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Texts of Remarks

by Hillary Rodham Clinton

President Vaclav Havel

Ambassador Madeleine Albright

Kevin Klose

July 4, 1996 in Prague

Following is a transcript of Mrs. Clinton's address as delivered at Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty headquarters in Prague today:

Thank you. Thank you President Havel. Ministers, Ambassador Walker, Ambassador Zantovsky, Ambassador Albright, Mr. Klose, distinguished guests, staff of the radios, and listeners across the Czech Republic, Central and Eastern Europe, and the new, independent states.

It is an honor to have this opportunity to speak to you on the fourth of July 1996. I am especially pleased to be in the Czech Republic with the United States Ambassador to the United Nations, my friend, Madeleine Albright. Ambassador Albright is a daughter of Czechoslovakia whose family was uprooted by war and repression. In the United States she found a home, and the opportunity to rise as far as her God-given talents would take her. But never once did she forget her roots. We Americans are better for her service, and so are the people of Central Europe and around the world who believe in the cause of peace, liberty and justice.

One of the ways men and women in this country and this region kept alive their faith in freedom before 1989 was through Radio Free Europe's broadcasts.

Today I am speaking to you from the new headquarters of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty in Prague. This itself is an emblem of the political, economic and social transformations that have taken place in Central Europe.

Not so long ago, members of an old Soviet-style parliament filled this room. Today hundreds of journalists report the real news from within these walls. Not so long ago, this was a place where ideas were suppressed. Today, it is a place where ideas are given life and a voice that delivers them from the heart of this young democracy to the Baltics in the north, the Balkans in the south, and all the way east to the Pacific Ocean.

Ask anyone who fought for liberty in Central Europe during the Cold War and they will tell you that Radio Free Europe was like a member of the family. I have heard of men and women who always placed their radios in front of a certain window, or on one side of the house, where the signal from Radio Free Europe came in the strongest.

I have talked to men and women who, for years, arranged their daily schedules around Radio Free Europe's broadcasts. President Havel has said that he and other Czech dissidents relied on Radio Free Europe to share their ideas with their countrymen and women. Were it not for Radio Free Europe, he has said, he might have spent more years in prison.

For four decades, Radio Free Europe unmasked the lies and deceit of dictatorship by broadcasting information about the world beyond the Iron Curtain and spreading a message of freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.

Now, Radio Free Europe has a new mission, but one no less urgent. It is helping to strengthen the foundations of democracy through news broadcasts, conferences about current affairs, and courses designed to promote an independent media in countries where a free press was silenced before. The United States continues to demonstrate its commitment to democracy by supporting Radio Free Europe's vital activities.

Today, Americans at home and abroad are celebrating our Independence Day, the 220th anniversary of our nation's birth. Throughout our history, America has represented an ideal of freedom, and of possibility and promise for humanity. Indeed, we are a nation of many different people, people from every corner of the world, but rooted in common values and hopes.

Our nation's story is of those values and hopes being realized. On our national seal is written: *E pluribus unum*. Out of many we are one - not just as a people, but in the democratic values that we cherish.

On this day marking America's independence, part of my heart is at home with my family and with the American people. But another part is here with you in Central Europe, a homeland to millions of Americans, a place where the principles of democracy have taken root, been nurtured, and now are flowering. I have traveled to this region on behalf of my husband to emphasize and strengthen the relationships between our countries and to celebrate your achievements in building strong democracies and dynamic market economies. I also carry a message of encouragement from America to people who might question the pace of progress or the pain of change. Perfecting democracy is a never-ending challenge, as my own country knows so well.

Over the past few days, I have had the chance to visit Romania and Poland. Now I am in Prague, one of Europe's jewels, where a Velvet Revolution peacefully buried more than 40 years of totalitarian rule in 1989. On Saturday, I will leave for Slovakia, Hungary, and Estonia. I only wish I had the time to visit every country in this region to see for myself the ways in which you are meeting the challenges of this extraordinary period.

Today, I would like to talk about the past and the future - a past that prevented old neighbors and friends from being partners, and a future that requires it.

For 50 years, a cruel and arbitrary line divided Europe. On one side of that line, people came together to contain the threat of Communism moving West. On the other side, tyranny and domination forced people to exchange their freedom for the false promise of a utopian ideal and a distorted sense of social stability.

Today, the Berlin Wall, as we know, is gone. There is no Iron Curtain. The line has been erased. In country after country, Communism has crumbled; democracy has come alive. The threat of nuclear war no longer hovers over us. Opportunities for peace and prosperity are greater than ever before. And the prospect of a new and even more dynamic civilization in Europe and the West is before us.

In Russia tens of millions of people exercised their democratic franchise by voting and opting to shape their future through peaceful, free choice. What a hopeful milestone for Russia and us all.

Yet at the same time, we feel the strains of growing global competition and scarcer resources. The rapid pace of change -- the superficial homogenization of the world -- inflames old tensions and weighs us down with new ones. In every country in the world, families are under greater stress. The gap between the rich and the poor grows wider. Even in countries with advanced economies, the social safety net -- education, health care, pensions, good wages and jobs -- is fraying.

The greatest threat to democracy today is no longer a Communist monolith with imperial designs, but volatile economic and social conditions that emerged with the collapse of the old regimes and the demagogues and dictators that can be generated.

These challenges are not unique to Central Europe but to democracies new and old. To meet them, the West needs to expand its democratic family by opening up the institutions that have served us for decades. But even as we do this, we must recognize that democracy is not just about institutions; it is also about the internalization of democratic values in people's hearts, minds and everyday lives.

Along with wider political, economic and strategic alliances, we must consciously develop an alliance of democratic values to guide us as we confront the unavoidable questions of the 21st century: Questions about how to balance individual and community rights and responsibilities; about how families will raise children in the face of pressures from the mass media and the consumer culture; about personal identity and work in an age of globalization, information overload and high-technology; about the roles of women in society; about how people will be able to preserve their ethnic pride and value their national citizenship; about how nations will protect their sovereignty while cooperating regionally and globally with others.

But how do we convey to ourselves, and especially to our young people, the values upon which this alliance is based -- the values of opportunity, responsibility, community and respect for human dignity?

We do it the way it has always been done best; by building and strengthening civil society, a term I borrow from social scientists and philosophers who use it to describe the countless daily associations and actions that weave together the fabric of democratic life. In the early 19th century, de Tocqueville observed that voluntary organizations, activities, philanthropic associations, had already become a hallmark of American citizenship and a distinctive part of our national life.

Civil society is the vehicle for our values, the way we convey who we are and what we stand for. And when we encounter the inevitable setbacks and historical bumps in the road, the alliance of values that fuels civil society is what will carry us through.

In the short time I've been in Central Europe, I've already met with people who are forging this alliance of values and building democracy from the ground up. Earlier this week, I met with teachers in Romania who are developing a new pedagogy that emphasizes civic participation and democratic values. I met doctors and nurses caring for children with AIDS and leaders of voluntary organizations who are training citizens to participate in elections.

In Poland, I met leaders of non-governmental organizations who are helping citizens protect the environment, improve health services, promote women's rights and strengthen the free press.

And here in the Czech Republic, another set of free and fair elections has recently taken place. And the most remarkable thing about these elections was how unremarkable they were. Candidates debated, people voted, ballots were counted, and political leaders sorted out the consequences to form a new government. That's what we call a democracy based on values in action.

In Slovakia, Hungary and Estonia, I will meet with people working to strengthen the role of minorities, incorporate women into the full life of their societies, promote an independent judiciary and free democratic institutions.

In many cases, America and Americans are supporting these local efforts. And what we are creating together is more than the training of nurses and teachers, more than the strengthening of an independent media, more than the cleaning up of dirty water and polluted air.

What we are creating together is an ethos of responsibility, caring and initiative that allows people to participate fully in the civic life of their communities and their countries.

We in America are also discovering that we have much to learn from you. As you -- the people of Central Europe --- construct democracy from the ruins of dictatorship, we Americans are reminded of just how precious freedom is, and what a stake we have in democracy's success around the world.

We also can offer, though, some lessons from our own experiences. The first is that democracy is a messy business that requires patience, hard work, flexibility and the acceptance of its inherent imperfections. For more than two centuries we Americans have been striving to perfect democracy and we will continue to do so but without any assurance we will ever fully succeed. Human nature guarantees that democracy requires constant nurturing and vigilance. But we can never waver from the struggle because nothing is more precious to us than the freedoms our ancestors struggled to preserve.

The second hard lesson is that democracy asks us to live peacefully as neighbors with people who are different from us and whom we may not even like. What most of us discover is that we share more in common than we think, and that we are stronger as a people if we overcome our superficial differences and unite around our shared interests and ideals.

And the third lesson is that democratic values must be steeped into our daily lives. President Woodrow Wilson, whose name graces the railway station and a boulevard near here, once said that "liberty does not consist...in mere declarations of the rights of man. It consists in the translation of those declarations into definite actions." Americans have taken that idea to heart.

Just last week, I was in Seattle, Washington meeting with a group of mothers who have formed a national organization to help fight crime on our streets and in their neighborhoods.

Community groups and civic associations across America raise money for their local schools, libraries, parks and hospitals. Nearly every town and city in America has voluntary church groups, Scout troops, sports leagues, book clubs, historical associations that act as mediating influences both on government and on the forces of a market economy.

Americans also come together when our values are endangered. As you may know, several dozen churches serving African-American congregations in different parts of the United States have been burned by criminals in the past few months. Our citizens have not met these acts of evil with silence or indifference. In nearly every instance, men and women of goodwill -- and all religious faiths -- have banded together to repair buildings and rebuild spirits in the aftermath of these anti-democratic hate crimes.

No country is free of purveyors of hate and fear. But the measure of a country's dedication to the values of opportunity, responsibility, community and human dignity is how it resists the forces of darkness and intolerance.

In this century, we in the West have traveled together with you down a long and hard road, with many setbacks and tragedies along the way. But you never relinquished your faith. And neither did we.

Ambassador Albright has told me the story of how in 1995, during the 50th anniversary celebration of the end of World War II, she visited the lands of western Bohemia, lands that were liberated by American troops in 1945. In every town and village she visited, the Czech people were waving American flags -- flags with 48 stars. The American troops had passed out the flags a half a century ago, when America had only 48 states. And these men and women in the Czech countryside had preserved those flags, held on to them year after year of Soviet domination, just as they had preserved their faith that freedom would finally come.

Freedom has come, and now it is up to each of us to determine what freedom will mean.

Last night, it was a beautiful evening in Prague, and I walked across the Charles Bridge. It was filled with young people, talking, laughing, listening to music. And I could not help but think that throughout Central Europe there were groups of young people doing the same.

But I was also reminded of the young men and women of earlier generations who lost years of their productive lives in prison or exile to make sacrifices for the values we celebrate today.

And I thought too of all the young people who fought and died for the freedom to form their own ideas, speak their own words, make their own decisions and dream their own dreams.

I cannot tell you what any of the young people on the Charles Bridge will do with their lives. But I know that it will be their choice, without fear or coercion from any ideology or government.

Many will make mistakes along the way. But it is our duty, having struggled so long to arrive at this moment of opportunity, to pass on to them a clear understanding of the values that will guide their choices as well as the decisions societies make. And that depends upon our own alliance of values being articulated, given meaning, taking root.

In President Havel's eloquent words: "we are not accountable solely to our party, our voters, our lobbies and our state, but in fact to the entire human race, including those who come after us, and that the decision on the worth of our deeds will ultimately be made beyond the realm of the mortals around us. In the language of today's world, this means nothing more than to harken, in our various dilemmas, to the voice that speaks to us from the depths of our conscience."

That voice is now free to speak. Let it speak. Let it speak of the values and ideals that brought us to this point and that should guide us now into the future that awaits.

May God Bless my country and yours. And may God Bless our common cause.

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Following is a transcript of introductory remarks by U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Madeleine Albright today at RFE/RL headquarters in Prague.

Thank you very much. As someone who was born in Prague, it is a great pleasure to visit the new headquarters of Radio Free Europe in this city. And you can only imagine what a special feeling it is for me to be here with America's spectacular first lady, Hillary Rodham Clinton, and to introduce her to Central Europe's spectacular first city.

It is a special privilege for this Czech-American to introduce the man who did so much to bring this historic broadcasting facility to the Czech Republic and who indeed has done as much as anyone to ensure the survival of Radio Free Europe in the post-Cold War era. That man is Vaclav Havel, president of the Czech Republic.

President Havel is known to RFE listeners. He was the voice of free Europe. He was a leader among those who dissented from Communist rule. He was an architect of the successful transition to democracy. He has been and remains one of the great moral leaders and philosophers of our era. And as President Havel knows so well, at the heart of freedom is a commitment to open exchange of information and opinion.

Communists sought to control those ideas and that information. But Radio Free Europe defied them. Those who advocate freedom believe when people are able to think for themselves, to make their own choices, to choose their own leaders and to express themselves politically, culturally and spiritually in their own manner, all of society will benefit. New and exciting ideas will find the soil fertile and grow. Life will be richer and we will find deeper meaning in our own lives and greater communion with others.

No institution has been more effective as an instrument for the full and open transmission of information than Radio Free Europe and no individual has been more eloquent an advocate of freedom or a more insightful instructor of freedom's responsibilities than Vaclav Havel.

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Following is a transcript of introductory remarks by Czech President Vaclav Havel today at RFE/RL headquarters. He spoke in English:

Thank you Madeleine (Albright). Nice to have you home. It is a great pleasure for us all to welcome Mrs. Hillary Clinton to the Czech Republic. I deem it an honor that she has accepted my invitation. Mrs. Clinton is esteemed by many in this country as a first lady who has filled this position with a sense of purpose and dedication. I am delighted that we shall hear her speak now.

The house where we have met for this occasion was once a symbol of the rule of totalitarianism over this country. Now with Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty as its occupants it has become a focal point spreading a message of freedom, peace and democracy to a great part of the world. It is significant that the voice of the First Lady of the United States of America will address us right here today.

Hillary, the floor is yours.

Following is a transcript of introductory remarks by Kevin Klose, President of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty:

Ladies and gentlemen, President Havel, Mrs. Clinton, Ambassador Walker, Ambassador Albright, Ambassador Zantovsky [Czech Ambassador to the United States], government officials, ministers, and distinguished guests.

On this Independence Day, 1996, the 220th celebration of the United States, we are also celebrating the second anniversary of the decision to move Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty to the former Federal Parliament Building here in Prague. We are deeply honored that Mrs. Clinton has chosen our headquarters from which to make an historic Independence Day address.

I am pleased to note that another greatly admired First Lady, Eleanor Roosevelt, broadcast a message of hope to the Soviet peoples from our New York bureau in January, 1958. And as Mrs. Roosevelt's address was carried to millions immediately, so Mrs. Clinton's address today will be carried eastward by our transmitters and satellite connections to our broadcast lands.

History has taught that democracy cannot live in an information vacuum. Indeed, a well-informed citizenry is essential for democracy and free-market economies to flourish. This powerful historic truth guides our radios each day. Our services in 23 languages provide accurate, objective news and information to millions of people across 11 time zones.

Citizens in newly emancipated lands can be freed from the past by the power of information itself to establish civil societies. The stakes are enormous. Civil societies that guard human freedoms across our broadcast region can guarantee a stable, peaceful future for all of Europe and the world. Our mission, to assist democratic change, to combat nationalism and racism, must not falter.

Thanks to the generosity and farsightedness of President Havel and the Czech government, matched by the wisdom and responsiveness of President Clinton and the United States government, we are here. We are proud to say to all, "Come to Prague."

Here at the radios you will find 350 Czechs and Americans, and men and women from more than 20 other countries, working in harmony and partnership to broadcast truthful information for the sake of our homelands and the futures of our children.

Thank you, one and all. Thank you, Mrs. Clinton, for joining us to celebrate our Independence Day.

Ladies and gentlemen, with great pleasure I introduce the United States Ambassador to the United Nations, Madeleine Albright.

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