

During the second half of the nineteenth century, between the years 1915 and 1923, the Armenian population of the Ottoman Empire became a target of heightened persecution by the Ottoman Turks. These persecutions culminated in a 3-decade period during which more than 1.5 million Armenians were systematically uprooted from their homelands of 3,000 years and eliminated through massacres and deportation.

Mr. Speaker, this historic event can no longer be denied. Vast amounts of documentation exist in the United States archives, as well as in the public domain, which lend proof that the horrific event surrounding this period did in fact take place. It is important that we, as Members of Congress, continue to officially recognize the genocide because it is an important part of our world history, just as historically important as World War II, and a prelude to the Holocaust that followed. It is a shame and an outrage that the Genocide is still not recognized by many, many nations.

Mr. Speaker, it is also important that we continue to mark this event on an annual basis. Although most of the survivors of the Genocide are unfortunately no longer with us, their relatives continue to remember and to mourn them to this day. I am proud that the State of New York is one of the few States which has offered a human right/genocide curricula for teachers and students to use at their discretion, which includes the Armenian Genocide. I was a sponsor of that curricula, and I believe educational programs such as this allow our children to learn more about the tragic events such as the Armenian Genocide, hopefully ensuring a peaceful existence for future generations.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot forget that the persecution and mistreatment of the Armenian people continues today in Nagorno-Karabagh. Since 1988, fighting there has left more than 1,500 Armenians dead and uprooted hundreds more, forcing them to flee to other parts of this unstable region. As a member of the Congressional Armenian Caucus, I will work to end the repression of the Armenian people in Nagorno-Karabagh and will continue to support their efforts to ensure a stable future for their people.

COLUMBINE HIGH SCHOOL SHOOTING

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

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, as a Coloradoan and as an American, I am profoundly shocked and saddened by the shootings at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, yesterday. My thoughts and prayers go

out to the families who have been victims of this terrible crime.

I can hardly imagine the horror and pain experienced by the families who lost loved ones in this tragedy, and as the father of two school aged children, I am deeply distressed by the prospect that our schools have become places where this kind of violence can take place.

Today, however, is not a time to rush to judgment about the causes or cures for this tragedy. I do believe, however, that parents, community leaders and policymakers at all levels, including school boards, State legislators and our national government need to come together in coming weeks and reflect upon this tragedy. We need a fuller discussion of the values we share as Americans, and we need to work more actively than ever before to make our schools safe and to ensure that our Nation's classrooms are places for learning and for nurturing the full potential of our young people.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that as a Nation we will respond to this incident by looking beyond our prejudices and political leanings. My concern is that the violence that took place in Colorado has deeper implications for our future than we can fully fathom at this moment. I fear it goes deeper than observations about a decline in our values or moral decay as a society.

Ultimately, this tragedy will challenge us to carefully explore our understanding of rights and freedoms, whether it is access to the Internet or access to guns. Moreover, it will challenge us to place an even greater priority on the quality of our lives and the lives of our children.

COMMEMORATION OF THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY of New York) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, as a proud member of the Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues, and the representative of a large and vibrant community of Armenian Americans, I rise today to join my colleagues in the sad remembrance of the Armenian Genocide.

First, I would like to commend the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. PORTER), cochairs of the Caucus, for all of their hard work on this issue and other issues of human rights.

April 24, 1999 marks the 84th anniversary of the beginning of the Armenian Genocide. It was on that day in 1915 that over 200 Armenian religious, political and intellectual leaders were arrested and murdered in central Turkey. This date marks the beginning of an organized campaign by the young Turk

government to eliminate the Armenians from the Ottoman Empire. Over the next 8 years, 1.5 million Armenians died at the hands of the Turks, and a half million more were deported.

As the United States Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, Henry Morgenthau, Sr. has written, and I quote, "When the Turkish authorities gave the orders for these deportations, they were merely giving the death warrant to a whole race. They understood this well and made no particular attempt to conceal the fact."

As a supporter of human rights, I am dismayed that the Turkish government is still refusing to acknowledge what happened and, instead, is attempting to rewrite history.

In a sense, even more appalling than Turkey's denial is the willingness of some officials in our own government to join in rewriting the history of the Armenian Genocide. It is vital that we do not let political agendas get in the way of doing what is right.

Mr. Speaker, the issues surrounding the Armenian genocide should not go unresolved. I call upon the United States Government to demand complete accountability by the Turkish Government for the Armenian genocide of 1915-1923.

To heal the wounds of the past, the Turkish Government must first recognize the responsibility of its country's leaders at that time for the catastrophe. Nothing we can do or say will bring those who perished back to life, but we can require them and bring everlasting meaning by teaching the lessons of the Armenian genocide to future generations.

The noted philosopher George Santayana has said, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." We should heed this wise principle and do all we can to ensure that those that died, the people of the Armenian genocide, that these people are not forgotten.

VICE-PRESIDENT GORE'S VIEWS ON ENVIRONMENT

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

Mr. DOOLITTLE. Mr. Speaker, today marks the first in a series of special orders members of the Conservative Action Team and Western Caucus hope to hold on the record of Vice President AL GORE.

For the past 6½ years AL GORE has been Bill Clinton's point man on the environment and on a number of key issues. He has been particularly aggressive in attacking the work of congressional Republicans, often portraying the positions of congressional Republicans as being very extreme and very anti-people, if you will.

The members of the Conservative Action Team believe it is important for

the American people to understand why AL GORE finds our record of cutting taxes, balancing the budget, eliminating wasteful government, and restoring commonsense environmental policies so contemptible, and to do this we think we must look at what AL GORE actually stands for.

Today we will examine the Vice President's views on the environment. This examination is important because, upon being elected, Bill Clinton ceded control of his administration's environmental policy to AL GORE. In fact, GORE was given the authority to select the EPA Administrator and other high-ranking environmental policy positions.

The timing of this special order also is important because tomorrow is Earth Day. Earth Day is a curious event, curious because we will not hear as much talk about protecting the environment, which all Americans support, as we will about what the Federal Government and Federal bureaucrats can do to curtail individuals' rights to use private property.

What makes Earth Day more curious is that the first such celebration took place in the 100th anniversary of communist revolutionary Vladimir Lenin's birthday.

One thing we have come to expect is that AL GORE will use Earth Day to criticize Republicans for not micro-managing every river, wetland, and estuary across America from Washington, D.C.

AL GORE's extreme views on the environment have not been given the attention they deserve, despite the fact that he has written an entire book explaining them. That book is entitled "Earth in the Balance," and I would encourage all of my colleagues to buy a copy and to read it. I think it will be most instructive. Let me just cite a couple of things out of the book in the limited time I have:

"The 20th century has not been kind to the constant human striving for a sense of purpose in life. Two world wars, the Holocaust, the invention of nuclear weapons, and now the global environmental crisis have led many of us to wonder if survival, much less enlightened, joyous and hopeful living, is possible. We retreat into the seductive tools and technologies of industrial civilization, but that only creates new problems as we become increasingly isolated from one another and disconnected from our roots."

Does any reasonable person really sit here and wonder if survival is even possible? I mean, this is unimaginable. And to compare this threat that he sees to the two world wars or to the Holocaust? And yet we live in a time of unimagined prosperity and a time when people in many ways are more well off than ever. I just think this is an interesting observation, to see that someone of this high office actually

holds this kind of view which is so far out of the mainstream.

The Vice President made a statement about the future of cars, and that is in the book and I will quote within that. Mr. Speaker, I will end on this note: Within the context of the Strategic Environment Initiative, which I understand to be a proposal the Vice President has worked on, it sought to be able to establish a coordinated global program to accomplish the strategic goal of completely eliminating the internal combustion engine over, say, a 25-year period.

Let me just observe, the internal combustion engine has been a great blessing to Americans and to people around the world. I have never really heard of an adequate replacement for it. And it has certainly been the source, in the manufacture of that and related industries, that has created hundreds of thousands of jobs. And yet here the Vice President is essentially lauding the elimination of the internal combustion engine.

We will conduct further discussions on this in the weeks ahead.

TIME HAS COME FOR THE UNITED STATES AND IRAN TO HAVE DIRECT COMMUNICATION

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

Mr. NEY. Mr. Speaker, Bruce Langden was a hostage in Iran with the takeover of the embassy; and as he has stated many times in the past couple of years, it is time for the two countries to talk.

It has now been 20 years since the United States and Iran have had any direct communications with each other. Official exchanges have all been indirect via the Swiss. Its embassy in Tehran today officially represents the American interests there. But these have been very rare and limited amounts of contact.

On the face of it, that fact makes little sense, for either country to not talk, given the way the interests of the United States and Iran in that part of the world overlap. We cannot ignore the reality of Iran. Neither can Iran ignore the reality of America's strategic interests and military presence today in the Persian Gulf.

We have some obvious shared interests. An improved situation in the Middle East is good for the world and good for us and good for Iran. We obviously also share interests of better control of traffic in narcotics in the region and freedom of navigation in the Persian Gulf for everyone.

But the absence of dialogue with Iran inevitably impacts even more broadly on our strategic interest throughout the region. More specifically, Mr. Speaker, it complicates our relation-

ship with the Central Asian states that evolved out of the former Soviet Union, with whom Iran has had historic cultural and strategic interests.

It also denies contact in commerce between the two countries, which can benefit many of the Iranian people and also the American people. It leaves the vast oil and gas sector of Iran, in serious need of infrastructure modernization and expansion, open to European interests but not to the Americans.

It also postpones the time when we inevitably will need to accept the reality of Iran's naval presence in the Gulf and the need for Iran to be included in essential long-term, multilateral security arrangements in those waters.

It denies us conduct with the emerging generation of future leaders in that country, particularly amongst the young people. Some 50 percent of Iran's population are under the age of 25, and the educational exchanges between the two countries would be of benefit to everybody.

Now, we never are going to be able to communicate by saying, "These are the four points that we are unhappy with with Iran," and Iran saying to the United States, "These are the four points we are unhappy with." I think we simply have to agree to begin to talk and to communicate.

Now, regrettably, the Tehran government continues to assert that it is not open to dialogue except under conditions that make dialogue impossible; in other words, no dialogue from government to government. And it is clear that the continuing political confrontation in Iran between conservative elements and those preaching moderation makes overtures towards the U.S. unlikely soon.

We also have our own amounts of arguments in our democracy here about whether we should or should not commune. I am sure other Members of Congress would take a different point of view, Mr. Speaker, from what I am saying today.

But on our part, I think we need to make it clear that we are ready to communicate and agree to talk with each other. One immediate way to signal that interest would be for us to facilitate the license that would be needed under our current trade embargo for the sale of up to 500,000 tons of American agricultural commodities that American and Iranian private interests seek to complete. According to Secretary of Agriculture Glickman, the request remains under review.

Former Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, in a speech at the Asia Society in New York, urged the reestablishment of relations between the two countries. Looking down the road, a restored relationship between Iran and the United States would find special strength in one important factor. The U.S. today is the second largest Persian-speaking country in the world.