum indicate a victory for democracy and economic reform in Russia. It’s a reassurance about how democracy works.

The successful conduct of the referendum, the large turnout by the people of Russia and the apparent direction of the results are all very welcome and are important steps on Russia’s road to democracy. The votes of the Russian people are an eloquent statement of their commitment to democracy and free-market principles. I think on this occasion we ought to reach out and give our congratulations and support to the Russian people for what they’ve done in yesterday’s vote.

Of course, our eyes are fully open to the serious problems that lie ahead of us all around the world. Throughout the former Soviet bloc, new states are struggling to make the transition from totalitarianism and command economies to democracy and free markets. In other parts of the world the fate of democracy depends upon how the political system deals with the almost intractable problems of poverty, population and the environment. Many nations confront security threats from hostile neighbors or from things like narcotics and terrorism. At the same time, many nations face enormous developmental challenges ranging from women’s literacy to child survival and family planning.

For these reasons President Clinton has instructed me to ensure that issues of development and democracy-building are effectively integrated into our foreign policy. By defining the rights of the individual wherever he or she may be, Americans reaffirm our own freedom. By supporting young democracies worldwide, we strengthen the world’s oldest democracy—our own democracy here in the United States.

Recognizing that these cross-cutting issues are vital as we re-shape the State Department for this new era, we are establishing at the Department, under Tim Wirth’s able leadership, a new Under Secretaryship for Global Affairs. I know that he and John Shattuck, our Assistant Secretary-Designate for Human Rights, will move forward with a broad agenda for action. The United States will engage in a comprehensive human rights dialogue with foreign governments around the world. We will energetically encourage trends toward democracy and open, tolerant, law-based civil societies; and we will also be targeting our foreign assistance accordingly to achieve these goals.

I know that many of you here this evening have come at a considerable sacrifice and that your work involves great personal risk and courage. Your selfless work is making the world a safer, freer and better place. President Clinton and I want you to know that in the United States you have a resolute and vigilant friend. The United States will continue to work for human rights around the world as long as President Clinton is...
the leader of our country, and speaking for myself, certainly as long as I am here at the State Department.

In closing, I would like to say that it's very fitting for us to be meeting here in the Ben Franklin Room. Franklin was a consummate democratic activist who we would be wise to emulate in this new, exciting era. He was innovative and entrepreneurial. He had courage and vision. He was idealistic, but he was also very practical. He saw democracy as the most sensible means of governing human beings. In Franklin's day, as in ours, there was no guarantee that the great democracy experiment would end in success. It continues as a great experiment, but the results have never been more promising than they are today, and the successes never more pervasive.

So ladies and gentlemen, the American government and the American people join you in this noble, world-wide experiment in democracy—an experiment that will be never-ending and I hope ever-more successful.

I want to say a final word to our international guests. I have been told about your noble achievements and the innovative things that you are doing around the world. The purpose of this conference is to share those innovations and achievements. In sharing your experiences, you inspire all of us to continue working for human rights and democracy.

So thank you again for coming to the State Department tonight. I am honored to have you here.
Tasbaldy Egemberdiev of Kyrgyzstan greets Diyanama Ywassa of Togo.

Ronal Umana of El Salvador, Mapopa Chipeta of Zambia and Sanaa Osseirian of Lebanon.

President Bill Clinton joined guests of the National Endowment for Democracy in honoring the Endowment's 1993 Democracy Award recipients at a reception and dinner on April 27. NED Chairman John Brademas introduced President Clinton, who then paid tribute to award recipients Vesna Pesic, director of the Center for Anti-War Action, Belgrade; Gitobu Imanyara, human rights lawyer and editor of the Nairobi Weekly, Kenya; and Han Dongfang, founder of the Beijing Workers Autonomous Federation, China. President Clinton's remarks, profiles of the award recipients and excerpts from their acceptance speeches follow.

President Clinton addressed those gathered for the Democracy Award Dinner and reiterated the Administration's support for the Endowment and for democracy worldwide. Pictured with the President are NED Chairman John Brademas, award recipients Han Dongfang, Vesna Pesic, and Gitobu Imanyara, and NED President Carl Gershman.
Remarks by President Bill Clinton

I want to join my voice with yours in congratulating tonight's honorees for their heroic work. I know that they stand here representing the many people around the world who have championed the cause of democracy and human rights.

I'd like to say a special word of support for the National Endowment for Democracy and its work in some 75 nations, many of which are represented here tonight. I'm very proud of the fact that in spite of the difficulties with the budget process, I have recommended a large increase in funding for the Endowment. This organization has done remarkable work. In the time since its creation, democracy has flourished. In only a decade, the number of democracies in the world has nearly doubled.

Our Administration is doing its part to support these democratic movements around the world. We were heartened by the news from Russia this past weekend and by the Russian people's support in the referendum for continued economic reforms, in spite of the hardship they may bring. We continue to watch the democratic progress in the other republics of the former Soviet Union. We continue to work to restore a democratically elected President to Haiti. And I've just come from a two and a half hour meeting with leaders of the House and Senate regarding restoring some sense of humanity to the regions of the former Yugoslavia.

The United States cannot solve every problem. We will not always succeed. But we will always stand on the side of democracy and freedom.
Han Dongfang, a 29-year-old railway worker, is the leading dissident labor activist in China. Sometimes called China’s Lech Walesa, he was a founder of the suppressed Beijing Workers Autonomous Federation (BWAF), the first independent labor organization since the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949. In that capacity, he led the workers’ organization in Tiananmen Square during the 1989 pro-democracy demonstrations.

The BWAF was declared a “counter-revolutionary” organization by the authorities following the adoption on May 28, 1989, of its “Provisional Outline,” a declaration stating its intention to operate openly and in full conformity with the laws and constitution of the PRC. The BWAF headquarters, in two small tents in the northwest corner of Tiananmen Square, was the first target of the People’s Liberation Army in the early hours of June 4.

One of China’s “most wanted” activists, Han was jailed later that month, though his arrest was never made public because the government feared an outbreak of organized industrial unrest. Unwilling to admit any “mistakes,” Han was moved to “isolation” and later, as punishment, placed in a cell with prisoners who had infectious diseases. While there he contracted tuberculosis.

In March 1990, Han was formally charged with “counter-revolutionary propaganda and incitement” and moved to the infamous Banqiao Prison K Block, where he was tortured. He was subsequently moved to Qin Cheng Prison, China’s top-secret facility for political prisoners, where his tuberculosis fully erupted. Denying him treatment for two months, the authorities, fearful that he might die in custody, eventually released him in April 1991. He had been held for 22 months without trial.

Though in poor health and subject to re-arrest at any time (the charges against him were not dropped after his release), Han continued his efforts to draw attention to the plight of Chinese workers. In April 1992 he formally applied to hold a demonstration, the first since the events at Tiananmen Square. His request was denied, and he was briefly detained on the eve of the third anniversary of the June 4 crackdown. After intense efforts by the AFL-CIO and other labor and human rights organizations, as well as the US Government and Congress, Han was allowed to leave China to receive medical treatment. In a Hong Kong press conference following his departure, he predicted that the PRC would eventually be forced to recognize free trade unions as a way of defusing mounting worker unrest and discontent fueled by the economic reforms. He and his wife, Chen Jingyu, then pregnant with their first child, arrived in the United States on September 17.

For his courage in the face of harsh persecution, and for his leadership of the workers struggle which is the main hope for transforming China, the National Endowment for Democracy was honored to present Han Dongfang with its 1993 Democracy Award.

(The Endowment wishes to acknowledge the assistance of the AFL-CIO and Asia Watch in preparing this tribute.)
I would like to thank the National Endowment for Democracy for giving me this Democracy Award. I am honored to receive this award and do so on behalf of my colleagues who have struggled for democracy in China with me, and who are still fighting for democratic rights under extremely difficult and dangerous conditions. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the people who made great efforts to win my release from prison and to enable me to come to the United States to receive treatment for tuberculosis.

At this moment, I cannot help but think about those who are still suffering in Chinese prisons. They are being tortured and forced to labor in inhumane conditions. Some, like me, may even now be purposely infected with contagious diseases. Let no one doubt that arrests of people including workers who seek democracy and trade union rights in China are continuing unabated. If anything, so-called market reforms have caused the government to tighten its grip on the people. The authorities are offering the world the image of “an open China”, while keeping restrictions in place, a tactic to which they often resort.

Democracy can be realized in China only through concrete actions, without which democracy would lose its luster and significance. Talk about democracy is not sufficient, nor will democracy result from the application of some abstract theory. Indeed, we know that it is only because numerous people have struggled for democracy and freedom, supported by their friends from other nations, that totalitarian governments have collapsed one-by-one throughout the world.

Today, China is the world’s largest remaining dictatorship. How the struggle for democracy fares in China will certainly be a pivotal influence in the overall effort to promote freedom elsewhere.

At the present time in China, the government, which owns most of the assets of the country, is in the process of restructuring the country’s command economy. This adjustment process is generating tremendous political and economic pressure on workers and peasants. It is a process in which they desperately seek input but have almost none. If China is to have a market economy in which employers have profits as their motive, then workers and peasants must have the right to form unions and associations of their own choosing. If such organizations are formed and can achieve real participation in state politics and the economy, then they will be able to exert a decisive influence on China’s advance toward democracy.

Tonight, I would like to share some encouraging news: after a long period of discussion, organizers of China’s free labor movement have decided that they will seek to advance democratization through open means using the legal guarantees now available to them in China. They are already involved in worker protest movements whenever they arise. Let me give you just one example: three weeks ago, my colleague Zhou Guoqiang, a member of the former Beijing Worker’s Autonomous Federation, openly provided legal advice to a demonstration by taxi drivers in Beijing. This demonstration was later broken up by the police. Although such involvement engenders great personal risk, they feel it is the only course of action available to them which will advance democratization at a practical level.

The cause of democracy in China cannot succeed without support from the global democratic community. However, such support must be directed to those real forces emerging in China which seek such change.

Finally, please allow me once again to express my gratitude to the National Endowment for Democracy. With this support, I feel energized to continue my efforts to promote democracy through the creation of a free labor movement in my country. Let us honor those who are fighting for democracy and those who have lost their freedom in this struggle. We stand together.
Gitobu Imanyara, a young lawyer and journalist, has been in the forefront of the democratic struggle in Kenya ever since the Moi government abolished multiparty democracy in 1982. Repeatedly arrested and harressed, he has unceasingly protested against the erosion of rights guaranteed in the Kenyan constitution, a document modeled on the US constitution and drafted with the help of the late Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall.

In 1987, after spending more than two years in Maximum Security Prison on trumped-up charges associated with his work as a human rights lawyer, he founded the Nairobi Law Monthly, described in the recently published Democracy Reader as “one of the boldest publications in Africa in the late twentieth century.” A forum for public debate on the crisis facing constitutional rights in Kenya, the publication quickly earned the wrath of the Moi government, which detained Imanyara on charges of not properly registering the magazine.

In 1990, following the revolution in Eastern Europe, Imanyara confronted the Kenyan government with a special issue entitled “The Historic Debate: Law, Democracy, and Multi-Party Politics in Kenya.” He was arrested twice that summer, at one point held incommunicado in a prison psychiatric ward. Undaunted, he republished the “historic debate” issue upon his release and was subsequently assaulted and arrested again on sedition charges following publication of another issue of the magazine reporting on the proposed founding of a new opposition political party. While in prison, he was named International Editor of the Year by the World Press Review, which called him “the boldest voice for a free press in a country whose intolerant government does not hesitate to shut down publications and where most journalists practice self-censorship.”

Imanyara is currently the Secretary General of the Forum for the Restoration of Democracy—Kenya. He continues to serve as Editor of the Nairobi Law Monthly, and with Endowment support, he has also started the Nairobi Weekly, to continue human rights advocacy and to nurture a civil society in his country.

Imanyara is not alone in Kenya, or indeed in Africa, in defending democratic values and human rights. He has written that “It is possible to crush a human body, for it is frail and finite...But no one, however powerful, can crush an ideal.” For defending this ideal, and for exemplifying the courage and aspirations of others throughout Africa who are struggling to build the institutions of civil society, the National Endowment for Democracy was proud to present its 1993 Democracy Award to Gitobu Imanyara.
This is a unique occasion. Three people drawn from three different continents that account for a significant portion of humanity are brought together in a special ceremony to celebrate democracy. From China, from Europe, from Africa...the names in this special context bring to mind places—Sharpville, Tiananmen Square, Srebenica—each representing its own irrational and tortured logic, the never ending struggle for human dignity and freedom.

I stand to accept this Award as a messenger of the African people. For us in Africa, this award is an eloquent affirmation that we have allies in our struggle to plant and nurture a culture of democratic values and civil society.

We thank the American people, who have, through the National Endowment for Democracy, recognized that the African continent is in the process of an irreversible march to human dignity and democratic emancipation.

More than 30 years ago, Nelson Mandela told us that there is no easy road to freedom. For close to 30 years he languished in jail as the moral leader of the African struggle for justice. Twenty years ago, President Jomo Kenyatta told us that the African continent is awake and will never go to sleep again. Now Nelson Mandela is out of prison and Jomo Kenyatta is long dead.

We have experienced the obstacles Nelson Mandela was referring to and we have seen our Founding Fathers lead us to autocratic slumber. The flame of freedom has changed hands and the torch bearers of Africa’s second liberation are a new generation of leaders. I see this Award as theirs and I accept it on their behalf.

I know I speak on behalf of the African people when I urge you the American people to share with us your unique experience in giving meaning to the words of your Declaration of Independence. I know I speak on behalf of the African people when I urge you to share with our rich experience in the civil rights movement and the non-violent realization of human dignity and self-worth through ceaseless and sometimes almost hopeless, but rewarding, litigation in your court system, particularly in the Supreme Court.

We urge you to help us learn the real meaning of a constitutional government and a government under law.

We, the new generation of Africans at the forefront of the continent’s second liberation, may appear to you to be impatient when we demand that apartheid in South Africa must end now. We, the new generation of Africans, may appear to you to be unreasonable when we ask you to stop arming the merchants of death that are the real cause of the never ending and senseless ethnic violence that we are witnessing in Kenya, Sudan, Somalia, Rwanda, Burundi, Liberia, South Africa and many other parts of Africa. We call upon you to show the same concern and urgency of purpose that you have exhibited in the land formerly known as Yugoslavia. If we are impatient or appear to be unreasonable, it is because we are thirsty for freedom and democracy. We are part of one human race. The weapons being used to fan and prolong African war are not made in Africa! Mr. President, we get angry when we see the might and economic power of the United States of America support and prop up African despots.

America bears a heavy responsibility towards mankind in this last decade of the millennium. President John F. Kennedy referred to this special responsibility as “the burden and the glory.” We call upon you, the American people, to help us help you carry the burden of freedom and the glory of knowing that we can all thank God for enjoying democracy in freedom. Thank you.
At a time when people throughout the world associate Serbia with the abhorrent policy of ethnic cleansing, Vesna Pesic represents "another Serbia"—one composed of those who believe that democracy is incompatible with exclusive nationalism and are fighting every day for peace and human rights.

Long before she emerged as the leading critic of the militant policies of ex-Yugoslavia's ultra-nationalist leaders, she was an active human rights and pro-democracy dissident who in 1982 was jailed for her activism. She was a founder in 1985 of the Belgrade Helsinki Committee and in 1989 of the Yugoslav Democratic Initiative, the first independent political organization since World War II which called for the democratic transformation of the former Yugoslav Federation on the principle of equal rights for all individuals. She constantly fostered dialogue among different ethnic groups, organizing three public discussions between Serbs and Kosovo Albanians in 1990.

When the war broke out in 1991, she founded the Center for Anti-War Action, which initiated a legislative proposal for an amnesty for deserters from the civil war and organized many anti-war demonstrations, among them "The Peace Walk" in front of the Federal Parliament; a "Meeting of Solidarity with Dubrovnik," "Peaceful Bosnia," a rock concert in Belgrade's largest public square; "Yellow Ribbon," a march protesting discrimination against non-Serb citizens of Serbia; daily protest discussions against the war called "Belgrade Anti-War Marathon;" and a peace demonstration on the anniversary of the Bosnian war at which aid for Sarajevo was collected and the war victims remembered.

In addition to her efforts within Serbia, Dr. Pesic has also initiated a number of international conferences, including a roundtable on violations of humanitarian law in San Remo, Italy. Preparations are underway for another conference on an international war crimes tribunal.

Dr. Pesic has also initiated many projects aimed at the promotion of the culture of peace and human rights. These include the S.O.S. Hotline for victims of discrimination; an analysis of war propaganda and extreme nationalism in school textbooks; a project called "Hello, Neighbor!" in which psychologists help refugee children and their parents recover from war-related traumas and prepare for a life in peace; and a Committee for Human Rights which monitors public hate speeches and human rights violations and publishes the bulletin "The Voice for Peace and Human Rights."

Through these and other activities, Vesna Pesic has sought to counter the hatred and violence that is consuming her country and to defend human rights and values of tolerance which are the foundation of democracy. For these efforts, undertaken at great personal risk, the National Endowment for Democracy was proud to honor Vesna Pesic with its 1993 Democracy Award.
I would like to thank the National Endowment for Democracy for honoring our anti-war efforts with this award. In honoring me with this award, the National Endowment for Democracy is recognizing all of the activists and friends of the Anti-War Center and their war to end the war and abuses of civil and human rights. These efforts, carried out in the most difficult of circumstances, often under harsh criticism for being so-called traitors, prove that even now many people are committed to keeping alive the ideals of peace and democracy.

What distinguishes us from other opposition groups and parties is our double agenda—for democracy and against nationalism. Many people talk about democracy, but you cannot implement democratic values and institutions within the framework of aggressive nationalism and war. You cannot be silent about the horrors of bloodshed and ethnic cleansing and the destruction of cities and villages and places of worship and claim that you are a democrat. You cannot call yourself a democrat if you are only seeking democracy for your ethnic community. We raise our voices against such thinking and against those who inflame national feelings and fears in their own struggles for power.

I would like to take this occasion to convey three messages to US policy makers and to the public at large. First, I want to stress the existence of those who do not support the policies of national hatred and war. For example, a group of people in the Bosnian Serb stronghold of Banja Luka have formed an organization called the Civic Forum. These people—Muslims, Croats and Serbs—reject the notion that they cannot live together. They resist the nationalist propaganda. There are independent women’s groups speaking out against the war and caring for women who have been raped and abused. There are independent associations of intellectuals who are trying to raise the voice of reason; journalists challenging the official accounts of the war; and people from all over the ex-Yugoslavia working together in the struggle for real peace and democracy. These people need to be recognized and supported. When I speak to US and European officials about these efforts, they often respond, “You are only a small minority.” My answer to them is: “Do you want us to disappear all together? To not exist at all? Who is going to build democracy if our efforts are both silenced by our regimes and ignored by the outside democratic world?” To those who are all too ready to accept any deal with nationalist forces, to those for whom “never again” means “another time, but not now,” I would point out that the so-called utopias have a concrete basis in the basic norms of international and humanitarian law. This moral vision is the only one that is practical in the long run.

Second, we feel that the international community can and must do more for all those trapped by the power games and violence in the war in the former Yugoslavia. The vacuum of the post-communist period allowed the extreme forces in the country to gain momentum, to push us into a vicious cycle of threats, aggression, and drastic violations of human rights. The international response to date has been confused and without any consistent or understandable policy. In between packages of food and bombs there are steps that can and must be taken. In the first place, there should be rapid and effective establishment of protective zones for civilians in Bosnia and Hercegovina and distribution of humanitarian aid by all means. Ultimately the international community should establish a civil administration for the whole territory of Bosnia-Hercegovina. Rather than spending all efforts and resources in order to create elaborate peace plans, the international community must attend to the immediate suffering of civilians. Long term solutions for the region can be deliberated after an effective cease-fire. In addition, help must be given to establish and maintain a free press, television and radio throughout the region. This is essential in order to rebuild communications, to break the monopoly over information and the psychology of war.

Third, we need support for our commitment to the idea of individual rights. We must be able to move away from the notion and practice of collective responsibility and guilt and develop
foundations for individual responsibility, which is a basis for democratic citizenship. Not all members of a national or ethnic group are guilty of war crimes, but the individuals who can be named must be made accountable. I’m not suggesting that we engage in witch hunts after the war, but we do need fair trials for those who have committed crimes. The Center for Anti-War Action has developed a project for an international war crimes tribunal which should be supported and which could ultimately fit into the international process. This can be a starting point in ending the historical cycle of collective re-
venge and introduce the rule of law into our societies. During this occasion of the world conference on democracy, I can still hear the echo of our warlords, with their claims that we cannot live together. Do not believe them. With so many people gathered here from so many regions, races and religions, we ourselves prove that multi-ethnic communities and cross-cultural communities are possible and present the only just future.
I firmly believe that in defending values of individual rights and mutual tolerance we are the real patriots of our nations.
ADDITIONAL INTERNATIONAL PARTICIPANTS

In addition to the panelists whose remarks are included in this book, Endowment grantees from over 40 other countries around the world also participated in the conference. Organizations represented included:

African Democratic Heritage Foundation, Nigeria
African Women’s Association for Political Awareness, Nigeria
Alliance for Democracy, Zambia
Association to Develop a Democratic Burma
Burkinabe Movement for Human Rights, Burkina Faso
Center for Cuban Democracy
Center for International Studies (CEPEI), Peru
Center for the Study of Human Rights, Togo
Center for Pluralism, Poland
Center for Anti-War Action, Serbia
Center for Democratic Education, Nicaragua
Center for Democracy/Civic Crusade Foundation, Panama
Center for Youth Formation (CEFOJ), Nicaragua
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