

RELEASE
IN PART B6

From: Mills, Cheryl D <MillsCD@state.gov>
Sent: Thursday, December 16, 2010 9:30 AM
To: H
Subject: FW: The Envoy

THE NEW YORKER

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The Envoy

Posted by *Hendrik Hertzberg*

Last night, as I was unlocking my bike on a windswept Greenwich Village sidewalk after leaving a holiday party, a friend approached, cell phone in hand. A few minutes earlier, she and I had been inside, chatting happily amid the buzz and warmth of a holiday party. Now she had tears in her eyes. “Richard Holbrooke died,” she said.

Notwithstanding the hospital bulletins since he fell ill on Saturday—critical condition, damaged aorta, emergency surgery—this sudden, awful ending was a shock, because Richard Holbrooke was such an astounding volcano of vitality. Everything about him was large: his physical size, including the ultimate “in your face” face, a face like a Times Square billboard; his buzz-saw voice, a highly expressive instrument, equally adept at *piano* (a side-of-the-mouth, gossipy wisecrack, often pleasingly nasty) and *forte* (a high-decibel outburst of anger or indignation, almost always calculated for effect); his appetites (for experience, for danger, for praise, for power, for fun); and his ambitions (for himself, for his beliefs, for the United States, for the world). He was no doe-eyed peacenik, but as a diplomat he labored long and hard to seek alternatives to war and ways to end particular wars. He was sentimental about his own unsentimentality, romantic about his own tough-guy realism.

Unlike my tearful informant, who had known Holbrooke as a family friend since she was a little girl, I was acquainted with him in the casual way of many journalists and editors. He was a peer as well as a “source,” a prolific and forceful writer whose favorite venues, *The New Republic* and *The New Yorker*, happened to be the places where I’ve spent my working life. He was gregarious and fond of big, splashy black-tie evenings. The last time I saw him was six weeks ago, on November 1st, at the New York Public Library’s “Literary Lions” celebration. At the pre-dinner reception, where he would normally have been on his feet, looming large, he repaired to a folding chair behind a little table and let his wife, Kati Marton, bring the party to him. At sixty-nine he was tired—that much was obvious—but he was as sharp and voluble as ever. He still had plenty to do.

Not long after Holbrooke achieved his greatest diplomatic triumph by negotiating the 1995 end to the Balkan wars, I asked him if he liked Warren Zevon’s wonderful song “The Envoy.” He said he’d never heard of it. The next day I sent him a CD. After that, he mentioned it every single time I’ve seen him, up to and including that NYPL gala, saying he puts it on, loud, when he needs a lift. And no wonder: his life was a drama, and he liked it that way.

If the Supreme Court had allowed the votes to be counted in 2000, then the Envoy, almost certainly, would have become the Secretary of State, and the next decade would have unfolded very differently. As it is, Holbrooke has left a stronger, more positive, more creative mark on history than all but a few of those who have held that post. He certainly did not die of a broken heart—Kati Marton saw to that—but it was surely the ghastly, impossible demands of his last, impossible assignment that

brought on the rending of his aorta. He died for his country as surely as any soldier. And his deathbed words may turn out to be the most important he ever spoke.

Photograph: Marco Di Lauro/Getty Images

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From: Kati Marton [mailto:
Sent: Thursday, December 16, 2010 9:15 AM
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