

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WICKER). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New York [Mr. GILMAN] that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, House Concurrent Resolution 160.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the concurrent resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on House Concurrent Resolution 160.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New York?

There was no objection.

COMMEMORATING THE 205TH ANNIVERSARY OF POLAND'S FIRST CONSTITUTION

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution 165 saluting and congratulating Polish people around the world as, on May 3, 1996, they commemorate the 205th anniversary of the adoption of Poland's first constitution.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. CON. RES. 165

Whereas, on May 3, 1996, Polish people around the world, including Americans of Polish descent, will celebrate the 205th anniversary of the adoption of the first Polish constitution;

Whereas American Revolutionary War hero Thaddeus Kosciuszko introduced the concept of constitutional democracy to his native country of Poland;

Whereas the Polish constitution of 1791 was the first liberal constitution in Europe and represented Central-Eastern Europe's first attempt to end the feudal system of government;

Whereas this Polish constitution was designed to protect Poland's sovereignty and national unity and to create a progressive constitutional monarchy;

Whereas this Polish constitution was the first constitution in Central-Eastern Europe to secure individual and religious freedom for all persons in Poland;

Whereas this Polish constitution formed a government composed of distinct legislative, executive, and judicial powers;

Whereas this Polish constitution declared that "all power in civil society should be derived from the will of the people";

Whereas this Polish constitution revitalized the parliamentary system by placing preeminent lawmaking power in the House of Deputies, by subjecting the Sejm to majority rule, and by granting the Sejm the power to remove ministers, appoint commissars, and choose magistrates;

Whereas this Polish constitution provided for significant economic, social, and political reforms by removing inequalities between the nobility and the bourgeoisie, by recognizing town residents as "freemen" who had judicial autonomy and expanded rights, and by extending the protection of the law to

the peasantry who previously had no recourse against the arbitrary actions of feudal lords;

Whereas, although this Polish constitution was in effect for less than 2 years, its principles endured and it became the symbol around which a powerful new national consciousness was born, helping Poland to survive long periods of misfortune over the following 2 centuries; and

Whereas, in only the last 5 years, Poland has realized the promise held in the Polish constitution of 1791, has emerged as an independent nation after its people led the movement that resulted in historic changes in Central-Eastern Europe, and is moving toward full integration with the Euro-Atlantic community of nations: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That—

(1) the people of the United States salute and congratulate Polish people around the world, including Americans of Polish descent, on the adoption of the first Polish constitution;

(2) the people of the United States recognize Poland's rebirth as a free and independent nation in the spirit of the legacy of the Polish constitution of 1791; and

(3) the Congress authorizes and urges the President of the United States to call upon the Governors of the States, the leaders of local governments, and the people of the United States to join in this recognition with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New York [Mr. GILMAN] and the gentleman from Virginia [Mr. MORAN] will each be recognized for 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York [Mr. GILMAN].

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Mr. GILMAN asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of House Concurrent Resolution 165, a resolution noting the 205th anniversary of the adoption of Poland's first Constitution.

Mr. Speaker, the Polish Constitution of 1791 stands as the first liberal Constitution in Europe, creating a constitutional monarchy.

Its adoption by the Polish nation marked an important step away from the feudal system of government that then prevailed throughout Eastern Europe.

Unfortunately, Poland soon fell victim to the imperialism of the Prussian, Russian, and Austrian empires, which divided the territory of Poland and ruled the Polish people for more than a century.

The Polish Constitution of 1791 became a symbol around which the Polish people rallied, however, and today—with the independence they regained earlier in this century and with the end of Communist dictatorship in Poland 7 years ago—the Polish people are now engaged in building a new constitutional democracy.

The Polish nation has undergone times of great difficulty and great destruction since 1791, but it has survived and, as a new democracy in Eastern Europe, appears to be well on its way toward integration into the trans-At-

lantic community of democratic States.

I urge my colleagues to support this resolution, not just as a recognition of Poland's historical striving toward democracy, but as a statement about Poland's future as a free, independent, and democratic State.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution and commend the chairman of the committee for bringing it before the House, and the strong supporter of Polish interests, the gentleman from Buffalo, NY, Mr. JACK QUINN; and the other cosponsors, the gentleman from Pennsylvania, Mr. BORSKI, the gentleman from Illinois, Mr. FLANAGAN, the gentleman from Wisconsin, Mr. KLECZKA, and others.

It is appropriate that the House and the people of the United States congratulate the Polish people around the world, including Americans of Polish descent, on the 205th anniversary of the adoption of the first Polish constitution.

The, as now, Poland has been a leader in Europe. In 1989, Poland took the first steps toward breaking up the Warsaw Pact and held the first free elections in Eastern Europe. That led the way on comprehensive economic reform.

Poland is now striving to integrate itself fully into the family of western nations. All of us can take a measure of pride in Poland's achievements, which serve the U.S. interests in peace, security, and prosperity in Europe.

Mr. Speaker, I urge adoption of the resolution, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from New York [Mr. QUINN], the original sponsor of this measure.

(Mr. QUINN asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. QUINN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today as the proud sponsor of House Concurrent Resolution 165, a resolution honoring an important event in the development of democracy in Central-Eastern Europe and the world; the 205th anniversary of Poland's first Constitution of 1791.

On the third day of May, 1996, Polish people and Americans of Polish descent around the world celebrated the 205th anniversary of Poland's first Constitution.

The Polish Constitution of 1791, which became the first liberal constitution in Europe was preceded only by our own Constitution in 1787.

The 1791 Constitution sought an end to the feudal system of government, where a few monarchs and aristocrats governed Poland's majority.

American Revolutionary War hero Thaddeus Kosciuszko introduced the concept of a constitutional democracy to his native country of Poland, which

like the Constitution of the United States, established three independent branches of government.

The Polish Constitution abolished the feudal system, giving all citizens the right to vote and guaranteed freedom of speech, right to assemble and freedom of religion.

As a result, Poland became Europe's first true democracy.

Thomas Jefferson himself held the Polish Constitution in high regard and was sure to include two copies of the document as part of the original collection in establishing the Library of Congress.

Unfortunately, this first grand experiment in European democracy survived for less than 2 years. This expression of the democratic tradition of Polish political culture, embodying liberty to all people, rule by the majority and religious freedom, became a moral threat to the absolute monarchies of its neighbors Tsarist Russia, Austria and Prussia.

Poland paid dearly for its democratic ideas, with the complete loss of its independence and the abolition of its Constitution, when it was partitioned by its three powerful neighbors in 1793.

Over the next two centuries, Poland and her people suffered many injustices, but the spirit of the Constitution of 1791 continued to live on and forge hope in the hearts of Polish people around the world.

It is only in the last 5 years that Poland again has emerged as an independent nation after her people led the movement that resulted in the fall of the Soviet bloc and the historical changes in Central-Eastern Europe.

Today, Poland has experienced its first "free" elections in several generations and the positive economic successes it has experienced are unparalleled in its history.

The eventual democratic goals of Poland include its hopeful inclusion in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization [NATO] and complete inclusion in the Western community.

I am honored to have offered this resolution to honor the Polish Constitution of 1791, something in which all Poles rightfully take pride.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank the gentleman from New York, Chairman GILMAN, the ranking member, the gentleman from Indiana [Mr. HAMILTON], and the gentleman from Virginia [Mr. MORAN], and all members of the Committee on International Relations for their support of the resolution.

I want to urge my colleagues to join me in saluting and congratulating the people of Poland and Americans of Polish origin for realizing the fulfillment of the spirit of the May 3d Constitution by supporting House Concurrent Resolution 165.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from New York [Mr. QUINN] for bringing this important resolution to the floor at this time and for his eloquent remarks in support of this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the distinguished gentleman from West Virginia [Mr. WISE].

□ 1530

Mr. WISE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman and the ranking member for the time.

I simply rise in strong support of this resolution. It was in 1787, of course, that our Constitution became a reality; 4 years later, the Polish Constitution. It was a wave of constitutional freedom and democracy sweeping the world at that time. So I think it is important to rise to commemorate this noted event, certainly to Polish peoples across the world, whether in Poland or to the large Polish American population that we have in the United States. It is certainly a moment that deserves recognition and particularly in light of what the Polish people have been through in the last decade, as they have reasserted their desire for constitutional democracy, moving from the heavy hand of communism to once again a constitutional republican system.

So we should rise as we recognize the 205th anniversary. Let us also recognize the pride and achievements that the Polish people have made in just the past decade.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Illinois [Mr. FLANAGAN.]

Mr. FLANAGAN. Mr. Speaker, as an original cosponsor I rise in support of House Concurrent Resolution 165, saluting and congratulating Polish people around the world as they commemorate this May the 205th anniversary of the adoption of Poland's first Constitution. As the first modern constitution in Europe, this document led the way in the advancement of democracy. Only our own Constitution of 1787 preceded it and the Polish Constitution was modeled upon it.

The Polish Constitution declared that "all power in civil society should be derived from the will of the people." This is the primary principle of our own sacred document. Like our own Constitution, the 1791 Polish Constitution created distinct legislative, executive and judicial branches. It also secured individual and religious freedom for all people in Poland.

Just as Poland led the way for democracy in the 18th century, so too did it do so again in the late 20th century. Poland was the key country in bringing about the recent demise of the totalitarian Communist regime under which Poland had suffered for so long. It became a shining beacon of light of freedom for other Communist countries in Central-Eastern Europe. Poland was the inspiration for those countries to peacefully overthrow their own Communist dictatorships.

Today, the 205-year-old legacy of the 1791 Polish Constitution continues in Poland's democratic rebirth. Poland is

to be congratulated for its commitment to democratic ideals and its rebirth as a free and independent nation. This is the purpose of House Concurrent Resolution 165 and I urge my colleagues to support its passage.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I rise this afternoon to support the passage of House Resolution 165, commemorating the 205th anniversary of Poland's May 3 Constitution. Although only in force for less than 2 years before falling victim to the second partition of Poland by her neighbors, this Constitution stands as an enduring monument to the Polish people's aspiration for democracy.

The May 3 Constitution was the first written constitution in Europe, adopted in 1791 and coming only a few years after the American Constitution. In fact, the American and Polish Constitutions have much in common, both in spirit and in purpose: Each sought to create the foundations of democracy and, in particular, to establish limits on the previously unfettered powers of sovereign rule.

Mr. Speaker, the Polish Constitution of 1791 may have been short-lived as a legislative edict, but it survived nearly two centuries of partition, foreign occupation, Fascist domination and Communist totalitarianism as a symbol of what Poles had once achieved—and would again achieve.

Today, the people of Poland continue their successful efforts to build a free and democratic society, a free-market economy, and a country in which human rights and fundamental freedoms will not only be guaranteed on paper, but ensured in practice. As Chairman of the Helsinki Commission, I have been especially heartened by the extraordinary progress Poland has made in this regard, and Poland is rightly lauded as a leader—perhaps the leader—of democratic reform in central and eastern Europe. I was also especially gratified to learn recently from President Kwasniewski's office that an overhaul of the Polish penal code will probably drop provisions which criminalize defamation of state organs—one of the last remaining vestiges of the old Communist order.

I am honored today to join my colleagues in commemorating the Polish Constitution of 1791, which continues to inspire the people of Poland during a period of profound and positive political transformation; I welcome the passage of House Resolution 165.

Mr. HAMILTON. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that the House of Representatives is taking up this important resolution today. The Congress, and the people of the United States, should congratulate Poland on its many accomplishments on behalf of the development of democracy and the furtherance of human freedom.

It is fitting today that we congratulate Polish people around the world, including Americans of Polish descent, on the 205th anniversary of the adoption of the first Polish Constitution. That 1791 Constitution both drew from the example of the American Constitution and set a standard for all of Europe to match.

Not only in the 18th century but in the 20th century Poland has been a leader in Europe. In the heady days of 1989, Poland took landmark steps to break up the Warsaw Pact. It held the first free elections seen in Eastern Europe since before communist rule. Poland led the way on both economic and political reform.

For the past 7 years—indeed for the past several generations—Poland has been working mightily to integrate itself into the family of

western nations. All of us can take a full measure of satisfaction in Poland's many accomplishments. I look forward to the continuing close work between the United States and Poland on behalf of our many shared interests. Together we can further peace and prosperity in Europe.

I urge adoption of the resolution.

Mr. LIPINSKI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate with the Polish people the 205th anniversary of the adoption of Poland's first Constitution. As the first liberal Constitution in Europe in 1791, it was preceded only by our own Constitution in 1787. This Polish document established a constitutional monarch and recognized the peasants for the first time as members of the nation. Mirroring our constitution, it too established three independent branches of government. It also carries the honor of being the first constitution established through a peaceful revolution.

Unfortunately, this expression of liberty to all, by rule by majority, and religious freedom survived for less than 2 years as it became a moral threat to the neighboring absolute monarchies. Poland lost its independence that year when it was partitioned by Imperial Russia and Prussia. Only in the last 5 years has Poland again emerged as an independent nation through the fall of communism.

Currently, free Poland enjoys open elections and economic success. The return of democratic principles to this nation has elevated its hopes for inclusion in the North American Treaty Organization [NATO] and full incorporation into the European Union.

With Chicago the largest Polish city next to Warsaw, and with many of her immigrants residing in my district, I am pleased to support this resolution which honors the advancement of democracy in a country close to my heart and the hearts of my constituents.

Mr. BORSKI. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of House Concurrent Resolution 165, which congratulates the Polish people around the world as they commemorate the 205th anniversary of Poland's first Constitution. I am proud to join Representatives QUINN, KLECZKA, FLANAGAN, and HOKE as an original cosponsor of this resolution.

Inspired by our landmark Constitution, the people of Poland in 1791 adopted a constitution with guarantees of individual and religious freedoms, and the creation of distinct legislative, executive, and judicial powers. The concepts of constitutional democracy that were embodied in the Polish Constitution were introduced to Poland by American Revolutionary War hero Thaddeus Kosciuszko. Designed to create a progressive constitutional monarchy, the 1791 Constitution was the first liberal constitution in Europe and represented Central Europe's first attempt to end feudal government.

Unfortunately, this historic and ground breaking Constitution survived for less than 2 years. In 1793, Russia and Prussia partitioned Poland, and Poland's Constitution was abolished. This loss, however, did not diminish the Polish people's will for achieving the freedoms embodied in the Constitution. For two centuries, the principles of the 1791 Constitution endured and inspired a powerful new national consciousness. Poland suffered greatly under imperial and communist rule, but its people never lost sight of the freedoms and rights embodied in the Constitution.

Today, Poland is enjoying its new-found freedoms, pursuing the principles first drafted

in the 1791 Constitution. Poland has emerged from an oppressive Communist state to a vigorous, free-market democracy. Poland is pursuing complete inclusion in the institutions of the western community, including the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The United States Congress must continue to express its support of Poland as it takes these bold steps into the 21st century.

This month marks the 205th anniversary of the historic Polish Constitution. House Concurrent Resolution 165 demonstrates to the people of Poland, and Polish people around the world, that the United States recognizes Poland's rebirth as a free and independent nation, and will continue its commitment to foster democracy throughout central Europe. This resolution salutes Poland for its patience in realizing the long-awaited principles of the 1791 Constitution, and expresses support for Poland's challenges in the future.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this important resolution. The Polish people will be grateful to know that the United States House of Representatives stands shoulder-to-shoulder with them as they enjoy the freedoms that were so eloquently declared in the 1791 Polish Constitution.

Mrs. KENNELLY. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of House Concurrent Resolution 165 commemorating the 205th anniversary of the Polish Constitution.

In the two centuries that have passed since this Constitution was adopted, Poland and its people have endured great tragedy and turmoil. But through these years—from the partition of Poland at the end of the 18th century, to the Napoleonic Wars, which resulted in the disappearance of the country until the end of World War I, the tragedies of World War II, and over 40 years of Communist rule, the love of the Polish people for freedom and democracy has never diminished.

It is fitting that the nation with the first liberal constitution in Europe, and the first modern constitution established through a peaceful revolution, was also the first nation to break free from the Soviet empire and establish the first of the new democracies in Europe.

As Poland was a leader more than 200 years ago, so it is a leader now. Its example of a successful transition to democracy in 1989 is a beacon of hope not only for other nations of Eastern Europe but for nations around the world. I congratulate the Polish people on the 205th anniversary of their Constitution and share their confidence that its successful democracy will continue to flourish into the 21st century.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WICKER). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New York [Mr. GILMAN] that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, House Concurrent Resolution 165.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the concurrent resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on House Concurrent Resolution 165, concurrent resolution just agreed to.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New York?

There was no objection.

10TH ANNIVERSARY OF CHORNOBYL NUCLEAR DISASTER

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 167) recognizing the 10th anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, and supporting the closing of the Chernobyl nuclear powerplant.

The clerk read as follows:

H. CON. RES. 167

Whereas April 26, 1996, marks the tenth anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster;

Whereas United Nations General Assembly resolution 50/134 declares April 26, 1996, as the International Day Commemorating the Tenth Anniversary of the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant Accident and encourages member states to commemorate this tragic event;

Whereas serious radiological, health, and socioeconomic consequences for the populations of Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia, as well as for the populations of other affected areas, have been identified since the disaster;

Whereas over 3,500,000 inhabitants of the affected areas, including over 1,000,000 children, were exposed to dangerously high levels of radiation;

Whereas the populations of the affected areas, especially children, have experienced significant increases in thyroid cancer, immune deficiency diseases, birth defects, and other conditions, and these trends have accelerated over the 10 years since the disaster;

Whereas the lives and health of people in the affected areas continue to be heavily burdened by the ongoing effects of the Chernobyl accident;

Whereas numerous charitable, humanitarian, and environmental organizations from the United States and the international community have committed to overcome the extensive consequences of the Chernobyl disaster;

Whereas the United States has sought to help the people of Ukraine through various forms of assistance;

Whereas humanitarian assistance and public health research into Chernobyl's consequences will be needed in the coming decades when the greatest number of latent health effects is expected to emerge;

Whereas on December 20, 1995, the Ukrainian Government, the governments of the G-7 countries, and the Commission of the European Communities signed a memorandum of understanding to support the decision of Ukraine to close the Chernobyl nuclear power plant by the year 2000 with adequate support from the G-7 countries and international financial institutions;

Whereas the United States strongly supports the closing of the Chernobyl nuclear