

CONSTITUTIONAL IMPASSE  
CONTINUES IN BELARUS

**HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH**

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, May 25, 1999*

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, on May 16, the alternative Presidential election concluded in Belarus within the timeframe envisioned by the legitimate 1994 Constitution. While the opposition Central Election Commission (CEC) concluded that the final results of the voting were invalid because of various violations deriving from the impediments placed by Belarusian authorities, the ballot served as an important barometer of democratic engagement by the citizens of Belarus. In the months leading up to the election, President Alyaksandr Lukashenka had imprisoned one of the two Presidential candidates—former Prime Minister Mikhail Chygir—on what were clearly politically motivated charges, arrested hundreds of election officials and volunteers, and instituted administrative proceedings against others. Nevertheless, the authorities were unable to thwart the election in at least one critically important respect—according to the opposition CEC, the voting itself was valid because more than half—or 53 percent of the electorate—participated. When one considers that these were unsanctioned elections that challenged Lukashenka's legitimacy, this is a substantial number of people.

No matter what the imperfections, Mr. Speaker, the opposition's electoral initiative should send a powerful message to Lukashenka. Clearly, an appreciable number of Belarusian citizens are dissatisfied with the profoundly negative political and socio-economic fallout stemming from his dictatorial inclinations and misguided nostalgia for the Soviet past or some misty "Slavic Union." The vote highlights the constitutional and political impasse created by Lukashenka's illegitimate 1996 constitutional referendum, in which he extended his personal power, disbanded the duly elected 13th Supreme Soviet, and created a new legislature and constitutional court subservient to him.

Last month, the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (Helsinki Commission), which I chair, held a hearing on the situation in Belarus, with a view toward promoting human rights and democracy there. Testimony from the State Department, OSCE mission in Belarus, the Belarusian democratic opposition and several human rights NGOs all reaffirmed that Belarus is missing out on what one witness characterized as "the great market democratic revolution that is sweeping Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia" because of Lukashenka's power grab and backsliding on human rights and democracy.

Despite repeated calls from the international community, including the Helsinki Commission, for Lukashenka to cease harassment of the opposition, NGO's and the independent media; allow the opposition access to the electronic media; create the conditions for free and fair elections and strengthen the rule of law, we have failed to see progress in these areas. Indeed, we see more evidence of reversals. Earlier this year, for example,

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

Lukashenka signed a decree which introduces extensive restrictions on non-governmental activity and mandates re-registration—by July 1—of political parties, NGOs and trade unions. The decree, which among other onerous stipulations requires that organizations acknowledge the results of Lukashenka's illegitimate 1996 referendum, is clearly designed to destroy democratic civil society in Belarus and further consolidate Lukashenka's repressive rule. Moreover, within the last few months, several disturbing incidents have occurred, among them the March arrests of Viktor Gonchar, Chairman of the opposition CEC, and the Chygir imprisonment, as well as the mysterious disappearances of Tamara Vinnikova, former chair of the National Bank of Belarus and, on May 10, Gen. Yuri Zakharenko, former Interior Minister and a leading opponent of Lukashenka. Just a few days ago, Lukashenka's government announced that no more foreign priests will be allowed to serve in Belarus, making it extremely difficult for the Roman Catholic Church, which is rebuilding following the travails of the Soviet era, to function.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly urge the Belarusian Government to comply with its freely undertaken commitments under the Helsinki Final Act and subsequent OSCE agreements and to immediately, without preconditions, convene a genuine dialog with the country's democratic forces and with the long-suffering Belarusian people.

TRIBUTE TO DR. AUGUSTO ORTIZ  
AND MARTHA ORTIZ

**HON. ED PASTOR**

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, May 25, 1999*

Mr. PASTOR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Dr. Augusto Ortiz and his wife, Mrs. Martha Ortiz. For 50 years, this outstanding team has provided medical and clinical services to the under-served, rural and urban, Spanish-speaking populations of Arizona. Dr. Ortiz, a medical doctor who graduated from the University of Illinois in 1945, provided the medical services while Martha, who rarely accepted compensation for her services, acted as the full-time administrator, personnel director, and business manager of the practice. The willingness of Dr. and Mrs. Ortiz to forego salaries or their acceptance of "pay-what-you-can" arrangements made medical services affordable and available to many poor residents of Arizona. Thousands of Arizonans owe their health and lives to the caring dedication of this selfless medical team.

Although Dr. Ortiz' family did not have large amounts of money, they encouraged a love of learning and a dedication to community service. With these values instilled in him as a young boy in Puerto Rico, Dr. Ortiz often dreamed of helping underprivileged people when he grew up. In order to pursue his dream of becoming a doctor to aid indigent people, Dr. Ortiz had to leave his much loved family and childhood home to attend medical school in Illinois. Although he was now thousands of miles away, these early dreams and

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lessons helped guide and inspire him to continue toward his goal.

In the early 1950's, while stationed at Luke Air Force Base in Phoenix, Arizona, Dr. Ortiz took on a Herculean task. He readily agreed to assist Dr. Carlos Greth with a medical practice that served 80,000 Spanish-speaking people in Maricopa County. At this time, they were the only Spanish-speaking doctors in Maricopa County.

Aside from generously offering his medical talents, Dr. Ortiz also became a champion for those that he treated. His political motivation was his need to "stand up and speak out" because he felt "an obligation to do something to . . . remedy those problems" which were regularly encountered by his patients. Dr. Ortiz was especially active on behalf of his farm worker patients. He was instrumental in obtaining an Arizona state ban on the short handled hoe, as well as improving the Arizona laws regulating pesticides and field sanitation. Dr. Ortiz' commitment and accomplishments make him an outstanding role model for the citizen activist. He identified the problems that needed to be addressed, sought logical, humane remedies for them, and consistently persuaded political decision makers to agree to the solutions.

Dr. and Mrs. Ortiz not only emphasized preventive health care, they organized mobile clinics and community health boards to ensure that this message would be heard and spread throughout many Arizona communities. In 1972, Dr. Ortiz joined the University of Arizona Rural Health Office as the Medical Director. Currently, he continues as the Medical Director of the Rural Health Office while maintaining his rural mobile clinic practice in three communities. During his tenure, he has worked tirelessly to encourage the poor and minorities to enter and to succeed in healthcare professions, while continually working to develop and deliver better health services for those in need.

Throughout his career, Dr. Ortiz has received many honors and awards, including: The Arizona Latin-American Medical Association Award; the Arizona Family Doctor of the Year Award; Distinguished Leadership Award, American Rural Health Association (national); and the Jefferson Award for Outstanding Service to the Community, Institute for Public Service (national).

Dr. Ortiz and Martha deserve the nation's gratitude and respect for the magnitude of the service they have given for such an extended period of time. I ask my colleagues in Congress to join me in applauding and honoring this noble doctor, Dr. Augusto Ortiz, and his admirable wife, Martha Ortiz.

AMERICAN LAND SOVEREIGNTY  
PROTECTION ACT

SPEECH OF

**HON. WALLY HERGER**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, May 20, 1999*

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 883) to preserve