

one underestimate its value here, as well. For if NATO can assure peace in Europe, it will contribute much to stability around the globe.

The history of this century and many before it has been marked by shifting patterns within Europe as empires rose and fell, borders were drawn and redrawn, and ethnic divisions were exploited by aggressors and demagogues. Twice this century, conflicts arose which required American troops to cross the Atlantic and plunge into the cauldron of war.

NATO and NATO's partners have closed that book and are authoring a new one. In collaboration with regional institutions, we are encouraging the resolution of old antagonisms, promoting tolerance, ensuring the protection of minority rights and helping to realize, for the first time in history, the dream of a Europe whole and free.

So let us not hesitate to rebut those who would diminish the role of our alliance, dispute its value, or downplay the importance of its unity and preparedness. For if NATO does not respond to the 21st Century security challenges facing our region, who will? If NATO cannot prevent aggressors from engulfing whole chunks of Europe in conflict, who can? And if NATO is not prepared to respond to the threat posed to our citizens by weapons of mass destruction, who will have that capability?

The 20th Century has been the bloodiest and most destructive in human history, and despite the Cold War's end, many threats remain. But we have learned some hard lessons from this history of conflict, and those lessons underlie all our planning for the Washington Summit.

We know that when the democracies of Europe and America are divided, crevices are created through which forces of evil and aggression may emerge; and that when we stand together, no force on Earth is more powerful than our solidarity on behalf of freedom.

That is why NATO is focused not only on welcoming new members, but also on strengthening its valuable partnerships with Russia, Ukraine and Europe's other democracies. Their inclusion and full participation in the transatlantic community is essential to the future we seek. For NATO's purpose is not to build new walls, but rather to tear old walls down.

Five years ago, while serving as U.S. Permanent Representative to the UN, I traveled with General Shalikashvili to Central and Eastern Europe, to outline President Clinton's plan for a Partnership for Peace. That concept continues to deepen and pay dividends for countries whether or not they aspire to NATO membership. Today, former adversaries are talking to each other, training with each other, carrying out missions together, and planning together for the future. By fostering that process, we prevent potentially dangerous misunderstandings, address present problems and lay a solid foundation for future cooperation.

We also remind ourselves, that although NATO stands tall, it does not stand alone. The EU, OSCE and NATO and its partners form the core of a broader system for protecting vital interests and promoting shared values.

We learned in Bosnia earlier this decade how vital such a system is. We face a test of that system now in Kosovo, and we welcome Russian Foreign Minister Ivanov's efforts in Belgrade today to help achieve our common goal.

There, together, we have backed diplomacy with tools ranging from humanitarian relief

to OSCE verifiers to the threatened use of NATO force. Together, we have hammered out an interim political settlement which meets the needs and respects the rights of all concerned.

When talks resume next week, we must be firm in securing this agreement. We must be clear in explaining that a settlement without NATO-led enforcement is not acceptable because only NATO has the credibility and capability to make it work. And we must be resolute in spelling out the consequences of intransigence.

To those abroad and in my own country who have raised doubts, I reply that the plan we and our partners have developed is not risk-free. But we prefer that risk to the certainty that inaction would lead to a renewed cycle of repression and retaliation, blood-letting and ethnic cleansing. The path we have chosen for our alliance in Kosovo is not easy; but it is right. It serves NATO interests, and it upholds the values of our alliance for which it was created and which we will defend.

Today, as NATO embarks upon a new era, our energy and vision are directed to the future. But we are mindful, as well, of the past. For as we welcome three new members, we have a debt we cannot fail to acknowledge.

In this room today are ambassadors and foreign ministers and generals and members of Congress. In this room, there is great pride and good reason for it. But let us never forget upon whose shoulders we stand. We pay homage to our predecessors and to the millions of soldiers and sailors and aviators and diplomats who, throughout the past half-century, have kept NATO vigilant and strong.

We pay homage, as well, to those who fought for freedom on the far side of freedom's curtain. For the Berlin Wall would be standing today; the Fulda Gap would divide Europe today; the Warsaw Pact would remain our adversary today, if those who were denied liberty for so long, had not struggled so bravely for their rights.

Let us never forget that freedom has its price. And let us never fail to remember how our alliance came together, what it stands for, and why it has prevailed.

Upon the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty, President Harry Truman referred to the creation of NATO as a "neighborly act." "We are like a group of householders," he said, "who express their community of interests by entering into an association for their mutual protection."

At the same time, Canadian Secretary of State Lester Pearson said, "The North Atlantic community is part of the world community, and as we grow stronger to preserve the peace, all free men and women grow stronger with us."

Prime Minister Spaak of Belgium added, "The new NATO pact is purely defensive; it threatens no one. It should therefore disturb no one, except those who might foster the criminal idea of having recourse to war."

Though all the world has changed since these statements were made, the verities they express have not. Our alliance still is bound together by a community of interests. Our strength still is a source of strength to those everywhere who labor for freedom and peace. Our power still shields those who love the law and still threatens none, except those who would threaten others with aggression and harm. Our alliance endures because the principles it defends are timeless and because they reflect the deepest aspirations of the human spirit.

It is our mission now, working across the Atlantic, to carry on the traditions of our al-

liance and prepare NATO for the 21st Century. To that end, we take a giant step today. And we look forward with confidence and determination to the historic summit in Washington and further progress tomorrow.

Thank you all very much.
(Applause)

GROWING RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE IN THE HEART OF EUROPE

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 17, 1999

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, in the coming days the participating States of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) will conduct in Vienna, Austria, a Supplementary Meeting on Freedom of Religion with the intent to discuss some of the key human rights concerns raised at the 1998 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting. The United States has a sincere interest in the deserved attention the OSCE is bringing to violations of religious liberty.

As Chairman of the Helsinki Commission (which has the mandate to monitor compliance with the Helsinki Accords), I continue to be concerned with the growing evidence that religious intolerance is on the rise and violations of this precious freedom are cropping up among the stalwart participating States of the OSCE. This trend is especially noteworthy in Western Europe, in countries such as France and Belgium, where the parliaments have issued, respectively, reports listing a variety of religious groups and institutions as "dangerous sects." The French, Belgian, and Austrian Governments have also established governmental centers to advise citizens which religious groups meet government criteria as a bona fide religion. If I may, Mr. Speaker, I want to take a moment and share with my colleagues these alarming initiatives so that we may consider what these actions portend for all peoples of faith.

The clearest and most comprehensive commitments on religious liberty found in any international instrument are enunciated in the OSCE documents. Non-interference in the affairs of religious communities is central to the OSCE understanding of religious liberty. The tendency of a number of European governments to establish themselves as the determiner of the rightness or wrongness of a particular belief is in direct contravention to this principle. In addition, OSCE States have committed to eliminating and preventing discrimination based on religious grounds in all fields of civil, political, economic, social and cultural life. Other commitments include the freedom to profess and practice one's religion alone or in community, the freedom to meet with and exchange information with co-religionists regardless of frontiers, the freedom to freely present to others and discuss one's religious views, and the freedom to change one's religion.

Over the past three years, the parliaments of France, Belgium, and Germany each established commissions to study "dangerous sects and cults" that have contributed to the discrimination and harassment of targeted

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groups. For example, an investigative report undertaken by the French Parliament in 1996 contained a list of "dangerous" groups in order to warn the public against them. Suspect activities, according to the report, include "recruitment" through evangelistic outreach and distribution of tracts, activities clearly within the internationally recognized right to free expression. Similarly, the Belgian Parliament's 1997 report had a widely circulated informal appendix that listed 189 groups and included various allegations against many Protestant and Catholic groups, Quakers, Hasidic Jews, Buddhists, and the YWCA. In Belgium, the unofficial appendix appears to have gained significance in the eyes of some public officials who reportedly have denied access to publicly rented buildings for Seventh Day Adventists and Baha'i because they were listed in the appendix.

Equally alarming, the French, Belgian, and Austrian Governments, as well as a number of state governments in Germany, have set up hotlines for the public and, through government-sponsored "information centers," distribute information on groups deemed by the government to be "dangerous." Characterizations of religious beliefs by these government information centers and publication of unproven and potentially libelous materials have already caused problems for a number of minority religious groups. Such government action presumes that religious beliefs and spiritual convictions can be objectively analyzed by government bureaucrats in their consumer protection role. These information centers contradict the OSCE commitments to "foster a climate of mutual tolerance and respect," and excessively entangle the government in the public discussion on the viability of particular religious beliefs.

A few months ago, in October 1998, the French Prime Minister's office created the "Interministerial Mission to Battle Against Sects," which by its very name, suggests confrontation with religious minorities rather than tolerance. The Interministerial Mission's mandate includes the responsibility to "predict and fight against actions of sects that violate human dignity or threaten public order."

This is the latest example of how the French Government has taken steps which have negative effects on religious liberty. In 1996, the French Parliament placed the Institut Theologique de Nimes, a mainstream Baptist seminary closely connected to the Luther Rice Seminary in Atlanta, Georgia, on its list of so-called "sects." Since then, libelous articles about the Institut have been published in newspapers. The articles were based on hearsay of dubious origin. In addition, the church connected with the Institut recently reported that a loan application was rejected for the reason that the church is on the Parliament's "sect" list. Members of the Institut have also apparently suffered discrimination from people in the region; according to report, at least one church member has lost her job due to her attendance.

Since the 1997 Belgian Parliament's report with the unofficial appendix listing 189 groups, the Belgian Government has moved ahead with plans to establish an "Advice and Information Center on Dangerous Sects." It is my understanding that this center should be fully

operational by the latter part of this year. According to Belgian officials at the Ministry of Justice, the new center will distribute official government views on the groups identified by the Parliament and may expand its inquiries to other groups not previously listed. A coalition of Belgian religious groups registered their concern at a press conference held in May 1998 in Brussels and continues to oppose the Belgian Government policies toward religious groups.

In Austria, a law restricting religious freedom became effective in January 1998. The law requires that a religious group prove a 20-year existence in Austria, have a creed distinct from previously registered groups, and have a membership of at least 0.02% of the population or 16,000 members before they are granted full rights under law. The Austrian Government's opinion that the government must "approve" religious belief before it is available for the public reveals a shocking retreat from democratic principles which encourage the free exchange of ideas and quality before the law for all religions or beliefs.

The tendency to increase control over religion or belief groups extends to Europe as a whole. Pan-European institutions such as the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly and the European Parliament have in the last year debated the role of government in controlling "sects." The tone of these discussions has been ominous and proposals include instituting even more government controls over minority religions.

The people of the United States are deeply committed to religious liberty. The 105th Congress overwhelmingly passed the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998. This act establishes an Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom and a nine-member Commission on International Religious Freedom who will monitor the status of religious freedom in foreign countries. Additionally, the Act encourages the President of the United States to become more thoroughly involved by regularly reporting to Congress on the state of religious liberty and by requiring the President to take specific actions against countries which violate this freedom.

Let me emphasize that the Act mandates U.S. Government action against not only countries engaged in persecution of religious believers, but also mandates U.S. Government action against countries that are actively intolerant of religious groups or those that allow societal intolerance to exist. The intolerant actions of Western European governments squarely are in the purview of the Act. The Commission, the Ambassador at Large, and the President are mandated to focus on issues of religious intolerance, and I encourage them to focus on the actions taken by Western European governments in light of international law and international commitments on religious liberty.

Clearly the actions taken by the Governments of France, Belgium, Germany, and Austria call into question the commitment those countries made to "foster a climate of mutual tolerance and respect." I urge the Administration to continue raising these issues with the Governments of Western Europe to ensure through law and governmental practice that religious freedoms for minorities are protected.

GOOD FRIDAY TRADE AND INVESTMENT ACT

HON. JIM McDERMOTT

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 17, 1999

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, we're here today because we share a common goal. We all want the peace process in Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic to work.

As hard as it is to get folks to sign a peace agreement. It's even harder to make sure that it gets fully implemented.

We feel strongly that the best chance we have to ensure the Good Friday Peace Agreement is fully implemented is by creating jobs and economic growth.

The legislation we are introducing today is the first comprehensive effort by the United States to create real jobs and real investment in Northern Ireland and the border counties of the Irish Republic.

Our legislation uses existing trade and investment tools to stimulate tangible economic assistance to the people of Northern Ireland and the border counties. Faced with continued resistance to the Irish free trade efforts of the past, we concluded that a fresh attempt to fashion legislation that could address European reticence while quickly delivering meaningful trade and investment assistance to Northern Ireland and the border counties was in order.

The legislation provides for the creation of a \$300 million Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) equity fund. Such a fund generates private sector focus and interest in Northern Ireland and the Border area and makes sure that women entrepreneurs have meaningful access to that funding. We believe that the multiplier effect from such a fund could generate a total \$1.2 billion in new private investment.

Our legislation also relies on the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) to assist Northern Ireland's exporters to grow their economy and job base. For those of you who don't know, the United States Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) provides preferential duty-free entry for approximately 4,500 products from 149 designated beneficiary countries and territories.

GSP lowers the tariff rate for goods being imported into the United States. GSP already is in place for portions of the European Union. Because beneficiary designees are not required to change import policies. GSP designation for Northern Ireland and the border counties of the Irish Republic would not require them to seek an amendment from the EU or the Treaty of Rome.

Finally, the legislation relies on the International Fund for Ireland to increase funding for projects that will create rapid job growth in the private sector. The bill recommends six projects for funding and support that will provide both immediate and mid-term job generating growth.

We feel strongly that now is the time for the U.S. to send a clear, serious and solid signal of support to the parties in Northern Ireland that are struggling to implement the peace agreement.