

crimes against humanity and other serious violations of international law. I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of this important resolution.

We must do everything possible to see that Charles Taylor, a fugitive from justice, is held accountable for his heinous crimes and brought before the Special Court for Sierra Leone. There should be no safe harbor for tyrants like Charles Taylor.

The legacy of Charles Taylor's human rights abuses and corruption in Liberia is deplorable. Charles Taylor sponsored a 10-year civil war in neighboring Sierra Leone and has inflicted suffering on innocent men, women and children in unprecedented acts of cruelty, all done to satisfy the avarice of a cruel despot.

The UN-backed war crimes court unsealed an indictment on Charles Taylor in 2003. He is accused of bearing the greatest responsibility for war crimes, crimes against humanity and serious violations of international humanitarian law. It is well known that he provided financial support, military training, personnel, arms and other form of assistance to the Revolutionary United Front to destabilize Sierra Leone and thereby gain access to her diamond wealth.

Charles Taylor organized and ordered armed attacks throughout Sierra Leone to terrorize the civilian population and ultimately punish them for failing to provide sufficient support to the RUF, or for supporting the legitimate government. The attacks routinely included unlawful killings, abductions, forced labor, physical and sexual violence, the use of child soldiers and looting.

I remain concerned that two years have passed and he has not been brought to justice before the Special Court for Sierra Leone. The United States must call on the Nigerian government to hand Charles Taylor over to stand trial. Charles Taylor has stated his plans to return to Liberia one day and is accused of meddling in the current affairs of West Africa.

If we fail to bring him to justice he may someday return to power in Liberia. Time is running out for the Special Court for Sierra Leone. Charles Taylor's crimes can not go unpunished. There must be justice for the victims.

Mr. ENGEL. Madam Speaker. I rise in support of H. Con. Res. 127.

Charles Ghankay Taylor is a ruthless war criminal who has been indicted by the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL) on 17 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity. Taylor, the former president of the Republic of Liberia, has supported atrocities including mass murder, rape, torture, mutilation, and the use of children as militants during Sierra Leone's brutal civil war.

Charles Taylor also supported the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), deemed a terrorist organization by the State Department. He therefore, should be held accountable for the inhumane barbarism the RUF committed within Sierra Leone's borders. Furthermore, this Special Court that indicted Taylor has contributed to the rule of law in Sierra Leone and deserves our support.

In August 2003, Charles Taylor was granted asylum in Nigeria and agreed to end involvement in Liberian politics. The Nigerian government also warned Taylor not to communicate with anyone involved in illegal or political activities in Liberia. However, the UN Secretary General has reported to the Security Council

that Taylor has breached this agreement and maintains contacts in Liberia with those planning to undermine the peace process in Liberia.

Today, Charles Taylor remains in Nigeria. Taylor is a threat to peace and stability in West Africa and should not be granted any freedom in Nigeria. I call on the government of Nigeria to immediately turn over Charles Taylor to the Special Court for Sierra Leone. Only with the proceedings of a fair and open trial for the crimes against humanity, will justice be served, and I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 127.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds of those present have voted in the affirmative.

Mr. LANTOS. Madam Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

RECOGNIZING THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF VICTORY IN EUROPE (VE) DAY AND THE LIBERATION OF WESTERN BOHEMIA

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 195) recognizing the 60th anniversary of Victory in Europe (VE) Day and the Liberation of Western Bohemia.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 195

Whereas the final major offensive in the European theater of operations during World War II, known as the Liberation of Western Bohemia, was fought from April 25, 1945, to May 8, 1945, with Victory in Europe (VE) Day declared on May 8, 1945;

Whereas the Liberation of Western Bohemia was the closing offensive of World War II, which decisively contributed to the ultimate capitulation of the German Third Reich;

Whereas on May 4, 1945, General George S. Patton gave the order for the American Third Army, consisting of 18 divisions and 500,000 men, to resume the Allied offensive into Western Bohemia;

Whereas on May 5, 1945, the Third Army liberated the city of Pilsen (Pilsen), the western-most city in then-Czechoslovakia;

Whereas on May 6, 1945, as Americans entered Pilsen, flowers were strewn along the paths and into the vehicles of the troops, while young girls and old men and women ran to kiss the soldiers;

Whereas during the communist era, Czechs celebrated their liberation from Nazi Germany on May 9 of each year in commemoration of the Soviet liberation of Prague; however, after the 1989 "Velvet Revolution", the date of commemoration was moved to May 8 of each year;

Whereas thousands of American veterans of the Liberation of Western Bohemia have traveled to Pilsen in the years since the liberation to honor their fallen comrades;

Whereas the people of the Czech Republic, symbolizing their friendship and gratitude toward the American soldiers who fought to secure their freedom, have graciously hosted countless veterans groups over the years;

Whereas between April 25 and May 9, 2005, some 50 communities across the western part of the Czech Republic will be celebrating the 60th anniversary of their liberation by United States, Czech, and Belgian soldiers under the command of General Patton;

Whereas the citizens of Pilsen will dedicate a statue of General Patton which will be unveiled on the town square on the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Pilsen, commemorating the Liberation of Western Bohemia by United States Armed Forces during World War II; and

Whereas the friendship between the United States and the Czech Republic is strong today in part because of the Liberation of Western Bohemia: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) recognizes the 60th anniversary of the Liberation of Western Bohemia in the European theater of operations during World War II which culminated in an Allied victory that assured the defeat of Nazi Germany and ended the War in Europe two weeks later;

(2) honors those individuals who gave their lives during the Liberation of Western Bohemia;

(3) encourages the President to issue a proclamation calling upon the people of the United States to honor the veterans of the Liberation of Western Bohemia with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities;

(4) reaffirms the bonds of friendship between the United States and the brave citizens of the Czech Republic; and

(5) seeks to continue building a great future between our countries.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) and the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH).

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, H. Res. 195 is a resolution introduced by the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. KINGSTON) which recognizes the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Western Bohemia by American forces.

I strongly support the resolution which recognizes the extraordinary sacrifice by American soldiers to free Western Bohemia from Nazi control. This was the last major offensive undertaken in Europe during World War II. The campaign was led by General George Patton and involved 18 divisions and approximately 500,000 men. It resulted in the liberation of Pilsen, which was then located in what was known as Czechoslovakia on May 5, 1945.

The liberation of Western Bohemia was decisive in leading to the ultimate surrender of Nazi forces and a quick end to World War II in Europe.

The resolution also recognizes the continued friendship between the people of the United States and the people

of the Czech Republic. In fact, in honor of the liberation of their city, the citizens of Pilsen will be dedicating a statue of General Patton on the 60th anniversary of the liberation of their city and all of Western Bohemia.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Madam Speaker, in just a few days, we will celebrate the 60th anniversary of the victorious end of World War II in Europe, and the President will mark this important historic anniversary by visiting Holland and Russia for special commemorative events. It is very appropriate, Madam Speaker, that in addition to recognizing that all-important date, we recognize the liberation of the Czech people who have gone through so much in their search for liberty.

Our resolution calls attention to the role of American military forces in the liberation of Bohemia and the city of Pilsen in the very last days of the Second World War.

Madam Speaker, 10 years ago, on the 50th anniversary of this event, it was my privilege to represent the United States in Bohemia commemorating this historic occasion, and I sensed firsthand the warm friendship and gratitude the people of the Czech Republic have for the United States and for our role in liberating them. The strong friendship and the good relations between the United States and the Czech Republic were profoundly strengthened by the liberation of western Bohemia in May of 1949 under the leadership of General Patton and the Third Army he led, which included not only American, but also free Belgian and Czech troops.

Our resolution reaffirms the bonds of friendship between the American and the Czech people, which go back to the strong and enthusiastic support President Woodrow Wilson and the American people displayed for the establishment of Czechoslovakia at the end of the First World War.

In the last decade and a half, those ties have been further strengthened as we have welcomed the end of the Communist era in Central Europe. Eight years ago, it was my pleasure to fly to Independence, Missouri with the Foreign Minister of the Czech Republic, as well as the Foreign Ministers of Poland and Hungary, to witness the signing of Czechoslovakia's ascension to the North Atlantic Alliance.

The Czech people have faced domination by foreign rulers for centuries. The liberation of western Bohemia by the United States created the possibility of a new future for the Czech people, which they attempted to seize first in 1968 in the famous Prague spring which Soviet forces brutally suppressed, and then in 1989 when the Czech people prevailed. Our resolution honors not only their liberation, but their resilience and their commitment to free, open, and democratic societies.

I urge all of my colleagues to support this resolution as we send our best greetings to the free people of a free Czech Republic.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Madam Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. KINGSTON), the author of the resolution.

Mr. KINGSTON. Madam Speaker, I am proud to have been a part of this resolution as we recognize the 60th anniversary of the victory in Europe and, really, the liberation of Western Bohemia as it signaled the end of the war in Europe and the defeat of the Third Reich.

On May 4, 1945, General George Patton gave the order for the American Third Army, consisting of 18 divisions and 500,000 men, to resume the allied offensive in Western Bohemia. The following day, Patton's Third Army liberated the city of Pilsen in the westernmost section of then Czechoslovakia. As the Americans entered Pilsen, flowers were strewn in their path and into vehicles for the troops. Young girls and old men and women ran out to kiss the soldiers. People who had been oppressed for all of the Nazi occupation and people who had had an underground resistance came out to welcome these soldiers.

□ 1600

Even today, thousands of American veterans of the liberation of Western Bohemia will travel to Pilsen to honor their fallen comrades.

The people of the Czech Republic symbolize their friendship and gratitude toward the American soldiers who fought to secure their freedom, having graciously hosted thousands and countless veteran groups over the many years.

Between April 25 and May 9, 2005, some 50 communities across the western part of the Czech Republic will be celebrating the 60th anniversary of their liberation by the United States, Czech and Belgium soldiers under the command of General Patton.

The citizens of Pilsen will dedicate a statue of General Patton to be unveiled on the town square on the 60th anniversary of the liberation, commemorating the liberation. One footnote that is very significant for all of us, though, is that while America liberated Pilsen and the Czech Republic in 1945, in 1948, the Iron Curtain fell upon it.

And at that point, the historians and the photographers and the people who knew that America had played such a major role in their liberation, those people were sometimes arrested, often intimidated, and even the photographs of the liberation were destroyed. So for 3 years, the people of Czech Republic in Pilsen enjoyed the fresh air of liberation and freedom; and then from 1945 to 1948, that ended with the Iron Curtain.

And the Soviet Government came in and wiped out all traces of the Amer-

ican liberation, even to the extent of tearing down statues and changing the history books. And yet through the dark period, the many years and decades that followed, the people of the Czech Republic still remembered that day.

Maybe it was not in their textbooks, maybe they did not have access to the photographs anymore, and maybe the stories were held down to whispers; yet they still remember what happened. The Czech people, and Czechoslovakia, have had a great role in the development of the United States of America.

Czech immigrants are all over our country. Our country is better because of the Czech influence that we have. And because we were so significant in their liberation in 1945, they never let the Soviet Union wipe out the memory of our contribution to their country either.

I am proud to be going there on Thursday with a bipartisan delegation to present this resolution. And I am proud that Congress and this subcommittee is passing this bill, because it makes a very significant statement on what we feel and how we feel, what we feel about what happened in 1945, in 1948, and in 1989, and today as we celebrate this important anniversary with our Czech brothers and sisters.

Mr. LANTOS. Madam Speaker, we have no additional requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Madam Speaker, I want to commend the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. KINGSTON) for his outstanding and very eloquent statement.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. BIGGERT). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 195.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds of those present have voted in the affirmative.

Mr. LANTOS. Madam Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on House Resolution 195.

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

There was no objection.