

GIVE PEACE A CHANCE IN THE BALKANS WAR

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

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, this evening I join my colleagues down here in the well of the House on the floor to join myself with their remarks. My colleagues, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. SHERWOOD) and the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. BROWN), I am sure are going to speak eloquently on this very subject that we are talking about this evening and that is that our hope as we stand here this evening is an opportunity to give peace a chance in the Balkans war.

No war, no conflict and certainly no humanitarian crisis has ever been resolved by bombing a country into oblivion. May I say that, as a veteran of two wars myself, that diplomacy is always preferable to war. And I am sure that we all recognize that this Balkan crisis, the war over there in Yugoslavia, the ethnic cleansing, the terrorism, the human tragedies, are an enormous crisis that this world faces; and military escalation by itself will not end, nor will it solve, this crisis. In fact, it may even precipitate an increase with the threat of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Perhaps I can explain that in just a few words. Whenever a small country is opposed by an organization of 19 other nations, the propensity of that country to defend itself may reach extremes. To that end, it may reach for those arsenals that it could acquire from some other country of a weapon of mass destruction, whether it is chemical, whether it is biological or even whether it is nuclear, in order to defend itself from the onslaught of an attack.

I urge this administration and I urge my colleagues here this evening to seriously consider the efforts and the recommendations of the U.S. Congress and the Russian Duma meeting that was held in Vienna, Austria, this last weekend. I urge them to consider the recommendations in order to bring about a fair, an equitable and a peaceful settlement between the warring factions in Yugoslavia.

This meeting that was held with the leaders of the Russian factions in their Duma, which is our equivalent of the House of Representatives here in Congress, reached consensus, reached an agreement, on areas that we thought would form a framework for the resolution, the peaceful resolution, I might add, of the Yugoslavia crisis.

Those include, first, ending the ethnic crisis, the ethnic cleansing and terrorism; an end of the NATO bombing; an absolute removal of the Serbian military forces; an emplacement of an international peacekeeping force that will ensure the peaceful repatriation of the refugees back into Kosovo, and wide autonomy is the final goal for Kosovo.

I think all of us here in this room this evening can agree that these are

elements that we can all consider as a solution for this crisis, elements which will allow us to resolve this.

May I say that later this week my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will have an opportunity to deal with the concurrent resolution that is the result of the recommendations of this meeting in Vienna, Austria, a historic meeting, and now this resolution will simply state a sense of Congress as to the meaning that diplomacy is always better than warfare.

I hope my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will give peace a chance as we debate this issue and vote on it later this week.

May I also say that it has been a great pleasure to work with my friends on both sides of the aisle when we have a common goal, a common goal of peace, not only in the Balkans but peace in the world.

So, Mr. Speaker, it is an honor for me to have stood down here to associate myself with my colleagues' remarks as we go forward in this process of seeking an alternative to an escalated war in Yugoslavia. I would like to thank them for the bipartisanship and the friendship and the collegiality that was demonstrated throughout this meeting. It is indeed a great honor for me to stand here, arm in arm, shoulder to shoulder, in this effort to bring peace to this world.

VIENNA PEACE TALKS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. BROWN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, as a member of the Duma-U.S. Congressional Study Group, I want to take a moment to thank the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. WELDON) for his leadership in this area.

I traveled with my colleagues to Vienna, Austria, last weekend to help bring cooperation between members of the Russian parliament and the United States Congress.

The United States-Russian Duma Study Group was created 5 years ago, and I have been an active participant in the organization for the last 3 years. As a group, our members meet to discuss national security, military affairs, housing, economic development and social welfare policies.

The importance of the working group cannot be overstated, since personal relationships by members of each of the respective governments are created, thus permitting for greater openness and increasing trust between the two governing bodies of each country.

Because Russia and Serbia have close ethnic and historical ties, I believe that members of the Russian Duma can play an important role in convincing the Serbian government to put a halt to the ethnic cleansing and help stop the refugee crisis.

I believe that the humanitarian crisis cannot be solved by just a bombing

campaign and that a diplomatic solution is much more desirable than military escalation. A spread of the violence will only bring about increasing division, hatred and resentment and violence, but a diplomatic solution could lead to the increase of communication and understanding between the two sides and save countless lives.

As a Member of Congress, I feel that it is my responsibility to do everything I can within my capacity to help end this war.

I would like to point out that the congressional delegation's discussions with the Duma were not meant as a slight to the administration nor an undermining of NATO's authority. Rather, members of our group traveled to Austria to increase communication between the warring sides and act as a conduit to the present talks taking place between President Clinton, foreign policy experts and members of the Russian Government.

The main point of contention which I brought to the talks with the Russian Duma was that ethnic cleansing is, in essence, the root cause of the conflict. As the only mother in the room during the talks, I felt that it was necessary to recognize the tragedies of the refugee families.

The Russian delegation originally refused to acknowledge that it was the ethnic cleansing that began this conflict and not the NATO bombing, but before they walked away from our discussion they acknowledged that it was the ethnic cleansing that began this conflict.

Our discussion resulted in a framework for peace negotiations. One of the guidelines I would like to see during the peace negotiations is a cease-fire, a time-out from the fighting, so that both parties can refrain from fighting in order to negotiate with one another in a diplomatic fashion.

In order to smooth out the road to diplomacy, the Congressional-Duma Study Group suggests a threefold approach to resolving the conflict. This includes a temporary end to the NATO bombing, along with the withdrawal of the Serbian Armed Forces from Kosovo and the KLA military activities.

We demand a recognition of the basic principles of the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia, including greater autonomy for Kosovo and just treatment of all Yugoslavian people.

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We also support efforts to provide international assistance to rebuild the destroyed homes of the refugees, as well as other humanitarian assistance.

This was a productive meeting, and I am hopeful that it will not be our last. We are all in agreement that we want a quick and peaceful end to the crisis, while keeping positive relationships between Russia and the United States.

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

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

A FRAMEWORK FOR SETTLING THE KOSOVO CRISIS

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

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. Speaker, some of us have recognized for a long time that it was terribly important that Russia become increasingly involved in the crisis in Yugoslavia.

Russia is, I think as everybody knows, Yugoslavia's major ally and major supporter. If Russia could be brought into the process supporting the humanitarian goals of the stopping of ethnic cleansing, it would be a major step forward in solving what is increasingly becoming a very, very horrible situation in the Balkans.

Within that light, I was very delighted to learn about a trip to Vienna, Austria, that was being organized by the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. CURT WELDON), who has done an excellent job in trying to improve relations between the United States Congress and the Russian Duma. He was organizing a trip which would involve 11 Members of the United States Congress to meet with the leaders of the Russian Duma.

On that trip, in addition to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. WELDON), were the gentleman from New York (Mr. MAURICE HINCHEY), the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. NEIL ABERCROMBIE), the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. DENNIS KUCINICH), the gentleman from Florida (Ms. CORINNE BROWN), the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. DON SHERWOOD), the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. ROSCOE BARTLETT), the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON), the gentleman from Nevada (Mr. JIM GIBBONS), and the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. JOSEPH PITTS). There were six Republicans, four Democrats, and myself, who is an Independent.

Mr. Speaker, in arriving in Vienna and meeting with the Russians, I think we were all delighted that the Russians shared our strong concerns about bringing peace to Yugoslavia. We were able, after a lot of discussion, to come up with an agreement.

As others have said, we were not there to negotiate the fine points of a treaty. That was not our job. But we were there to see if we could come together on the broad outlines of what a peace process would mean for the Balkan area, and I think we did that.

Mr. Speaker, let me just touch on some of the important points that the Russians and our delegation agreed upon.

"We call on all of the interested parties to find practical measures for a parallel solution to three tasks, without regard to sequence;" in other

words, to do it in a simultaneous manner. That is, "the stopping of the NATO bombing of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia; the withdrawal of Serbian Armed Forces from Kosovo, and the cessation of the military activities of the KLA."

What we have said is that these steps should be accomplished through a series of confidence-building measures, which include but should not be limited to the following:

A, the release of all prisoners of war. When we stated that, our three POWs were, of course, still being held by Yugoslavia, and a few hours after this agreement was reached Milosevic, as it turns out, released our three POWs.

My own view is that, consistent with this agreement, in an act of good faith on our part, we should release the two Serbian POWs that we are holding. But our agreement called for the release of all prisoners of war.

Second of all, what we said is the voluntary repatriation of all refugees in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and unhindered access to them by humanitarian aid organizations. In other words, what we were agreeing to is that the people who have been driven out of their homes whose villages were burned by Yugoslavia should be allowed to return to their homes and be allowed all of the humanitarian help they can receive.

Thirdly, and on a very important point, there was agreement on the composition of the armed international forces which would administer Kosovo after the Serbian withdrawal.

The composition of the group should be decided by a consensus agreement of the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council, in consultation with Macedonia, Albania, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and the recognized leadership of Kosovo.

This is a very important step forward, because what this means is the Russians are saying very clearly that there should be armed international forces, something that many of us understand is absolutely necessary if the people of Kosovo are to return safely and with protection to their homes.

I think increasingly, within our own administration and all over the world, there is an understanding that that armed international force need not strictly be NATO. That is what we are saying here, and that is what the Russians have agreed to.

Then we said that the above group would be supplemented by the monetary activities of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I think that this trip was a significant step forward in bringing the Russians into the peace process. I was very proud and delighted to be there with my fellow representatives from the United States Congress.

AGREEMENT REACHED IN VIENNA PROVIDES A FRAMEWORK FOR RESTORING PEACE IN YUGOSLAVIA AND KOSOVO

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

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewomen for giving me the opportunity to go forward.

Mr. Speaker, I, too, had the opportunity to join my colleagues in the trip to Vienna to meet with leaders of the Russian Duma.

Mr. Speaker, in this audience tonight we have some young people who are visiting our Nation's Capitol, and as I was looking up there getting ready to speak, I was reminded of the time when I was in school at that age, and we had in this country a different type of relationship with Russia.

It was the height of the Cold War, and at school they used to do drills. Some people will remember the drills. They were called duck and cover drills. We would have to, anticipating there would be a nuclear attack, we would actually have to get down under our desks, cover our heads, and close our eyes so we would not see the flash that was supposed to be a nuclear attack.

Mr. Speaker, that was an era of terror. It was an era when the United States and Russia were at odds over the great global consequences of whether capitalism or communism would rule the earth.

Have we come a long way from those days? Yes. We worked throughout the seventies to build down nuclear arms, we worked throughout the eighties to reestablish a relationship with Russia, and in the nineties we have in the United States been responsible for helping Russia rebuild itself economically, and assisted in so many ways as partners in peace.

But yet, Mr. Speaker, that very peace and that partnership has been threatened by the Balkan conflict, because Russia has seen this conflict in other terms, and only a week ago the leader of the Yablako faction in Russia, Vladimir Luhkin, was quoted in worldwide news reports as saying a blockade of the port in Montenegro would be a direct path to nuclear escalation, setting aside years and years of progress that we made and launching us right back into the Cold War.

How important it was to have Members of this Congress go to Vienna, Austria, to sit down with that very same leader and other leaders of the Duma, the leader of Mr. Chernomyrdin's party, one of the leaders of the Communist party, to sit down with those individuals face-to-face, sharing our common human interest in protecting the life of this planet and sharing our interest in relieving the suffering of the Kosovar Albanians and of the people who are being bombed throughout the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.