

have taken place in the Republic of Armenia.

News reports indicate that Prime Minister Vazgen Sarkisian has been assassinated in an attack by four gunmen who stormed into Parliament during a session earlier today. Other lawmakers and government officials were killed in the attack in the Parliament chamber, including the Speaker of Parliament Karen Demirchian, according to news reports. The death of the Prime Minister and the Speaker of the Parliament have now been confirmed by the office of Armenia's president.

The gunmen are currently holding some 100 hostages, including members of Parliament. However, the government is in full control of the situation outside Parliament in the Armenian capital of Yerevan and throughout the country. There is no state of emergency. There are no indications that this was part of any organized coup, but merely the action of a few gunmen whose motives are not yet clear.

The Prime Minister and members of the government were gathered in Parliament for a presentation of the budget. So, clearly, the gunmen chose an occasion when they could attack many of the top leaders at one time. The gunmen have reportedly released the women hostages.

Armenia's President Robert Kocharian was not at the Parliament complex at the time of the shooting. He is there now personally directing the security forces and trying to negotiate for the release of the remaining hostages.

I want to stress, Mr. Speaker, that democracy in Armenia is strong. The commitment on the part of Armenia's elected leaders and the vast majority of Armenia people to democracy, to the orderly transfer of power, to peace and stability in Armenia and within the region, all remain as strong as ever.

Clearly, Armenia must be in a state of shock right now. The same is true for me, Mr. Speaker, and for all the friends of Armenia in this Congress on both sides of the aisle and for all the American friends of Armenia, including more than one million Americans of Armenian descent. But Armenia will continue to move forward with the political and economical reforms it began when it won its independence more than 8 years ago.

Mr. Speaker, there is a special poignancy for me and many of my colleagues in learning of the death of Prime Minister Sarkisian. The Prime Minister was our guest in this very Capitol building just a few weeks ago, 4 weeks ago to be exact. More than 30 Members of Congress and many of our staff had the opportunity to hear the Prime Minister give a very strong speech in which he stressed his commitment to continuing with economic reforms while working for a settlement of the Nagorno Karabagh conflict and greater integration between Armenia and her neighbors.

Vazgen Sarkisian had only been Prime Minister since May of this year

following nationwide elections for the National Assembly, the Parliament. His party was the Unity Federation. Prior to becoming Prime Minister, he served as Defense Minister from 1995 to 1999. And like many political figures in Armenia, his real involvement in politics began in 1988, as the Soviet Union was collapsing. That year he joined the National Liberation Movement for Independence of Armenia and Constitutional Self-Determination of Nagorno Karabagh.

Also, like many of the political leaders of today's Armenia, Prime Minister Sarkisian was quite young. He was only 40 years old and had an extremely bright future ahead of him as leader of his country.

Mr. Sarkisian was committed to the goal of reform, rebuilding the nation after decades of Soviet domination. He supported integration of Armenia's economy with the region and the world. He sought to promote a society that protects private property with a stable currency and a balanced budget, while providing social protections to its citizens.

During his visit to Washington, the Prime Minister met with Vice President GORE, attended World Bank and IMF meetings, and met with officials of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation, as well as other Members of Congress.

Mr. Speaker, Speaker Demirchian had been the leader of Armenia during Soviet times. In the post-Soviet Armenia, he has emerged as a champion of reform. I have had the opportunity to meet Mr. Demirchian during a congressional delegation to Armenia that I participated in this summer with four of my colleagues. We were all struck by the fact that the new leadership, with President Kocharian, Prime Minister Sarkisian, and Speaker Demirchian represented an extremely strong leadership team poised to lead Armenia into a new millennium and into an economic area of prosperity and peace.

While I am sure President Kocharian will continue at that legacy, he has lost two valuable partners. Armenia and the world have lost two fine leaders. But even on this saddest of days, and it really is a very sad day, I am confident that Armenia will continue its progress in establishing a strong, prosperous, and free society.

SOCIAL SECURITY TRUST FUND

(Mr. SMITH of Michigan asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I come to the well of the House today with what I consider good news but also maybe some bad news, a little bit sweet and a little bit sour.

The good news is that there is a great deal more attention to the serious problem of saving Social Security. The bad news is that we are not doing too much about it.

I was disappointed when the President sent over his proposed legislation that in effect says, let us add another IOU promissory note to the Social Security Trust Fund. An IOU is, of course, a promise to pay in the future. And that is what this would do is say, somehow, some way, raising revenues from some source down in future years, Congress will come up with the money to keep Social Security going for a little while longer.

Let me, Mr. Speaker, just give a little background on Social Security. It was started in 1935. It was a program then and always has been a pay-as-you-go program. In other words, existing current workers were asked to pay a Social Security tax. That tax came in and was immediately sent out to senior citizens, retirees, beneficiaries.

So today the money comes in one day and by the end of the week it is sent out in benefit payments. Right now we are bringing a little more in because we have substantially increased the FICA tax, the Social Security tax; we are bringing a little bit more money in than is needed to pay benefits. That is what is called the Social Security Trust Fund. And that is what Republicans, the Democrats and the President have been arguing about, should we continue spending that Social Security Trust Fund money for other government programs.

I think now most of us agree, no, that we should not. And the challenge is how do we calm the desire of the President and some of the spenders in this body that would like to spend more money and yet not spend the Social Security Trust Fund reserve.

□ 1530

That, however, not spending that Social Security trust fund, does not solve Social Security. The trust fund, the IOUs in the trust fund, the money the government has borrowed in the past, now accounts for approximately \$800 billion. But when we consider that benefit payments are \$400 billion a year, that trust fund reserve would not even hardly last the full of 2 years. The actuaries at Social Security and the CBO, the Congressional Budget Office, estimate that the unfunded liability, I will go into detail on those words, but the unfunded liability of Social Security is \$9 trillion. In other words, if we were to hire a private firm and say we want you to continue paying Social Security benefits indefinitely, they would say, okay, you have got to give us the right to tax all workers 12.4 percent of their taxable payroll, plus you have got to give us \$9 trillion today to put in an interest-bearing account so that that will be the only way that we will take on as a private sector industry the responsibility of paying Social Security benefits in the future. \$9 trillion. Compare that with our annual budget in this country of \$1.7 trillion. It means that we have got a long ways to go. It means that Social Security is not solvent and cannot continue the way it is currently structured.

So back to the good news. The good news is there is more attention to it. I say hurrah to the President for the last two State of the Union speeches, saying let us put Social Security first and so the Republican leadership, the Democrats, all of us in Congress have said, good idea, let us put Social Security first but we have not done it yet. We have not come up with the kind of proposals that are going to keep Social Security solvent.

Next Wednesday at 11 a.m. in room 210, Mr. Speaker, I will be announcing my Social Security bill that does just that. It keeps Social Security solvent into the future. It is not easy. To pretend that somehow the Social Security trust fund and the promise that government has made that it will somehow pay that trust fund money back is going to save Social Security is not true. It is not right. It will not work. Somehow, we have got to increase benefits for widows and widowers that are asked to substantially reduce their money coming in from Social Security as they try to survive. I think we are challenged with a situation that Congress does not usually react and do something unless the people of this country demand that something be done. That has not happened yet. There needs to be better information. There needs to be more understanding that at risk are future generations and current retirees if we do not step up to the plate and solve Social Security now.

MARKING 100TH YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF H. HORWITZ CO., CHICAGO'S OLDEST FAMILY-OWNED JEWELER

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. NEY). 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 rise today to pay tribute to one of Chicago's finest and most longstanding family-owned businesses, the H. Horwitz Company, jewelers since 1899. 1999 marks the 100th year anniversary of H. Horwitz Company, Chicago's oldest family-owned jeweler. Founder Hyman Horwitz emigrated to the United States from Russia in 1895, equipped with a jeweler's training and desire to start his own business. At first, his one-room loop shop handled only jewelry repairs. But it soon blossomed into a thriving boutique that in addition to gems, provided gainful employment for a passel of Horwitz's Russian Jewish brothers and sisters. Scooping Service Merchandise by decades, he sold his diamonds alongside luggage, radios and cameras from the 1930s through the 1960s through his jewels values catalog. Horwitz and his son Donald, who ran the shop until 1998, experimented from the start with cutting edge jewelry designs. Theirs was one of the first companies to produce the pearl mystery clasp, a setting in which a necklace or bracelet clasp is drilled into two pearls, allowing them to screw

together. The all around channel setting, now a common setting for diamond rings, was another pioneering step forward in jewelry design for the company.

This spirit of innovation also characterized Hyman Horwitz's humanitarian interest. In addition to supporting several Chicago charitable organizations, such as the Shrine Foundation and Chicago's Scholarship Fund, Horwitz created a custom braille watch to give to the blind of Chicago. This watch was made to size with the bracelet band and engraved with the name on the back. Of the luminaries who have shopped at H. Horwitz, least surprising is the one famous for his diamond fetish, Liberace. Other patrons have included former Illinois Governor Otto Kerner, Henry Youngman, Archbishop Samuel Cardinal Stritch, Chicago's Goldblatt family and insurance magnate and philanthropist W. Clement Stone.

Now run by Donald's wife Phyllis and son Craig, H. Horwitz and Company continues to offer fine jewelry at a discount. The company also imports all of its diamonds and precious gems directly from diamond cutters.

Mr. Speaker, 100 years is a long time, especially is it a long time to own and operate a business in one of the Nation's finest cities, Chicago, the windy city, city of the big shoulders, the city of neighborhoods. Yes, Chicago, the home of Horwitz jewelers. Yes, Ms. Phyllis Horwitz, we salute you and your family for an outstanding century of providing services to Chicagoans and all of those who have come to know of your service, professionalism and contributions to humanity. We say congratulations. We wish you well as you continue down the road to success. You are makers of history and we are pleased that you are a part of our community and that you prepare and distribute some of the finest jewelry in the world.

"CUBA PROGRAM," TORTURING OF AMERICAN POWs BY CUBAN AGENTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, the Geneva Convention prohibits violence to life and person, in particular murders of all kinds, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture and outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment. That is an exact quote.

However, all of those barbaric acts are exactly what took place in a prison camp in North Vietnam known as the Zoo, seen here in a declassified photo. North Vietnamese POW prison called the Zoo, site of tortures of American POWs by Castro agent. During this period of August 1967 to August 1968, 19 of our courageous servicemen were physically and psychologically tortured by

Cuban agents working under orders from Hanoi and Havana.

Assessed to be a psychological experiment to test interrogation methods, the Cuba Program, as the torture project was labeled by our Defense Department and intelligence agencies, was aimed at obtaining absolute compliance and submission to captor demands. It was aimed at converting or turning the POWs and to be used as propaganda by the international Communist effort. It was inhumane. It was incessant. It was barbaric.

Air Force Major James Kasler, who is pictured here in one of the posters, 19 of the U.S. POWs in the Cuban program, Major Kasler said that during one period in June 1968 he was tortured incessantly by a man known as Fernando Vecino Alegret who had been identified as Fidel, the Cuban agent in charge of this exercise in brutality. In a Time magazine report entitled "At Last the Story Can Be Told," after one beating, Kasler's buttocks, lower back and legs hung in shreds. The skin had been entirely whipped away and the area was a bluish, purplish, greenish mass of bloody raw meat. The person he has identified as the possible torturer is this man who is the current Minister of Education in Cuba. He could be one of the agents identified by our POWs as Fidel.

Colonel Jack Bomar, another victim of the Cuba Program, pictured here, has described the beating of a fellow prisoner and Readers Digest printed this eyewitness account for an article they wrote on POWs. It says, The sight of the prisoner stunned Bomar. He stood transfixed trying to make himself believe that human beings could batter one another. The man could barely walk. He was bleeding everywhere. His body was ripped and torn. Fidel, Fernando Vecino Alegret perhaps, smashed a fist into the man's face, driving him against the wall. Then he was brought to the center of the room and made to go down on his knees. Screaming in rage, Fidel took a length of rubber hose from a guard and lashed it as hard as he could into the man's face. The prisoner did not react. He did not cry out or even blink an eye. Again and again a dozen times Fidel smashed the man's face with the hose. He was never released.

This man who stood firm in the face of such brutality, who would not surrender himself to the wishes of his torturer was Air Force pilot Earl Cobeil. Earl Cobeil died in captivity, and he is pictured here. As a result of being tortured by a Castro agent, Earl passed away.

These accounts are but a microcosm of the terrible acts committed against American POWs in Vietnam by Castro agents, acts which are in direct violation of the Geneva Convention on prisoners of war. To violate the provisions enshrined in this document run against the grain of civilized society and undermine the integrity of the international community as a whole. Humanity is one. When one suffers, we all