CONGRESS' DUTY IS TO UPHOLD THE RULE OF LAW FOR ALL AMERICANS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. DELAY. Mr. Speaker, we have arrived at a point in our history where we will be called upon to make decisions and judgments that will deeply affect the integrity of the government and our society, the kind of society that we leave to our children and our grandchildren.

That decision now before us is fundamental to our system of government. This country grew to be great because the Founding Fathers provided for the rule of law and not the rule of man. They enshrined this principle forever in the Constitution.

Now, some would ask us to be judged by the rule of man. They are trying to convince us to abandon the principles of our Constitution and the rule of law. They are trying to convince us that public opinion polls are more important than the principles on which our government was founded. They are trying to advocate censure as the only appropriate course of action.

Well, Mr. Speaker, anyone who considers censure, and makes decisions based on the polls, believes in the rule of man, not the rule of law.

We, the Members of the House of Representatives, have been entrusted by our fellow citizens to uphold and preserve the rule of law for all Americans. The basic tenet of the rule of law is that it applies to every American equally. Laws cannot be applied selectively based on some whim or some public opinion.

The very strength of our system of law and government is that every American is evaluated by a common standard, without exception. One set of laws should not apply to high officials and another set of laws apply to the rest of the country. If we begin to make exceptions based on some expediency or some convenience, we reduce ourselves to little more than a loosely organized mob.

Those who advocate censure believe that Congress can resolve this matter by making its opinion a matter of public record. Let me say to my colleagues that I would hope that the people of America already know where we stand on this issue, because Members of Congress have been unambiguous in their condemnation of this type of behavior, and I believe every American, no matter where they stand on the ideological spectrum, shares this view.

A resolution of censure would do nothing more than to allow Members of the House to record their disapproval. While such an approach might appeal to some, the time for that is well past.

It may be that the House decides at some point not to move forward. That is a decision that must be made by the House Committee on the Judiciary and ultimately by the full House. But for now, the House has no choice but to proceed with an impeachment inquiry. We cannot selectively apply the rule of law in the face of such a serious allegation. The Constitution does not bow to polling data and it leaves no middle ground.

Censure establishes the rule of man at the expense of the rule of law. We must never allow America to go down that road. It is the road to ruin. Anyone who doubts that the rule of man gives rise to chaos only needs to look at Russia. There is a country with no rule of law.

Mr. Speaker, I pledge to the Members of this Congress as Majority Whip of the House to fight in no uncertain terms the scheduling of any vote on censure, and I will fight to ensure that censure never sees the light of day in this chamber.

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The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. GEPHARDT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. GEPHARDT addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WOLF) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. WOLF addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks).

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A STABLE RUSSIA OF PRIME INTEREST TO AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, let me first thank all of those who communicated with me today following my comments yesterday about Russia, indicating that they share my concern that we focus on some critical issues unfolding on this planet, and not be mesmerized and preoccupied exclusively with topic number 1.

Today's New York Times has a headline which I will take as my text: ''The Kremlin Brings Gorbachev's Economies Back.''

Now, this statement reminds me of a Soviet era story, Mr. Speaker, when on May Day, the tremendous might of the Soviet Union was displayed on Red Square. Vast columns of artillery and tanks and missiles rolled by, and then suddenly, a half a dozen crumbled, not very well dressed, middle-aged men shuffled by. And as the visiting dignitaries were standing atop Lenin's mausoleum, Fidel Castro asked, how did these men get into this parade of power and might? And the Soviet leader responded, they are our economists, and you have no idea how much damage they can cause.

That is what we are seeing today. The new Russian leader Primakov is bringing back the discredited Soviet era, Stalin-era economists for high-ranking positions in this new government. The man who was in charge of central planning in the Soviet Union is now the number 1 economic power in the new Russia. The former head of the central bank is the new head of the central bank, and what we can expect to see is the beginning of the operation of the printing presses, hyperinflation, the continuing deterioration of the Russian economy with devastating consequences for the Russian people.

Now, the question might be asked, Mr. Speaker, why is that important to us? Well, I suggest it is important to us for 2 reasons. Russia still has thousands of nuclear weapons, and as the authority of the central government erodes, as the various provinces are striking out on their own, the likelihood of these nuclear weapons falling into hands unfriendly to the United States increases geometrically.

But we have a second reason to be concerned about the galloping deterioration of conditions in Russia. Not too many decades ago, in the bemired Republic of Germany, as hyperinflation took hold, fascism followed, and so did the Second World War. It is in our prime policy interests to attempt to stabilize the Russian economy, and I suspect it will be one of the serious and substantive debates of this body during the course of coming months to see how we can work with Mr. Primakov to stabilize the Russian economy which, at the moment, is in a free-fall. Goods are disappearing from the stores. People have no access to their bank accounts. Most banks are, in fact, closed. Unemployment is rising. Imports are declining because Russia has no foreign exchange. This gigantic society, Mr. Speaker, of 150 million people and covering 11 time zones has in its central bank $12 billion in foreign exchange reserves. This would be laughable if it were not so serious.

Tax collections, which were bad enough last year, are down by 40 percent, and as the central government in Moscow is unable to collect taxes, the tendency of the regions to break away will accelerate. Of the 89 provinces of Russia, some 75 have been receiving subsidies from Moscow. These subsidies are declining, in many cases disappearing, and the danger of Russia becoming a chaotic society has enormous ramifications for our own safety and security.

Mr. Speaker, I will continue this dialogue with my colleagues and with the American people tomorrow evening.

□ 2000

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BASS). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. MINGE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. MINGE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)