

what it failed to do 86 years ago and to officially recognize the slaughter of more than 1.5 million Armenians by the Ottoman-Turkish Empire from 1915 to 1923 as a deliberate and systematic attempt to destroy the Armenian people, their culture and their heritage, as genocide.

It began with the killing of the community leaders and intellectuals 86 years ago today. That was followed by the disarming and murder of Armenians serving in the Ottoman-Turkish army. And this was followed by attacks on Armenian men, women and children, whom the Ottoman-Turks drove into the desert where they were left to either die of dehydration or starve.

This deliberate and systematic assault on the Armenian population would continue for 8 years. Then-U.S. Ambassador to the Ottoman-Turkish Empire, Henry Morgenthau, Sr., witnessed these events first hand and reported them back to Washington. Later he would write that "the great massacres and persecutions of the past are insignificant when compared to the sufferings of the Armenian race in 1915."

Despite reports such as this, the United States failed to intervene. As horrible as not coming to the aid of the Armenian people in 1915 was, what strikes me today is that the United States, 86 years later, still fails to recognize these events for what they were, genocide.

Last year I joined with 143 of my colleagues in sponsoring H. Res. 398, which would have acknowledged the events in Turkey of 1915 to 1923 as genocide and called on the President to do the same. Yet this resolution was not allowed to come to a vote on the floor. Even today, when President Bush issued a statement to commemorate what he called "one of the great tragedies of history," he did not use the word genocide.

Mr. Speaker, if we fail to acknowledge these events for what they truly were, we are, as Elie Wiesel has said, "committing the most dangerous sin of all." In Turkey, Germany, Yugoslavia and Rwanda, we have either acted too slowly or failed to act at all. How many more genocides are going to occur before we raise our own awareness of these events and condemn them for what they truly are.

Mr. Speaker, finally I would like to thank Mr. KNOLLENBERG and Mr. PALLONE, the co-chairs of the Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues, for organizing this special order tonight. Recognition and acknowledgment of the Armenian Genocide is an important step toward defeating that indifferent spirit which has allowed events such as these to occur again and again. I am glad that I am joined by so many of my colleagues who share this view tonight.

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I join with my colleagues tonight in somber remembrance of the Armenian Genocide. Early in the 20th century, during World War I and its aftermath, the Ottoman Empire attempted the complete liquidation of the Armenian population of Eastern Anatolia.

We must come down to the House floor tonight not only to remember this tragic event, but we must also proclaim that the Armenian Genocide is an historical fact. There are many who deny that this first genocide of the 20th century actually took place.

The American Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire in 1919 was an eyewitness. In his memoirs, he said, "When the Turkish authorities gave the order for these deportations they were merely giving the death warrant to an entire race. They understood this well and in their conversations with me made no particular attempt to conceal this fact."

He went on to describe what he saw at the Euphrates River. He said, as our eyes and ears in the Ottoman Empire, "I have by no means told the most terrible details, for a complete narration of the sadistic orgies of which they, the Armenian men and women, are victims can never be printed in an American publication. Whatever crimes the most perverted instincts of the human mind can devise, whatever refinements of persecution and injustice the most debased imagination can conceive, became the daily misfortune of the Armenian people."

We can never forget that 8 days before he invaded Poland, Adolf Hitler turned to his inner circle and said, "Who today remembers the extermination of the Armenians?" The impunity with which the Turkish Government acted in annihilating the Armenian people emboldened Adolf Hitler and his inner circle to carry out the Holocaust of the Jewish people.

It is time for Turkey to acknowledge this genocide, because only in that way can the Turkish Government and its people rise above it. The German Government has been quite forthcoming in acknowledging the Holocaust, and in doing so it has at least been respected by the peoples of the world for its honesty. Turkey should follow that example rather than trying to deny history.

It is also time—indeed it is far overdue—for our Congress to recognize the Armenian Genocide.

Mr. Speaker, I again call on my colleagues to recognize the Armenian Genocide and to urge my fellow Americans to remember this tragic event.

EARTH DAY

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

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I take this moment to acknowledge Earth Day. We have made great strides in protecting our treasures, protecting our natural resources, and in protecting our environment. So, Mr. Speaker, since the first Earth Day in 1970, Americans have found many ways to promote the preservation of our environment and to focus a great deal of attention on the work that is left to be done.

Earth Day has always been a day to celebrate the environment and our natural heritage. It has also served to mark the importance of environmental protection and responsible living. As the leaders of this great Nation, we must collaborate in a bipartisan fashion to promote environmental policies that make sense to this country. We do not want to continue to drink water that is contaminated and polluted. We

do not want to breathe smoke-filled air. We do not want to develop life-threatening diseases from water, air, and other environmental hazards. Poor environmental management affects everyone, and environmental justice does, in fact, matter.

We ask, how many children must develop lead poisoning before we get serious about that issue. Do we want the Nation's most precious animals to perish from the Earth? Do we want to live in neighborhoods that are surrounded by nuclear power plants? Do we want to breathe a thick layer of smog from contaminated air before we feel that a clean air policy is important? Will there come a time when we must go to the local grocery store and purchase bottled air?

Many of our urban communities are currently in serious unrest due to many different environmental problems. Today we must make a new dedication toward bringing a more proper balance to the widening gap between community standards based upon their economic status. People in our poorest communities are struggling for environmental justice, from Louisiana's "Cancer Alley" to the Native American reservations' nuclear problems to the people along the border in the maquiladora region, and for the communities where I live on the south and west sides of Chicago.

Furthermore, millions of people live in housing surrounded by physical environments that are overburdened with environmental problems and hazards untold, waste, toxins, dioxins, incinerators, petrochemical plants, polluted air and unsafe drinking water. These factors all combine to pose a real and grave threat to the future of our Nation's public health.

So, as we mark the 31st anniversary of the first Earth Day, we glory in the progress that has been made, but must strive to continue to develop strong environmental policies that help protect our Earth.

COMMEMORATION OF ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

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

Mr. KNOLLENBERG. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor on this very special and important day to join my colleagues and individuals throughout the world in commemorating the 86th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. We must never forget the tragedy of the Armenian Genocide, and this commemoration makes an important contribution to making sure that we never do.

When most people hear the word "genocide" they immediately think of Hitler and his persecution of the Jews during World War II. Many individuals