

time a few weeks ago that a better way to give honor to our allies in the Pacific, a better way to celebrate this 100th anniversary of our close partner, would be to remedy an injustice that was perpetrated on the brave veterans of the Philippine armed forces who fought side by side with the American Army in the liberation of the Pacific in World War II.

The Philippine soldiers were drafted into World War II by our President Franklin Roosevelt. They fought side by side and helped to win the battle of the Pacific; and yet, after the war, all the benefits of being a veteran were taken away by the Congress of 1946.

There is legislation in this House that is cosponsored by almost 200 of us, legislation introduced by the distinguished Chairman of the House Committee on International Relations, the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN) and myself, H.R. 836, called the Philippines Veterans Equity Act. Thanks to the Chairman of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. STUMP), we will be having a hearing on this legislation next week on July 22nd, a hearing on H.R. 836, the Filipino Veterans Equity Act. That hearing promises to give the American people a living history lesson of past bravery and courage, much of it long forgotten by our current generation.

The American people will hear from brave participants in the battles of Bataan and Corregidor. They will hear from survivors of the famous Bataan Death March in which thousands of Filipinos and Americans died. They will hear from guerilla fighters who, for 4 years in the Philippines, both held up the advance and the consolidation of power by the invaders and helped prepare the way for the return to the Philippines by General Douglas MacArthur. The story after that is well known, with MacArthur retaking the Philippines and using that as a base to regain the Pacific.

What will be clear from this testimony next week at the House Committee on Veterans Affairs will be the bravery, the courage, the honor, the dignity and the loyalty of these veterans of World War II, and what will also be clear is the injustice that was perpetrated more than 50 years ago and the dishonor that was brought really to us as Americans by allowing this action. We took away the rights that they had earned as veterans of the American Armed Forces. To this day, they are still wanting a return of this honor and dignity. Of more than almost a quarter of a million who were alive during World War II, less than 75,000 are alive today.

I plead with this Congress and with the Committee on Veterans' Affairs to restore the honor and dignity to these brave veterans in the last years of their lives. Let us pass H.R. 836, the Filipino Veterans Equity Act. Let us restore the honor and dignity of these brave fighters of World War II. Let us grant equity to them now.

We have apologized as a Nation for the internment of the Japanese in World War II. We have apologized to those soldiers at Tuskegee who were involuntarily subject to medical experiments which led to their death. It is time as a Nation that we apologize to the brave veterans of World War II who are from the Philippines. Let us pass H.R. 836. Let us give these soldiers their honor and dignity.

RUSSIAN MATTERS RELEVANT TO THE UNITED STATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. WELDON) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Madam Speaker, last evening I gave a keynote speech at the John F. Kennedy School of Harvard University to a group of 25 Duma members from Russia, parliamentarians who were here for 2 weeks of orientation in the ways of our operation of the American democracy, our Congress and our system of government. It was an eye-opening experience, and I wish them well as they spend the next 2 weeks learning more about America and our democracy.

Working in Russian issues as I do, I have two other facts I would like to bring to the attention of my colleagues. One is a very positive development in Russia, and we have all watched with a great degree of concern as this emerging democracy over the past several years has evolved in giving people additional rights and freedoms.

One of my good friends, Aleksei Yablokov, who has testified twice before Members of this Congress and our subcommittees on issues involving the environment, nuclear contamination and small nuclear bombs, unfortunately had an incident where one of the Russian publications, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, wrote an article about Mr. Yablokov calling him a traitor because he came before the U.S. Congress and told in a very open setting about his concerns that Russia had, in fact, built small nuclear suitcase bombs, that these bombs might not be accounted for.

Mr. Yablokov sued this publication and just recently, in fact last week, the Moscow Municipal Court ruled in favor of Aleksei Yablokov, ordered the newspaper, the *Gazeta*, to print a public retraction by the 9th of September, 1998, and to pay Yablokov 30,000 rubles because of this libel case. It is a credit to the Russian system that an individual with the integrity of Aleksei Yablokov can sue and successfully win compensation for wrongs committed by the Russian media, and for that I applaud Russia.

The second issue concerns me, Madam Speaker, because during the recent break one of my good friends, a member of the State Duma from the

our home is Russia party, Lev Rokhlin was assassinated. He was the Chairman of the Duma Committee on National Security. I had met with him on numerous occasions, and while I in many cases did not agree with his political positions, I respected him. He was a retired Russian general, someone who was known for committing himself and his political leadership to support for the troops, for their quality of life.

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Lev was also one of the most outspoken critics of Boris Yeltsin. In fact, last year he called publicly for Yeltsin to be impeached. For these calls, Lev was removed from his position as chairman of the Duma Defense Committee. He was involved more recently in investigating whether or not Russian oil companies took money for use in the Caucasus, to be used to buy weapons, instead of being used for the people and for the Russian government.

There are suspicions that Lev Rokhlin was assassinated because of his outspoken comments. The official line out of Moscow is that Lev was killed by his wife, a wife who shot him in a fit of anger. But Lev's children have publicly come out and said that is not the case, that Lev was assassinated, and that his wife had to say what she did because she also was told she would be assassinated.

In addition, Yuri Markin, a lawyer that worked with Rokhlin, said that he believed that there was an assassination attempt on his life the same night Lev Rokhlin was killed. Mr. Markin claims Lev was assassinated because he in fact was revealing things that were going on inside of Russia that were not legal and that in fact involved organized crime.

I encourage, Madam Speaker, the Russian government to fully investigate, as Boris Yeltsin has promised, the unfortunate and untimely death of Lev Rokhlin, so we can, as we have in the case of the environmentalists winning the money from the slanderous article by the Russian newspaper, so that we can have peace of mind that Lev Rokhlin was not killed by some organized criminal element in Russia because of what he was saying and because of the job that he was performing as a member of the State Duma.

The Russian people understand this issue. In fact, at Lev's funeral last week over 10,000 Russian citizens came out in force. Most of them have a suspicion that Lev was in fact assassinated by forces other than his wife.

I would ask our administration to lend its support to my call for the Russian government to have a full accounting as to the circumstances and facts surrounding the death of Duma Deputy Lev Rokhlin.

THE TRANSPORTATION NEEDS OF THE RESIDENTS OF THE 46TH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. JOHNSON of Connecticut). Under the