

the chance that others will follow Gaulieder's example and defect from the Prime Minister's party, or vote down the Slovak Democratic Coalition's proposal to restore Gaulieder to his seat and confirm that whatever form of government exists in Slovakia, it is not constitutional democracy, at least not as we understand it.

Sooner or later, the Slovak Parliament will reconvene. When it acts, or fails to act, on the Gaulieder question, we will know whether Slovakia is committed to becoming a functioning constitutional democracy. If it is not, what it will become is an isolated State under constant international pressure and scrutiny, cut off from a promising and prosperous future by the arrogance and greed of its own leaders.

As Vladimir Meciar is asked in his weekly news show, what next, Mr. Prime Minister?•

TRIBUTE TO GEN. JOHN M. SHALIKASHVILI

• Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to Gen. John M. Shalikashvili on the occasion of his retirement after serving on active duty for more than 39 years, the last 4 years of which he has served as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

General Shalikashvili's life is a marvelous American success story. Many people are aware that he was born in Warsaw, Poland of stateless parents and came to Peoria, IL, at the age of 16. What is not generally known, however, is that when he became a naturalized American citizen shortly before he graduated from Bradley University, it was the first nation of which he was a citizen, and that he was drafted into the U.S. Army shortly after graduation. He is the only Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff who is a naturalized American citizen and the only Chairman who was drafted into the military.

Mr. President, I won't attempt to describe all of General Shalikashvili's military achievements, but I would like to include a few of his experiences that I believe molded his outlook and enabled him to perform in such a superb fashion as our Nation's senior military officer.

General Shali, as he likes to be called, served in Vietnam during the Tet offensive and in Korea in the early 1970's. His experience in combat and in a theater in which U.S. forces faced a strong and unpredictable military foe undoubtedly prepared him to be the strong spokesman for the men and women in uniform and a strong advocate for maintaining our Nation's military might second to none.

I have been struck by General Shali's frequent reference to his experience in 1991 as the head of Operation Provide Comfort. This operation brought the Iraqi Kurds down from the mountains of northern Iraq and eastern Turkey where thousands were dying and helped them to return to their towns and vil-

lages. He has described that experience as the toughest challenge and, at the same time, one of the most gratifying things that he has done. Mr. President, it has been my experience that our finest military leaders are also people who are caring human beings. General Shali's compassion and humanity comes clearly through in his recollection of his experience with the Iraqi Kurds who suffered so much at the hands of Saddam Hussein.

General Shali also served in a number of positions in Europe both during and after the cold war. Just last week, I had an opportunity along with Senators ROTH and BIDEN and other members of the Senate NATO Observer Group to meet with General Shali and the chiefs of defense of our NATO allies. I observed with pride the respect and admiration that the senior military leaders of our NATO allies have for General Shali. I am sure that it was also evident to them that all of the Senators at that meeting have the highest regard for General Shali. With his European upbringing and his several assignments in the European area, including as NATO's Supreme Allied Commander, General Shali has been a unique leader as NATO has been carrying out its internal adaptation and its enlargement.

Mr. President, I am sure that there will be a number of tributes paid to general Shali here on the Senate floor, elsewhere in the Capital area, and around the world. Some will no doubt recount his extraordinary performance as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. I have chosen to highlight only a few and perhaps lesser known aspects of General Shali's career because I believe they demonstrate his qualities of leadership, compassion, humanity, and courage.

General Shali has been a superb Chairman, a true friend of the men and women who serve our Nation, and I count myself fortunate to consider him a good personal friend. I salute him for the former and cherish the latter.•

KENNETH APFEL CONFIRMATION

• Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, today Mr. Ken Apfel will be sworn in for the position of Commissioner of the Social Security Administration. Mr. Apfel was confirmed earlier this month to direct the agency responsible for administering the largest domestic program in the United States. Social Security will have an impact on the life of every single American at one time or another. I support Mr. Apfel's confirmation to head this vital agency.

Mr. Apfel will guide the Social Security program into the 21st century, bringing it right up to the edge of the largest demographic shift this country has ever seen. Starting in 2010, the baby boom generation—70 million strong—will begin entering retirement. Because of the tremendous medical strides we have made in extending life expectancy, this cohort will be living

longer and collecting benefits longer. It is imperative that our Social Security program be ready to absorb such a huge influx of beneficiaries. The Commissioner must be a leader in preparing the agency and the program itself, to meet this challenge.

Preparing for the retirement of the baby boom generation is only half of the challenge. There are on-going problems that must be addressed as well. The Social Security Administration has had difficulties protecting taxpayer dollars. The General Accounting Office recently elevated the Supplemental Security Income Program to its high-risk list of Federal programs because of their inability to pay out the proper amount of money. Huge overpayments go out to beneficiaries—most of which are never collected. Additional problems exist in the Disability Insurance Program. Prisoners and legal aliens have received benefits improperly. The agency has not fulfilled its legislative mandate to refer applicants and recipients of disability benefits to appropriate rehabilitation. Addressing these issues is very important because problems in any one of the programs that the Social Security Administration operates undermines confidence in all of the programs.

I will say right now that I do not envy Mr. Apfel. He is endeavoring to take on a job with many difficult challenges. Having met with him personally, I can honestly say I believe he can do the job. It is my hope, however, that he will not fall into the practice of his predecessors of not taking a pro-active stance with regard to policy issues faced by the Social Security Administration. When he sees the need for legislative action, or he sees problems with policies that must be changed—that he communicate with Congress immediately.

I hope he will see himself, in his capacity as Commissioner, as a liaison to the public, to the President, and to Congress to resolve some of the most important challenges that will face our country and the Government over the next 6 years. Most of all, SSA, like any other Government agency, is an overseer of taxpayer dollars—our money. That responsibility must be taken with the utmost seriousness and deliberation. If he can motivate his personnel to do that—protect taxpayer dollars—he will have a successful term as Commissioner.•

BLACK CAREER WOMEN

• Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize the achievement of a very valuable community organization in Cincinnati, OH.

The group—known as Black Career Women, or BCW—has been serving the African-American community in Cincinnati and throughout the United States for 20 years. Back in the early 1980's, BCW provided word processing assistance and office-skill development

services to unemployed and underemployed women—to help them get decent jobs with a living wage.

This nonprofit organization provides an extremely valuable service to corporations and managers who are trying to develop and support successful skills-development strategies for African-American women. Working in partnership with executives, BCW has helped improve the lives of countless women from corporate executives to entrepreneurs.

Over the last two decades, more than 10,000 women have benefited from the service of Black Career Women.

Black Career Women has been helping the African-American women in the Cincinnati area and throughout the Nation achieve the goals of self-help and self-determination. They deserve the praise of all people who believe in diversity, economic progress, and independence for working people.

I ask all my colleagues to join me in extending our warmest congratulations on their 20th anniversary. They are making a big difference for the better in the life of the Cincinnati area and the entire nation.●

RECOGNITION OF HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

● Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I am proud to be able to speak today, as many of my colleagues have done recently, on the significance of Hispanic Heritage Month, being commemorated from September 15 through October 15. For almost 30 years, we as a nation have, in this way, formally acknowledged and celebrated the contributions Hispanic Americans have made and are making to our country.

Mr. President, in my home State of Texas, Hispanics are an intrinsic and dynamic part of our history, culture, economy, and civic life. From El Paso to Texarkana, and from Amarillo to Brownsville, over 6 million Latinos in Texas contribute immeasurably to making the Lone Star State the unique and wonderful place it is. Whether they trace their ancestry to the earliest Spanish settlers in Texas or have recently immigrated to this country, individually and collectively Hispanics have made our State and our Nation a richer place in which to live.

For at least 250 of the last 400 years, Hispanic heritage was synonymous with Texas heritage. Since the first Spanish landing at the mouth of the Rio Grande by Alonso Alvarez de Pineda in 1519, the Spanish, and later the Mexicans bravely began to colonize the vast and rugged land known as Texas. To this day, Hispanics continue to contribute their boundless determination and unique perspective to every facet of life in Texas and the Nation. Hispanic Americans enrich our lives in virtually every field of endeavor: politics, business, science, education, art, music, film, cuisine, and countless other fields.

In my home State, we recently lost two of our greatest native Texas His-

panics, Congressman Frank Tejeda and musical artist Selena Perez. In their own way, both of these individuals demonstrated astonishing determination, which in turn reflected the vibrancy and strength of the Hispanic community: Frank Tejeda, who dropped out of high school from the south side of San Antonio and went on to distinguish himself in military service in Vietnam, in higher education, in the business world, and as a dedicated public servant; and Selena who, at the young age of 23 became a pop icon, entertaining audiences in her hometown of Corpus Christi and throughout the world with her unique brand of "Tejano" music. Although the lives of these two great Texans ended far too soon, they will forever inspire the tens of thousands of young Hispanics who will look to them and to the many other Hispanic leaders in our country as symbols of what can be achieved through hard work, ambition, and the support of the community.

As a Texas and as a member of the Senate Republican Conference Task Force on Hispanic Affairs, I remain committed to ensuring that the American dream continues to exist and to come true for all Americans. Through my activities on this task force and in the Senate, as well as through daily contact with my constituents, I have worked hard to ensure that the needs and concerns of the Hispanic community are heard and responded to. While we all share the goal of improving our country and the opportunities for our children, there are economic and other concerns that disproportionately impact the Hispanic community. I believe we in Congress must continue to address those concerns by pursuing policies that promote education, health care, urban renewal, and a business environment that encourages entrepreneurial activity and risk taking.

There are certainly challenges ahead. With so many Hispanic-owned businesses starting up around the country, access to capital is a critical need. I have supported and continue to support lending and contracting programs that offer fledgling businesses the opportunity to launch themselves—and to continue to soar. I am also working to give small business people and other Americans relief from excessive levels of taxation and Federal regulation.

On the eve of a new millennium, it is vital that we remain a people united, respectful of the individual, the family, and our country as a whole. In this same spirit, it is also important to inform ourselves and our children of the sacrifices and contributions that have been made by our ancestors on our behalf. Hispanics have extremely good reason to be proud of that heritage and to rejoice in it.

Mr. President, I am pleased to be able to highlight today the contribution of Hispanics to the exquisite mosaic that is America the Beautiful, America la linda.●

PROTECTING RELIGIOUS FREEDOM WORLDWIDE

● Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. President, I rise today to draw the attention of my colleagues to an article I recently read on the subject of religious freedom. The author, Mr. Philip Peters, a senior fellow at the Alexis de Tocqueville Institution, offers a keen assessment of the tragedy that currently faces Christians who are being persecuted in their homelands. In his article, "Persecution and Redemption," Mr. Peters makes specific reference to the treatment of Christians and other victims of religious persecution living in the former Soviet Union.

It is unfortunate but true that tens of thousands of people in the former Soviet Union cannot practice their religion without encountering hostility from their government. As the author points out, "About one fourth of Russia's regional governments have laws restricting religious activity."

I agree with Mr. Peters' assessment that refugees from the former Soviet Union "deserve the support of anyone concerned about Christians and other victims of religious persecution around the world." I have joined with Senators KENNEDY, HATCH, and LEAHY in urging President Clinton to restore the refugee ceiling on refugees from the former Soviet Union in fiscal year 1998 to its level in fiscal year 1997.

Mr. President, I ask that Mr. Peters' article be printed in the RECORD.

The article follows:

[From the Washington Times, Sept. 25, 1997]

PERSECUTION AND REDEMPTION

(By Philip Peters)

This year, Washington has caught on to a fact that human rights activists have known for some time: Persecution of Christians is on the rise around the world. This issue was at the center of the debate on China's trade status, and the State Department issued a special report on it in July.

Now, the question is whether anything will be done about it.

New legislation introduced by Sen. Arlen Specter and Rep. Frank Wolf, the Freedom From Religious Persecution Act, is so laden with new economic sanctions and foreign policy prescriptions that it has drawn the opposition of the Clinton administration, business, and pro-trade groups, and is destined for prolonged debate.

While that debate goes on, four other senators have proposed a far more immediate and concrete way for the U.S. to help.

On Sept. 10, Sens. Spencer Abraham, Edward Kennedy, Orrin Hatch, and Patrick Leahy called on the administration to abandon its current plan to cut next year's admissions of refugees from the former Soviet Union. They deserve the support of anyone concerned about Christians and other victims of religious persecution around the world.

The State Department wants to cut admissions from the former Soviet Union to 21,000, even though 27,000 were admitted this year. The senators propose instead 30,000 admissions from the former Soviet Union, with no reductions in planned admissions from other regions.

This proposal is modest. The Clinton administration has driven refugee admissions down 40 percent, and if the senators' proposal is accepted, total 1998 admissions