

fighters. Thousands of others were killed while serving in jails and labor camps or while attempting to flee the country. Asphyxiating central economic planning stifled the entrepreneurial spirit of the Czech people.

As revolutionary ideas swept across the continent in 1968, the flowers of the Prague Spring emerged from the cracks in the Iron Curtain. Alexander Dubcek's vision of "socialism with a human face" gained currency with the Czech population only to be crushed by Soviet tanks—sent by anxious leaders in Moscow.

When the people of Czechoslovakia marked the first anniversary of the Soviet crackdown in August 1969, it demonstrated that the resistance of that fatal Spring would not soon be forgotten. Nonetheless, resistance against the regime lost momentum for a number of years until the eighties when the dissident movement percolated once again in the churches and cafes of Czechoslovakian society.

The man who became the symbol of this movement would become one of the defining individuals of the last 20th century, Vaclav Havel. The famous playwright who mocked communist duplicity, conformity, and bureaucracy was jailed soon after he helped draft and distribute Charter 77, an anti-Communist manifesto originally signed by 242 people. Havel emerged as a dissident who trumpeted that "truth and love must prevail over lies and hatred."

Ten years ago this month in Czechoslovakia, the temperature of dissent reached the boiling point. Police brutally dispersed public rallies in Bratislava and Prague on November 16 and 17. Daily mass gatherings produced a national general strike on November 27 rallied by the motto "End of Governance for One Party and Free Elections." Forced to negotiate with this powerful opposition, the ruling leadership of Czechoslovakia yielded to the formation of the Government of National Understanding with Alexander Dubcek elected as Chairman of the National Parliament and Vaclav Havel as President of the Republic. In a remarkable month, Havel had gone from the theater stage to moving into Prague's Castle as president of a new Republic.

Just as few predicted the breakneck pace of Eastern Bloc dissolution after the fall of the Berlin Wall, few envisioned the "Velvet Divorce" between the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic in 1993. It was a tribute to the peoples of both sovereign nations that the split was non-violent, a sharp contrast to the violence which accompanied transition in a number of other post-communist societies in Europe.

I had the honor of sitting down with Vaclav Havel when I accompanied President Clinton to the NATO Madrid Summit in July of 1997 when the Alliance invited the Czech Republic, along with Hungary and Poland to apply for membership. We reflected on the changes that had transpired in this society, a subject which lends itself to further discussion on this tenth anniversary as well.

Inevitably, some of the idealism of those heady days of ten years ago has dissipated, as Czechs and Slovaks grapple with the day to day challenges of a democracy and a free market. After opting for separation, the Slovaks chose a repressive leader, Vladimir Meciar, who promptly took the fledgling nation on a u-turn away from democratic pluralism and economic reform.

Nonetheless, the Slovaks changed direction again and are back on a positive course. Relations between the neighboring Czechs and Slovaks have also markedly improved in recent months. In this sequence of events, I believe there are lessons to be learned. With freedom comes the ability to make good and bad choices—and bad decisions will be made time to time in any democracy. It is nonetheless eminently preferable to having decisions forced on a populace by a discredited, installed regime.

What the vibrant Czech and Slovak communities in the United States remind us each day is never to take our freedom for granted because it can be taken away or it can deteriorate into an unrecognizable state. They help us understand the pain that their friends, relatives, and brethren endured when they lost this gift. And they help us recall the remarkable achievement the Czech and Slovak people accomplished together during a remarkable month, one decade ago.

#### HONORING BRANDI DIAS

#### HON. LOIS CAPPS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, November 18, 1999*

Mrs. CAPPS. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to pay tribute to a very brave young woman, Brandi Dias. Ms. Dias suffers from acute myeloid leukemia and recently had a stem cell transplant, using her own marrow to fight the cancer. I am happy to say that she is doing well.

After her own experience with trying unsuccessfully to find a bone marrow donor match, Brandi became interested in attracting volunteers to the National Marrow Donor Program. The National Marrow Donor Program facilitates transplants from volunteers and unrelated donors for patients of all racial and socioeconomic backgrounds. Brandi has focused on attracting and retaining volunteers to participate in the NMDP Registry, where people can search for matching donors.

Believing that donors are more likely to remain committed to the program if they participate in a thorough education program prior to joining the NMDP Registry, Brandi submitted a proposal for a pilot program that will include two-hour seminars covering the process of becoming a bone marrow donor.

I am proud to say that Brandi has received word that her Bone Marrow Donor Pilot Program proposal has been funded. The funding will allow for a donor pilot program in San Luis Obispo County and for four donor drives beginning in January 2000. The goal of this pilot program is to encourage and educate the public about the need for bone marrow donors and to assist in retaining donors on the registry.

And so I salute Brandi Dias today. She has shown courage in her fight against leukemia and transformed this experience into community activism that will benefit patients across San Luis Obispo County. I am proud to represent her in Congress.

IN RECOGNITION OF A VISIT BY A RUSSIAN DELEGATION TO THE THIRD CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT OF WISCONSIN

#### HON. RON KIND

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, November 18, 1999*

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, in recent weeks I have read many news articles and heard many interviews which paint a very grim picture of the political and financial situation in Russia. I have seen economic analysts and political pundits shake their heads and ask in very solemn tones, "Who lost Russia?" If I were to believe the most outspoken American leaders and experts, it seems we should just give up on democratic development in Russia and allow the worst-case scenarios to become self-fulfilling prophecies.

But while gloomy forecasts cloud this country's media-based perception of Russia's future, I have good reason to hold out hope for a prosperous Russia and for a strong U.S.-Russian relationship. In September, I hosted a delegation of Russians through the auspices of the Library of Congress and the American Foreign Policy Council. After spending an exceptionally enlightening week with these individuals, I believe the real question facing the West is not who lost Russia—as if it were the West's to lose—or even whether Russia is lost. Rather, the question is how can we help enterprising and industrious Russians, like those I met, work to rebuild their nation.

The delegation that spent a week in my Congressional district in western Wisconsin came from different regions of Russia and different walks of life. As politicians, scientists and financial advisors, these men and women represented their nation well. They looked around a typical Wisconsin dairy farm, walked in a small town parade, toured a state university campus and strolled along the banks of the Mississippi River. All the while they shared with me, with my constituents and with each other, their thoughts about their homeland, its future, and the future of relations between our countries. I was struck by the energy and optimism of these individuals, and by their sincere desire to see their fledgling democracy flourish.

Mr. Sergey Alksandrovich Klimov is the deputy head of the Votorynets district administration in Nizhney-Novgorod Oblast. Ms. Irina Lovovna Osokina is a deputy of the Moscow City Duma. Mr. Nikolay Mikhaylovich Tarasov is the Mayor of Orsk in the Orenburgh Oblast and a member of the legislative assembly. Mr. Dmitry Valeriyevich Udalov is chairman of the board of the agricultural finance company Russkoye Pole, and deputy of the Saratov regional Duma. Each of these individuals has specific reasons for participating in the delegation to my district, and each had specific interests in comparing the institutions, business ventures and political processes of our two nations. But by the end of their stay, each grew to be friends with the others, as well as with me and my staff, and our shared goals for peace and prosperity outweighed the differences between our respective ways of life.

On their way home, the delegation stopped here in Washington. They were not only impressed by our magnificent capital city, but by the fact that the American people have such