

RELEASE IN PART
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From: Slaughter, Anne-Marie <SlaughterA@state.gov>
Sent: Monday, January 3, 2011 6:04 PM
To: H
Cc: Abedin, Huma
Subject: FW: Les Gelb Daily Beast Blog, 1/3/2011

You must read this -- Les on Richard. AM

-----Original Message-----

From: Leslie H. Gelb [mailto:
Sent: Monday, January 03, 2011 9:56 AM
To: Slaughter, Anne-Marie
Subject: Les Gelb Daily Beast Blog, 1/3/2011

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Dear Dr. Slaughter:

Dick Holbrooke, writes Leslie Gelb, was a human tidal wave, the most luminescent diplomat of his generation, and a very controversial and complicated man.

The full text of the piece is included below.

<http://www.thedailybeast.com/blogs-and-stories/2011-01-02/leslie-h-gelb-on-the-late-richard-holbrookes-contributions-to-foreign-policy/>

Sincerely,

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The Richard Holbrooke I Knew
by Leslie H. Gelb
January 2, 2011 | 10:41pm

****He was the most dynamic foreign-policy force of his generation. Leslie H. Gelb recalls his dear friend, their political partnership, and how Holbrooke pushed to make AfPak work until the very end.****

Far better to write a novel about Richard C. Holbrooke than a biography, let alone an obituary. Only a novel could render his mythic contradictions-his stunning ability to see into the hearts and minds of others, but his blindness to how they saw him; his unrivaled gift for knocking down doors and walking smack into them; his infuriating qualities and his enormous charm and generosity; his capacity to sit and consume books or movies and his titanic energy to go anywhere and do anything; his bullying qualities and willpower coupled with his thin skin, neediness, and fragility; his almost childlike ego and his fiery commitments to great causes, indeed his fusion of self and mission. When not obsessing about adversaries and transforming them into monsters so he could slay them, he was incomparably interesting and fun.

His life and mine have been so intertwined for 45 years that he swims in my head-as unfinished music about the man I grew up with in the cauldron of foreign affairs and in life. For me, this music conjures his surpassing diplomatic skills, his gift for Homeric friendship-and his promise, lost.

I don't want the obituaries to swallow him up as a brilliant star who never made it to the top. I want people to understand why his death is being treated like the passage of a great secretary of State, the position he dearly coveted, never attained, and so clearly deserved.

Part of it, of course, was that Dick Holbrooke was a character of the first order, a captain of industry in an age of the bureaucratic personality. It was highly unusual to get through a meal without someone telling some "Holbrooke" story. (His name was a word unto itself in Washington.) For example, taking five cellphone calls during a meeting, walking out speaking, returning and immediately telling all present that whatever they were saying while he was out of the room was either "just wrong" or "not quite right" (his polite put-down). One of my favorites: his coming over to watch sports on television, talking non-stop during the game while devouring every morsel in sight. His feats of memory about novels or history were prodigious. Then, there's the story about his playing Donkey Kong in an arcade for hours, stuffing quarters hither and yon in a frenzied and laughing pursuit of the game's highest honor-an "epic win."

But the main reason the trumpets scream belatedly and ecstatically about Dick Holbrooke is because he attained those epic wins in diplomacy and was capable of more. He would never be satisfied with mere successes. He yearned to do great things, to be a great man, to make history, and the history books. That takes an enormous amount of nerve and ability. Even notable leaders shy away from such tests of will, challenges, and risks of failure. These downsides barely troubled Holbrooke. He would dare to tread where others feared, and he simply would not give up.

Holbrooke would and could do what others merely gaped at-accomplish meaningful goals and great goals. Frankly, I don't know a soul in my generation who could replicate his bringing about the Dayton Accords and ending the genocidal war in Bosnia. He conceived the federal solution to stop the fighting, and he got the Balkan beasts to sign on by knocking their heads together. Other diplomats would still be playing little games of persuading the beastly parties to be good boys, seeking compromise, and failing. For forging peace in Bosnia, he deserved the Nobel Peace Prize. Doubtless, some enemy he had made along the way blackballed him. As for his many other accomplishments, I won't recount them here; they can be read now in most other reviews of his life.

Let me just tell you a slice of the incredible story of why he accepted the position as President Obama's Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan-and why he soldiered on in the face of poor treatment by the White House and the virtual impossibility of the task itself.

Dick took the envoy position because the United States faced no greater challenge. The challenge was to stop the killing, make "a peace" if possible, and sharply diminish America's combat role as quickly as possible. The other reason for taking the job was that he was devoted to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. She was not threatened by his formidable talents, and she saved his job at least twice. (She also was Herculean in making arrangements to try to save his life when he was stricken in her office.) They were a great team. And as a practical matter, he was really Clinton's envoy far more than Obama's.

The answer to the second question-why Holbrooke stayed on given Obama's attitude toward him and the virtual impossibility of the task-is very complicated. Holbrooke was loyal to the president. He never said a bad word about him to me, a quite unusual occurrence. But the chemistry didn't work between them. Dick, as was his custom with superiors, flattered Obama excessively. Dick also "lectured" him, and the president is the kind of guy who felt he ought to be doing the lecturing. It was a clash as well of two very powerful intellects. Obama could have learned a lot from Holbrooke, but wasn't disposed to do so. The result was that Holbrooke wasn't given the power of the Oval Office in doing his job. Characteristic of the man, if he couldn't do his work one way, he would search for others. But it was hard.

From the outset, Holbrooke was hamstrung. He knew that Americans and Afghans both had no chance unless the government in Kabul shaped up. President George W. Bush let President Hamid Karzai do whatever he wanted. So, Holbrooke went to Kabul and blasted Karzai for the corruption, inefficiency, and illegitimacy of his government. That was

precisely the right move. Karzai had to understand that Washington was now going to get serious. But Karzai, no fool and no amateur bargainer himself, told Holbrooke's bosses he wouldn't talk to the envoy, period. Obama let that injunction stand until fairly recently, and that killed Holbrooke-and the U.S.-with Karzai. Instead, the president should have responded to Karzai's ploy by picking up the phone and telling the Afghan leader that he would either have to speak to Holbrooke or he'd speak to no one.

Why did Holbrooke stay on in the face of all this and the situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan itself? The answer shows another side of the man. He had little or no illusions about the limitations of American power to defeat the Taliban. But it was his job, his duty, his mission, to try anyway. So, he did his thing, which was not to create new grand strategies for solutions. Rather, his style was to learn everything about Afghanistan, then turn on his acute radar and wait for openings, for chances to ease America into a much more modest role in Afghanistan. He and Mrs. Clinton cooked up the idea of inserting the word "transition" in the NATO communiqué this past November. It was a wedge to move policy decisions along a bit faster toward troop drawdowns and turn over responsibility earlier to the Afghans. He also wanted to test all possible waters for talks with the Taliban, just in case. And he wanted to work with Kabul's neighbors to establish a future alliance to contain Afghan extremism. As for Pakistan, he hoped to put the leaders there on the same or similar strategic trajectory with Washington. This was a long shot, but neither he nor the White House was prepared for more drastic approaches. The point was this: If the United States was not going to walk away from the sinkholes of AfPak, Dick Holbrooke wasn't going to walk away either. Better in his mind for him than someone else to stay on and battle out policy at home and abroad.

Richard C. Holbrooke was the most luminescent foreign-policy figure of my generation. He was a unique personality, brilliant, a great diplomat, irresistible despite his obsessiveness about matters miniscule and mountainous, a Renaissance man in his interests and knowledge, controversial, beset with detractors almost as legion as admirers, both a formidable foreign-policy mind and bureaucratic swordsman, both a clever and too obvious maneuverer, mesmerizing in his intellectual sparkle and his energy.

He was the only person I could imagine capable of doing something truly Herculean on the diplomatic front. Friend and foe alike would agree that he was a human tidal wave.

Dick Holbrooke spent his youth being smart and useful to the titans of yore: Averell Harriman, General Maxwell Taylor, Henry Cabot Lodge, Clark Clifford, Dean Rusk, Lyndon Johnson, Jimmy Carter, Bill Clinton. He saw he could be among them in their international deeds.

Making peace would be his trampoline to greatness and his pedestal.

Leslie H. Gelb, a former New York Times columnist and senior government official, is author of *Power Rules: How Common Sense Can Rescue American Foreign Policy* (HarperCollins 2009), a book that shows how to think about and use power in the 21st century. He is president emeritus of the Council on Foreign Relations.