

This is a day to remember, a day to pause in prayer and a day to commemorate our desire and commitment for this not to happen again.

HONORING THE MEMORY OF THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

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

Mr. ROGAN. Mr. Speaker, imagine an entire village, 10,000 people, drowned at once. Imagine watching as your fathers and brothers are burned to death. Imagine watching men in your community tied to horses and dragged away. Or watching children see their mothers and sisters raped and then beaten and dragged away. Imagine, if you will, smiling soldiers posing alongside the corpses of those who were just moments before family, friends and neighbors. Imagine if all this happened in front of your eyes, and then as you grew old, history and indeed nations of the world choose to ignore it all.

Mr. Speaker, these memories were not imagined, they were witnessed by thousands. Today these memories live in the hearts and minds of many of my friends and thousands of my constituents. It is our duty not to let these memories fade.

□ 1500

Mr. Speaker, I rise to support legislation that will forever recognize the atrocities committed against the Armenian people at the hands of the Ottoman Turks between 1915 and 1923. In eight short years, more than 1.5 million husbands, wives and children suffered and died.

The eyewitness accounts of this tragedy come not from the history books but from my own hometown. Today, nearly one-quarter of a million Armenians reside in the Los Angeles area, a majority in my hometown of Glendale, California. This is the largest concentration of Armenian Americans outside the Republic of Armenia. I have been blessed with their friendship.

Armenian Americans have served our country faithfully as members of the armed services, as public officials, as business and community leaders. Their story is the story of America, one of hard work, dedication, commitment to faith and to family. I have heard their story. I have heard it from survivors of the genocide and from their descendants.

My good friend Gregory Krikorian has told me the story of his grandmother, Yegnar Atamian, who after witnessing the brutal death of her father, the capture and slaughter of her brothers, the rape of her mother and sisters, endured her own deportation through the deserts of Syria. Her faith and her will to live somehow guided her to America.

She is not alone. Last year, I spoke of the tragedy witnessed by another constituent, Haig Baronian. As a child, he watched his own mother dragged away, never to be seen again.

In the memory of their families and in reverence to our founding principles of liberty at all costs, we must not let these images be erased from history. We must work together today to put to rest the painful memories of these and so many Armenians who were forced to begin their lives anew, far from their homeland. We must properly acknowledge the past.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting our efforts to commemorate the genocide against Armenia. Let us join together to close the gaping wound history has scored on the body of humanity. Let us give the martyrs of the Armenian people the eternal rest they have been seeking for nearly a century.

ALAMEDA COUNTY CHILDREN'S MEMORIAL DAY AND FLAG PROJECT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. NEY). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to ask that my colleagues join me in supporting a Children's Memorial Flag Project and establishing a National Children's Memorial Day to remember all of the children who die by violence in our country. As I speak today, my thoughts and prayers go out to the Littleton, Colorado, community and the families of the students and faculty members who were tragically murdered yesterday.

Not only during January, when we celebrate Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday, should we discuss and teach nonviolence. Demonstrating and teaching our children that violence is wrong should be a part of our daily lives.

Each day in the United States five infants and children die from abuse and neglect and seven teens are murdered. In fact, more children lose their lives to criminal violence in the United States than in any of the 26 industrialized nations of the world. Many would be shocked at these statistics.

The Children's Memorial Flag Project was created to raise awareness about the violence towards children in our country and to organize community and national prevention strategies. It is with pride that I say that this project was originated in 1996 in the district which I represent, the 9th Congressional District of California.

In the past 5 years alone we have lost more than 140 children in Alameda County to preventable violence. Each time a child is killed, we fly the Children's Memorial Flag at half-staff. The Child Welfare League of America has adopted Alameda County's Children's

Memorial Flag and promotes it nationally.

Last year 33 states participated on Children's Memorial Day, the fourth Friday in the month of April, which is both Child Abuse Month and Crime Prevention Month. This year we anticipate 20 States flying the flag at half-mast, with 13 others memorializing the children by other means.

Soon my friend and our Bay Area colleague, the gentleman from California (Mr. STARK), will introduce legislation that would adopt the Children's Memorial Flag and establish the fourth Friday in April as National Day of Observance. I ask my colleagues to cosponsor and support this legislation, and honor the memory of children lost to violence in our country on this Friday, April 23rd. I will continue to work to establish this day as a remembrance to honor children by flying the Children's Memorial Flag at half-mast, and I urge my colleagues to join with me in this effort.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of one of our society's most valuable and most vulnerable groups of citizens: our Children.

For more than a decade, April has been recognized as Child Abuse Prevention Month. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reported that nearly one million children were abused and neglected in 1997.

Child abuse is society's concern. Prevention of child abuse demands that everyone—Federal, State and local government as well as community service providers, teachers, businesses, families, friends and neighbors must work as a unit to protect our children.

This Friday is Children's Memorial Day; a day set aside to memorialize the thousands of children and youth killed each year as a result of child abuse. I challenge each Member of Congress to help expand awareness and encourage prevention efforts for this nationwide problem.

Violence against our children must end. Preventing child abuse is everybody's business. Make it yours.

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.

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 inter-

vention 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 adminis-

tration'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 non-negotiable 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.