

Operations and Human Rights, for his ongoing commitment to these issues and for his sponsorship of this bill.

I also want to thank our ranking member, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. HAMILTON) for his support of the measure.

As many of our colleagues know, under Communist rule, individual and communal property was brutally confiscated without any compensation. Religious communities were also severely affected, as were hospitals, schools, and orphanages that they operated. While many post-Communist nations are trying to address these problems by enacting property restitution laws, much still remains to be done.

Our Committee on International Relations recently conducted a hearing at which we heard about the successes and frustrations from Under Secretary of State Stewart Eisenstat.

H.Res. 562 welcomes the efforts of countries in Central and Eastern Europe to address the question of expropriated properties but urges countries which have not already done so to return these properties to their rightful owners. The bill also urges countries to pay compensation when the actual return of property is not possible.

H.Res. 562 specifically mentions Croatia, the Czech Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania and Slovakia by calling on them to remove restrictions that limit restitution or compensation. This measure is also required to be transmitted to the President following its adoption and for his consideration.

It is important that countries involved in this issue understand their response is seen as a measure of their commitment to basic human rights, to justice and to the rule of law as one of several standards by which our Nation assesses its bilateral relationship with them. Those who perished, those who survived and their descendants deserve nothing less.

Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, I urge adoption of H.Res. 562.

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

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on the resolution under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to my good friend, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MICA).

(Mr. MICA asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks, and include extraneous material.)

Mr. MICA. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor this afternoon in support of this resolution. I wanted to also com-

ment for the record about a particular concern that I have. My grandfather was a Slovak American and came from Slovakia. He came from a country that was dominated for a thousand years by other interests.

When I visited Slovakia last September, I visited some of their museums and their cultural heritage facilities and what stunned me is I found that many of the artifacts and cultural objects that were native to Slovakia were missing. I hope that when we talk about returning properties of people from former communist regimes that we can call on those who have expropriated cultural heritage objects from the Slovak Republic and native Slovakia to return them to their rightful owners.

Unfortunately, Slovakia was plundered under the various communist regimes and many of the artifacts and art and cultural objects disappeared.

In light of us passing this resolution, it would be my hope that we could do justice in also requesting that the Slovak people have returned to them things that are so precious to them. They had, again, years of domination by the communists. For many years, they had domination from communists in Prague and what is now the Czech Republic.

I also sent recently, October 10, a letter to His Excellency Vaclav Havel, the President of the Czech Republic, asking that they help expedite the return of some of these historic items from the Czech Republic.

I come to the floor in support of this effort to see that properties and other rightful objects are returned to their rightful owner; that we correct the injustices of the past, particularly under communist regimes.

I come to the floor also to congratulate the Slovak people on their recent elections, which will allow them with a new western leaning government, their rightful place in the community of free and independent nations. They have only been free since 1993. They gained their independence and now I hope with this movement by Congress today we can also have them retain their right title and ownership to properties that a country has been deprived of, a people have been deprived of, for many, many years under a communist totalitarian regime. I commend the authors of this legislation on both sides of the aisle.

Mr. Speaker, I include for the RECORD the letter of October 10.

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, October 10, 1998.

HIS EXCELLENCY, VACLAV HAVEL,
President of the Czech Republic,
The Embassy of the Czech Republic, Wash-
ington, DC.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: I am writing to request your assistance in securing the return to the Slovak Republic certain objects of art and cultural heritage that currently are in the care or possession and held with the authority of the Czech Republic.

With Slovakia's independence and status since 1993 in the community of free and recognized sovereign states, it is both proper

and legal that objects of art and national Slovak cultural heritage be returned to the Slovak Republic.

For generations, Slovakia and the Slovak people have been dominated and ruled by other people.

Now it is only fair and just that art, paintings, sculptures, antiquities and culturally significant artifacts native to Slovakia be returned to the Slovak people.

I seek your personal intervention and remedial action to correct this situation. Hopefully these objects can be returned through a cooperative effort. If not, it will be my intention as a Member of the United States Congress to seek redress by legislative action in the 106th Congress. In that regard, my action may include a Congressional Resolution relating to the matter and/or legislative and appropriations action disapproving of future economic, military and financial assistance to your country.

I believe this to be a very serious matter that should also be raised by the United States Ambassador to the United Nations and to the appropriate international organizations and tribunals.

Hopefully we can work together to correct this injustice, identify and return art and antiquities rightfully belonging to Slovakia and amicably resolve this matter.

Respectfully,

JOHN L. MICA,
Member of Congress.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, we have no further requests for time, and 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 resolution, H. Res. 562.

The question was taken.

Mr. HAMILTON. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 5, rule I, and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

CALLING FOR FREE AND TRANSPARENT ELECTIONS IN GABON

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 518) calling for free and transparent elections in Gabon, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 518

Whereas Gabon is a heavily forested and oil-rich country on central Africa's west coast;

Whereas Gabon gained independence from France in 1960;

Whereas the Government of Gabon is involved in ongoing efforts to mediate regional conflicts;

Whereas Gabon is scheduled to hold national elections in December 1998 for the purpose of electing a President;

Whereas Gabon was subject to single-party rule until 1990;

Whereas the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES) and the Africa America Institute (AAI) served as observers

during the organization of the 1993 Presidential and legislative elections in Gabon and found widespread electoral irregularities;

Whereas the Government of Gabon is a signatory to the "Paris Accords" of 1994, approved by national referendum in July 1995, which provides for a state of law guaranteeing basic individual freedoms and the organization of free and fair elections under a new independent national election commission;

Whereas the people of Gabon have demonstrated their support for the democratic process through the formation of numerous political parties since 1990 and their strong participation in prior elections; and

Whereas it is in the interest of the United States to promote political and economic freedom in Africa and throughout the world: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) recognizes and commends the Government of Gabon's ongoing efforts to resolve central African conflicts;

(2) recognizes and commends those Gabonese who have demonstrated their love for free and fair elections;

(3) commends the Gabonese Government for inviting IFES to perform a pre-election assessment study;

(4) calls on the Gabonese Government—

(A) to take further measures to help ensure a credible election and to ensure that the election commission remains independent and impartial; and

(B) to further welcome IFES, the National Democratic Institute, the International Republican Institute, or other appropriate international nongovernmental organizations to aid the organization and oversight of, the December 1998 Presidential election in Gabon, in an effort to ensure that these elections in Gabon are free and fair;

(5) urges the Government of Gabon to take all necessary and lawful steps toward conducting free and fair elections;

(6) calls on the international community to join the United States in offering their assistance toward conducting free and fair elections in Gabon;

(7) urges the United States Government to continue to provide support directly and through appropriate nongovernmental organizations to aid the organization of free and fair elections in Gabon; and

(8) urges the United States Government and the international community to continue to encourage the Government of Gabon to ensure a lasting and committed transition to democracy.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN) and the gentleman from Florida (Mr. HASTINGS) 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 the resolution under consideration.

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. Speaker, this resolution, very appropriately, calls for free and transparent elections in Gabon, the election

of which in 1993 was marred by serious irregularities according to the State Department's human rights report.

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The emergence of genuine democracy in Gabon would help stabilize the rest of Central Africa, a region which has suffered great instability in recent days. And I want to thank the gentleman from Florida (Mr. HASTINGS) for introducing this resolution and for working with the rest of the members of our Subcommittee on Africa in coming up with language that everyone can support.

In addition, the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE), chairman of our Subcommittee on Africa, has played an important role in bringing everyone together on this resolution, for which he deserves our thanks.

Accordingly, I urge my colleagues to support this worthy measure.

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

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I offer this resolution today to support and strengthen democracy and democratic forces in Gabon.

First, I would like to thank the gentleman from New York (Chairman GILMAN) and the gentleman from California (Chairman ROYCE) of the Subcommittee on Africa for expediting this measure and working with us to ensure that we could get this before the House before we exit today or tomorrow or whenever.

I would like to thank the distinguished gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE) because he has been conscientious in more ways than one; not just about Gabon, but about all of Africa and the concerns of the Committee on International Relations.

Mr. Speaker, Gabon is well positioned to move forward to a stable and democratic nation. With a per capita income that is three times that of most nations of sub-Saharan Africa, a relatively high literacy rate, and a billion dollar oil industry, Gabon possesses all the necessary components for true democracy. However, despite these positive attributes, Gabon's elections have not always been transparent because of poor organization and poor execution.

While I commend the Government of Gabon for its ongoing efforts to resolve conflicts in Central Africa, I personally would like to encourage that government to take further steps in ensuring that the December presidential election is credible and that the commission remains independent and impartial.

This resolution gives the people of Gabon a chance to participate in free and fair presidential elections in December. It also calls on the international community to join the United States Government in offering their assistance toward conducting free and fair elections in Gabon, and urges the

United States Government to continue to provide support, directly and through appropriate non-governmental organizations, toward free and fair elections in that nation.

Mr. Speaker, the Gabonese people have demonstrated their strong support for freedom and democracy through their participation in previous elections. Thus, I believe it is incumbent upon us as leaders of democracy to help the forces of freedom in Gabon institute true democracy.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this resolution.

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

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Florida (Mr. HASTINGS) for his eloquent support of this measure.

Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the distinguished gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE), chairman of our Subcommittee on Africa.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I want to lend my support to this resolution, and I want to commend the work of its author, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. HASTINGS) my subcommittee colleague, as well as the other members of the Subcommittee on Africa who have worked on it.

This is a balanced resolution that sends a loud and clear message that the United States cares about democracy in Gabon. This is a country with which we have growing commercial ties, and it says that we are prepared to support democracy there.

This resolution points out some of the achievements of the government's democratic transition, and it points out some of the shortcomings, calling for the U.S. to help improve these conditions.

Ultimately, though, democracy is the responsibility of the Gabonese people. The government and democratic opposition will have to continue their work together so that fair and free elections are held and so that democratic aspirations are met. This resolution says that we care about these aspirations and are willing to help.

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

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from California (Mr. CAMPBELL), a member of our Subcommittee on Africa.

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

Mr. Speaker, I wish to commend the work of the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE), our chairman, in bringing this to the floor, along with the gentleman from New York (Chairman GILMAN), and the work of the gentleman from Florida (Mr. HASTINGS), my good friend and colleague who authored this resolution and who brought this issue to our attention, and with whom I am honored to play a subordinate role, but still a partnership role.

The resolution is well worth the time and concern of the American people. The purpose of the resolution is to make the message clear to the people of Gabon that the United States stands with them. We do not stand with any particular outcome of the election; we stand with the democratic process so that the people of Gabon might be free to express their preference in the process.

Secondly, to our good friend and long-time ally, the people of France, we wish to encourage them to encourage the democratic outcome. I view France as having a tremendous potential to doing good in Africa.

All we can accomplish, to be realistic, is to let the world know that we care, we do not turn ourselves away from the peoples of Africa, particularly at times when they are attempting a democratic resolution to the problems that have surfaced since they have come out of the Cold War period.

Gabon's democratic election, which we anticipate coming up this December, will be viewed by us with great interest. Those of us who devote our attention to African matters in this body will have a much easier time of convincing our colleagues to assist the peoples of Africa if that election goes as fairly and fully democratically as possible.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from California (Mr. CAMPBELL) for his intensive and extensive support of democracy in Africa, his continuing support, and for his eloquent remarks in support of this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. BLUNT), a member of our Committee on International Relations.

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

Mr. Speaker, I want to first of all say that exactly what was said by the gentleman from California (Mr. CAMPBELL) is the goal here. It is not a specific result of the process, but it is the process.

And as the gentleman from Florida (Mr. HASTINGS) has advanced this resolution, it is a resolution that hopes to see in this country, and in other countries in Africa, what we have seen over so much of the world in the last decade.

This truly, Mr. Speaker, been an extraordinary decade for democracy. In the last debate we heard about the democracy in Slovakia. We could talk about democracy in country after country in Eastern Europe. We could certainly talk about an incredible change in South America and in Central America in the last decade as democracy has held sway time and time again.

We need to stand for that same process in Africa. We need to stand not in opposition to any result or in favor of any result, but in favor of democracy. We need to stand as a beacon, as we

have to so many other countries in the world, of support in their efforts to have the kind of freedom that is only possible with a true democratic process.

As the country of Gabon approaches what we hope will be a fair and free and open election in December, followed by what we hope will be the implementation of the results of that election, I just want to encourage my colleagues to support the resolution, and to thank the gentleman from New York (Chairman GILMAN) for all he has done in this Congress to encourage democracy all over the world, and to thank the gentleman from Florida (Mr. HASTINGS) for bringing this resolution forward.

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

Mr. Speaker, I just want to thank the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. BLUNT) for his extensive work on our Committee on International Relations, and for his continued interest in bringing democracy to countries throughout the world.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I merely wish to thank our cosponsors of this measure. The gentleman from California (Mr. CAMPBELL) has spoken, but he did extraordinary work in ensuring that we were able to expedite this resolution. I would like to mention the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PAYNE), the gentleman from California (Mr. DIXON), the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. CHABOT), the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. JACKSON), the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. SANFORD) and the gentlewoman from Georgia (Ms. MCKINNEY) and thank them for their assistance as well.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, this may be the last suspension bill that our committee will be bringing to the floor this year, and I wanted to take this opportunity to thank the leadership, our floor staffs, the cloakroom staffs, the Clerk's staff, especially in the Office of Legislative Operations, our stenographers and transcribers, and finally the parliamentarians for their many acts of assistance to our committee as we moved legislation during the past 2 years.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank the members of our committee, the staffs of the members, and the committee staff on both sides for their dedication and cooperation that we have had over the past 2 years.

Mr. SHAW. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H. Res. 518.

Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to travel to Gabon recently with the gentleman from Texas, Mr. ARCHER, and the gentleman from Tennessee, Mr. TANNER. While there, we met with President Bongo and learned first-hand of the changes that have been made over the past eight years. In 1990, responding to popular demands, President Bongo convened a

National Conference to institute major political reforms. A new constitution was approved by participants from over 70 political parties and organizations as the first step away from single-party rule. Also in that year, the first multi-party elections were held, and opposition parties won 45% of the 120 seats in the National Assembly. Since 1990, a firm foundation for Gabon's democracy has been laid.

I am pleased that the International Foundation for Electoral Systems has a team in Gabon as I speak, conducting a pre-election assessment of the presidential elections to be held in December. I wish to recognize the cooperation of the gentleman from Texas, Mr. ARCHER, the gentleman from Tennessee, Mr. TANNER, the gentleman from New York, Mr. GILMAN, the gentleman from California, Mr. ROYCE, and Dr. Susan Rice, Assistant Secretary of State for Africa, in obtaining funding for this assessment team.

While in Gabon, I also witnessed the struggle for conserving the scarce natural resources of the rainforest and its inhabitants. In a step toward conscientious stewardship of Gabon's natural resources, the first national park of Gabon was recently established as a reserve for orphaned young gorillas. President Bongo has made a public commitment toward responsible use of natural resources, including the establishment of guidelines for the appropriate harvesting of Gabon's oil resources for trade on the local and international market. It is evident that much progress has been made toward positive economic, ecological, and political development in Gabon.

President Omar Bongo is to be commended for his efforts to establish democracy in the tumultuous region of Central Africa. To this end, my recent experiences and discussions have impressed upon me the importance of a free, fair, and transparent presidential campaign and election to stabilize Gabon's fragile, new democracy.

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. SHIMKUS). 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. 518, as amended.

The question was taken.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 5 of rule I and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on the motion will be postponed.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

FURTHER MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A further message from the Senate by Mr. Lundregan, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate had passed with an amendment in which the concurrence of the House is requested, a bill of the House of the following title:

H.R. 2807. An act to amend the Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Act of 1994 to prohibit the sale, importation, and exportation