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GABRIELA DLOUHÁ

Head of Transition Promotion Unit, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Czech Republic

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues and friends,

The promotion of democracy in terms of “participation of citizens in good governance” and the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and encouragement of respect for these values is a foreign policy priority of the government of the Czech Republic. Democracy promotion has been a major priority, at least to a certain extent, in the foreign policies of all governments since the dismantling of Czechoslovakia’s former totalitarian regime. A variety of tools continues to be used in an effort to fulfill this task. Additionally, bilateral, as well as multilateral, political, diplomatic and other tools are aimed at enhancing security, stability and prosperity worldwide.

The manner in which the Czech Republic promotes democracy and respect for human rights focuses on the establishment and reinforcement of democratic institutions, the rule of law, the strengthening of civil society, the principles of good governance through education, and the spread of information, views and experience. Experience in the field of nonviolent resistance directed at a totalitarian system and the subsequent process of social transformation is a fundamental part of that process. The experience that the Czech Republic and other countries of Central and Eastern Europe gained in the 1980’s and 1990’s has become a source of new ideas, inspiration, and empathy as well as having initiated a sense of duty and responsibility.

Countries of priority interest to the Czech Republic concerning the field of transformation promotion are the European Union’s eastern neighbors, the countries of the former Soviet Union (Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine), the Balkans (namely Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro) and Iraq, where the first pilot projects of Czech transformation cooperation were successfully launched in early 2004. And last but not least, in the framework of the Transition Promotion Program, projects and activities have been implemented in Cuba and Burma, countries that cause grave concern with regard to human rights in today’s world.

The Foreign Ministry's Transition Promotion Program functions as a practical, institutional tool used to promote democracy and human rights through various projects with the cooperation of civil society organizations. This program mainly serves to pursue an ambitious foreign policy objective. Those who struggle for democracy, for a just and stable social system, seek to implement values compatible with our own. The goals of the Transition Promotion Program complement the goals of the Czech Republic's foreign development cooperation. However, the program also becomes a separately defined part of the policy towards developing countries, countries in transition, and especially towards undemocratic regimes that the traditional procedures of development assistance are unable to tackle given the same goal: to work for the ongoing or potential changes in these countries towards changes leading to democracy and rule of law, not to chaos, conflict and destabilization.

We see that practical experience in the field of classic and economic diplomacy as well as theoretical findings has proven that development assistance, humanitarian aid, and promotion of democracy should be three separate, mutually irreplaceable (although complementary) instruments of foreign assistance. The major characteristic of Czech transition promotion is systematic cooperation with civil society groups and non-governmental organizations while contacts with government authorities in recipient countries may be deliberately excluded. The key partners for the Czech government in the implementation of this program are numerous civil society organizations in the Czech Republic and their partners in recipient countries. They compete for proposals that fit into a strategic framework for government funds that are granted at the end of each year. In addition, there is a continuing dialogue between the government (especially the foreign ministry) and civil society professionals in foreign affairs. This aspect must be considered in order to reach a consensus about the basic objectives of foreign policy priorities, one of which is the promotion of democracy.

Among the program's strategies and principles are recognizing local ownership, guaranteeing donor coordination, close monitoring and ongoing evaluation of projects, and the concept of multi-tasking. A multi-task or multi-track approach allows for efficient parallel use of all available tools to encourage, support and motivate relevant groups in recipient countries to start on the road towards democracy. The international community uses a wide range of these approaches within their international organizations and bodies. The EU has a very complex set of instruments, starting with EU common positions and their legal implications,

principles of conditionality included in agreements with third party countries, and a recently reformed set of financial mechanisms for development and support of democracy and human rights worldwide. Every state also has several bilateral options that may be implemented in their efforts towards becoming a relevant participant in this field.

The Czech Republic also pays close attention to its role as an agent in supporting positive change where change is required. Our government's goal is to offer expertise, to combine all available instruments and approaches in the most effective manner possible, and to suggest new ideas if we identify a gap between existing possibilities. Therefore, at present, the Czech Republic is focusing on discussions regarding the strategic plans of the EU external financial instrument with regards to supporting democracy and human rights in their respective territories. We have identified such a gap that might be fulfilled by a more independent instrument positioned somewhere at arms length of European institutions.

The Czech Republic is ready to search for effective ways to support change, rather than identify the limits of it. Our government is ready to cooperate with the transatlantic community, with all partner governments, ministries of foreign affairs, and civil society organizations. Our desire is to be a constructive entity and a reliable actor.

PAULA SCHRIEFER

Director of Advocacy, Freedom House, USA

KEYNOTE REMARKS

It is a tremendous pleasure to be here today surrounded by so many people who have worked long and hard to bring greater freedom and democracy to the world—and who have succeeded in doing so, at least here in Central Europe.

I would like to thank the U.S. Embassy and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for organizing this important conference. Sitting here in Prague in this beautiful building, it is easy to forget that the very concept of democracy promotion is under attack in many parts of the world today.

This past fall, Freedom House celebrated its 65th anniversary in the pursuit of promoting freedom and democracy around the world. In these six and a half decades, we have thought a great deal about approaches to promoting democracy and we have tried to address the development of democracy in a number of ways:

- We started out in 1941 by putting pressure on the U.S. to make the defense of freedom and democracy a top foreign policy priority. This is still the major emphasis of our work.
- We later moved to analyzing the state of freedom around the world in various publications and reports and used this research not only as a tool to continue our pressure on democratic governments, but also as a tool to reach out directly to governments of countries with a democracy deficit and to make recommendations for change; and
- More recently, in the late 1980's and early 1990's, we started working directly with local democracy advocates, providing information, training, and occasionally financial support to facilitate their efforts to effect local change.

However, since I was asked to talk about U.S. support for democracy assistance more broadly, it would be useful to take a brief look at the evolution of democracy assistance from a U.S. policy perspective. While no U.S. President has talked about

the need to promote democracy more than the current one, the promotion of democracy as a U.S. foreign policy goal is certainly nothing new. It can be traced back at least to Woodrow Wilson and his argument before Congress to enter World War I to “make the world safe for democracy.”

Freedom House itself was founded to convince the U.S. that it had a moral obligation to enter World War II and help our European allies to defend their freedom. America’s entry into that war and subsequent investment in the Marshall Plan as well as its post-war reconstruction of Japan and Germany, were perhaps two of the most successful examples of American support for democracy promotion abroad. The Fulbright Program, although not explicitly conceived as a democracy promotion initiative, was established in 1946.

Groundwork for the promotion of democracy was laid in the late 1970’s during the Carter Administration, when human rights first emerged as a U.S. foreign policy priority and new standards were set for U.S. assistance including prohibitions against U.S. aid going to gross violators of human rights. Yet democracy promotion as a specific goal was not seen as an integral part of U.S. foreign assistance efforts until the 1980’s. After first backtracking on human rights, the Reagan administration then started putting a higher priority on democracy promotion. Reagan’s speech in 1982 at Westminster Palace marked the creation of the National Endowment for Democracy. The NED, along with its four core institutes affiliated with the two political parties, labor unions and chambers of commerce, has played a critical role in many U.S. democracy promotion programs. Also during the Reagan era, the U.S. government started directing official foreign assistance funds to promoting election and judicial reform in Latin America. At the same time, despite the administration’s objections, Congress mandated a program to support civil society and the struggle against apartheid in South Africa. Yet it was really with the fall of the Berlin Wall that democracy promotion became a mainstream part not only U.S. foreign policy, but of U.S. foreign assistance, which had hitherto been conceived as more technical and non-political in nature.

A rapid expansion in U.S. democracy assistance followed the collapse of communism, with explicit authority given to U.S. Agency for International Development to develop new programs aimed at helping former Soviet bloc countries to make the transition to democratic systems of government. This trend continued under the Clinton administration, under which USAID’s democracy

assistance programs grew by more than three-fold, increasing from \$200 million to \$700 million by the year 2000.

Since September 11, President Bush has continued and intensified the focus on democracy promotion. His second inaugural address noted that it was U.S. policy “to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in the world.” More importantly, aside from hopeful speeches by the President, democracy budgets have also grown—current USAID estimates claim that they are implementing over \$1.2 billion of programs designed to strengthen democracy. Additional funds are programmed by the State Department. In a major new approach, the goal of democracy promotion was extended to the Middle East—an area that has traditionally been outside previous democracy promotion efforts.

Yet what has all this democracy promotion accomplished? Is the world today freer or more democratic than it was in the 1980’s? According to Freedom House evaluations, the answer is yes. In 1976, we rated 26% of the world’s countries as free. By 1996 that percentage had risen to 41% and we currently count 47% of the world’s 193 countries as free. The precise role of democratization efforts in this expansion of freedom is debatable, but I think most people would agree that these efforts have contributed.

How does democracy promotion meet today’s challenges? In evaluating the potential capability of governments to impact the spread of democracy on a bilateral basis or through their participation in international bodies such as the UN or the Community of Democracies, I believe that there are four critical points to keep in mind:

1. First, while the adherence to democratic principles and the respect for human rights cannot be the only guiding foreign policy principle for any democratic country, they can and always should be a key principle.
2. Second, those who care about the promotion of democracy and human rights should never confuse a lack of experience or capacity in running democratic institutions and adhering to fundamental human rights with the lack of political will to do so.
3. Third, those engaged in the promotion of democracy, whether governments, private citizens, or NGOs, should not confuse the means and ends in democracy promotion.

4. Finally, the ultimate success of democratization in a country will always depend on the desires and actions of its people.

In regards to my first point that human rights and democracy should be a key foreign policy goal, the record of U.S. bilateral efforts to perpetuate democracy abroad, not surprisingly, is mixed. While the USA has always been a strong voice for the importance of democracy and human rights, economic and security interests often have trumped the promotion of democracy when it comes down to specific trade or foreign assistance policies. This is as true under the current administration, which has named the promotion of democracy as one of its chief foreign policy objectives, as it has been for past administrations. Thus, while the Bush administration held firm in demanding that the Uzbek government agree to an independent investigation into the massacre of civilians in Andijan, our president has since extended warm welcomes to Presidents Aliyev of Azerbaijan and Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan, heads of two decidedly “not free” countries lacking in both basic political rights and civil liberties. While the Bush Administration created the Middle East Partnership Initiative, a new mechanism for promoting democracy in the Middle East, the administration’s stance toward “strategic partners” like Egypt has waffled leaving Egyptian reformers disappointed and disillusioned even as the only serious political opponent to Mubarak remains in a hospital bed in prison.

The need to engage and sometimes offer carrots to the leaders of influential and/or resource rich countries cannot be ignored, however in the wake of the strong rhetoric placed on democracy promotion by the current administration, such compromises come across as hypocritical and undermine the concept of democracy promotion. Toning down the rhetoric, while setting terms for engagement for all relations that includes a minimum of high-level discussion of democratic deficits, would be more beneficial.

My second point focuses on the need to differentiate between a lack of capacity of governments to engage in democratic behavior and a simple lack of will to do so. We should never kid ourselves into thinking that any amount of governmental capacity building is going to help bring democracy to a country led by a government that is only interested in its own power. It’s not as if governments or their police forces or security services simply don’t know how to stop putting political opposition members in prison, beating up journalists, or rigging elections, they simply don’t want to. In this aspect, the U.S. approach to democracy promotion

has taken some important steps, at least in comparison to the EU and certainly in comparison to international bodies.

Not only does the U.S. support the provision of assistance directly to civil society organizations in many countries where the governments have no desire to behave democratically, but it also created a whole new funding mechanism in the Millennium Challenge Account that, for the first time, has tied the provision of assistance not only to economic need, but to criteria of governing justly. Thus, governments are penalized for corruption and lack of progress on political rights and civil liberties.

As to my third point regarding differentiating between the ends and means in democracy promotion, there is little doubt that the equation of the invasion of Iraq with the promotion of democracy has inflicted great damage on the support of democracy promotion both within other democracies and within the USA itself. While there is clearly a time to fight to defend freedom, the use of force to promote democracy has historically met with little success. Post-war gains in freedom in Eastern Europe, Latin America, South Africa, South Korea have mainly been achieved through peaceful means.

According to a Freedom House study released in 2005 looking at over 33 years of data collected through our annual survey of Freedom in the World, the manner in which a transition from authoritarianism occurs and the types of forces that are engaged in furthering the transition have a significant impact on the success or failure of democratic reform. Of the key findings to emerge from that study, one of the most compelling is that the presence of strong and cohesive civil coalitions was the leading factor in contributing to whether or not a country emerged from a transition with a greater level of freedom. Data also found that prospects for freedom were significantly enhanced when the opposition refrained from using violence.

Genuine and lasting democratic change takes place not only when led by local actors, but also when led by a broad coalition of local actors. Does this mean that democracy promotion is a waste of time? Certainly not. But it does mean that the means of promoting democracy does matter.

This leads me to my final point, that the ultimate success of democratization will always depend on local actors.

Governments often don't have the necessary patience for strategies that require long-term investments in people, but the reality of democracy promotion is that it doesn't easily fit into the election cycles of democratic governments. Programs like the Fulbright Program will not show immediate results, but they are absolutely essential in investing in the individuals who will ultimately be responsible for bringing reform to their own countries and on their own schedule.

Democracies can help to promote the spread of democracy to those remaining not free countries, but to do this effectively, they need to keep several points in mind. They must:

- Make the issue of democracy and human rights one of their key foreign policy goals
- Be willing to support the development of civil society in countries where governments are not truly interested in democratic development
- Remember that freedom and democracy are admirable and achievable goals and stop equating the invasion of Iraq as an example of failed democracy promotion
- Invest in programs like the Fulbright and other exchanges that in turn invest in the individuals who will ultimately be responsible for bringing reform to their own countries and on their own schedule.
- Be willing to support brave human rights and democracy advocates over the long term because it's the right thing to do, even though a transition from a repressive regime to a more democratic one may be a long way off
- Finally, they must remember that democracy in a large part of Europe was lost for over 40 years due to the unwillingness of democracies to stand together.

I am so pleased that the American Center of the U.S. Embassy and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have convened this important conference and I greatly look forward to the discussions that will take place over the next two days.

IGOR BLAŽEVIČ

Human Rights Department Director, People in Need, Czech Republic

I would like to begin by thanking the U.S. Embassy and the Foreign Ministry for bringing us all together. Before speaking specifically about People in Need, let me just make a few general remarks. We are here today to discuss the role of Central Europe, its new democracies and the promotion of democracy, and in so doing, we must address the following question: what is the specific, added value that new democracies from this part of the world can provide and are providing to democracy promotion worldwide? Certainly there are newly democratic nations that have transition experience and knowledge which can be of great value to those living in nations under authoritarian rule and striving to achieve democracy. Poland, Slovak Republic, Hungary and the Baltic states, for example, have readily shared their experiences and their proven effective strategies and tactics with people in other parts of the world. Clearly though, one obstacle that those hoping to achieve democracy must confront is the difficult issue of segregation from democratic nations. Established patterns and models for democracy however can help give inspiration and hope to those all over the world. Though today we live in a completely different technological era and knowledge gained from Charter 77 and the Solidarity era simply cannot be applied to our goals today, the efforts of Charter 77 and Solidarnosc continue to be such a huge inspiration, a huge hope for many people around the world.

As a dissident, I feel the most powerful concept is the simple notion of the “power of the powerless.” Take the example of one lone university woman, alone in her thoughts and without any opportunity or influence in her community. Or the example of Marta Beatriz Roque or Oswaldo Paya, dissidents who sit at home, barred from influencing the majority interests of the Cuban population. Belarusian democratic opposition is divided, losing momentum in internal struggles. The North Koreans have a nuclear weapon; dissidents there certainly have no political weight. I believe that People in Need, and citizens of the Czech Republic and those who come from this part of the world, derive legitimacy from our historical experience. Vaclav Havel and many others in this part of the world at one time in history appeared to be powerless, insignificant people with no political influence. There are certainly those who live today under similar circumstances who are

interested, ready and willing to claim their authority. Wherever these people exist in the world today in authoritarian and totalitarian environments, it is important to recognize that, far from weak and irrelevant, these individuals could have a huge political impact at any given moment. This is another important message that this region brings to the concept of democracy promotion.

Many citizens of this region also help influence the power of the people in struggling countries by sharing their own historical experiences. Members of foreign ministries, journalists and other such professionals are always willing to share their experiences or to encourage colleagues in Belarus, Burma and other such places in the world. Experiences outlining the transition process from a totalitarian system to a democratic one, with specific focus on political, economic and civil society, are invaluable. For those who have not lived under a totalitarian regime, it is almost impossible to imagine what it is like to live in a society where the political climate has suddenly changed from repression to freedom. Certain processes must begin immediately: the civil sector, in order to provide services and become a partner of the state, must first learn simple things, such as how to raise grants or run an organization. Thus, the commitment to sharing our knowledge with our colleagues in other countries is of key importance.

I am very pleased with our efforts in the last few years to follow the process in southern Europe, in the former Soviet bloc countries, since I believe that is where our expertise is most valuable. Central Europe today is engaged in helping colleagues not only in Ukraine, Georgia, Belarus, Central Asia and the former Yugoslavia, but we are also starting to become involved in the Middle East, in Africa, and in Latin America. Our approach as we enter into these new territories is a cautious one, and we are well aware that we are bound to make certain mistakes as we make our contributions.

People in Need began in 1992, established by a group of former dissidents, Šimon Pánek (a former leader of the Velvet Revolution) and some journalists who, already back in 1992, had an idea that the people of Czechoslovakia should not only be on the receiving end of democratic assistance, but should also be contributing to the cause of freedom and democracy in struggling countries and to those who are the victims of war and natural disasters. In 1992 our organization was just a small group of people occupying a space not even big enough to be called an office. Since then, People in Need has developed into one of the strongest Central European non-governmental organizations. Our organization has two main departments.

One works with development and cooperation as well as humanitarian assistance issues; the other is concerned with democracy promotion and human rights. As head of the democracy promotion and human rights division, I would like to speak specifically about my work. One of the things we focus on is direct assistance to politically persecuted individuals in specific areas and countries. Our interest in this pursuit is connected to our own legacy and experience. During communist times, various individuals traveled to the Czech Republic to offer assistance and support our dissidents. We feel, therefore, that it is our moral obligation to assist those who are struggling today, just as we were helped. We not only provide direct financial, medical and legal aid to politically persecuted people, but we also try to support dissident groups by providing technical assistance and information and advocating on their behalf.

In support of NGO and civil sector capacity-building, we organize training programs and study trips to the Czech Republic and provide small grants. Recently we have also become more involved in local democracy assistance programs by providing Czech expertise at the local authority level and assisting in the democratic transformation process. We have several programs which specifically support independent media and journalists. Our organization also arranges activities aimed at providing an understanding of the principles of Czech and Central European democracy through study trips to the Czech Republic, internships for young leaders, seminars and training programs in target countries. Additionally we publish our own study materials. Networking with other Central European and European NGOs who are working in the democracy field is another important objective. We are strong advocates of partnership between state and non-state actors in this field; the current relationship between People in Need and the Foreign Ministry as partners in the field of democracy is a strong one, and it is through our efforts that our organization was the first to achieve this type of partnership with the Czech Foreign Ministry.

Belarus, Burma, Cuba, the Middle East, Moldova, and Ukraine, areas in which we continue to be involved, are all what we call “challenging environments.” We believe that in such environments, it is our specific mandate to engage now as we have done before in Bosnia, Kosovo and other such places.

Thank you.

VÁCLAV NEKVAPIL

Vice Chairman, Association for International Affairs, Czech Republic

I am pleased to be speaking here today as a representative of the Association for International Affairs. I would like to start with a presentation on the Association and will follow with an outline of the challenges we face in the field of democratic and transformation assistance.

The Association for International Affairs recently celebrated its tenth anniversary. The organization has three main branches of activity. Our education department, which is dedicated to conducting educational programs, enjoys close cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Education. Currently we are organizing the Prague Model United Nations for 500 high school students; it is wonderful to observe them in their roles as diplomats. We believe these young people to be prospective candidates for careers in the NGO sector and think tanks. The second branch of our activities involves research. In 2003, we established a research center. The third branch involves activities in the field of transformation assistance, which is connected to both the research and education branches. We have used the knowledge we obtained through our work with Czech high schools in our transformation activities in target countries, such as Belarus.

Our ambitions are not as lofty as those of the People in Need organization. Our main focus is comprised of two specific regions, Belarus and Eastern Ukraine. Our projects in these countries and in the Czech Republic consist of seminars for NGO activists and high school teachers. The latter in particular, is an integral part of society that falls somewhere in between the system and the public sphere. Teachers have quite an influence and need to be regarded as important actors within the system. In addition to this focus, we also provide a website about European affairs in the Belarusian language.

Like People in Need, we also invite individuals to the Czech Republic for seminars or 3-month internships, teaching them about transformation, about failures as well as successes. We find that the younger generation is often more able to address mistakes in our transformation process than the generation that advanced that transformation.

I would like to talk briefly about two specific fields of special concern. In our efforts to communicate our experience with European integration, we provide the “European alternative” for Belarus and the Ukraine. As we learned in the transition process of the Czech Republic, and in fact in all the Central and Eastern European countries that have joined the EU, the transition process consists of transformation, democratization, and in the more advanced stages, accession into the European Union. This process not only stimulated our leaders to reflect more deeply on the current situation in the European Union, but also forced us to fulfill criteria necessary to achieve our goals and then to reflect how to proceed in the EU. The notion of Europe and the European Union is continuously misrepresented by the regime of Belarus and so we aim to properly represent it, focusing on high school teachers and the general public, including Belarusian NGOs and political parties.

The second part of our activities in those regions and in the Czech Republic involves NGO development assistance: sharing knowledge on how NGOs function and how to best utilize human resources under restricted conditions. These activities are conducted through internships here in the Czech Republic and also through seminars held in those countries.

In the last part of this presentation, I would like to mention several specific challenges we are facing in these countries.

The first challenge involves building information networks in target countries. Most foreign NGOs currently only communicate with key contacts in capital cities, and there is very little control over how information is shared, if at all, within networks and amongst local NGOs. This factor also influences the likelihood of an increase in the numbers of these elite, key members of society who accept our internships, receive support, and are then not willing to share their experiences due to their status as privileged members in their communities. Naturally this is understandable, but it is also concerning.

The second issue is very closely connected with internships abroad for people from target countries NGOs, political parties and their structures may lose their most important human resources during the internship term and, while these individuals need to be replaced during the time key personnel are out of the country, often this is not the case.

The third point that Western European and American NGOs should fully understand is the requirements of their partners. In my experience in Belarus, I realized that their needs were not actually clear or at all realistic. Needs should be based on dialogue. There should be active communication about actual, reasonable needs. We should engage in more specific discussion about our propositions, our experience and what we believe could be useful for their specific situations.

Two final points: As I mentioned in the first part of my presentation, we must learn from our mistakes, from the mistakes of our own transformation. After 18 years, we should be reflecting regularly and conferring on the issue of how our mistakes could be of value to others. Unfortunately the debate about our mistakes is not taking place with any vigor in the Czech Republic. How can we learn if we have no clear conception of what was done and in what way?

Finally, there is the question of the cultural aspect of transformation assistance. This concern applies to China and Burma for example. For countries which are more distant to us in terms of location, culture and history, we must take into consideration the specific needs and perhaps other kinds of assistance that may be required. What may have applied and proven effective in Europe and Eastern Europe may not apply elsewhere.

Thank you for your attention.

MARTIN PAŠIAK

Program Coordinator, Pontis Foundation, Slovak Republic

First of all, I would like to thank the organizers for putting together such a high-level meeting and for the opportunity to speak here today. Also, although I am the only representative of a Slovak NGO on this panel, my goal is not to present the whole spectrum of Slovak NGOs working in the field of democratization, and since I see rather sorrowful faces of the representatives of other Slovak NGOs, I am sure that they will add their own remarks after my presentation.

Even though I am fairly new to democracy work, I am very pleased to be able to speak to you today on behalf of the Pontis Foundation. My presentation will be divided into three sections based on the target countries with which we work, Cuba, Belarus, and Serbia. Since I am responsible for Cuba, I will start with Cuba. The main goal of our work with Cuba is to increase European solidarity and to provide humanitarian aid to the families of political prisoners. Since 2002, we have focused on activities on the island in addition to outside European and Slovak public awareness of Cuban human rights violations. Initially we supported Cuban dissident groups by providing materials which displayed indirect symbols of freedom. Later we started working with civic youth activists in several provinces. After the March 2003, crackdown, in which 75 civic activists, including independent journalists, intellectuals and trade union leaders were sentenced to prison terms of up to 28 years, we joined the greater international effort to help the families of these political prisoners. We started a public collection comprised mostly of individual donations from Slovak citizens and delivered those donations to over 30 families of political prisoners. We also initiated an adoption program of Cuban political prisoners among Slovak politicians and members of the European Parliament. In 3 years, we managed to collect over 650,000 Slovak crowns (around USD 25,000). We personally brought these donations to Cuba and gave them directly to the families of the prisoners.

We have organized many events and activities in Slovak Republic and other European countries to raise public awareness of the issues of democracy and human rights in Cuba. When the European Parliament awarded the Sakharov Prize to leading Cuban dissident Oswaldo Paya in December 2002, we organized his

visit to Bratislava. Later, when the Damas de Blanco (The Ladies in White) also received the Sakharov Prize from the European Parliament, we initiated a number of solidarity events, including a petition of Slovak women leaders' support of Damas de Blanco. We enabled them to travel to Strasbourg to receive the award.

As a member of the network of Central European and Latin American NGOs coordinated by the Directorio Democrático Cubano, we are now working to expand this campaign to other new EU member states that have had their own experiences with totalitarian regimes. In 2006, we organized the first public debate and press campaign on issues in Lithuania and Bulgaria. In Bulgaria, we helped create an NGO whose main goal is to work on human rights violations in Cuba.

We have also conducted new assessments in Romania and Slovenia. Both countries will weigh in on the EU policy towards Cuba in the near future: Slovenia as the holder of the EU rotating presidency in the first half of 2008, and Romania, as a large new member state with an active embassy in Havana. Romania also holds the special status as the country in the region with the most difficult regime change and transition experience in Eastern Europe. As Igor Blazevic of People in Need has already mentioned, their organization was the first to cooperate actively with the Foreign Ministry. I believe we were the second; with Dzurinda's former government in Slovak Republic, we established regular consultations between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the NGOs in Cuba. This policy dialogue contributed to the change of the Slovak national position during the 2005 debate in favor of the human approach advocated by the Czech Republic.

Additionally, we are working to maintain our progress in the face of the recent changes in Slovak government and foreign policy.

Serbia has been a long-term focus of the Pontis Foundation. Our primary objective today is to motivate youth, a vulnerable social group. We also work with local NGOs to ensure their institutional and financial sustainability through cross-sector partnerships. Recently we broadened our focus to include sharing the Slovak experience in European integration with our Serbian counterparts, mainly with the employees of the National Parliament of Serbia, the Skupština, and with young political leaders from democratic parties. After the successful mobilization of young voters in the Slovakian elections in 1998, we started working with the Serbian student movement *Otpor!*, which I am sure you are all familiar with, and shared with them our knowledge of the voting process that toppled the

Milosevic regime in 2000. A few years later, after the end of the Milosevic regime, as the country progressed in delayed transition, a time characterized by political instability, widespread poverty, the legacy of war crimes and weakened civil society, we remained focused on encouraging vulnerable youth and civil society outside Belgrade. In cooperation with local NGOs and municipal governments, we established two pilot youth programs. Later we progressed to provide direct assistance to local NGOs, focusing on reinforcement through institutional capacity building and nurturing their partnerships with local government and businesses in the towns of Central and Southern Serbia. In effect, we were responsible for building the framework of five NGOs from this region.

Recently we embarked on the transfer of Slovak Republic's practical expertise on the EU integration process to the Integration Committee of the Serbian Parliament and, in cooperation with the Belgrade Fund for Political Excellence, the involvement of young politicians in training sessions and seminars. Our newest project aims to support Serbian NGOs by helping to build civil society through use of the concept of corporate social responsibility. This branch of the Pontis Foundation conducts its activities mostly in Slovak Republic.

As I said, based on our experience, the strategic strengthening of the NGO sector and the sustainable development of the local community in Serbia, especially after many donors recently withdrew their financial assistance, could be facilitated by implementing new finance models, through forming strategic and self-sustainable forms of cooperation between the NGOs and the business sector.

Now to the third target country, Belarus. The Pontis Foundation has been active in Belarus since 2000. The rationale for our engagement with Belarus was based on the Slovak experience with a non-democratic regime during the communist era, and the specific path of Slovak transformation, which took place between the years 1994 and 1998. Building on our experience with the "get out and vote" campaigns in Slovak Republic, and then in Serbia in 2000, we currently focus on providing campaign assistance to civil society and youth organizations, as we did in the 2001 presidential elections. Since 2003, Pontis has been helping independent think tanks working within the restrictive environs of the authoritarian regime. Our main aim is to provide assistance in the development of alternative scenarios for Belarus' present, and for its future post-Lukashenko period. Therefore, the core of Pontis assistance lies in increasing the research capacity of the analytical community and in facilitating the communication of policy alternatives both to the general public

and to the representatives of democratic forces and policymakers, not only in Minsk, but also in the regions in and outside Belarus.

After the 2004 referendum that allowed Lukashenko to serve a third term and the 2004 parliamentary elections, we initiated the establishment of a Slovak Republic/Belarus taskforce, with the overall objective of establishing a framework for greater cooperation between Slovak Republic as a new member state and Belarusian democratic forces, and transferring policy reform know-how from Slovak Republic to Belarus. In the framework of the Slovak Republic/Belarus taskforce, two groups were established: the Civil Society Working Group and the Economic Reforms Group. After the 2006 presidential elections, we launched a special program to strengthen policy debate in the country and to increase direct support for those scholars, analysts and think tanks working in Belarus on economic, social and political issues.

Pontis gradually became recognized as one of the most reliable sources of information on Belarus in Slovak Republic. Pontis regularly issues analyses, briefs, civil society monitoring research and surveys which provide, in English, a look at key aspects of civil society and reform policies in Belarus. In this way, Pontis is actively shaping both Slovakian and European policy toward Belarus. Cooperation with EU institutions has led to the establishment of the Brussels-based Office for Democratic Belarus, which conveys vital support and assistance from our foundation to other organizations. Today the office is recognized as an intermediary between pro-democratic Belarusian civil society and European Union institutions.

In summary, the Pontis Foundation believes that civil society is the backbone of a democratic society. We try to draw upon our own Communist-era experiences in Slovak Republic but also our memory of the period that was referred to by some as a quasi-totalitarian regime. A major success of our project in Serbia is having coordinated Slovak NGOs with the business sector in Serbia. I believe that in the future we may be able to do the same for Belarus and Cuba. I am looking forward to further discussion on this issue. Thank you very much.

MARTA PEJDA

General Secretary, Grupa Zagranica, Poland

Since many of you do not know much about our platform, first I would like to describe briefly who we are and what we do. The Zagranica Group – Polish NGOs Abroad is a coalition of non-governmental organizations working abroad and/or with foreign partners. Currently we have 47 member organizations working in the area of development cooperation, democratization issues and global education.

The Zagranica Group was registered in 2005; it was initially established in the early 2000's as an informal structure. At the very beginning, the Zagranica Group was composed of mostly round table meetings of several organizations' representatives who gathered regularly to talk about their international projects, to share experiences and search for solutions to problems, and to organize ad hoc actions and discuss common policy.

The organizations involved in that first stage of Zagranica Group activity, 2001–2002, worked mostly on democratization programs in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, with chief emphasis on Belarus and Ukraine. In the following years the group was joined by many other NGOs from all over the world, which focused on areas of international assistance such as development cooperation and global education. These issues became vital to the Polish non-governmental sector and thus, democracy assistance and promotion became the charter of our coalition.

Democracy assistance and promotion, as I mentioned, has become a specialization within Polish NGO work, especially in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. The Zagranica Group member organizations support numerous activities in these regions, such as providing scholarships and study visits to Poland for young people, scientists and specialists; conducting training activities; courses and workshops for various target groups; re-granting to support local activities; publishing books and organizing conferences on transition issues, human rights defense and democracy promotion and sharing the Polish experience with regards to administration and education reforms. There are different target groups for all of these projects. In countries that are further along in the transition process, we are able to work with

local authorities, public servants and public institutions, while in Belarus we mainly address civic society organizations, independent mass-media and informal youth initiatives.

The Polish government's strategy for foreign assistance promotes this specialization in transition and democracy support: Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova and Georgia are mentioned as priority countries in the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs strategy papers, as outlined in a recently published report entitled "Solidarity, Development and Freedom. Strategy for Polish Foreign Assistance in 2007–2015."

After ten years of Polish democracy assistance and over five years of Zagranica Group activity, we are now able to evaluate particular projects and, even more importantly, to assess how our activities have influenced societies with which we have worked. This evaluation is a difficult but necessary task.

In 2001, the Zagranica Group adopted a Code of Conduct (outlined below), the guiding principles of Polish NGOs working abroad. While the group's project aims are of key importance, a focus on individual responsibility is also essential. Principle #3 below refers to individual standards and responsibility: "By our attitude we show that the idea of democracy and civic society is not just one of empty slogans." Democracy is in part defined by personally accountable behavior, standards that we apply to our work and our requirements from our partners.

In the 2001 version of the Code of Conduct and during meetings we conducted at that time, we mainly focused on how effectively we had conducted our work and whether or not we had managed to establish a sound example for our partners. Now, six years later, we must review our work and assess our impact. Have we managed to teach our partners more than basic technical methods of work? Are they more democratic than they were ten years ago? What is their understanding of democracy? Are they honest and responsible? How do they treat their own partners when Western donors aren't observing? Can we really be satisfied with our work; have we in fact made an impact? And has there been an impact on the mentality of individuals, or "individual democratization"?

Obviously it is not possible to give completely positive answers to all of these questions. And actually it does not matter whom we blame: totalitarian authorities, difficult circumstances, technical problems, bad luck, and so on. The "Soviet" mentality is a "collective responsibility" characterized by a lack of individual

responsibility, defective interpersonal relationships and faulty social behaviors, and a commitment to corruption, protection and profitable connections. These negative features are deeply rooted within the culture of Soviet totalitarian rule. How then do we react to these negative characteristics? How do we account for the consequences of such a mentality? Are we sensitive enough to these issues? In our relations with our Eastern partners, we must find the golden compromise between flexibility and principals.

I believe that democracy cannot exist if there is no basic foundation of strong interpersonal relationships and individual responsibility. If we accept corrupt behavior from our partners, we cannot promote democracy.

Guiding Principles of Polish Non-governmental Organizations Working Abroad

Code of Conduct agreed upon on July 11, 2001 and since then signed by more than 70 NGOs:

1. The people, organizations and local communities with which we cooperate in the East are our partners. As partners, they have the right to know and understand the essence of a joint project.
2. We do everything to ensure that our partners are independent. We do not patronize them and do not make them dependent on us.
3. By our attitude, we show that the idea of democracy and civic society are not just empty slogans.
4. Our programs are economical and reliable. We require this from ourselves and from others. We do not make partners in a more difficult situation bear the brunt of financing a program. We never make rash promises.
5. We do not participate in programs that do not lead to the realization of socially important goals.
6. In preparing to conduct a program outside the borders of Poland, we familiarize ourselves with the culture, history, language, customs, the bases of the legal and political systems, realities of life as well as the religions of the countries and peoples with which we will work. We build our programs respecting local culture and traditions.
7. We make every effort to conduct our programs in the language of the participant. We limit the use of international languages.
8. We care about the safety of our partners. Working in totalitarian countries, we always remember that it is mainly the local activists who bear the risk.

9. We build understanding across borders. For us, the citizens of Belarus, Lithuania and Ukraine are the hosts in their countries. We want to support them in their activities towards establishing democracy, independence and a strong economy in their countries.
10. Working abroad, we try to create a good image of Poland. Whenever possible we maintain contacts with Polish diplomatic posts.

PÉTER RADA

Program Officer, International Centre for Democratic Transition, Hungary

WHAT DOES DEMOCRACY PROMOTION MEAN FROM A SUBJECTIVE HUNGARIAN POINT OF VIEW?

Within the past 17 years, there has been a change in the Central European security environment. Former enemies have become allies within the framework of NATO. Though Central Europe has not, in the recent past, been threatened militarily, we cannot neglect military issues. Although the security environment is currently stable and large-scale hostilities are quite unlikely, the new challenges of the twenty-first century are evident: terrorism, the proliferation of WMD, the failure of states to politically develop and thrive, and weak democracies.

The “new world order” gives us more opportunity to cooperate with each other, but along with positive interaction, we also experience greater risk and are faced with more complex issues due to the increased number of actors involved: international organizations, transnational companies, and destructive elements as well, such as terrorist groups and international criminal groups. International economic relations are characterized by interdependence and connectivity. The process of globalization refers to the term “distant neighborhood,” in which physical distance is no longer an impediment to economic interaction. While in the Western world, the reduction of the power of state authority is a key issue on the agenda, states in the Third World still need to make it a priority.

The understanding of the complexity of global issues has become greater since the demise of the bipolar world system. The simultaneous terrorist attacks of 2001 forced the realization that traditionally stronger states are not secure from certain actions of weaker states. The problem of failed states is emerging on the global policy agenda. Failed states are born in a conflict situation and the international community has the responsibility to help avoid the failure. Due to the global ripple effects of state failures, it is of major importance for the international community to find effective tools to help manage the security of post-conflict situations.

It may be easier to understand why Hungary plays a role in conflicts not directly associated with Hungarian interests when we consider the issue within the context of the new international system. We must keep in mind that membership in global or regional organizations, such as NATO or the EU, implies not only enjoyment of rights but also dedication to duty. Many of these obligations, such as the provision of troops to Afghanistan, are not solely a result of membership—the threats of an unstable regime there would need to be addressed anyway—but membership in NATO and the EU allow us to be able to influence the decision process and present our point of view before a decision is made, i.e., before an intervention.

During the Kosovo War, Hungary's location was strategically important. Hungary's position in NATO during the last few years however has declined and, as a consequence, Hungary must consider focusing on new, emerging areas of concern, such as conflict management. Hungary views this interest as parallel to its ambition to support peace-building operations. In order to reach the government's goal of stationing 1000 troops outside the Hungarian border, Hungary must modernize its army.

The question of peace-building operations is a topic on the Hungarian agenda that was recently reviewed. On one hand, Hungary could demonstrate its enthusiasm for NATO by sending soldiers to faraway conflicts. Such a move would be considered proof of our intention to contribute to common security instead of simply taking advantage of other countries' work in this area. On the other hand, the topic of Hungarian participation in conflict management engenders intense domestic debate within our political community.

Democracy promotion, however, seems to be a solution that is beyond debate. Promoting democracy is a very important tool in the development of post-socialist countries. Hungary and, of course, the other countries in Central Eastern Europe, went through a long transition period in dealing with the challenges of building democratic institutions. While we possess the institutional knowledge of the democratic transitional process, we still do not know exactly how to fully transfer the concept. First of all, we must deepen our understanding of the problem of state failure. The Hungarian Foreign Policy Institute has begun a study project aimed at understanding the particulars of our state failure in 2005. The International Center for Democratic Transition (ICDT) was established mainly to allow Hungary to share its knowledge with other countries in transition. The ICDT focuses on gathering the experiences of states that have participated in the democratic transition process

and then sharing those facts with those who are determined to follow the path towards establishing a democracy.

HOW TO PROMOTE DEMOCRACY?

The countries of Central Europe already know that democratic transition means democratic state-building. The very nature of state-building is a complex process with at least five dimensions. In my short presentation I will focus on this question: How can Hungary contribute to democratic transition in target countries?

1. SECURITY

A secure environment is a prerequisite for democratic transition, since without it there is no hope of building a sustainable democratic institutional system.

Hungary has taken part in peace support operations with military and civil personnel and therefore actively contributes to the preservation of peace and stability. I have to mention here that Hungary, like many other post-socialist countries, does not have either the financial means or the military experience to take part in intensive military operations. For this reason, we must concentrate on military-civil cooperation. The results of the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) in Afghanistan clearly show that civil engagement has the same importance as military operations. As you may know, Hungary has led a PRT in the Baghlan province since last October. The main task of this group is to establish a secure environment in order to further development. The core tasks are the rebuilding of the basic infrastructure, basic educational facilities and basic health care. I cannot emphasize enough that without security, other efforts to promote democracy are useless or can even worsen the situation.

2. BUILD LOYALTY TO THE DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION PROCESS

This is a key factor since democracy promotion cannot include military coercion. Democracy should emerge from civil society. This dimension is often mistakenly called “nation-building,” however no society can be forced to transform into a nation. Despite this fact, there is a need for cohesion within society that should manifest itself vis-à-vis democratic development.

ICDT is launching more projects to strengthen democratic political culture by offering the opportunity to prominent individuals to gain insight into the development of political rights and of the civic voice of the different societal groups in Central Eastern Europe that have emerged in the last 16 years. It is also very important to educate and train potential democratic leaders by transferring firsthand experience gained in

the process of building a civil society in our region. Finally, we have to keep in mind that sustainable democratization can be achieved only if the rights of all who are affected by the transition are ensured in the long term.

3. BUILD THE INSTITUTIONS OF RULE OF LAW

The introduction of new legal institutions at the very outset of transition determines a country's path forward. Sustainable development and democratization can be ensured only under circumstances where institutions of rule of law exist, to include an effective court system, an ombudsman component and an effective police force. These institutions are crucial as they serve to protect the people against the state itself.

The new ICDT program “Sustainable Democracy: Protecting the Rights of Vulnerable Groups” will introduce new legal procedures. The three main target countries are Mali, Mongolia and Morocco. The project will aim to enhance democratic dialogue in these target countries by increasing the understanding of legal institutions and policies designed to protect the rights of vulnerable groups. The target country representatives will also learn about direct governance approaches, such as minority self-governance. Throughout the events, participants will discuss how similar mechanisms can be used effectively in target countries and how such mechanisms can be used to foster democratic dialogue among marginalized groups. We must keep in mind that sustainable democracy can be achieved only if the rights of all who are affected by the transition are ensured in the long term.

4. FUNCTIONING DEMOCRATIC MECHANISMS

The phrase “democracy export” is a rather complex and often misleading concept. In fact, it does not refer to simply forcing democratic elections, but rather involves institutional know-how and the export of liberal democracy. It regards not only free and fair elections, but also the separation of powers and the protection of the basic liberties of speech, assembly, religion and property. If a country is able to hold multi-party elections, which is in and of itself a democratic notion, it is in fact a functioning democracy only when multi-party elections lead to “good governance.” A “good government” seeks to protect the individual autonomy of the people with dignity against coercion, regardless of what the source of that coercion is: the church, the interests of the majority of society or even the state itself.

Rather than aiming to promote democracy in general, ICDT sets more specific, concrete and pragmatic goals for itself. We concentrate on democratic transition

as a process. As we have seen, in both historical and contemporary examples, this lengthy process is varied and difficult and has many potential pitfalls. Rather than handing out manuals on how a democracy should be built, we share the experiences of others who have been through the transition process, so that those who plan to embark on this difficult path in the future may learn from others' successes as well as their failures. In this regard, ICDT plans to build upon the firsthand experiences of countries that have recently experienced their own transitions, such as those of Central and Eastern Europe.

5. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Central European experiences helped to illustrate that transition of democratization and economic development go hand in hand. Economic development is the material foundation for a sustainable democracy. Economic transition has a very important role to play in moderating the political atmosphere and rolling back state control. The countries of Central and Eastern Europe, which have undergone this process in the relatively recent past, have ample expertise to offer a prospective transition to a market economy.

I am personally convinced that Central European examples of transition can help other target countries. We experienced a very difficult transitional period when the method of trial- and-error was the only way to stabilize, liberalize and privatize the economy. Transitional democracies can surely benefit from the past experiences of others and by so doing, can be better prepared to forge ahead.

As a member of the “developed world,” Hungary has a duty to help less fortunate societies. The International Development Cooperation (IDC) is the institution that provides official Hungarian development assistance. This institution is under the coordination of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and has granted economic aid since 2003. The main target of IDC is Serbia, which receives approximately 10% of the assistance.

CONCLUSION

Building a democracy is a long and exhausting process. Hungary and other post-communist states not only have the opportunity but the duty to help countries in transition by sharing the knowledge that we have developed.

In the 18th century, Edmund Burke wrote that real wisdom lies in institutions. Countries in Central Europe have recently experienced democracy building, which

means, in a Burkian sense, we possess the institutional wisdom of transition gained from that experience. Despite this fact we, as democracy promoters, must always keep in mind that the process is long, exhausting and multidimensional.

MIROSLAW SYCZ

Democracy and Transformation Support Team,
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland

FUNDING DEMOCRACY PROMOTION AND ASSISTANCE FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF THE POLISH GOVERNMENT: STRATEGIES FOR THE FUTURE.

I. GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE POLISH AID PROGRAM

Poland's aid is delivered via three main channels, each managed by a different government institution:

- Financial aid in the form of preferential credits, foreign debt relief and co-funding of the operations of international financial institutions. Responsible: Ministry of Finance.
- Educational aid through scholarships for students from poor countries studying in Poland. Responsible: Ministry of Science and Higher Education Institutions.
- Development assistance (including technical assistance) and democracy support in the form of projects as well as humanitarian and multilateral aid. Responsible: Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Under the strategy for Poland's Development Co-operation, Poland's aid system is coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Since September 2005, Polish aid has been handled at the MFA by the Development Co-operation Department, which includes the Democracy and Transformation Support Team.

II. THE ISSUE OF DEMOCRACY SUPPORT IN THE POLISH AID PROGRAM ADMINISTERED BY THE MFA

The Polish aid program focuses on democracy support and the development of civil society. Expanding democratic space is an important goal of this program. The program concentrates on mechanisms for observing human rights, civil liberties, freedom of speech, rule of law, and rules of good governance in all countries in which a lack of attention to democratic objectives restricts the development of these countries.

A specific deficit of democracy is a prerequisite for rendering Polish assistance under certain conditions. On one hand, we are rendering assistance to societies that are functioning under a dictatorship (as in Belarus). On the other hand, assistance is provided to countries in which political systems have elements commonly acknowledged as democratic, yet their ability to function is impaired by corruption, oligarchization (as in Ukraine), the lack of open media, the limitations of poor education or organized crime (as in Russia).

The idea of democratization in the Polish aid program boils down to the popularization of democratic values and free market rules, the transfer of the Polish transition experience from a totalitarian system to democracy, and to the launch of civic activities in the socio-political sphere. Thus, the expansion of democracy as encouraged by the Polish aid program does not impose our ideas or interests on the country which receives the assistance. On the contrary, we provide alternative models of functioning for a country and its society, informing citizens about their right to make independent decisions about their future and to support initiatives undertaken by pro-democratic circles.

III. FORMS OF POLISH ASSISTANCE IN THE AREA OF DEMOCRACY SUPPORT AND THE CIVIC SOCIETY DEVELOPMENT

Polish activities in the area of support of democracy and the strengthening of civil society focus on the following issues:

- strengthening civil society structures
- promoting freedom of speech and the access to independent information
- supporting the process of democratic socio-political and economic change
- popularizing the observance of human rights and civic freedoms
- effectively conveying the lessons of the Polish experience of system transition
- rendering special assistance (material, financial, legal and in the form of scholarships) to individuals repressed for their political activity

Each of the countries indicated (Belarus, Ukraine, Russia) is at a different level of advancement in internal democratization processes. This fact implies certain limitations with regard to the freedom of Polish activity in the area of democracy promotion. Belarus serves as the extreme example.

IV. PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS FOR BELARUS IN THE AREA OF DEMOCRACY SUPPORT IN 2006

1. SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM IN SUPPORT OF EXPELLED STUDENTS

The Polish Government established the Kalinowski Scholarship Program in response to Belarusian repression towards students involved in political activity who were expelled from higher education institutions. Approximately 245 students have participated in this program. They have or are currently studying at state-run and private higher education institutions in Poland.

2. MEDIA PROJECT: RADIO AND TELEVISION

As a result of the solicitation of proposals from NGOs to work within the framework of the MFA's media project, an NGO was selected to work with Racja Radio (based in Poland). The goal of this project is to give citizens of Belarus access to independent information on various events and on developments in Belarus, Poland, Europe and other countries.

An agreement between the MFA and Polish Public Television (TVP S.A.) will be signed in the very near future. It acknowledges cooperation in the establishment of a TV Belarus Channel. Thus far, two editions of a training course for Belarusian journalists have been financed. These journalists will commit to cooperation with Television Belarus which is currently being established.

3. SPECIALIZED TRAINING COURSES

In 2006, the MFA financed the Strategic Economic Needs and Security Exercise (S.E.N.S.E) training. As a rule, this training is intended for representatives of medium and senior-level government administration, legislative authority, representatives of business associations and non-governmental organizations. It consists of two parts: seminars and computer simulations during which participants can perform in a virtual setting. The project is based on software developed by the U.S. Institute for Defense Analyses. In 2006, 73 members of the Belarusian opposition were included in this training.

V. PRINCIPLES OF POLISH AID ASSISTANCE IN THE AREA OF DEMOCRACY PROMOTION

Democracy support has been and will remain a permanent part of the Polish aid program. Development assistance activities that are conducted exclusively within the area of economic or democracy development are not sufficient. Both types of

assistance are complementary and are aimed at achieving one goal. Democracy and a free market constitute a certain integrity. Contrary to some opinions, long-term economic development does not exist without these two elements. Economic rules facilitate a gradual expansion of civic freedoms and of the development of democratic institutions even in countries that have decided to establish a free market without democracy.

Naturally, the majority of Polish MFA attention in the area of democracy support is directed towards the east. We focus on countries close to us geographically, historically and with similar cultures, offering our experiences in democracy building and in the area of Euro-Atlantic integration. Hence, Belarus and Ukraine were the priority countries for Polish aid in 2006 and remain the largest Polish aid recipients in 2007.

And finally, there cannot be one single policy directed toward all countries experiencing democracy transition problems. Every activity in support of democracy in a specific country should be preceded by a profound and thorough analysis of its socio-political and economic situation and adjusted to its historical and cultural background.

VI. EUROPEAN DEMOCRACY AND SOLIDARITY FUND

At this point, I would like to mention the European Democracy and Solidarity Fund, a new project under discussion by the Czech Republic, Denmark, Lithuania, Poland, Great Britain, Hungary and Sweden.

In our opinion, a special fund should be established that would support all initiatives aspiring to establish civil society as well as the development of democracy. The fund would be a complementary and strengthening mechanism of the EU democracy support policy, focusing on assistance to the countries of Eastern Europe, South Caucasus and Central Asia, however it would also reserve the right to prioritize based on geographical interests, retaining an open formula for the fund. By establishing this fund, we affirm our commitment to seeking a new intergovernmental tool to promote democracy.

ARISTOTELIS BOURATSIS

Head of Unit, EuropeAid Cooperation Office, EU

The European Union today fosters the integration of a number of organizations, including NGOs and foreign ministries, and also allows for many varied points of view to be heard in what is now a democratic Europe. Human rights and democracy are a part of the European identity and essential to European integration.

In the 1970's and 1980's, Greece, Spain and Portugal emerged from dictatorships to joined a new group of European states, one that did not form a union but had high hopes for economic development and accession. Austria, Sweden and Finland made a relatively smooth accession transition, but it was nevertheless difficult to manage. Prague, Bratislava and Warsaw are excellent examples of successful transitions and today enjoy full membership in the EU. One important concept that has not been widely discussed however, is the need for consolidation. Another is the necessity to observe other nations that have been successful in the process of democratic development. The EU has been observing such communities since the 1960's.

A few days ago we celebrated the 50-year anniversary of Europe in Berlin and are currently celebrating 47 years of development policy. Europe today represents 55% of ODA in the world.

Democracy promotion and human rights issues require a tremendous amount of funding. As we all know statistics can be represented to express almost any results one wishes to convey, but statistics from the OECD during the period from 2000 to 2004 show that the EU 15, which refers to monies from member states, spent about USD 9.5 billion in support of civil society. The European Community, member states managed by the Commission, contributed USD 4.5 billion. Therefore, during this time, USD 14 billion was spent for strengthening civil society and promoting human rights in the world. During this same period, the USA spent USD 10.6 billion, from which USD 5 billion was spent in 2004; Japan spent USD 400 million, and Canada spent USD 1 billion. These have been the major donors in the last 4 to 5 years in the field of civil society.

It is not always clear which areas benefit most from contributions, but in Europe we feel a relative sense of overall satisfaction: Europe is relatively comfortable, and monies from European taxpayers have aided in the prosperity of other nations in other regions of the world. The EU has recently established a 7-year budgetary framework called “financial perspectives.” Before establishing the financial perspectives for the period 2007 through 2013, there was extensive discussion within the EU about how much funding should be allocated to the development of external relations. Once a decision was made, a difficult question remained: how would the money be appropriately distributed within the external policy framework? It was then determined that funds would be distributed to assistance in seven areas of interest, including development cooperation, enlargement, neighborhood policy and human rights, and democracy. Development cooperation, enlargement, and neighborhood policy would receive about € 11 billion and the instrument for human rights would receive approximately € 1.1 billion. Within the sector policies, monies would be spent in the areas of democracy promotion, capacity building, and so on.

Finally, I believe the multiplicity and diversity of actors, NGOs, foundations, trade unions, churches and the like, must be constantly cultivated. The multiplicity and diversity of the Commission, member states, ministry offices, regions, and cities must be properly appreciated to effect the best results.

A final remark: as you are well aware, we are constantly working on common foreign policy objectives. Up to the present, our policies in such areas as development and human rights have not included any common foreign policy objectives. The reality of the EU agenda is that we continue to address a variety of difficult issues. It is vital for the EU to encourage cohesion and understanding among all members. Some feel that certain member states are more experienced and therefore better equipped to take a greater participatory role, however a large majority of the member states agree that, while not all issues can be solved in the European arena alone, cohesion and mutual, complementary involvement and understanding should be a fundamental part of the foundation of the new financial perspectives.

Thank you very much.

ROEL VON MEIJENFELDT

Executive Director, Institute for Multiparty Democracy, the Netherlands

INTRODUCTION

Let me first thank the organizers – the U.S. Embassy in Prague, the Czech and Slovak Fulbright Commissions in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Czech Republic – for organizing this important and timely conference on the European approach to democracy building. I am very glad to see so many friends my organization, the NIMD, has met over the years within Europe and in the field. I am grateful and privileged to have the opportunity to address this meeting and to engage in discussions on a topic—democracy promotion—that I believe deserves more attention in foreign policy circles within the European Union, its member states and their civil societies.

Why? I believe that Europe is at a historic threshold in which it will either take up the challenge of assisting the process of democracy building in third partner countries, in recognition that it will ultimately serve Europe’s best interest to live in a world of democracies, or will fall back satisfied with the achievements of consolidating the former East and Central European countries, which have transitioned peacefully to democracy, as new members of the expanded EU club.

That in itself has been a milestone of historic proportions as is often acknowledged. However, if Europe fails to learn the lessons of supporting transitions and consolidating democracies, to move these processes forward to other parts of the world as a core objective of its foreign policy, it will send a message of hope to autocracies that have recently gained ground on the world stage and a message of abandonment to those struggling under repressive circumstances to support democracy.

There are so many people around the world with high expectations for partnership with Europe in the increasingly hostile international environment that, despite the many internal EU challenges to find ways to move forward with its institutional reform process, Europe should assume its natural vocation of recognizing that democracy is the basis for prosperity and peace.

As a result of this workshop, I hope we have a better understanding of the distinctive European approaches to democracy building in societies facing a post-conflict situation, of democracy promotion in countries where democracy has not yet taken hold, and about approaches in assistance to fledgling and emerging democracies.

PART I: BUILDING A EUROPEAN AGENDA

A little over two years ago we organized a conference entitled Enhancing the European Profile in Democracy Support in The Hague that resulted in the The Hague Statement. The conference was the positive response to what turned out to be a catastrophe, the invasion of Iraq under the pretense of causing a regime change to advance democracy. As a result, some of us felt that it would be appropriate to get our own house in order as Europeans, and start seriously working on enhancing European operational capacity and approaches. The Hague Statement defined what may be referred to as a specific European identity in supporting democracy. It distinguished seven dimensions and concluded that Europe has a lot to offer in the area of democracy support. Secondly, the statement set out a number of suggestions for the European architecture in democracy support. Two years down the road, significant progress has been reported although much still needs to be achieved. There is no reason for complacency.

The conference argued that, whereas democracy is the cement with which Europe has solidified its stability and prosperity, there can only be consistency if democracy support becomes a core pillar of EU foreign policy, a foreign and defense policy that a remarkable and, over the years, constant 67% of the European population wants to see expanded.

Consultations with the Council and transatlantic dialogue between the EU and USA resulted in the first policy paper on democracy promotion produced in July 2006, under the title “Food for Thought.” The paper is an excellent introduction to the theme of democracy promotion and has subsequently been discussed in various meetings within the Council without, as I understand, having made specific progress to date.

At the 50th anniversary of the EU last weekend, the Berlin Declaration (which was kept secret until the very last minute) referred for the very first time to democracy promotion as an objective of its external policy. The sentence in this short statement reads: The European Union will continue to promote democracy, stability and prosperity beyond its borders.

I am sure we owe it to our German friends present here today that the reference to democracy promotion has been included as a core objective of EU foreign policy! Obviously, at this time, this objective is only a statement on paper and we realize that the debate within the council has not yet gained momentum, but it can and should be an important reference to engage the Council more proactively in enhancing the EU's profile in democracy support.

Secondly, the Commission. In the new financial perspectives 2007–2013, an external assistance package of around € 70 billion and with € 22.6 billion under the European Development Fund (EDF) with a € 2.7 billion governance bonus (Millennium account) for the period 2008–2012 was created. The European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR II) provided € 1.1 billion. We have lobbied hard to keep the non-state actors' budget lines and EIDHR budget lines open and flexible for political society. But they remain bureaucratic management instruments with limited value for some of the highly political and sensitive work implemented by some of our democracy support agencies.

Thirdly, the EU has become more proactive with its own democracy bureau and with the establishment of the democracy caucus.

Finally, there is new resolve within European civil society to discuss and pledge cooperation on the democracy agenda and to establish partnership relations with the relevant institutions of the European Union and initiatives to strengthen our European civil society operational capacity.

PART II: WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES?

There is a lot of writing about the backsliding of democracy. While these analyses are correct, the international context for advancing democracy has also substantially deteriorated. It can be said that, after the third wave, the ocean has now returned to its normal dangerous currents. Supporting change in power relations, which is what democracy promotion and assistance are all about, never promised to be a simple endeavor. Adversaries of democracy have learned and are still learning how to divert the impact of democracy assistance. Our challenge now is to look beyond our current practices and interests, and to assess critically how we can enhance our capacity to support meaningful and tangible democratic reform processes. I believe that it is consistent with our own European values and experience that we take this challenge seriously.

PART III: ELEMENTS FOR A FORWARD AGENDA

1. Develop concepts of democracy promotion and assistance by addressing:
 - a/ Perceptions: linear development vs. the valley of the tears, sequencing (economic development first, democracy later), etc.
 - b/ Clarification of what democracy promotion and assistance are and what they are not. The numbers game.
2. Integrate the three D's with the cohesion of EU and member states within EU civil society. Within international cooperation, trade, economic, security and development, cooperation has been the mainstay. Democracy promotion is more or less taken for granted but is not part of the core foreign policy agenda. For the reasons summarized earlier, a strong case exists that foreign policy should encompass three dimensions, the three D's: Defense (security), Development, and Democracy.

The three D's are so interlinked and interrelated that it makes good sense to bring these three dimensions into one policy framework. From my experience, I know that this will meet with much institutional resistance, because around each of the dimensions, specific institutional interests have been established. In my opinion, however, lessons learned from past cases of missed impact caused by fragmented approaches require that we move forward and open the windows for some fresh thinking and new approaches.

The paradigm developed by Amartya Sen (countries become fit through democracy) and taken up by some high-ranking policy makers within the EU, suggests a sequencing that would make democracy promotion the core objective. Personally, I believe we should be careful with sequencing between the various dimensions and with an assumption of causal relationships. In history, democracy has developed over long periods of time, but in today's world time is limited. In my work in democracy promotion, I have learned that one dimension cannot stand alone without the others. The challenge in each specific situation is to find the right balance between the dimensions and the cadence, the rhythm of change and of modernization processes that societies can manage peacefully.

3. Go deeper to the core: focus on political society. Empowering stakeholders rather than overpowering them with technical advice. For democracy, our biggest assets are our partners on the ground. Opportunities for democratic advancement is, as it is referred to, a path dependent on previous experience and the process through which change is pursued. Facilitation of dialogue about national reform agendas is key.
4. From hardware to software. Investment in the formal attributes of democracy is not sufficient. Investment is needed in practicing democracy, the culture of democracy. As former French PM Mendes once stated: “La démocratie est d’abord un état d’esprit.” Learning to disagree without becoming disagreeable, learning to overcome conflicts of interests peacefully: this is a part of the process of constructing democracy. By approaching our international cooperation differently, a lot can be achieved in this field. As Indian history in democracy building provides us with an interesting example, we remember that Gandhi taught: democracy can only be built from within.

In this context we may wish to elaborate the governance approach along the lines recently introduced by Hilary Benn within DFID, by the former Minister of Development Cooperation of The Netherlands, Agnes van der Ardenne, and already practiced by the Swedish government. The political realm should be a key component of the governance agenda. This is a major paradigm shift but a very necessary one. We need to think through how this can be done in an environment that has tried to keep the political dimension at arms length.

5. Increase operational and professional capacity (European civil society) in order to be responsive to rising opportunities, take risks when formal institutions are averse, operating at arms length, become a European knowledge hub and gateway to partners who want to access European knowledge and experience and act as a catalyst in developing the content of the European democracy approach.
6. Increase academic interest and educational training. Democracy support suffers from a culture of complacency; by definition everything done is worthwhile. Tom Carothers and Gero Erdmann, among others, raise the need for regular evaluations to enhance the performance of the various

actors in this field. Frankly, when I read their publications, I find them rather timid. Democracy support needs a critical academic community that can help to keep all of us attentive, recognizing that we work with public funds. The intrinsic values of democracy promotion demand the highest standards of transparency and accountability from professionals in this business. Secondly, the complexities of democracy support require more academic research and teaching. There is an increasing interest among young academics, judging from the many requests for internships we receive, but the support of democracy is not an academic discipline yet. Is this not something we should be considering?

I hope these suggestions provide some issues to be considered for the unfolding EU democracy promotion and assistance agendas. The EU not only encompasses three formal institutions, but also defines the responsibilities of EU civil and political society organizations as well. Since the EU continues to be a work in progress, this outline is presented in that spirit. For the 50th anniversary, NIMD published a book on the subject of the theme of my introduction: Democracy: Europe's Core Value? This book was launched earlier this week by the new Dutch Minister for Foreign Affairs, Maxime Verhagen. He challenged the notion of the question mark in the title and I agreed that it should be dropped. In fact, since the Berlin Declaration, it should now become an exclamation mark! To sum up, democracy has been oversold (uncritical complacency), mis-sold (applying democracy concepts which are too narrow or using democracy promotion for other agendas) but, at the same time, undersold. There is no alternative for democracy.

Thank you for your attention.

JEFF LOVITT

Executive Director, Policy Association for Open Society, Czech Republic

Thanks very much. I would like to say a few words about PASOS and to explain how it factors into this discussion. The mission of PASOS is to support policy centers, think tanks, in promoting democracy, good government, human rights and economic and social development. It is a network of think tanks which has 29 members spanning 20 countries, including nine of the new EU member states. We focus very much on a common advocacy and the capacity-building of think tanks, and also joint project development, which includes re-granting. PASOS is supported by the Open Society Institute in Budapest and is the facilitator of the Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative. PASOS think tanks support engagement in democracy promotion and democracy assistance. What PASOS members have in common is that they are all from transition countries that have developed from communism to a democratic market economy, albeit currently at different stages. We include members from Central Asia, the Caucasus, Russia and Ukraine. We provide added value by ensuring that lessons on transition are understood, shared and applied. At the same time, by working together and forming international networks, we support joint advocacy, as we lobby in national governments at the Brussels level, with institutions, the Commission, the Council and the Parliament.

We also try to work with donors to help them target their aid needs more effectively; in particular, we review their activities with policy centers and assess how they can focus better on policy. Jeremy Nagoda is working on a project called DECIM, the World Bank and European Commission Donor Exchange, Coordination and Information Mechanism. PASOS is engaged in this effort as well, specifically working to try to encourage donors to make policy outcomes a bigger priority.

PASOS members are working on many different projects in different countries, particularly cross-border projects in which democracy assistance is of major interest. The PASOS Secretariat, as an example, is currently coordinating a project in Central Asia. We have been working with the Soros Foundation, NGOs and policy centers in Kyrgyzstan to try to strengthen the dialogue process between NGOs and the Kyrgyz Government. What we found is that the only way to effectively engage government

and policy centers is by training them in the policy planning processes, thereby creating an understanding of the importance of greater public participation. Just to explain how difficult this process actually is: it was only last night that I was rewriting our proposal for this project, but then learned this morning that the government was sacked yesterday. Kyrgyzstan has had three constitutions within the last six months and there may be a fourth constitution within the next few months. In light of this perpetually changing situation, we find that we must constantly engage different groups that are committed to democratic participation and governance strengthening. This requires long-term effort and a commitment to constant involvement.

PASOS has also established an initiative in which PASOS members from the Visegrad countries are currently seeking funding opportunities in order to conduct an evaluation of democracy assistance policies and the impact of the Visegrad Four countries' policies by reviewing work opportunities in Belarus, the Balkans and other countries. At this time we do not know whether we will be successful in raising funds for this project but hopefully we will be able to formulate some clear recommendations and identify best practice methods for supporting democratic groups.

This brings me to a topic discussed by Roel von Meijenfled: the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy's initiative, the European Foundation for Democracy. PASOS arranged a meeting yesterday, when Nadia and Roel were with us, in which the possibility of finding common ground was discussed. This idea was based on the decision made at the annual assembly in Istanbul in October last year that PASOS would become involved in the area of democracy promotion and assistance. The goal was to find common ground and work together in the future though there may be some objective differences between our two groups. We would like to see much more emphasis on important lessons learned from the U.S. democracy experience. Statistics on EU funding, which were mentioned and criticized this morning, show an emphasis on the PHARE program and candidate countries. The amount of money actually spent on other countries in the areas of civil society development and democracy promotion is minuscule. Funding that the USA has invested in Belarus is minimal compared to that of the European Union, but roughly ten times more comes from the USA for democracy promotion. This process of contribution is based in part on the US's interest in maintaining some flexibility in the area of promotion as opposed to working on a more confidential level with unregistered groups. With the revamping of the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights aims, unregistered groups will now be eligible. Financial projection changes have been made, but have not yet been tested and,

frankly speaking, significant amounts of new money has not been promised for the EIDHR, so we will be testing and monitoring this issue.

We also question whether this foundation should be centered in Brussels or be more decentralized. There is a tendency to emphasize the EU countries from the west: Britain, Germany and France, but actually the democracy transition process was much more recently experienced by new EU members, who are actually physically closer with some neighbors still in the process of transition and some, such as Belarus, hardly even close to transition.

In my opinion, it would be valuable to establish a network of democracy NGOs to build coalitions to lobby together for greater European commitment to democracy assistance and democracy promotion. Democracy assistance very often aids countries that are already well on their way to democracy; democracy promotion aims at working in much more hostile territory. As a panel focusing not only on democracy promotion, but also on transformational diplomacy, I believe we should begin, through NGOs and think tanks, to lobby nationally and on the Brussels level, to set clear priorities within the European foreign policy. The European Union foreign policy towards Russia and Central Asia is either nonexistent or in total disarray. In my opinion, we must move away from a position of one single European foreign policy. With 27 or more members, there cannot be one policy, but rather many with focus on specific strategic areas: the Caucasus and frozen conflicts, EU-Russia relations and energy policy, and Central Asia. At the same time, these are areas in which the EU should be working as a responsible partner with Turkey and the USA, but not in isolation. And this doesn't preclude the EU from having distinctive policies for targeted regions; obviously these specifically directed policies will continue to exist.

I would like to conclude by saying that democracy promotion has really taken hold, and real change, peace and stability has been established in this part of the world. I can only hope that we will be able to conduct similar meetings, in about ten years time, which will involve discussions about EU engagement in the Middle East: Iraq and Afghanistan, but also in the regions of Sudan and Zimbabwe. It would be a tremendous development if, ten years from now, we could be actively discussing European democracy promotion and assistance on a broader, more worldwide scale.

Thank you.

NADIA DIUK

Senior Director, Central Europe and EuroAsia,
National Endowment for Democracy, USA

Even though the title of this session is “Strengthening Support for Democracy Promotion and Assistance to Transformation,” I would like to use my time to make some general comments about democracy assistance in general, its role in European foreign policy and some lessons learned from my twenty years of experience at the National Endowment for Democracy in the United States.

The first point I would like to make is: “Democracy promotion has arrived!” It is truly a vindication of my twenty years of work at the NED and the existence of my organization since 1983 to be here at the Czech Foreign Ministry in a hall filled with democracy practitioners—some of whom are former NED grantees who are now working within the governments of their own countries on projects that will provide democracy assistance to other countries beyond their borders in the same way as they received assistance from the NED in the 1980’s and 1990’s. This gathering also reinforces the understanding—once and for all—that democracy is fundamental for security, just as it creates the basis for economic prosperity. And it goes without saying that there is now a much broader recognition of the complexities of democracy; that democracy is not just ensuring free and fair elections, but also includes creating the environment for a free media, for vibrant and representative political parties and trade unions, think tanks, human rights organizations and the myriad other non-governmental organizations and also government institutions that work together as a civil society to form a functioning democracy.

This gathering is also a testimony to the important role the countries of Central and Eastern Europe can play and are beginning to play as new members of the European Union and also as a model and inspiration for other regions of the world where democracy is still struggling.

The second point I would like to make is a more esoteric one, although I believe it is an important one for this group. The creation of a democracy assistance foundation as an initiative of any country’s government marks a certain milestone in the development and maturity of that country’s own political system. It requires a

certain level of confidence, experience and sense of security to create an institution out of the desire to uphold democratic values and projects beyond one's own border. Creating an institution that will use public funds to do that signals a level of achievement for the country's own political system. The post-Second World War period has seen the emergence of such foundations and institutions in many of the leading democracies of the world—the NED in the USA, Westminster Foundation in the United Kingdom, the party foundations in Germany as well as many others. It is therefore interesting to hear discussions that will launch similar efforts in Central and Eastern Europe.

Each one of these foundations has unique characteristics of its own which stem from the national particularities of the country in which it was launched. And this brings me to my third point which addresses the issue raised for this panel—"The concept of a pan-European organization for funding transformational diplomacy." The foundations and institutions for democracy assistance that function best are those—as I just mentioned—that have been established as an organic outgrowth of the society that sponsors them. The National Endowment for Democracy has four core institutes that anchor its programs and give it a dynamic connection to the two American political parties, the major trade union organization and the collected interests of the business community in the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. This connection to American "civil society" ensures a unique form of substantive oversight and accountability and provides inspiration and motivation to maintain a fresh and dynamic approach to the multifarious challenges of democracy. NED's counterparts in Europe function in the same way, each having shaped its own identity from the society that supports it. I am sure that the various initiatives that are now being considered to establish a European Democracy Foundation will be all the more fruitful for taking this approach into account and that the Foundation that emerges after all these deliberations will be a unique institution with a European identity. The challenge for this effort—as I see it—is to work out how one institution will accommodate those broad organic links with the societies of each European country that participates in order to keep the institution dynamic and vital, and prevent it from deteriorating into a bureaucracy-driven program with diminishing connections to the people it is supposed to assist—as some noble efforts in this field have ended up.

My third point relates to modes of operation: taking a non-governmental approach provides the best guarantee of success. This is not to say that government institutions should not be assisted in democracy programs, but that

non-governmental organizations provide the flexibility, dynamism, focus and commitment to the mission that promotes success.

My last point is that democracy promotion is a long-term project. There are no quick and easy solutions—even in places like Georgia and Ukraine, what looked like a popular revolution with people in the streets was, in fact, preceded by years of slow and steady building up of civil society. So it is even more gratifying to be here with a group of old friends who are now the new frontier for democracy assistance. There are many more challenges ahead in many regions of the world and particularly with the “backlash” now launched by the international community of dictators. Maintaining a vibrant and responsive community of democracies is all the more important so that we can reaffirm our vision and commitment to the values of democracy around the world. Thank you.