MANY ARMENIAN SURVIVORS CAME TO THE UNITED STATES SEEKING A NEW BEGINNING

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

Mr. SWEENEY. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride that I rise before the House today, taking this opportunity to speak out about one of the 20th century's earliest atrocities and worst atrocities. I do so because this subject is close to my heart.

Mr. Speaker, I am the son of a second generation Armenian American. My own grandfather, a native Armenian, witnessed the bloodshed firsthand when on April 24, 1915, 254 Armenian intellectuals were arrested in Istanbul and taken to the provinces in the interior of Turkey, where many of them were later massacred.

My grandfather often told my sisters and I how he had witnessed the execution of his own uncle and his teacher in a one room classroom as a child. In total, approximately 1.5 million Armenians were killed in a 28-year period. This does not include the half a million or more who were forced to leave their homes and flee to foreign countries like our own.

Together with Armenians all over the world and people of conscience, I would like to honor those that lost their homes, their freedom and their lives. Many Armenian survivors came to the United States seeking a new beginning, among them my grandfather, who was a recipient of the Russian Medal of Honor during World War II as a demolition specialist. He was awarded this honor for his incredible valor in the midst of this premeditated genocide. In fact, my grandfather went back to his own country to fight the Turks, to fight the Turks to stop the massacres of his family and his friends.

It is important that we do not forget about these atrocities. Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of my Armenian heritage, and I believe my Armenian grandfather, if he were still alive today, would be proud to know that he has such strong defenders of Armenians in the United States Congress, and I thank my colleagues who have risen today to support this recognition.

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

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

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

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

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

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

WE MUST EXAMINE THE KOSOVO CRISIS IN LIGHT OF OUR VITAL NATIONAL INTERESTS

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

Mr. KASICH. Mr. Speaker, as we approach the NATO summit in Washington this weekend, I would hope that this will be a somber occasion for serious reflection about the issues of war and peace that confront us.

It seems clear that the crisis in Kosovo is nearing a decision point. There are reportedly some in the administration and in other NATO governments who are contemplating the commitment of ground forces to secure Kosovo. Before we consider such a step, and before our country even thinks of putting more Americans in harm's way, it is essential that we stop, pause for reflection and examine the Kosovo crisis in light of our vital national interests, our humanitarian obligations and our enduring need for a more peaceful and stable world.

It would be a grave error to replace no long-term policy, which is what I believe the administration has executed thus far, with the wrong long-term policy. We need to carefully draw up a strategic road map of the Balkans, a road map that gets us as quickly as possible to our desired outcome.

The fundamental question we must answer is whether our military intervention in a centuries-old civil war in the Balkans is likely to be either resolved on our terms or be successful over the long term. Make no mistake about it, this is a centuries-old conflict dating to 1389. If it could be accomplished, intervention on the ground might be worth doing, assuming casualties could be minimized, but I have come to the conclusion that military escalation is neither in the national interest nor can it achieve a stable long-term peace in the region.

Those who have called for ground troops have not specified the goal. Is it to take Kosovo, fortify it and occupy it for years, perhaps decades, against the threat of Serbian guerilla warfare? Or should the goal be to conquer all of Serbia, with incalculable consequences to wider Balkan stability, our relationship with Russia and our ability to respond on short notice to other regional flash points around the world?

Do those who advocate such a course understand that it may take months to properly build up such an invasion force? How much more misery and devastation will have occurred by then? In this particular conflict, does ratcheting up the violence serve our national interests or, for that matter, the interests of refugees and innocent civilians?

Those who say we should pursue victory by any means necessary and at all costs fail to answer the question, what would victory be if in the process it brought us a bitterly hostile Russia, made even more dangerous than the old Soviet Union by the volatile combination of loose nukes and a restive military? Do we strengthen our national security by potentially undoing all the good work that we have done since the fall of the Berlin Wall in getting Russia to be a responsible power?

The issue of the refugees is, of course, a terribly, terribly important issue and cannot be dodged by anyone in the debate on Kosovo. I am deeply moved by their plight. The United States has a moral obligation to get Milosevic to withdraw his forces from Kosovo, help return the refugees in an orderly manner and generally assist in reconstruction.

Just as surely, we need to help Albania and Macedonia get up on their feet economically, but we must ask ourselves whether military escalation is the best way to achieve those goals in light of our moral reasoning, which teaches us to preserve human life and limit material destruction as best we can.

The problem is now bigger than Kosovo, and America should actively encourage the mediation of a settlement before this crisis flashes over into a wider conflict. Rambouillet was almost destined to fail because it required the acceptance by both parties of a draft document with no substantive changes allowed. The administration's absolute requirement for a NATO implementation force and the probability of independence for Kosovo after 3 years were conditions of Rambouillet that neither Yugoslavia or any other sovereign country was likely to accept.

A realistic mediation needs the efforts of neutral parties to develop a flexible framework to get the parties to say yes. To the objection that mediation will never work, I say that judgment is overly pessimistic. We will never know unless we try. Rather than seeking opportunities to escalate the military campaign, we should be seeking opportunities for peace. It is strategically wise to involve the Russians, not only because of their influence with Serbia but because we must tangibly show Boris Yeltsin and other democratic forces in Russia that they will be rewarded, not spurned, for their efforts on behalf of peace.

A too rigid rejection of Russian peace overtures, by contrast, would simply strengthen extremists in Russia. Other countries such as Sweden and the Ukraine should be encouraged to take part, and we must consult actively with countries in the region. From Italy and Bulgaria to Greece and to Turkey, they will have to live with any settlement in the Balkans for decades to come.

I do not underestimate the difficulties involved, but should Milosevic

balk, we will retain the ability to apply military pressure and continue to apply military pressure from the air. Once a settlement is reached, an international force may be necessary to assist the refugee return and to oversee reconstruction. We should be more flexible about the makeup of this force than we have been in the past. Rather than making its composition a nonnegotiable end in itself, we should bear in mind that the international force is the means to an end. That means to an end is peace and stability in Kosovo, where ethnic Albanians can live in safety and with autonomy.

□ 1515

World War I began in the Balkans because a great power, Austria-Hungary, scoffed at the idea that Russia would intervene on the behalf of its Serbian ally. The world has turned over many times since 1914, but it could be an equally grave mistake to assume that the Russians will remain passive indefinitely. They have already sent truck columns carrying relief supplies to Yugoslavia, and there is public agitation in Russia to send military equipment.

This situation is far too dangerous for the U.S. public debate to get carried away by amateur generals in and out of public office. Many of these people insist that the Russians are too weak to do anything about it, precisely the error the Austrians made in 1914. There is a better way. Who doubts that Theodore Roosevelt, one of our greatest Presidents, knew the national interests and acted vigorously in its behalf. Of course he did. But he also knew when military action brought no advantage and actually weakened a Nation, when a source of regional instability arose, such as the war between Russia and Japan, his every instinct was to be an honest broker and mediate peace. His efforts were rewarded with the Nobel Prize.

While we are now a party to the Kosovo dispute, we should be seen as a supportive element in such a solution. Americans need the moral courage to lead in peace as well as war. I have urged the President to use the occasion of NATO's 50th anniversary summit to call for a special meeting of the group of eight nations, the so-called G–8, to begin a formal effort to achieve a peaceful settlement. This G–8 meeting should help initiate a framework for a diplomatic solution of the crisis, and begin to put into place the foundation for economic assistance to this region. Delegations from Ukraine and other affected regional countries should also be invited to participate in the G–8 session.

I emphasize that this is not a panacea. It is only the beginning of a long and difficult process, but it is a step our country should not be afraid to take. The fact that negotiation is a long-term process should be no obstacle to our trying to achieve it.

The United States can and should remain strongly engaged internationally, because regional instability will not solve itself. But we must choose our tools very carefully, for the stakes do not allow failure. Power is a finite quantity. If we wantonly expend it all over the world for every thinkable cause, we diminish ourselves. America should carefully husband its military power. We should act militarily only in the cases of clear national interests and always keep an eye on the strategic end game: Protecting the American people and using our power effectively where it will provide greater stability and security for the world.

A mediated settlement of the Kosovo crisis may not be politically popular at the moment, but it may look considerably wiser to us and our children in the future.

84TH ANNIVERSARY OF ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

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

Mr. TIERNEY. Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the thoughtful remarks of my colleague, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. KASICH), the chairman of the Committee on the Budget, before I begin my remarks.

On this 84th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, we take a moment to remind ourselves anew of the atrocities that people are capable of committing against others. The Armenian Genocide of 1915 to 1923 ranks among the most tragic episodes of the 20th century. It serves as a constant reminder for us to be on guard against the oppression of any people, particularly based on their race or religion. Too often during this century, the world has stood silent while whole races and religions were attacked and nearly annihilated. This cannot be allowed to happen again. Particularly as we face revived and brutal ethnic hatred in Kosovo, we must take this opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to the achievement of liberty and peace worldwide.

I would also like to take a moment, thinking about the individuals who lost their lives during that Armenian genocide. One-and-a-half million innocent Armenians had their lives snuffed out mercilessly. When we try to contemplate the idea of one-and-a-half million lives, it is a staggering number, almost incomprehensible. But we must remember the victims of the genocide as they were. Not numbers, but mothers and fathers, sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, cousins and friends. Each and every victim had hopes, dreams and a life that deserved to be lived to the fullest. It is our duty to remember them today and everyday.

As a member of the Congressional Armenian Caucus, we work every day with many of our colleagues to bring peace and stability to Armenia and its neighboring countries. Division and hatred can only lead to more division and hatred, as the genocide proved. Hopefully, the work of the caucus and of the others committed to the same cause will help ensure that an atrocity such as the genocide will never happen again. Kishar paree and Shnorhagalootyoon. I thank you for your time.

MEMORIALIZING THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

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

Mr. MCNULTY. Mr. Speaker, I join with my many colleagues today in remembering the victims of the Armenian Genocide. But rather than repeat what has already been said, let me say a few words about the very positive spirit of the Armenian people, because they endured a great deal before, during and after the genocide, and they were under the totalitarian dictatorship of the Soviet Union for many decades.

That all ended in 1991, and I was there to see it. I was one of the four international observers from the United States Congress to monitor that independence referendum. I went to the communities in the northern part of Armenia, and I watched in awe as 95 percent of all of the people over the age of 18 went out and voted in that referendum. And of course, the thought did not escape me how great it would be if we could get that kind of participation in our own democratic government here in the United States of America. But, as always, sometimes we take things for granted.

But the Armenian people had been denied for so many years, they were so excited about this new opportunity, almost everyone was out in the streets, and that number, I am sure, Mr. Speaker, was not inflated because as best I could determine it, no one was in their homes. They were all out into the streets going to the polling places. I watched people stand in line literally for hours to get into these small polling places and vote.

Then, after they voted, the other interesting thing was that they did not go home, because they had brought little covered dishes with them, and all of these little polling places across the country, they would have little banquets afterwards to celebrate what had just happened.

What a great thrill it was to be with them the next day in the streets of Yerevan when they were celebrating the great victory, because 98 percent of the people who voted, of course, voted in favor of independence. It was a great thrill to be there with them when they danced and sang and shouted, Getze Haiastan, long live free and independent Armenia. That should be the cry of all freedom-loving people throughout the world today.