

I thank the gentleman from New York for his cooperation and the Speaker and the majority leader to have these bills scheduled and moved. I truly appreciate their efforts.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. MCHUGH. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume. In closing, I could not add to the very eloquent statement of the ranking member. We indeed all need a Max Weiner in our lives. Although we are not obviously in a position to enjoy the guidance and the light that he shed during his very, very illustrious career, we can perhaps through this naming inscribe his name above the pillars of the Postal Service and remind us all of the good things that he did in his life. I thank the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. FATTAH).

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HEFLEY). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New York (Mr. MCHUGH) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4003.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

COMMENDING VISIT OF POPE JOHN PAUL II TO CUBA

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 362) commending the visit of His Holiness Pope John Paul II to Cuba, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 362

Whereas Pope John Paul II earlier this year undertook a first ever Papal visit to Cuba to speak directly to the Cuban people;

Whereas the Pope led the Cuban people in celebration throughout the island, including leading the largest open-air mass since 1959 on the last day of his visit in Jose Marti Plaza;

Whereas the Pope spoke directly with the Cuban people and the Cuban Government about the importance of fundamental human rights and the necessity for "each person enjoying freedom of expression, being free to undertake initiatives and make proposals within civil society, and enjoying appropriate freedom of association";

Whereas the Pope called for political freedom in Cuba, including a call to release "those who are isolated, persecuted, imprisoned for various offenses or for reasons of conscience, for ideas which though dissident are nonetheless peaceful";

Whereas the Pope called for greater religious freedom in Cuba and a "harmonious social climate and a suitable legislation that enables every person and every religious confession to live their faith freely, to express that faith in the context of public life and to count on adequate resources and opportunities to bring its spiritual, moral and civil benefits to bear on the life of the nation";

Whereas Cuban churches of all faiths supported the Papal visit and emerged from the visit with expectations of greater promi-

nence and freedom to operate in Cuban society;

Whereas the Pope invoked the name of Father Felix Varela y Morales, "an undeniable patriot", who "spoke of democracy, judging it to be the political project best in keeping with human nature", and the name of Jose Marti, "a writer and a teacher in the fullest sense of the word, deeply committed to democracy and independence, a patriot, a loyal friend even to those who did not share his political program";

Whereas the Pope remembered "those people who for various reasons have left the country but still feel that they are sons and daughters of Cuba" and established that "the Cuban people should be the protagonists of their own future and destiny";

Whereas the Pope both called for greater integration of the people of Cuba into the international community and criticized the Castro Government by saying "imposed isolation strikes the people indiscriminately, making it ever more difficult for the weakest to enjoy the bare essentials of decent living"; and

Whereas the Pope challenged Cuba and the international community of nations by saying "May Cuba with all its magnificent potential, open itself up to the world, and may the world open itself up to Cuba": Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) commends Pope John Paul II for his visit to Cuba, for his frank criticism of the Cuban Government, and his message of hope to the Cuban people; and

(2) urges the international community to join the United States in actively supporting the freedom and democratic reforms for Cuba embodied in the Pope's homilies which have peacefully united Cubans in the common cause of liberty.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN) and the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. HAMILTON) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN).

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 this measure.

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

There was no objection.

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, the most telling moment of the visit by His Holiness Pope John Paul II to Cuba occurred at the beginning of his public mass at Havana. The Pope successively greeted Cuban Cardinal Jaime Ortega, the Church hierarchy, and the priests and assembled faithful to repeated applause from the crowd that filled Jose Marti Plaza.

The Pope then respectfully greeted Fidel Castro. Apart from the tiny sound of polite applause drifting from the stage over the loudspeakers, the sprawling crowd of ordinary Cubans stood in spontaneous, purposeful silence. No one applauded.

While ordinary Cubans were clearly touched by the Pope's message, the Castro regime remains unmoved. Sadly, the Catholic church and other Cuban religious leaders and laity consider to face intransigence and repression. The Cuban regime's State Security apparatus is now arresting more dissidents than were released after the Pope's visit.

In the meantime since the Pope's visit, church officials have publicly criticized the Cuban government for doing little since the Pope's visit to resolve issues that the Catholic church considers essential. Just yesterday, the New York Times reported that:

The government of President Fidel Castro, which won praise for receiving the Pope has shown little new flexibility since then in response to church requests for greater freedom. Efforts to ease the admittance of foreign priests and nuns have made no apparent progress. Nor have pleas that the government scale back controls on Catholic social service agencies that could deliver badly needed food and medical aid from abroad.

Permits for religious processions have been denied as often as they have been granted, church officials said, and hopes that the Pope's visit might open space for religious groups in the state-controlled news media have mostly been dashed.

Approval of long-standing requests—to allow the opening of Catholic schools or importation of an offset press to print newsletters and magazines—seems as distant as it did in years past.

While Fidel Castro has refused to let up on the Catholic church in Cuba, here in our own Nation he continues to directly and brazenly attack American interests. The FBI announced in Miami just yesterday that 10 people have been charged with spying for the Cuban government. These Castroite agents were trying to penetrate our Miami-based U.S. Southern Command, MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, and the Boca Chica Naval Air Station in Key West. This morning, the Washington Post reported in a front page story that U.S. Attorney Thomas Scott "described the activities of the eight men and two women as an attempt 'to strike at the very heart of our national security system.'"

The FBI has said that Castro's spies also sought to infiltrate Cuban-American groups and manipulate other political groups and the United States media. I would like to commend FBI director Louis Freeh and the FBI's Miami field office for neutralizing this illegal espionage network.

Great leaders from Franklin Delano Roosevelt to Ronald Reagan have known that good will does not move dictators. I regret that the Clinton administration chose to make a number of unconditional, unilateral concessions to the Cuban government in the wake of the recent visit by the Pope. The United States should instead be leading efforts to help the church and Cuba's internal opposition to lay the basis for a peaceful and democratic transition.

I would like to note that our ranking member the gentleman from Indiana

(Mr. HAMILTON) was an initial cosponsor of this resolution and offered a compromise amendment which was approved in our committee. Accordingly, I invite my colleagues to join us in adopting this resolution.

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

Mr. HAMILTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume. I rise in support of the resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I want to commend my colleagues the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN) the chairman of the committee, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ), the gentleman from California (Mr. GALLEGLY) and the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) for their willingness to work out an accurate and, I think, helpful compromise that we bring to the floor today. I appreciate that this was not an easy process, that there were some difficult decisions made, and I want to thank them for their cooperation and keeping an open mind throughout the process.

I think we bring a good resolution to the floor. It is a straightforward resolution that commends the Pope for his visit. I think you can be for his position on U.S. policy or against it; you can agree with a part of his position and disagree with other parts of it, but it does seem to me we all ought to commend his visit and his message to the Cuban people.

The compromise resolution we have before us reflects the importance of the Pope's visit in a number of ways.

First, it commends Pope John Paul II for his visit to Cuba, for his frank criticism of the Cuban government and, his message of hope to the Cuban people.

Secondly, it urges the international community to join the United States in supporting freedom and democratic reforms for Cuba embodied in the Pope's homilies.

Third, the resolution recognizes the Pope's frank criticism of the Cuban government. The Cuban government is isolating its own people, gravely limiting Cubans' freedoms and basic human rights. This isolation is unnecessary and is counterproductive and it stands in stark contrast to trends throughout the hemisphere.

Fourth and finally, the resolution makes clear that the Pope is critical of U.S. policy toward Cuba, and he has challenged us to consider the costs of that policy. U.S. policy isolates the Cuban people who are made to bear the brunt of our opposition to the Castro regime. That isolation is counterproductive to our shared goal of bringing freedom to the Cuban people.

The Pope was right to do what he did and to say what he said, and we, I think, are right to commend him. He spoke directly to the Cuban people, engaged them, as he did the people of eastern Europe. He is not trying to isolate them or coerce them. On his return, he said that the purpose of this trip was to promote the same changes in Cuba as took place after his trip to his native Poland.

I believe that the Cuban people are more hopeful for change in the aftermath of the Pope's visit, and less fearful in seeking that change. We cannot say that nothing has changed in Cuba since the Papal visit, because it is clear that the Cuban people and their expectations have changed. One only had to see scores of Cubans marching through Havana with their Patron Saint last week, for the first time in more than 30 years, to understand what is changing for Cubans.

What has not changed, unfortunately, is the Castro government. Their actions of the last week confirm what we have known for more than three decades.

We were all informed just the other day that the FBI arrested 10 persons on Saturday in Miami, saying that they are part of an espionage ring that was sent by the Cuban government to strike at the very heart of our national security system and our very democratic process.

I join in the criticism that has been made and certainly will be made of the Castro government which isolates the Cuban people and, of course, has a terrible human rights record. The capricious exercise of power last week, to arrest 13 dissidents and detain them without charge, is exactly what the Pope rightly criticized when he was in Cuba.

But this resolution is about the Papal visit. It is not about the behavior of a government that stands in stark contrast to every other government in the region. The Pope's visit had an impact on the people of Cuba that continues, I think, to return dividends, continues to grant hope and breathes life into Cuba's civil society.

The Pope's trip was a remarkable trip and I think admirable. We should not only commend him for it but we should be wise to follow his example.

I urge support of the resolution.

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

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. GALLEGLY) the distinguished chairman of our Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere.

Mr. GALLEGLY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding time.

Mr. Speaker, eight months ago, His Holiness, Pope John Paul II undertook a historic pilgrimage to Cuba. His primary mission was to reassure the faithful of that island nation that the open profession of their faith and active practice of their religious beliefs was an important right that they as Catholics should not be afraid to exercise. While in Cuba the Pope not only took a number of opportunities to highlight the important role of the church in Cuban society but on several occasions he took the opportunity to point out the failures of the Cuban regime to prevent the free exercise of views and to permit the faithful to practice their religion.

The issue of Cuba is never an easy one around here, Mr. Speaker, but as

chairman of the Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere, I introduced this resolution because I did not feel such an historic event and the potential consequences of such a visit should go unrecognized.

The bill before us today is a compromise effort which received unanimous support in our subcommittee. For that I want to again thank the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) and the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ) for their cooperation. I also want to commend the ranking member of the full Committee on International Relations my good friend the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. HAMILTON) for his work on this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation recognizes the Pope's visit as an important milestone in the lives of the Cuban people because the visit did set into motion a change in the relationship between the government of Cuba and the Catholic church. Beyond that, the visit has provided a new measure of hope for the people of Cuba that the church, in due time, could become an important conduit to increased economic, social and political freedom on the island.

Let there be no mistake, however, that while the Pope's visit has provided a new measure of freedom for the church, it has not significantly changed the attitude of the regime toward freedom of expression and assembly for the general population. While it is true that since the Pope's visit, many political prisoners have been released from jail, unfortunately many of those have had to leave Cuba and many others have been taken and placed in prison in their place. Obviously the Cuban regime did not get the message. For this I want to express my strong disappointment in the regime.

Despite the continued repressive attitudes of the regime, I urge my colleagues to pass this resolution to give the Pope the recognition he deserves for his visit to Cuba and to send a message to the Cuban regime that the Pope's message about truth, freedom and religious expression must be honored.

I urge my colleagues to adopt this bill.

□ 1800

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN).

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I thank so much the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN) for his steadfast dedication, for many years of leadership on the cause of freedom and democracy to the people of my native homeland of Cuba, and those are qualities and a direction which is shared by his ranking member, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. HAMILTON). We thank him for his patience throughout this process, for the gentleman from California (Mr. GALLEGLY), for his leadership, as well for the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ) and the

gentleman from Florida (Mr. DIAZ-BALART) who also had a significant hand in the drafting of this resolution.

As all of us know, Mr. Speaker, in January of this year, the Pope went on a religious pilgrimage to Cuba to bring hope to a people oppressed, enslaved and tortured by a ruthless dictator, Fidel Castro, and his gang of thugs. It was unprecedented, and it should be recognized as such, but we should be cautious that an acknowledgment of the Pope is not manipulated into praise for a brutal regime. There were great expectations that the visit of His Holiness would somehow bring a sense of humanity to the evil that is Fidel Castro. Unfortunately, of course, it has not.

In the aftermath of this visit, many have tried to distort the Pope's message and the facts in an attempt to seek a weakening of the U.S. position against the Castro regime. These attempts are premised on the contention that the Pope's visit has resulted in significant changes by the Castro regime and has created an opening for the people of Cuba.

But make no mistake. Up to now, nothing has really changed in Cuba. While those who seek a normalization of relations with the ruthless Cuban dictator ignore this reality, the Congress cannot and must not ignore the truth. The actions taken by the Castro regime since the papal visit clearly show that a leopard does not change his spots and a tiger its stripes.

This is the case of Dr. Oscar Elias Biscet and Rolando Illore, directors of the Lawton Foundation of Human Rights in Cuba who were arrested on July 11, 1998, for planning a commemoration of the fourth anniversary of the sinking of the 13 de Marzo tugboats. The whereabouts of these two individuals are still unknown, Mr. Speaker.

Or the case of the members of the Liga Civica Martiana who on March 30, 1998, were arrested by the Cuban revolutionary police during a meeting that was planned to honor the remembrance of the combatants of the Brigade 2506. One of the members, Wilfredo Martinez Perez, was beaten to death and murdered at the police headquarters in Havana.

Or the case of the members of the Partido Pro Derechos Humanos who on February 24, 1998, were in prison for honoring the memory of martyrs of the Brothers to the Rescue. One of them, Jose Antonio Alvarado Almeida, was sent to a local psychiatric hospital as punishment.

I ask you to listen to the Cuban people, those like Oswaldo Paya Sardinas, the national coordinator of the Liberation Christian Movement of Cuba who has stated:

The Cuban government has made clear that certain spaces or gestures or other allowances to the church or concessions only on the occasion of the Pope's visit.

Or listen to the words of Ramon Humberto Colas, a Catholic political dissident from Las Tunas. Ramon

Humberto Colas asserted: "There were 5 days of freedom, but there were just 5 days amid 40 years."

I ask my colleagues to listen to the words of Aurora Garcia Del Busto, an independent journalist in Cuba, when she says: "Cuba does not open up to the Cuban people."

We have had an opportunity to send a clear message to the Cuban dictator that we can see beyond the facade created by opponents of U.S.-Cuba policy. Honor the Pope for his efforts at bringing hope and faith to the Cuban people, but do not allow this Chamber to be used as a platform for Castro's public relations maneuvers.

Despite the Pope's visit, the reality is that the Castro regime has not changed, nor does it ever want to change. Once an oppressive dictatorship, sadly, Mr. Speaker, always an oppressive dictatorship.

Mr. HAMILTON. I have no more speakers, Mr. Speaker, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. DIAZ-BALART) who is one of the sponsors of this resolution.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN), the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. HAMILTON), the gentleman from California (Mr. GALLEGLY), the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROSLEHTINEN), and the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ) who have been so helpful with this resolution.

I do support this resolution. I have had in the past, differences with my friend, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. HAMILTON) on Cuba policy, and yet it is evident and it has always been evident that LEE HAMILTON does not in any way condone or accept nor whitewash, nor much less support, any of the brutality that Castro has been responsible for and continues to be responsible for and has been for 40 years.

Mr. Speaker, I think that this is an important resolution because basically what it does is that it restates the overwhelming support that the United States people, the American people and its representatives and the representatives in Congress have for the right of the Cuban people to be free.

Without any doubt, those were extraordinarily hopeful days in January where the Cubans felt, since the eyes of the world were upon Cuba and that extraordinary figure of this century was present, that they could not be as easily brutalized during those days. Even so, even during those days, we saw the examples of the very brave demonstrators during the Pope's Masses who were dragged off, some even pulled by their hair, young ladies, and in other demonstrations of violence, manifestations of violence by that gangster regime. Even during the Pope's Masses, those things happened.

So the essence of the regime has not changed. I think when we realize that perhaps the most distinguished, certainly the most well known Catholic

leader in Cuba today, Catholic political leader in Cuba today, Oswaldo Paya was not even allowed to meet with the Pope, that political prisoners were picked up, were made prisoners, men and women were made political prisoners even during the days of the visit and that the hundreds, and I have a list of 1,500 approximately, political prisoners in my office, that they still languish, they still languish in Cuban prisons, from the most well known to some who have never received publicity. They all deserve and receive our support. We think of them.

And our policy, Mr. Speaker, is well set and is clear, and it is in law. We will maintain our policy of not trading or permitting trade with the Cuban regime as long as all political prisoners are not free, all political parties are not legalized, and free elections are not condoned. That is our policy, it is codified, and we, the American people, will continue to stand with the Cuban people.

I appreciate the opportunity for this intervention and for this resolution to have been filed.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his kind remarks in support of the resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ), a member of our committee.

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

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN) for yielding this time to me.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in temperate support of H. Resolution 392, and I am happy that we were able to come to agreement with the distinguished ranking Democrat, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. HAMILTON) on the language. However, I think that the events of the past week are evidence of how very little has changed in Cuba since the Pope's January visit. Following a religious procession through Havana, the government launched its most repressive crackdown on political dissidents this year. Thirteen individuals were detained and held by the regime for political activities related to the religious procession and the sentencing by the regime of political prisoner Reynaldo Alfaro.

The resolution accurately reflects the sentiments of Pope John Paul II's visit to Cuba and commends him for a visit that took far too many years to come to fruition. But most importantly, the resolution recognizes the historic significance of the Pope's visit, something each of us can agree with.

Now, while his visit was successful in opening a window of opportunity for the Catholic Church, as we stand here today that window is slowly closing. The absence of world attention on Cuba since his visit is largely responsible for allowing the window to close. Even the

Pope has expressed concern and frustration that the initial opening for the Church provided by his visit is quickly receding.

Since January, the Cuban Government has continued to block Church access to mass media, limited public Masses and denied permits for Masses, expelled American priest, Reverend Patrick Sullivan, and forced others to flee under harassment, continued to deny autonomy to Caritas, the Church's humanitarian relief agency, restricted visas for clergy to enter and preach in Cuba, and has severely limited the ability of Cuban Protestants to worship in Cuba.

On January 31 of this year, Ricardo Alarcon, President of Cuba's National Assembly, announced that the regime will, quote, not permit the reopening of Catholic and parochial schools.

It is evident to me that Castro is seeking to undo the progress made by the Pope during his visit and return Cuba to the status quo it has lived under for almost 4 decades.

As a recent article in the New York Times pointed out:

Efforts to ease the admittance of foreign priests and nuns have made no apparent progress, nor have pleas that the government scale back controls on Catholic social service agencies that could deliver badly needed food and medical aid from abroad. Permits for religious processions have been denied as often as they have been granted, church officials said, and hopes that the Pope's visit might open up space for religious groups and the State-controlled news media have been mostly dashed.

Without continued calls for democratic change by the international community and the media spotlight on these issues, the opportunity for further change will be lost.

I think it is appropriate that we commemorate Pope John Paul's visit to Cuba and celebrate the religious opening in Cuba created as a result of his visit. But, most importantly, it is essential that the church and the international community build on his visit by refusing to allow the Cuban regime the opportunity to close that window that was open. I hope that we will not let this historic opportunity, the visit of Pope John Paul II, disappear for lack of attention. The people of Cuba deserve this long-awaited opportunity, and we can take advantage of that opportunity. But right now, people in Cuba are still suffering the very realities they were suffering before the papal visit, and while he inspired hope and opportunity, Fidel Castro is quickly closing and snuffing out that hope.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. All time has expired.

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 resolution, H.Res. 362, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof)

the rules were suspended and the resolution, as amended, was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

EXPRESSING SENSE OF THE CONGRESS THAT THE PRESIDENT SHOULD RENEGOTIATE EXTRADITION TREATY WITH MEXICO

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 381) expressing the sense of the Congress that the President should renegotiate the extradition treaty with Mexico so that the possibility of capital punishment will not interfere with the timely extradition of criminal suspects from Mexico to the United States.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 381

Whereas under the Extradition Treaty Between the United States of America and the United Mexican States, Mexico refused to extradite murder suspect and U.S. citizen Jose Luis Del Toro to the United States until the State of Florida agreed not to exercise its right to seek capital punishment in its criminal prosecution of him;

Whereas under the Extradition Treaty Mexico has refused to extradite other suspects of capital crimes; and

Whereas the Extradition Treaty interferes with the justice system of the United States and encourages criminals to flee to Mexico: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That it is the sense of the House of Representatives that the President should renegotiate the Extradition Treaty Between the United States of America and the United Mexican States, signed in Mexico City in 1978 (31 U.S.T. 5059), so that the possibility of capital punishment will not interfere with the timely extradition of criminal suspects from Mexico to the United States.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN) and the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. HAMILTON) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN).

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

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 H. Res. 381.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MILLER) appealed to me some time ago to move this resolution which he sponsored in response to a heinous murder which occurred in his district in the State of Florida.

I recently received a letter from James Bellush whose wife Sheila was a victim of this brutal slaying, in which he wrote as follows, and I quote:

On November 7, 1997, Jose Luis Del Toro, Jr., entered my home in Sarasota, Florida

and murdered my wife, the mother of 6 children. Jose Luis Del Toro murdered her in front of my 23 month-old quadruplets who watched their mother bleed to death. They were in the house with her dead bloody body for well over 3 hours until my 14 year-old stepdaughter came home from school and found this macabre scene.

Mr. Del Toro is a natural born American citizen wanted in context with this murder, and after confessing to his crimes, he fled to Mexico where he has taken refuge within the Mexican Government's interpretations of the provisions of our bilateral extradition treaty and now within Mexico's judicial system.

□ 1815

The United States-Mexico extradition treaty establishes the Mexican Government may, may refuse to extradite persons for crimes punishable by the death penalty. The words "extradition may be refused" in article 8 of the treaty, these nonmandatory words suggest that the Mexican Government could have returned Mr. Del Toro without delay.

Although the State of Florida, clearly for good reason, wished to seek the death penalty, the prosecutors in the case agreed to waive the death penalty at the Mexican Government's insistence. Now Mr. Del Toro still sits in Mexico, appealing the extradition ruling, while Sheila Bellush's family is grieving, deprived of the justice they truly deserve.

Mexico's insistence of not returning United States citizens to face the death penalty creates a safe haven for the worst criminal elements and clearly interferes with the timely extradition of these criminal suspects to our own Nation. I cannot understand the Mexican authorities' fastidiousness. In this case, they chose to refuse to return one of our own citizens to face justice for a horrific capital crime.

Mr. Speaker, let us send a message to the Mexican Government that Jose Luis Del Toro belongs before a jury of his peers under the laws of the State of Florida where he is alleged to have committed his crimes.

Accordingly, I urge my colleagues to join in strongly supporting this resolution.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I commend the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MILLER) and other members of the Florida Delegation for bringing this issue to our attention. The murder on November 7, 1997 was a brutal and unspeakable crime. We are certainly right to want to find a way to ease the suffering of the family of the victim.

While I have reservations about the approach taken by this resolution, which I will state in a moment, I do not plan to oppose the resolution.

Mexico is one of a number of countries that demands that criminals they extradite to the United States not be