

Center for National Policy  
September 17, 1998  
DC

PHOTOCOPY  
PRESERVATION

**REMARKS BY FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON  
THE CENTER FOR NATIONAL POLICY**

**WASHINGTON, D.C.**

**SEPTEMBER 17, 1998**

Thank you all very much. Thank you, thank you so much. Thank you, I am overwhelmed and extremely honored. Extremely honored to receive this award and extremely honored to be with all of you this evening. I must say that I have many thoughts and feelings running through my head and heart. But I want all of you to know how grateful I am for the commitment to public service, for the belief in this country's ideals, for the work that all of you do every day, and that this center has done. To breathe life into our commitment to building a better future. For our nation and our world.

I was watching that video and, besides being struck by my changing hair styles, I was thinking about all of the places I have been privileged to visit on behalf of our country, both with my husband and on my own, and often with good friends like Secretary Albright. And how honored I am every single time I am permitted, on behalf of my country, to go to any part of the world and to do what I can to convey to people everywhere what it is that America stands for, and what kind of world we want to build together. I want to thank, especially, my friend

Secretary Albright for her introduction. As you might have guessed from her words, one of the great gifts of my time here in Washington is my friendship with Madeleine Albright, and my admiration for her, and what she is doing for our country, continues to grow.

I'm also very grateful that two friends of mine, both of whom served our country so well during this administration, Ruth Harkin and "Mack" McClarty, who have agreed to chair this dinner and to be here with me. I want to thank Mo and the staff of the Center for the work you do every day, for the enormous effort that went into this dinner. I'm very grateful that members of Congress are here. I am very pleased that members of the Diplomatic Corps are also with us, and also many of you who are friends of the Center. I am especially pleased that Jane Muskie and members of the Muskie family are with us.

I want to add my words publicly to those that have already been said on behalf of Kirk O'Donnell. In the rough and tumble world of politics, his life exemplified public service. He brought great gifts to all that he did, especially making this Center an active and effective voice. He will be missed greatly. I know all of you who knew Kirk much better than I, will continue to support his family in the days and months ahead.

Now you might think, and I wouldn't blame you for thinking, that there needs to be some explanation, perhaps, as to what the connection is between America's leadership in the world -- our national security -- our

diplomatic mission, our future -- and the kinds of scenes you just saw in the video. I think in a way, it's especially fitting that we would gather tonight in honor of Ed Muskie, who had a special way of talking about and explaining the problems of the world. He carried out his responsibilities with great fairness, warmth, and intelligence, whether he walked the back roads of Maine or the corridors of power, he represented the best of America -- our optimism, our deep commitment to forge bi-partisan support for our national and international objectives. How fitting that he would be followed in the Secretary of State's position by someone who shared that optimism and commitment, who is equally devoted to making it clear what America's position is around the world, but also making it clear to Americans why we must do what is set before us to be meet the challenges of our time.

So, when I think about this great honor that you have given me, and I view this film that the Center has prepared, I see an unbroken line that runs from people like Ed Muskie to Madeleine Albright, but has roots much deeper than that, that certainly go back to the architecture of our foreign policy after the end of WWII, when our leaders, both Democratic and Republican, understood what America must do to help create a world that would be safe and secure, peaceful and prosperous for us. That unbroken line, as you I'm sure, have observed, has become somewhat frayed in recent years, partly because of historical changes

that have brought deep transformations in how the world is working; because of the impact of technology; because of the changes and the political structure, and so many other reasons.

We are living in what is called the post-Cold War era, hardly a descriptive term, but instead an add-on because we know we are no longer where we were, we just don't know where we are yet. And that poses great challenges to decision-makers because the world has changed so rapidly that we have to catch our breath and as often happens in a time of rapid change, there's a natural inclination to pull in a little bit. To think that maybe there is not much we can do in the world, that we should just attend to our business here at home. One of Secretary Albright's great gifts, which was eloquently described by Mack McClarty, is her unique ability to communicate with Americans about what is going on around the world, to put into down-to-earth terms all of those difficult problems that she has to analyze and deal with every day.

So as we stand here, on the brink of a new century, and as we are amidst of this enormous transformation that is occurring, there is a lot of talk about what must be done to create the conditions for the kind of stable world that we certainly want and that we have to take the lead in creating.

When my husband spoke to the Council on Foreign Relations on New York on Monday, he laid out both an analysis of, and prescriptions

for, the international economic crisis that we are facing today. Those prescriptions require us to think differently. They require our allies and our friends around the world to think and act differently in order to fashion remedies that meet today's problems, not yesterday's. So we all -- in the Center, and those of you engaged in the hard work in the Congress, and in the Administration, and in the private sector, in making sense of this new world, all have to take stock of where we are and where we need to be going, and that brings me back to the video. It brings me back to the issues that I have seen visibly played out in my travels, not only abroad but also here at home. It's certainly clear to me that much of what we have to do, is acquaint ourselves with what is actually going on in the rest of the world, to have a much better idea than we are able to get in our daily viewing of news or receipt of information about what is happening in countries far from our shores.

We have to understand people better. I think it is a grave misconception to believe that the extraordinary increase in local communications, the existence of the Internet with information being passed from place to place in nano-seconds means that we are all becoming alike. There are deep and important differences among us that must be understood and respected. We cannot treat the world as though it were homogenous. And even as the President spoke on Monday about our international

financial challenges, there are different and necessary changes that will have to be made that will not be the same in countries that are very diverse, such as Japan and Russia.

So, how do we once again take stock of the world in which we find ourselves and the one in which we are the indispensable nation? I believe some of what we must do starts with very simple efforts to understand each other and to realize that one of America's great gifts to the world is a sense of optimism and hope, matched by a commitment to providing the tools of opportunity that will enable people to solve their own problems and build their own lives. I am especially impressed by what I have seen of America's foreign assistance around the world.

Like many Americans, before I started living in the White House, I didn't know a lot about foreign assistance. I didn't know where it was going or what it was used for. I had, perhaps, more than the typical knowledge of that, but I was not well versed. I must say that over the past five and a half years I've seen first-hand how America's programs overseas have helped to fuel and further progress. I have been very regretful to see where we have not come forward with aid to help democracy flourish and provide opportunities for people that we have not played the role we could have played.

It is very troubling to me that for the past fifteen years, the foreign assistance budget of our country has steadily declined. Many of you are

well aware of the rather paradoxical situation that exists, where in public opinion poll after public opinion poll, Americans are asked if they want to help people overseas, if they want to provide not only humanitarian assistance but development assistance. In great numbers they answer, "yes." But then they're asked how much money do you think we spend on foreign assistance in the United States, and they say, "well, we spend between ten and fifteen percent of our national budget." Those of you who are familiar with our budget know that we spend less than one percent on our entire foreign assistance budget. So we have this unusual paradox of an American public that wants to see work that is done and is effective but believes we're already spending far more than we actually are. I wish that I could take every American with me to see the results that I have seen in place after place.

From Nicaragua to Uganda I have seen how small loans, subsidized and backed by our government through USAID, or our not-for-profit sector, have transformed the lives of poor women. Sometimes only a few dollars can dramatically improve the resources and living standards of an entire community. One woman in Bangladesh told me about how she borrowed money to buy a milk cow and -- by selling that milk--she bought another. Then when she had finally made enough money, she bought a rickshaw for her husband, so that he could become a taxi driver. I've met other villagers who are renting cellular phones in

places that have no phone service, and are connecting people in these remote villages with the rest of the world by renting out time on their cellular phones. Every time I see that kind of transformation I see two things that are at the root of our foreign policy; the promotion of democracy and the promotion of market economies -- not in abstract and theoretical terms, but down on the earth where people live and work in village after village.

In Bolivia, I met with expectant mothers at a primary health center run by an NGO with support from the government, again because of help we had provided. They had created a safe place for very poor women to get health care. They brought in their babies for immunization. They had prenatal check ups and -- because of this access to health care -- they were limiting the numbers of babies they had. And because their babies were healthier, they were living longer, and the women were understanding how they could be both better mothers and healthier by practicing family planning. Now it may seem a stretch, but to me, there's a direct correlation--a woman in Bolivia who was given the support she needs to receive the health care she requires, who determines based on the information she is given and the education she receives that she wants to limit the number of her children has a positive effect on our future lives together.

In Senegal, I visited a small village where education for girls, and women's adult literacy programs, had become a top priority. I watched how because the women were educated, they began to understand what they needed to do to deal with the environmental damage that was occurring in their village. They were able to go out and take barren land, with the help of some technical assistance, again indirectly provided through USAID, to begin to make that barren land productive, to grow products which they then sold, which helped support sending more girls and boys to school. They realized a very fundamental lesson that when you educate a girl you help create a better informed and educated mother and a potential leader for the community.

Would we look at these, what appear to be very small steps? Just think of aggravating them and think about -- despite all the rhetoric that we have heard filling the air waves since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of communism -- about free markets and democracy. We cannot expect people who have experienced neither to understand how to make that transition without a lot of help and modeling. We are learning now, with the global economic crisis, that we have to do a better job of demonstrating what it means to be part of a democracy, what it means to be a participant in a market economy.

Last year I went to Siberia. I went to outside of Novis Siberis, to a place called Agandamporado, where I met with three generations of a

Russian family. It was very instructive for me. The grandfather had been a well respected applied mathematician in the closed city, the closed academic center, where he had worked all of his adult life. His wife was a research librarian. They were both retired now. They had two daughters, both of whom were teaching English and they had a grandson. In talking with them I could see the generational tensions that are operating in a society like Russia's as they make this transition, that all of us hope and pray they can successfully navigate, and we're doing all we can to assist them. The grandfather, a very gentle looking man said, "I always yearned for democracy. I always believed in democracy," but he had none. "But now it makes no sense to me. I don't understand how it works. My pension is not paid, I don't have enough money to live on. My bicycle has been stolen. I don't know what the future holds."

One of his daughters broke in and said, "But daddy, don't you remember that we used to have to stand in line to buy butter, starting at four or five o'clock in the morning when it was available. Things are better now." And he said, "Yes, but all I know is that my bicycle is stolen and my pension is not paid." And then his wife said, "No, there used to be respect for learning and for education. Now all that anything matters seems to be what you can sell and there are many, many trying to sell and very few trying to buy."

If you have a chance to listen to people, you understand more clearly what is going on in the headlines that we see every day. You also see the opportunities for our country to be more involved in helping to change attitudes and provide opportunities to those who are making these difficult transitions -- from controlled economies to free markets, from authoritarianism to democracy. It is in our self interest to do what we can to help all of these people navigate this transformation. We also know that powerful, global forces lurk that threaten the gains that are being made. The bombings in Tanzania and Kenya were an attempt to send a tragic and evil message-- to destroy lives to intimidate America and Americans, to intimidate our friends, and to discourage people from pursuing freedom. The global financial crisis -- which is pushing millions of people around the world back under the yoke of poverty and affecting the pocketbooks and stock markets from one end of the world to the other -- is a grim reminder of our inter-connected and interdependent world. We cannot pretend, as my husband has said, that we can be "an island of prosperity."

Therefore, we have a critical challenge, and opportunity, to make the connections for ourselves and with others around the globe. We're doing some of that work, but I don't think we are doing enough of it. Even in the peaceful, yet incomplete, transition of the newly independent states of Eastern Europe, for example, stable market

democracy is vital to continued growth in that region and to our national security. Yet the USAID assistance programs that would help those countries push for market reforms and support democratic forces are in danger of being cut.

In Africa, we are investing in the rule of law to help prevent future genocides and instability on that continent, in supporting Radio Democracy, which will help strengthen fledgling democracies. Again, we face cuts in programs that are only beginning to have an effect.

Through AID's international disaster assistance funds we respond to both natural and man-made disasters world wide, helping to suppress raging fires in Mexico, promoting ethnic reconciliation in Bosnia, and so many other places. Again, the program and effort that is showing the best of America is in danger of being cut.

This is not the time to withdraw our involvement or attention for the world. If we care, as we say we do, that opening foreign markets is essential for American goods and services, then we have to do more than just talk about it. We have to fully fund the International Monetary Fund, including the President's request for additional \$18 billion. We also have to be clear that opening foreign markets for American goods and services is not just an economic undertaking. It rests ultimately on political change as we have seen in the last months. We have to do more to help people understand and promote democracy and rule of law, and

all of the issues that we know are critical to both political and economic success.

If we care, as we say we do, about making our country secure in the face of new threats, then we must pay our debts to the United Nations. Unfortunately, paying our debts to the UN has become entangled with an unrelated issue -- family planning overseas. I respect the deeply held views of both sides, but I have personally seen how our family planning assistance improves women's lives, and not only helps control the population increase, but also helps to reduce the incidence of abortion. We cannot continue to fail to pay our dues because of this unrelated issue.

If we care, as we say we do, about expanding and sustaining the world's community of democracies and strengthening our own security, then we must fully fund the foreign operations budget and the many foreign assistance programs, some of which I have mentioned, that demonstrate clearly America's ideals and gives citizens around the world a chance to relate to us, to be part of this great democratic movement that is sweeping the globe.

And if we care, as we say we do, about the quality of lives of women around the world -- who make up seventy percent of the poor and two thirds of those who cannot read or write -- then we should support investments in lifelines that work by micro credit and education.

I really do wish that our country would join the rest of the world in ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women.

Now, what we need to do, I think, is not just the government's to do. I've mentioned issues that require administration and congressional action but there is much that we all can do to promote an agenda of security, and stability, peace, and prosperity.

After the end of WWII, the creation of the Marshall Plan responded to a very real need, but it was not an immediately popular idea. Leaders like President Truman and General Marshall had the vision to look beyond the war time devastation and underlying hostilities, to a Europe in which regional cooperation would transcend adversarial boundaries and traditional rivalries. They believed large scale economic cooperation would facilitate post-war recovery which they knew was in the interest of long term prosperity, international peace, and the United States. It was U.S. leadership that was instrumental in creating the UN, The World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and of course, NATO. But it wasn't just President Truman and General Marshall and government officials who were able to bring this about. In fact, they had to enlist key constituencies around our country in a major campaign.

It was a difficult sell to go into small towns around America and say, "We want to use to your tax dollars to go rebuild Nazi Germany."

That was a difficult sell, but because they had listed a broad spectrum of leaders from the private sector, academia, foundations, and the like, they were able to get into small towns and civic clubs, and college campuses and make the case for American engagement and American leadership. That is what we need to do again today -- to convince Americans, including members of Congress that our foreign policy not only improves lives and strengthens the forces of freedom overseas, but that it directly affects the quality of life here at home--providing jobs, creating markets for exports, enhancing our security.

If we do persuade our fellow Americans that America's leadership is essential, then there will certainly be a greater commitment by the Congress to what needs to be done to fulfill that leadership. Working to engage Americans will not be easy. We have a lot on our plates and a lot of other things to occupy time in our lives. But I think it is an essential challenge that I hope we can meet, because it is not only a one-way street.

Yes, I believe that by investing in education in Uganda, which is engaged in a heroic effort to undo the damage of the 1980's and educate children who have never seen the inside of a school before. Or when we create opportunities for women in Latin American barrios to make a better income for themselves and their families. Yes, we are doing that because we believe it will have a ripple effect indirectly on the state of

the world and our self interest. There are also lessons we can learn from what is going on overseas because of what our foreign assistance has done. We saw on the video examples of micro credit and a particular group called FINCA. Well, because of the lessons of FINCA, from overseas, we brought FINCA to Washington, DC, where I met with a group of lower-income Americans right in our backyard, who felt they were out of the mainstream of the economic life of our country and they needed a little bit of help. They needed credit, they needed technical assistance, to know how to make a living for themselves and their families.

There is much we can give and much we can learn. So, I am very honored and very grateful to CNP, and to all of you who work with it, and all of you people in your individual capacities working on behalf of America's leadership and engagement around the world. I thank you for giving me this honor and I ask that each of us think about how we can promote the vision that would honor Ed Muskie's legacy, that would continue our commitment to be the leader of this new world that is being created, and that would help people in our own country understand better why investments in people a long way away is in the interest of them and their families, and our future.

I believe that we have within our grasp the vision of what needs to be done, if we have the will to do it. There are a lot of people looking

over our shoulders like Ed Muskie or Kirk O'Donnell, people who spent their lives trying to fulfill the ideals of our country. If we take up their challenge and we go forward together, I'm convinced that America's best days and America's leadership in the world will stand firm and confident in the 21st century.

Thank you all very much.