



FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Richard Gephardt

NED marked the year 2012 with celebrations of three key milestones: the 30th anniversary of President Ronald Reagan’s Westminster speech that helped to launch the idea of a bipartisan institution to advance democracy abroad; the 10th anniversary of the Fellows program named for President Reagan and my former congressional colleague Dante Fascell, who had called for establishment of a NED-like body back in the 1960s; and the 5th anniversary of NED’s Center for International Media Assistance.

In his speech to the British Parliament on June 8, 1982, President Reagan called for the United States to “take actions to support the campaign for democracy.” The following year, the National Endowment for Democracy came into existence, including affiliated institutes of the two major political parties, the business community, and the labor movement’s already operational democracy building institute to make the vision of Fascell and Reagan a reality.

I was proud to be on hand last June in Los Angeles to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Westminster address by honoring George Shultz and Madeleine Albright, two former Secretaries of State who championed the cause of democracy while providing the Endowment with immeasurable personal support and encouragement. Secretary Shultz played a major role in getting early buy-in from the Congress, and Secretary Albright, a former NED Board member, continues her invaluable involvement as Chair of the NED-affiliated National Democratic Institute (NDI).

I want to thank NED Board member Robert Tuttle and NDI Vice-Chair Marc Nathanson for chairing the event honoring these two great Americans that raised funds for the World Movement for Democracy’s Seventh World Assembly in Lima in October. The L.A. commemoration also featured a conference at the Reagan Presidential Library highlighting the major achievements of three decades of democracy assistance, and a panel at NED held several days later enabled many of our founders to reflect upon how they were able to build a bipartisan coalition to establish the Endowment in the aftermath of the Reagan address.

NED, a privately incorporated entity, has long regarded the U.S. Congress as its partner, a source not only of funding for the grants program, but also of guidance and encouragement. Since the founding of the Reagan-Fascell Democracy Fellows Program, members of Congress have met regularly with the activists, journalists, and scholars who have been in residence at the Endowment. The program’s tenth anniversary, celebrated in the Congress last May, recognized more than 180 alumni from over 80 countries who have spent time in Washington engaging with the policy community, sharing ideas with fellow activists, and developing projects that have enriched democracy movements upon their return home.

“This program gave me the opportunity to be away from the field for a while, to regroup, and to think through the issues I deal with on a daily basis,” said Angolan journalist Rafael Marques de Morais, who has courageously exposed government corruption. “It also allowed me to organize myself for the return back home. I now have a platform to work on and am better prepared to challenge the status quo.”

In addition to helping to develop future democratic leaders, the program provides a safe haven for practitioners, journalists, and scholars facing heightened risk of political persecution in their home countries.

Congress also played a central role in the establishment of NED’s Center for International Media Assistance (CIMA), which celebrated its fifth anniversary in 2012. During his tenure as Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Senator Richard Lugar encouraged the Endowment, already active in

(continued on page 6)



FROM THE PRESIDENT

Carl Gershman



The five-year Strategy Document that the NED Board adopted at the beginning of 2012 opened with the observation that “the coming years will witness a continuing struggle pitting those pressing for greater freedom against an array of forces that are determined to resist democratic change.” This continuing struggle was one of the great challenges that NED and its grantees faced during 2012.

In many ways, of course, this is not a new struggle. Autocratic governments have always harshly repressed dissident and protest movements seeking democratic rights. What has changed, according to the World Movement for Democracy’s updated report on “Defending Civil Society,” is that the standard techniques of dictatorships, such as imprisonment and violent repression, are now being supplemented “by more sophisticated measures, including legal or quasi-legal obstacles.” This was also the subject of an important new book by William J. Dobson that was published in 2012 entitled *The Dictator’s Leaning Curve: Inside the Global Battle for Democracy*.

The measures now being used by autocrats are intended to strangle civil-society organizations by preventing them from registering, carrying out their activities, advocating on issues of public policy, engaging in cross-group communication and cooperation, assembling peacefully to advance their views, and raising the resources they need (including foreign funding) in order to function. Governments have also stepped up efforts to control international democracy-assistance organizations, forcing many of them to shut their offices in a number of countries; and they have carried the battle into cyberspace, using malware, denial-of-service attacks, and other measures to prevent bloggers and democracy activists from accessing the Internet to communicate information and ideas and to organize common actions.

Countries where governments have taken such steps include Russia, which has passed laws requiring NGOs receiving international support to register as “foreign agents;” Ethiopia,

which has closed ten NGOs for alleged violation of its civil-society and charity laws; Sudan, which has also passed a law imposing severe restrictions on NGOs and which has recently closed five human-rights organizations; and Egypt, where security forces raided 17 international democracy-support groups, including NDI and IRI, the NED’s two party institutes.

Repressive measures such as these were not the only obstacles to the advance of democracy that NED grantees faced during the past year. Groups trying to promote transitions in countries like Egypt, Tunisia, Libya and Burma have found it extremely difficult to overcome deeply rooted political, social and economic problems. The sharp divisions that persist in these countries after decades of authoritarian rule, when free exchange of opinion among groups was impossible, have made it hard to foster dialogue or to build modern political parties. With power still highly centralized and democratic practices very weak, groups have met resistance in their efforts to strengthen civil society and accountable government, or to defend human rights and free media. It has not been easy to promote pluralism, liberal values, and the rights of women and minorities in strongly traditionalist cultures. And it has been especially difficult to promote economic reform and the rights of workers and poor people in countries that have yet to make the transition from state and crony capitalism, marked by high levels of corruption, to a transparent and competitive market system.

NED is aware of the formidable challenges faced by activists working to open up dictatorial systems and to promote transitions in countries that are still very far from stable

(continued on page 6)



l-r: the Center for Progressive Young People “Apelsin” (Ukraine); Women Arise for Change Initiative (Nigeria); Centre for Civic Education Pakistan; policeman filming demonstrators in Armenia; Iraqi Human Rights Watch Society (Iraq); Asociación Nacional de la Prensa (Bolivia) highlights violence against journalists; a Civil Rights Defenders rally (Serbia).



(Gephardt, continued from page 4)

providing assistance to independent media through its grants program, to work on strengthening the field of media assistance.

CIMA does this in a number of ways: by organizing working groups and roundtables to investigate important issues in international media development; by commissioning research reports on key topics; and by identifying needs within the field and bringing donors, experts and practitioners together to devise strategies for solutions. For example, last October CIMA brought together representatives from 10 private foundations and 15 government and multilateral institutions for the first such global donors-only meeting to discuss trends in funding media development and initiatives to enhance media effectiveness.

On the occasion of its fifth anniversary, CIMA rolled out the second edition of its seminal report on “Empowering Independent Media” which surveys the field of media assistance, paying particular attention to how the digital revolution is transforming media development.

When I began my service on the Board at NED in the spring of 2004, social media was in its infancy and digital technology was only beginning to revolutionize the way we receive and disseminate information. The so-called “colored revolutions” were in their earliest stages, offering hope to millions across a broad section of Eurasia. The Arab awakening had yet to blossom, but there were tangible signs of hope for the continued spread of democracy to parts of the world that had yet to experience its benefits.

But then a backlash set in, not just in autocratic states that stepped up their harassment of civil society groups, but also in countries where democratic breakthroughs had occurred. Many people in these countries became disillusioned with the slow process of institutional reform and with the economic stagnation that they thought democracy would quickly cure.

As my final term as a Board member of this great institution expires, I nonetheless remain optimistic about the future. We at NED have always contended that democracy is a long-term and continuous struggle. I am particularly encouraged when I think of the young men and women with whom we work day in and day out, some of whom I have had the privilege to meet, who are dedicating their lives to building societies where their children can grow up in dignity and without fear. I am proud to have been associated with an organization—now entering its 30th year—that fulfills the vision of its founders Dante Fascell and President Reagan, providing timely assistance and solidarity to courageous people the world over. I look forward to staying involved. ●

(Gershman, continued from page 5)

democracy and the rule of law. Of the many reasons we remain hopeful that their struggles will ultimately succeed, three seem to stand out. The first is that authoritarian rulers may be resourceful and repressive, but they are fighting a defensive battle against populations that are becoming steadily more informed about their rights and relentlessly more insistent that their dignity be recognized and respected. The second is that democratic transitions, difficult as they are, represent the process by which people take ownership of their society and learn the values and obligations of citizenship. This process of national growth continues even when transitions encounter great obstacles, because the quest for justice and the realization of human potential is unending.

The third reason is the continuing emergence of young leaders of amazing eloquence and democratic commitment who are calling for freedom against great odds and in the most hostile environments. When the Seventh Assembly of the World Movement for Democracy opened in Lima on October 14, it heard a stirring keynote address from Glanis Changachirere, a 22-year old “rebellious girl child” from rural Zimbabwe, who explained why democracy “is not a far-fetched concept that speaks to the elite and socially privileged,” but rather an idea that “signals liberation...for the undermined, disadvantaged, oppressed, unrecognized and minorities.” And when the Assembly closed three days later, Maryam al-Khawaja, the 25-year old daughter of the imprisoned Bahraini human-rights defender Abdulhadi al-Khawaja, explained how she drew inspiration from her father’s view that the first and most important victory of the Arab uprisings lay not in the achievement of regime change or reform, but in “the fact that masses of people tread upon their fears and went out to demand those things,” and that this “victory” called for celebration and not despair.

And then there is the young Pakistani girl Malala Yousafzai who first drew the ire of the Taliban as an 11-year old in 2009 when she posted blogs decrying the horrors of life under Taliban rule and expressing her fervent desire for education. On September 15, 2012, just three weeks before she was shot in the head and nearly killed by Taliban gunman, and still just 14-years old, she was given the Civic Courage Award by the Center for Civic Education, a NED grantee. In her acceptance remarks, she said that “People win their rights only when they struggle to achieve them....What I have learnt from...is that just one voice and one movement is strong enough against the groups which usurp the rights of the people. If they are armed with guns, you have the weapon of the pen and the power of words to defeat them....”

That a young girl, facing a mortal threat, could speak these words sends a message more powerful than the combined forces of repression and violence. The message is that even the mightiest tyrant or the most ruthless fanatic cannot thwart the triumph of the human spirit. It is a message of hope not just for Malala but for all mankind. ●



L-r: Popstar Loreen took time off from the Eurovision Song Contest to visit democracy activists (Azerbaijan); REDLAD activism workshop (Ecuador); Students for a Free Tibet held training seminars.

