

October 18, 1999

DEMOCRACY SUFFERS ANOTHER
BLOW IN KAZAKHSTAN—PARLIAMEN-
TARY ELECTION IS SERI-
OUSLY FLAWED

HON. TOM LANTOS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, October 18, 1999

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, in Kazakhstan just over a week ago, on October 10, the first round of elections were held for the Mazhilis—the lower house of the Parliament. There was little suspense or excitement about the results. In fact, there was little suspense or uncertainty even before the elections were held. These elections simply confirmed the nondemocratic nature of the Kazakh government, and they raise extremely serious questions about the future of United States relations with this country.

The elections were far from democratic in substance, although there were some cosmetic efforts to make the elections appear to be free. Furthermore, the modest efforts to make the elections appear democratic were not voluntarily adopted by the government of Kazakhstan. They were taken reluctantly and only under international pressure including a Congressional Human Rights briefing on the electoral process which was held a few months ago. The election fell far short of the standard of free and fair elections.

Mr. Speaker, in a blatant affront to democracy, the President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, presented to the out-going parliament his choice for the new Prime Minister of Kazakhstan last Tuesday—the second day after the election and the day before the results of the first round of elections were announced. Standard procedure in any democratic country would be for the newly elected parliament to approve a new Prime Minister. This affront to democratic procedure is truly mind-boggling!

Mr. Speaker, not only was the Prime Minister approved by the lame-duck parliament, the elections themselves were seriously flawed. The Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) sent an official international observer group which monitored the elections. Their report on the parliamentary contest highlighted the gravity of the problems. According to the observer group, “the OSCE said there was widespread official interference in the run-up to the campaign against opposition candidates and the independent media” (Agence France Presse report from Kazakhstan, October 11, 1999).

International observers reported “widespread abuses in the runup to Sunday’s parliamentary and local elections in the Central Asian republic of Kazakhstan.” These reports also quoted the OSCE that “the government interfered, opposition parties faced discrimination from local authorities, and individual candidates were intimidated.” At one polling place in Almaty, Kazakhstan’s largest city, election observers uncovered duplicate tally sheets with falsified results. The majority of the electoral commissions, which are charged with monitoring and assuring the fairness of the election process, were dominated by supporters of the pro-presidential party (Deutsche

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Presse-Agentur, the independent German news agency, and the independent Russian news agency, ITAR-TASS both on October 11, 1999).

The official statement of the OSCE stated that several steps “seriously undermined” these polls. Executive officials’ “illegal interference” and “bias of local electoral commissions against opposition representatives and candidates” placed parties in unequal conditions, the statement said. Opposition parties were “intimidated and obstructed.”

The most blatant example of this outrageously flawed election is the concerted action of the government against former Kazakh Prime Minister Akezan Kazhegeldin, who established the Republican People’s Party and attempted to contest the parliamentary elections. Mr. Kazhegeldin has faced government-created obstacles to every attempt he has made to participate in Kazakhstan’s political life since he left office as Prime Minister in 1997 after serving three years in that post. He was disqualified from participating in the last presidential race on a technicality. Shortly after he declared his intention to run for the presidency in 1998, the government announced that he was under investigation for tax evasion. The allegations were that he owned property abroad that he had not declared on his tax forms. But as soon as a court ruled that Kazhegeldin could not run for president due to the minor offense of attending a nonsanctioned meeting, the investigation into his foreign holdings stopped.

Mr. Speaker, the campaign against Mr. Kazhegeldin started up again this past spring, at the same time that he announced his new political party, the Republican People’s Party, would participate in the parliamentary elections. Mr. Kazhegeldin left Kazakhstan to acquaint leaders in other countries, notably the United States, about his party’s existence. During this trip, he appeared at a briefing of the Congressional Human Rights Caucus here in Washington. Once he left the country, however, it became obvious the prosecutor general’s office was moving to arrest him on tax evasion charges, and he said he would not return home unless he received a guarantee that he would not be arrested. He stayed away from Kazakhstan until last month.

The government’s very public effort to brand Kazhegeldin as a tax cheat left his Republican People’s Party at a serious disadvantage in contesting the election. Furthermore, party candidates complained that their campaign efforts were hampered by government forces. On September 9, just a month before the date of the election, the Central Elections Commission announced that Kazhegeldin was ineligible to run in the elections because of the tax evasion charges, and the following day, the Republican People’s Party announced it was withdrawing from the election race.

Mr. Kazhegeldin, who was in Moscow for medical treatment, said the party should not boycott the elections. But he was detained that same day by Russian police because the Kazakh government had put out a warrant for his arrest. Russian authorities under great international pressure, including efforts by our own Secretary of State Madeleine Albright subsequently permitted Mr. Kazhegeldin to return to London. Meanwhile, back in

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Kazakhstan, the Central Elections Commission declared that it was too late for the party to withdraw from the elections, and the party’s candidates were left on the ballots. The publicity surrounding Mr. Kazhegeldin’s arrest in Moscow and the call for a boycott of the election insured that the Republican People’s Party and its leader had minimal success at the polls last week.

Mr. Speaker, at my request on July 15 of this year, our distinguished colleague Congresswoman JAN SCHAKOWSKY of Illinois, chaired a briefing of the Congressional Human Rights Caucus on the political situation in Kazakhstan at which Mr. Kazhegeldin testified. His testimony about the threats facing advocates of democracy and human rights proved prophetic, and foreshadowed his arrest in Moscow at the request of the Kazakhstan government on trumped up charges and the appalling results of the recent election.

Mr. Speaker, I was extremely disappointed by the response of the Government of Kazakhstan to the hearings conducted by the Human Rights Caucus in July and by its subsequent actions leading up to the failed parliamentary elections. To my great dismay, the Government of President Nazarbayev has responded to neither the criticism leveled against his government by the Human Rights Caucus, nor to concerns voiced earlier this year by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

Mr. Speaker, the Congressional Human Rights Caucus is gravely concerned about the violations of human rights and political liberties in Kazakhstan, most clearly and convincingly demonstrated in the undemocratic elections that were held just two weeks ago. The fact that the Government of President Nazarbayev continues to ignore the concerns raised by the Human Rights Caucus, international organizations concerned with democratization and human rights, and a number of governments, including the United States, is a serious matter.

The concerns with democratization in Kazakhstan are extremely serious in their own right, Mr. Speaker, but there are also security concerns involving this country. We recently learned about the sale of about 30 MiG 21 fighter jets by Kazakhstan to North Korea, a prime sponsor of international terrorism. This irresponsible and reckless sale of advanced military equipment to North Korea calls into question the Kazakh government’s commitment to building good relations with the West and its interest in international security and stability.

It is my strong view, Mr. Speaker, that United States assistance to Kazakhstan and assistance of international financial institutions should be conditioned upon fundamental improvement in political liberties and fundamental freedoms in Kazakhstan. Further, Mr. Speaker, it is my view that any visit by Mr. Nazarbayev to Washington should be postponed until such an improvement takes place.

THE TRAGIC DEATH OF MATTHEW
SHEPARD

HON. NANCY PELOSI

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, October 18, 1999

Ms. PELOSI. Mr. Speaker, with great sadness I rise to recall that 1 year ago, Matthew Shepard, a gay college student, was murdered. We should all deplore his tragic death. He was a lovely young man and was courageously willing to be open about who he was. He suffered because of who he was. This is simply wrong. It is a tragedy when a young man has the courage to be open about who he is, and his life is taken for it.

Unfortunately, Mathew is not alone. His tragic death and violence toward others point out the need for hate crimes legislation. According to the National Coalition of Anti-Violence programs, in 1998, 33 Americans were murdered because they were gay or lesbian. In the United States last year, there were at least 2,552 reports of anti-gay or lesbian incidents. The number of serious assaults in which victims sustained major injuries grew by 12 percent. How many more deaths, how many assaults on the personal integrity of people, need to happen before this Congress will see the need for hate crimes legislation?

The statistics and Matthew's individual personal story demonstrate that these incidents are not isolated. Harassment of gays, lesbians, and bisexuals is not isolated to one geographic area nor to any one factor. As our country knows all too well, hate crimes take many forms and affect many different kinds of victims. We all remember the 1996 horrible murder of James Byrd, Jr., an African-American man in Texas. We all remember earlier this year, when a gunman opened fire at a Jewish Community Center and then singled out an Asian-American and shot him. These harsh stories are troubling and unfortunately, recent shootings are a constant reminder of the hate that still exists in our society.

The Hate Crimes Prevention Act would provide law enforcement officials with needed tools, and would serve as a lasting tribute to the lives of Matthew Sheppard, James Byrd, Jr., and the others who have been victimized by hate crimes. The Hate Crimes Prevention Act would not end all violence against people because they are gay, or African-American, or Jewish, or come from another country. Nonetheless, this legislation would allow the Federal Government to investigate and punish crimes motivated by hate.

The murder of Matthew Shepard is the manifestation of the enduring bigotry that still prevails in our society. Our Nation should take action and pass this responsible legislation which would enable Federal law enforcement officials to fight these crimes and punish the perpetrators.

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IN HONOR OF RONALD J. TOBER

HON. DENNIS J. KUCINICH

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, October 18, 1999

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Ronald Tober for his many years of service to the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority. He plans to celebrate with friends and family at a farewell dinner on October 22, 1999.

Robert Tober has had a very successful career in the public transit industry. Mr. Tober has served as the General Manager and Secretary-Treasurer for the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority since May, 1988. Prior to this appointment, Mr. Tober served as Director of Transit for the Municipality of Metropolitan Seattle for six years. For two years he was Deputy Transportation Coordinator for Metropolitan Dade County in Miami. He also served as Assistant Director of Operations and Chief Operations Planning Officer for the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority in Boston.

Robert Tober is recognized nationally as one of the top transit managers in the country, having served over twenty-eight years in the public transit industry. Mr. Tober has carried his dedication to transportation into leadership positions for several transit organizations. While serving as President of the Ohio Public Transit Association, he helped develop better transportation for the citizens of the state of Ohio. He also has been noted for promoting and hiring women and minorities in the industry.

Mr. Tober has been a great asset to the state of Ohio and city of Cleveland. His innovative ideas and leadership have guided the development of the public transit industry. His wife, Terry and four children are so proud of him.

I urge my fellow colleagues to please join me in congratulating Mr. Tober on his many accomplishments and commemorate him for his dedication to the public transit industry.

HONORING CINCINNATI'S 1999 TALL
STACKS CELEBRATION

HON. ROB PORTMAN

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, October 18, 1999

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Cincinnati's 1999 Tall Stacks celebration and the special national recognition it is receiving from the Library of Congress. This year, the Library of Congress is celebrating its bicentennial with an exciting new Local Legacies Project, which will document America's heritage by preserving unique cultural events and activities across the country.

From the earliest days of recorded history in Southwest Ohio, our traditions and culture have been shaped by the Ohio River. That's why I was delighted to nominate the recent Tall Stacks celebration as our region's contribution to this project.

The Tall Stacks event, which took place last week in Cincinnati, was a great celebration of

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our region's riverboat heritage. Nineteen riverboats from across the nation—including several classic steam-powered vessels—came to Greater Cincinnati to recreate a bygone era. And many thousands of visitors came to our region to take a step back in time and to share in this celebration.

Through its inclusion in the Local Legacies project, Tall Stacks will receive additional national recognition for its role in commemorating an important chapter in our regional and national history. And, through the National Digital Library Program, people from across the country and throughout the world will be able to share the excitement of Tall Stacks through the Library of Congress website (<http://www.loc.gov>).

We have a rich and distinguished history in Southwest Ohio. From our region's active involvement with the Underground Railroad to the Suspension Bridge, Fountain Square and our many well-preserved historic areas, we have a tremendous heritage of which we can all be proud. The riverboat era is an important part of that heritage, as Tall Stacks reminds us now and into the future.

TRIBUTE TO AMBASSADOR E.
WILLIAM CROTTY

HON. CARRIE P. MEEK

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, October 18, 1999

Mrs. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, it is with great honor that I rise to pay tribute to one of our Nation's exceptional diplomats, E. William Crotty, Ambassador to Barbados, Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts-Nevis, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. This able facilitator of American diplomacy passed on Sunday, October 10, 1999. He is survived by his loving wife, Valerie Kushner, and several outstanding children.

Ambassador Crotty was nominated by President William Clinton on April 28, 1998. Prior to this appointment, Ambassador Crotty was an attorney in Daytona Beach, FL. Ambassador Crotty served as a senior managing partner of one of the top law firms in the United States, where he was recognized as a leading lawyer in his area of practice, which included corporate and business transactions, banking and finance law, and taxation and real estate law.

Ambassador Crotty served appointments to at least 11 different commissions, including the Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad by President Clinton in 1996 and the Judicial Foundation Board by Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell in 1989. He was quite active in the Democratic Party, serving on the National Finance Board of the Clinton-Gore Campaign, as a Democratic National Party Trustee, and as the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Democratic National Committee Board of Directors from 1984 to 1988.

Ambassador Crotty was quite active in civil affairs, serving as chairman or member of the board of directors for numerous charitable and educational organizations, including the United Way of Volusia County, the Embury-Riddle