



New York Democracy Forum



**Remarks by Henry Kissinger and Richard Holbrooke
New York Democracy Forum Launch
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Dr. Henry Kissinger:

Thank you very much. See I thought that after mentioning my name, that would lead to a long peroration and I sat there looking extremely humble, which is a tremendous effort for me. It's for me a wonderful opportunity to attend this dinner, and to speak at this dinner.

I was a member of the first board of directors of the NED. And John Richardson was the chairman. Lane Kirkland, whose wife is honoring us with her presence, was a board member and instrumental in getting me to join the board. This was after he had committed years of human rights abuses on me, when he and George Meany showed up at the monthly meetings we had in my office when I was Secretary of State and provided a refreshing counterpoint. Usually I was attacked from the left for being too tough and then George Meany and Lane would show up and attack me for being too soft. So I knew I was making a contribution to unifying the American people if nothing else. But those who have received the award that is being given tonight represent a distinguished group, which Lane and Violeta were among the first recipients. And tonight John Whitehead with whom I've worked and who's been my friend and John Richardson, who's been present in a leadership position in every fight on behalf of democracy around the world with which I am familiar.

I knew John Whitehead first as an investment banker. And then where he was sort of trying to teach me the craft, which he never quite managed to accomplish. Then he became Deputy Secretary of State, it was a little hard on me that he was approaching on my territory. And then he went to Hungary early on in his term as Deputy Secretary of State and made a speech in which he announced the imminent liberation of Hungary. So I felt very superior, I thought here was somebody who just doesn't understand the trend of events. I thought that the satellite orbit would eventually be liberated, but I didn't think it was as imminent as John Whitehead did. Well, not many audiences have heard me admit that somebody knew something better than I did. And I think the reason is that all great accomplishments were somebody's dream before they became a reality. A certain amount of naïveté is necessary to do great things. Naïveté in the sense, that all the practical obstacles that one usually visualizes are overcome because of the commitment to some fundamental values. The two John's that we are honoring tonight have

represented such an attitude. And at this moment, when democracy is gaining in so many places, it is particularly appropriate that we honor them.

When the NED started it was controversial. Now it is an integral part of the American role in the world, but at this moment also of a great sense of accomplishment, I think it is necessary to express some concerns. There is a triumphalist, euphoric atmosphere that makes us in danger of forgetting that we are witnessing the first scene of a long running play. We have succeeded in a number of places to establish the principle of elections. And it's even wrong to say that we alone have succeeded. We have been able to encourage it, and to participate in it. But this is only a first step. The establishment of democracy has to be followed with the institutions of social progress. The beginning of the appearance of pluralism has to be disciplined into a pattern that keeps the factions from settling their disputes by civil war or of manipulating the political process in such a way that the minority can never become a majority, and institutions and possibilities have to be created that connect the citizens to a governmental system that transcends their differences. All of these are huge tasks for the NED and for the values that everybody in this room stands for.

I occasionally hear the phrase that we live in a world in which interests and values have become identical. That's not my reading of history. History teaches – I believe – that whatever the practical solutions which are represented by interests and which are always contingent, need to be guided by some values that are more absolute, that may never be fully reached but whose very existence acts as an inspiration. Now I'm delighted that a New York forum – The New York Democratic Forum – has been established, that it will be conducted by the NED and the Foreign Policy Association, who are jointly sponsoring this dinner.

Questions like the ones I raised will represent the new affirmation of democracy, and many others that I didn't raise. And I want to thank again John Whitehead and John Richardson for what they have done in times when the outcome was far from certain and when it was far from fashionable to stand for the causes, the beginnings of whose success we are now seeing and to express the hope that in honoring them we will inspire many successes to walk along that road of our two honorees and of, if I may, my friend Lane Kirkland, who got me involved in the early activities.

Thank you very much.

Amb. Richard Holbrooke:

Thank you so much for allowing me to speak tonight. This is the first time in my life that I've spoken *after* Henry Kissinger. I've introduced him, I've talked before him, he has put me in my place, we have argued on many things, but tonight at least for a few hours I have a shot at getting the last word. I also note of course that we're honoring John Whitehead and John Richardson, both extraordinary exemplars of American foreign

policy at its best. But who, like Henry Kissinger served Republican presidents so I assume I'm the token Democrat here tonight, and I will do my best to hold up my side of the bargain.

I listened very carefully to Henry Kissinger's sort of self-pitying description of himself as attacked by Republican right-wing, liberals, Lane Kirkland – I hope you all shared with me the deep sympathy that he deserves from all of us for the difficult, difficult task he had standing up to these critics, all of whom of course loved him. And I, on a more serious note, value his long friendship. We met in Saigon, a very long time ago, thirty-nine years ago to be precise, when Lynden Johnson sent him to Vietnam as an advisor. We've been friends ever since and collaborate on a project near to both our hearts – the American Academy in Berlin, which he is the Honorary Chairman of and I am the Chairman of, and which we founded together in September of 1994 in Berlin as a center to maintain U.S.-German dialogue after the Cold War.

And we're honoring John Whitehead and John Richardson tonight but there are so many other friends of mine in the room. Like Henry, I want to acknowledge Irena Kirkland, who was at least as rough on me as she was on Henry over the last twenty-five years. It's a pleasure to see her today and to remember her great husband, and so many other friends – Steve Schlesinger, who wrote the best book on the founding of the UN, "Act of Creation." I think if you're interested in the United Nations and it's a cause near the hearts of many of us in this room, including John Whitehead. It's the best book on the subject. Ahmet Ertegun, Enzo Viscusi and so many other friends. And Noel Lateef, who has done such a great job over the last decade with the Foreign Policy Association.

I am proud to be a member of the board of the National Endowment for Democracy and I want to say to you before I get onto our honored guests and the issue that brings us together how really important NED is. A lot of people don't see NED in action because its operating wings in the field are the international - the IRI, the International Republican Institute, the NDI, or National Democratic Institute, and the labor union equivalent and the business equivalent. But if you happen to be in a place like Kiev in Ukraine -- as I was twice last year at the height of the drama when the center of town had been taken over by young students living in tents and Kiev was occupied and President Kuchma could not get to his office, and the country and city teetered on the brink of either a civil war or a historic revolution -- and you want to find out what's going on, you can not do better than meeting as I did and for many hours and twice last year, on two trips with the NDI and IRI and their colleagues. Young Americans who really knew what was going on and with no disrespect to the embassy, they just knew a lot more because they were unconstrained by an official status even though they are really official - they're paid by the U.S. government, but they're so much freer.

When the NED and its affiliates were set up, as a good foreign-service officer, a career diplomat I wasn't sure how it worked. I remember a dinner in which William F. Buckley argued vehemently in favor of such an institution. And a lot of the traditional diplomats said, "I don't get it. It's going to undermine the embassies. It's going to confuse the voice." But twenty years later it has more than proved its value. And in Kiev and Tbilisi

in Georgia where I was also visiting last year, and in Azerbaijan and Baku and anywhere they're allowed to operate they make a difference, and they are a phenomenal source of information and an inspiration to young adherents of democracy throughout the world, not just in central Europe but in Central Asia, in Southeast Asia. Of course there are certain countries they're not allowed to operate in. The Burmese generals wouldn't think of letting them function in Rangoon because they're much too dangerous. But the fact that they're considered dangerous is a tribute to them. And any of you who ever get a chance to meet with them, anywhere in the world, will be inspired by their ability. And so I am delighted to be part of this great evening.

A brief word about our two honorees. First of course, John Whitehead. Henry has already described John's contributions so well but I must share with you an anecdote that he has heard me tell before, which is that I ran into John Whitehead once on the shuttle going from Washington to New York, when he was Deputy Secretary of State. And I said, "Hello, are you going up to New York?" And he said, "I'm on a mission." And he patted his breast pocket. And I said, "What's that?" And he said, "Well I have here something I'm going to give the Secretary-General of the UN." And he opened the envelope and there was a check for three hundred million dollars – roughly, well maybe it was a little more or less but you know, less than John's net worth, but a decent amount of money. And John was going to personally deliver to the Secretary-General of the UN as our dues payment. He felt that it merited that kind of symbolism. And I'll always remember that and appreciate it. I've been with John on the International Rescue Committee board. John has been an incredible supporter of the refugee movement around the world. I've been associated with him through Outward Bound. You all know about his extraordinary career and the fact that he is currently engaged in running the rebuilding of lower Manhattan, than which there is no more important project to the city that most of us in this room live in. And any chance that any of us get to honor John Whitehead is a true honor.

John Richardson and I share a different kind of past, a remarkable snapshot in time in August of 1992. When the International Rescue Committee was sending a delegation to Bosnia and Winston Lord who was then – if my memory is correct – the Vice Chairman of the IRC and is now co-chairman, is that roughly, am I close? I hope so. Winston asked me if I wanted to go to Bosnia on this trip, and like all of you at that time I was reading the newspapers, totally confused about what was going on. It was extraordinarily hard to understand that three sided war between Croats, Serbs and Bosnian Muslims. And I said, "Yeah, I'd like to go." And John and I ended up on the plane together out of Frankfurt into Zagreb and from Zagreb set out with two or three other people on a road-trip through hell. We were completely unprepared for what we were going to see. As soon as we left Zagreb we were in some kind of nightmare, a World War II landscape that was just unimaginable. Destruction everywhere, entire towns and villages destroyed and danger really everywhere. We really did not know where we were going. We got stopped, we got arrested, we had to go through roadblocks filled with landmines. For those of you who haven't walked across a road with big land mines in it, even if you know they're there and even if you see them, walking in between them is quite an

experience. And John, our most senior person was a steady, calm guide throughout that remarkable trip.

For both John Richardson and myself, that was a seminal trip in our development. I came back and wrote memos and articles about it. I sent a memo to Governor Clinton who was running, saying that I thought it was going to be the critical challenge for the next administration. And it was that trip which led me into my involvement in the Balkans. And I'm always grateful to John for leading that very dramatic trip. John as you all know has just stood for these issues forever.

Now, so what are we celebrating besides John Whitehead and John Richardson? We're really here to talk about democracy. The Democracy Forum which is being founded out of tonight's dinner and will be here in New York at Hunter College and will help increase understanding of the issues, is a very valuable addition. But where does democracy stand in American foreign policy? Henry Kissinger already alluded to the tremendous turmoil over the appropriate role of democracy in foreign policy during the years – the creative years where he was the primary architect of American policy. In the over forty years since I joined the U.S. government this has been a recurring debate. Obviously it preceded that period and it continues to this day. For much of the time since 1919, 1918 when Woodrow Wilson unleashed on the world a set of ideas which had enormous power, these ideas have been debated in the United States and there have been two schools of thought. One is democracy is diversionary and we should stick to our strategic, our mercantilist interests, our geo-strategic interest. And the other point of view is that what we're here for is to advance democracy on earth.

The battle has been extraordinarily intense and it had domestic overtones throughout the last fifty years. But I think that with the Bush administration's strong adoption of rhetoric that is extremely similar, if not perhaps as eloquent as that of President Kennedy in 1960, and I say this in the presence of his closest collaborator and in my view the greatest speechwriter in American history, Ted Sorensen, who when asked, by the way, by Dick Cavett some years ago whether or not he had written the President Kennedy's inaugural address replied, "Ask not." President Bush's inaugural address while rhetorically far inferior to that great address in 1961, nonetheless carried very similar sentiments and this has caused an enormous debate among the Democratic party. Should we continue? Should we oppose it simply because George Bush proposed it? Or should we embrace it? My answer is very clear. I am delighted if President Bush wishes to ally himself with these values. I think that's great. I would like to see democracy promotion. And I'll get back to what I think that means in a moment. I'd like to see democracy promotion be a bipartisan issue. I'd like to move beyond the era when many of us were attacked for being naïve and woolly-headed because we supported these values.

Now, having said that I need to echo what Henry Kissinger said and echo it very intensely. Democracy is not just an election. What we saw in Iraq on January 30th was wonderful. It was emotional, it was moving, and it was heartwarming. But that election does not democracy make in Iraq. We don't know yet what's going to happen in Iraq. Will it be an election followed by corruption? Battles between the factions? We've seen

this in other parts of the world. Cambodia had a heartwarming election and it's a mess today. And that's happened elsewhere. So all the list of things that Henry Kissinger said, that he listed, as essentials of stable democratic regimes are central. And I think that as the Democracy Forum moves forward I hope it will focus on a lot more than just elections.

In any case, we honor tonight two people who have spent their careers standing for these issues: Republicans but bipartisan. It's a great honor for those of us on the other side of the isle to have made common cause with John Richardson and John Whitehead. And it's a great honor for me to have been asked to join you tonight.

Thank you very much.