

On this 85th anniversary celebration for Taiwan, I would urge our colleagues to call upon the world's governments and international organizations to open their doors to Taiwan and extend upgraded ties to this most deserving friend and democracy.

GREECE: A VITAL ALLY IN THE BALKANS AND THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

HON. LEE H. HAMILTON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 24, 1996

Mr. HAMILTON. Mr. Speaker, I would like to include in the RECORD some recent remarks of mine on the topic of Greece: A vital ally in the Balkans and the Eastern Mediterranean. The text follows:

GREECE: A VITAL ALLY IN THE BALKANS AND THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

THE IMPORTANCE OF UNITED STATES RELATIONS WITH GREECE

The civilization of ancient Greece has shaped the New World. Our democracy, and our highest ideals of citizen participation in public life, follow the Hellenic tradition. Our architecture, our arts and sciences, and the names of towns large and small across the breadth of the continent bear witness to Greece's profound influence on the American experience.

The historical legacy is great, but I also would like to speak of the importance of Greece today: the importance of strong United States relations with our friend, partner, and ally—the people and government of Greece.

A STABLE AND DEMOCRATIC GREECE

If you consider the Balkans and the Eastern Mediterranean today, you see a wide swath of instability, the result of several unresolved ethnic and national questions:

Intercommunal violence and the division of Cyprus continue; the peace process in Bosnia is at a critical stage; Albanian populations present a challenge to current governments in the former Yugoslavia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM); and Turkey is troubled by political instability and a new Islamic-led government that seems to be turning eastward.

In this uncertain environment of the southern Balkans, Greece stands out as a stable, democratic nation.

Greece's geography, as well as its long history of security cooperation with the United States and NATO, gives it a unique role to play.

The smooth transition from the Papandreu government to that of Prime Minister Costas Simitis underscores Greece's stability.

Greece is headed for another political transition now that Prime Minister Simitis has won re-election and will begin a full term as head of government. I am confident that the United States will be able to forge close working ties with him and his government.

THE GREEK-TURKISH RELATIONSHIP

Greek Prime Minister Simitis is to be commended for the peaceful resolution of the confrontation with Turkey over the Imia rocks in the Aegean earlier this year. His clear, stated desire to improve Greece's relations with all its neighbors and its European Union partners is encouraging. Once again Greece is demonstrating that it is taking steps to enhance peace and security in its part of the world.

I am also pleased that two months ago Greece agreed to lift its hold on a \$4.3 billion European Union (EU) aid package to several African and Middle East states, including Turkey.

Greece retains its hold on a \$490 million EU aid package for Turkey designed to help the Turks adjust to the demands of the EU-Turkey customs union.

GREECE'S SPECIAL CONCERNS

A sound U.S. policy in southeastern Europe must take into account Greece's special concerns and sensitivities.

The principle elements of good relations in this part of the world must be respect for international borders and respect for minority rights. In the absence of these two, there will be no stability.

We cannot contribute to political stability elsewhere in southeastern Europe and the eastern Mediterranean region if we contribute to political problems in Greece. In other words, we cannot resolve problems in Turkey, the FYROM, Albania or Cyprus at Greece's expense. In this regard, the United States has a special interest in ensuring the human rights of the Greek minority in Albania.

The United States also wants to ensure the rights of, and respect for, the important seat of the Ecumenical Patriarch of the Orthodox Church in Istanbul. The Patriarch is the spiritual leader of 260 million Orthodox Christians.

INSTABILITY IN TURKEY

This country, as well as Greece and our other NATO allies, are justifiably concerned by the political instability in Turkey. On July 8, the Turkish Parliament endorsed the coalition government led by Islamic Welfare Party leader Necmettin Erbakan.

This coalition includes the right-of-center True Path Party led by former Prime Minister and current Foreign Minister, Tansu Ciller.

This marks the first time in the 73-year history of the Turkish Republic that it is headed by an avowed Islamic, instead of secular, leader. The Welfare party and its leader, Erbakan, have taken a populist, anti-western and anti-NATO position on several key issues.

Regardless of the leadership in Turkey, it is in the national interests of Greece and the U.S. to keep Turkey firmly rooted in the western security alliance.

In a hopeful sign, Erbakan initially allayed U.S. and western concerns about the nature of his government. Contrary to his campaign rhetoric, he reaffirmed Turkey's status as a democratic, secular state as well as its links to NATO and the west. His Welfare Party also reversed its previous position and agreed in July in a parliamentary vote to extend the mandate of the U.S.-led Operation Provide Comfort in northern Iraq until the end of the year.

These are positive sighs. But there remain many tests ahead.

In Iraq, Saddam Hussein's invasion of Irbil, and the success of his Kurdish partner Massoud Barzani against a rival Kurdish faction, place great stress on U.S.-Turkish ties. Turkey supported U.S. military action against Iraq, but U.S. planes based in Turkey did not participate in that military action. Turkey wants to resume normal commerce and normal relations with Iraq, but the United States wants to keep Turkey part of the coalition to contain Iraqi aggression.

In southeastern Turkey, the government's attempt to stamp out an insurgency with military force is causing great hardship, and by all account appears counterproductive. The Turkish government needs to pursue a political solution that respects the rights of Kurdish citizens of Turkey if it is to defeat

the terrorist challenge of the Kurdish Worker's Party (PKK).

In Iran, Prime Minister Erbakan unfortunately has acted upon his campaign promises of closer ties to his eastern Islamic neighbors. Last month, on his first official visit abroad as Prime Minister, Erbakan signed a \$23 billion, long-term agreement to purchase natural gas from Iran.

Turkey is energy short and wanted to reduce its dependence on natural gas for Russia. But this move toward Iran is disturbing. It pushes Turkey toward a broader and more active relationship with Iran, a terrorist nation, just at a time when the U.S. is moving to further isolate that nation.

This new gas deal could also trigger economic sanctions against Turkey as a result of the new Iran-Libya sanctions law.

Greece and the United States must remain vigilant to ensure that Turkey under the leadership of the Welfare Party continues to remain an integral part of the western security alliance.

THE CYPRUS ISSUE—THE YEAR OF CYPRUS

According to former Assistant Secretary of State for Europe, Richard Holbrooke, 1996 was supposed to be the "Year of Cyprus" when the Administration was to make a big push for a negotiated settlement.

Many of us in the Congress applauded this long-awaited initiative to provide active and sustained U.S. leadership in the pursuit of a settlement of the Cyprus dispute.

But the initiative got derailed even before the new year began, with the fall of the Ciller government in Turkey and then the Imia rocks confrontation.

As I understand it, the planned U.S. initiative—if and when it gets off the ground—is more procedural than substantive. The plan is to determine if the political will for a settlement exists among the parties in Cyprus and in Athens and Ankara. If the will exists, the U.S. will begin an intensive round of shuttle diplomacy among the parties.

Substantively, the outlines of a settlement have been on the table for some time—the UN plan for a bi-communal, bi-zonal federation.

EU and UN officials are hopeful that EU accession talks with Cyprus, planned to begin in late 1997 upon completion of the EU's on-going Inter-Governmental Conference, will provide the impetus necessary—both among Greek and Turkish Cypriots—for a comprehensive solution to the Cyprus problem.

RECENT VIOLENCE IN CYPRUS

Unfortunately, the violence in Cyprus southeast of Nicosia this summer which claimed at least four lives darkens the prospects of progress toward peace.

In a press statement of August 14, I condemned the violence on Cyprus—the worst clashes since the Turkish invasion of 1974—and urged all sides to step back from further escalation. I also expressed my deep concern about the fighting between Greek and Turkish Cypriots as well as the use of force by Turkish troops which resulted in the death of two Greek Cypriots and the wounding of 11, including two UN peacekeepers.

It is clear that the current stalemate cannot be allowed to fester. If it does, further violence and escalation is predictable. The tense situation on Cyprus needs concerted and top-level attention and the involvement of the President himself.

Our priorities should be to reduce tensions along the UN buffer zone on the island, reduce the inflow of arms to the island, restart intercommunal peace talks and find a basis for direct Greek Cypriot-Turkish Cypriot talks.

THE ALBRIGHT-BEATTIE TRIP

Prior to the recent round of violence, the Administration had energized its diplomatic

activity on the Cyprus issue. I was pleased that on July 17-18, U.S. Ambassador to the UN Madeleine Albright and Special Envoy Richard Beattie traveled to the region with specific recommendations for easing tension in the buffer zone and in an effort to improve the atmosphere for advancing a negotiated settlement.

Unfortunately, one of the positive results of this visit, a proposed meeting between the commanders of the Greek Cypriot forces and of the Turkish forces on the island—which would have been the first such meeting since the occupation of northern Cyprus in 1974—did not take place as hoped, due to differences over whether representatives of Turkish Cypriot forces would be present.

Although the trip did not result in any significant break-throughs, it was viewed in the Administration and the region as an important step in diffusing tension, in dealing with security and military issues and, hopefully, in creating a suitable environment to start a more substantive U.S. initiative later this year.

THE U.S. ROLE IS CRITICAL

The recent violence in Cyprus underscores my long-held view that progress on Cyprus is long overdue and should be a high U.S. priority. It remains my hope that a fair and lasting settlement of the Cyprus dispute can be reached in the coming months.

It has always been my firm belief that only high-level and sustained U.S. attention will convince all parties and particularly the Turks, to resolve the Cyprus issue.

It is in U.S. interest as well as all the people of the region that we find a just and lasting solution to this problem.

Turkey remains the key to progress on Cyprus. Only Turkey can push Turkish-Cypriot leader Denktash toward a settlement.

Now is the time to push a U.S. initiative forward. I urge the Administration and specifically Ambassador Beattie, the President's special envoy on Cyprus, to reactivate his diplomacy so that further violence can be averted.

MACEDONIA

Improved relations between Greece and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, FYROM, are critical to greater stability in the southern Balkans.

The U.S. has been more sensitive than any of Greece's other allies to Greek concerns regarding FYROM. This Administration has sought to balance its desire to respect Greek concerns with the need to address the new realities created by the dissolution of the former Yugoslavia.

I have consistently urged the Administration to link recognition and the establishment of diplomatic relations with FYROM to a series of steps by the Skopje government to reassure the legitimate security concerns of Greece.

Now this policy is succeeding. Last fall, the Foreign Ministers of Greece and FYROM finalized an agreement which separated the intractable name issue from the other issues. Under the agreement FYROM agreed to change its flag and amend its constitution, and Greece agreed to end its economic blockade of FYROM—which was hurting Greece as well.

This historic agreement was brokered by two Americans, former Secretary of State Cyrus Vance on behalf of the UN and special U.S. envoy Matthew Nimetz.

Face-to-face talks at the UN have so far been unable to produce an agreement on the official name for FYROM. It seems that the FYROM authorities have been unwilling to compromise on this key issue.

I am hopeful that the agreement between Greece FYROM will move us from an era of confrontation and instability to one which

will prove mutually advantageous to the people of both Greece and FYROM.

The United States and its NATO allies want to continue to assist Greece and FYROM—within the framework of the UN-sponsored negotiations—to work out their remaining mutual problems, particularly the name issue, as soon as possible.

The failed assassination attempt on FYROM President Gligorov last year, as well as the continuing unrest among the ethnic Albanian population, vividly demonstrates the fragile stability in FYROM, and the need for regional stability.

CONCLUSION

I would like to conclude by reaffirming the special relationship that exists between the United States and Greece. This relationship is based on our long history of shared values and our common interests in stability in southern Europe.

Stability in Greece stands in stark contrast to the unsettled situation in Turkey and the rest of the Balkans. We must continue to engage with Turkey, as a critical NATO ally on a whole range of issues.

But until Turkey can resolve key issues—particularly finding some sort of political solution in southeastern Turkey and ending the division of Cyprus—the U.S. and Greece will find their efforts to achieve lasting stability in southeastern Europe thwarted.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. JAN MEYERS

OF KANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 24, 1996

Mrs. MEYERS of Kansas. Mr. Speaker, last week, on two occasions, I was recorded as not voting on measures at a time when I was on the House floor and did insert my voting card.

On Tuesday, September 17, I voted "yes" on rollcall 415, a motion to suspend the rules and pass the bill conferring honorary citizenship on Mother Teresa.

On Thursday, September 19, I was on the floor when rollcall vote No. 422 was called, and I voted "yes" on the majority leader's motion to table the Linder privileged resolution.

I am uncertain why these votes did not register, but I was present and voting in both instances.

THE IMPACT OF THE IRISH POTATO FAMINE ON AMERICAN HISTORY

HON. RODNEY P. FRELINGHUYSEN

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 24, 1996

Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN. Mr. Speaker, today, I introduced legislation along with Representative MENENDEZ to encourage America's schools to teach our young students about a tragic period in history that nearly destroyed the people and country of Ireland and forever changed the face of America.

The mass starvation in Ireland from 1845 to 1850 initiated by the dramatic failure of the Irish potato crop is most commonly referred to as the Irish Potato Famine. Although Europe's poorest country in the middle 19th century, Ireland's 8 million inhabitants were curiously

well-nourished. The Irish people relied on the potato for the bulk of their diet since it was inexpensive and high in nutrients. However, in 1845, the Irish potato crop was ruined across the entire countryside by phytophthora infestans, an airborne petilence. At the time, no one knew what caused the potato blight and so little could be done to save the crops. Across the whole of Ireland, potatoes simply rotted on the ground.

The failure of the potato crop led to the inability of most Irish families to pay the rent on their cottages which, after Britain's annexation of the island in the late 18th century, were often owned by British landholders. The vicious cycle of poverty was held intact by both the continuation of the potato blight and the active exportation of the Irish grain crop by the British Crown. Those who traveled across the island during the famine noted the horrifying situation in which they encountered the Irish people. Men, women, and children literally starved to death on the roadside and families huddled together in the cold waiting to die. In fact, while visiting Ireland in 1845, the African-American abolitionist Frederick Douglass wrote that the people of Ireland "are in the same degradation as the American slaves."

A number of British groups threw aside the prevailing prejudices against the Irish to provide relief from what had become a starvation of epidemic proportions in the colony. The Quakers, or the Society of Friends, even set up a vast array of soup kitchens throughout the countryside. However, it was not enough to stop the hunger and loss of farming wages. By the end of the epidemic in 1850, more than 1 million Irish had perished from the hunger, cold, and disease brought about by the potato blight. It seemed the only way to elude the horrors of the famine was to leave Ireland—and so many did just that:

Although the voyage was treacherous and relatively expensive, more than 1 million Irish emigrated to the United States during the famine. Initially, they settled in the cities of the northeastern seaboard such as Boston and New York. Later they pushed westward to Chicago, the Great Plains, and the uncharted Western territories. With them they brought their Celtic culture and determination. Aside from impacting the basic makeup of the American people, Irish-Americans have made significant contributions in American business, law, music, athletics, literature, religion, and politics. In fact, U.S. Presidents John F. Kennedy and Ronald Reagan, considered by many to be the greatest Presidential orators in their respective political parties this century, are both from Irish-American families.

Perhaps, though, the legacy of the Irish Famine's immigration wave to America is most evident in our everyday lives. Today, 5 million of New Jersey's 8 million inhabitants claim some Irish descent, as do millions of other Americans. The resolution put forth today by myself and Representative MEMENDEZ recognizes the contributions made by Irish-Americans to our greater American heritage. Irish-Americans have left an indelible mark on American culture and history, and for that reason our children should learn more about the tragic famine which brought so many of them to our shores in search of freedom from hunger, freedom from want, and freedom from colonial rule.