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This was truly a tragedy. Whales were hunted almost to extinction in the late 1800s.

Mr. Speaker, we must not allow the clock to be turned back to past days of barbarism. Republicans and Democrats in this body must stand with the American people and stop this conspiracy against these magnificent creatures. We must not return to commercial whaling.

THE 85TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FOSSELLA). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. LOWEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. LOWEY. Mr. Speaker, today I rise in commemoration of the 85th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, a horrible period in our history that took the lives of 1.5 million Armenians and led to the exile of the Armenian nation from its historic homeland.

My colleagues and I join with the Armenian-American community, and with Armenians throughout the world, to remember one of the darkest periods in the history of humankind. We owe this commemoration to those who perished because of the senseless hatred of others, and we need this commemoration because it is the only way to prevent such events in the future.

We have already learned the lessons of forgetting. The Armenian Genocide, which began 15 years after the start of the twentieth century, was the first act of genocide this century, but it was far from the last. The indifference of the world to the slaughter of 1.5 Armenians laid the foundation for other acts of genocide, including the Holocaust, Stalin's purges, and, most recently, ethnic cleansing in Kosovo.

The lessons of the destruction that results when hatred is left unchecked have been too slowly learned. The world's indifference to the Armenian Genocide proved to Adolf Hitler that his plans to annihilate the Jewish people would encounter little opposition and would spur no global outcry. The post-Holocaust directive "zachor," remember—lest history repeat itself, came too late for 1.5 million Armenians and 6 million Jews. It came too late for millions of victims around the world.

Today we recall the Armenian Genocide and we mourn its victims. But we also renew our pledge to the Armenian nation to do everything we can to prevent further aggression, and we renew our commitment to ensuring that Armenians throughout the world can live free of threats to their existence and prosperity.

Unfortunately, we still have to work toward this simple goal. Azerbaijan continues to blockade Armenia and Nagorno-Karabagh, denying the Armenian people the food, medicine, and other humanitarian assistance they need to lead secure, prosperous lives. And as long as this immoral behavior continues, I pledge to join my colleagues in continuing to send the message to Azerbaijan that harming civilians is an unacceptable means for resolving disputes.

Mr. Speaker, after the Genocide, the Armenian people wiped away their tears and cried

out, "Let us always remember the atrocities that have taken the lives of our parents and our children and our neighbors."

As the Armenian-American author William Saroyan wrote, "Go ahead, destroy this race . . . Send them from their homes into the desert . . . Burn their homes and churches. Then see if they will not laugh again, see if they will not sing and pray again. For, when two of them meet anywhere in the world, see if they will not create a New Armenia."

I rise today to remember those cries, and to pay tribute to the resilience of the Armenian people, who have contributed so much to our world. Those who have perished deserve our commemoration, and they also deserve our pledge to ensure that such a horrific chapter in history is never repeated again.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. DIAZ-BALART) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DIAZ-BALART addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN COMMEMORATIVE COIN ACT OF 2000

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. LUCAS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. LUCAS of Oklahoma. Mr. Speaker, my home State of Oklahoma has a strong heritage in our Nation's Native American history and culture. In fact, the name "Oklahoma" means "Land of the Red People" in the Choctaw language. So nowhere else in this country is there more appreciation than in Oklahoma that a museum dedicated to preserving this legacy is being constructed in Washington, D.C.

The National Museum of the American Indian was established as an act of Congress in 1989 to serve as a permanent repository of Native American culture. The groundbreaking took place in September of 1999, and it is scheduled to open in the summer of 2002.

Because of the historic significance and importance of this museum to the people of Oklahoma, I am introducing a bill today that will commemorate its opening. The National Museum of the American Indian Commemorative Coin Act of 2000 will call for the minting of a special \$1 silver coin intended to raise funds for the museum and celebrate its completion.

As part of the highly respected Smithsonian institution, which is now the world's largest museum complex, the National Museum of the American Indian will collect, preserve, and exhibit Native American objects of artistic, historical, literary, anthropological, and scientific interest. Also important is that it will provide for Native American research and study programs.

The coin my bill proposes will be of proof quality and be minted only in the

year 2001. Sales of the coin could continue until the date that the stock is depleted. The coin would be of no net cost to the American taxpayer, and the proceeds from its sale will go towards funding the opening of the National Museum of the American Indian. The proceeds would also help supplement the museum's endowment and educational outreach funds.

Based on past sales of coins of this nature, we are likely perhaps to raise roughly in the range of \$3.5 million for the museum. The coin will be modeled after the original 5 cent buffalo nickel designed by James Earl Fraser and minted from 1913 to 1938, which portrays a profile representation of a Native American on the obverse, and an American buffalo, American bison, on the coin's reverse side.

Mr. Speaker, as an Oklahoman, I was proud to have led the effort in Congress to designate the Roger Mills County site of the November, 1868 Battle of the Washita, yes, some might more accurately describe it as a massacre, as a national historic site. This site in Western Oklahoma, where Lieutenant Colonel George Custer and the 7th U.S. cavalry attacked the Cheyenne Peace Chief Black Kettle's village.

Now I am pleased to introduce the National Museum of the American Indian Commemorative Coin Act of 2000. A like version of this bill is already making its way through the Senate, having been introduced there by United States Senator BEN NIGHTHORSE CAMPBELL of Colorado and Senator DANIEL INOUE of Hawaii.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my fellow colleagues in the House to take this opportunity to recognize the importance to our Nation of the National Museum of the American Indian by becoming a cosponsor of my bill.

ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mr. SWEENEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SWEENEY. Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to speak about one of the 20th century's early atrocities, the Armenian genocide. It is a subject that is very near and dear to my heart as my own grandfather was a witness to the bloodshed firsthand.

While the genocide began well before the turn of the past century, April 24 marks an important date that we as citizens and human beings need to remember. It was when 254 Armenian intellectuals were arrested by Turkish authorities in Istanbul and taken to the provinces of Ayash and Chankiri, where many of them were later massacred.

Throughout the genocide, Turkish authorities ordered the evacuations of Armenians out of villages in Turkish Armenia and Asia Minor. As the villages were evacuated, men were often shot immediately. Women and children were forced to walk limitless distances

to the south where, if they survived, many were raped and put into concentration camps. Prisoners were starved, beaten, and murdered by unmerciful guards.

This was not a case for everyone, though. Not everyone was sent to concentration camps. For example, many innocent people were put on ships and then thrown overboard into the Black Sea.

The atrocities of the Armenian genocide were still being carried out in 1921 when Kemalists were found abusing and starving prisoners to death. In total, approximately 1.5 million Armenians were killed in a 28-year period. This does not include the half million or more who were forced to leave their homes and flee to foreign countries.

Together with Armenians all over the world and people of conscience, I would like to honor those who lost their homes, their freedom, and their lives during this dark period.

Many survivors of the genocide came to the United States seeking a new beginning, my grandfather among them. The experiences of his childhood fueled his desire for freedom for his Armenian homeland in the First World War, so he returned there, where he was awarded two Russian Medals of Honor for bravery in the fight against fascism.

It is important that we not forget about these terrible atrocities, because as Winston Churchill said, those who do not learn from the past are destined to repeat it.

Since the atrocity, Armenia has taken great strides, achieving its independence over 8 years ago. Then it was a captive Nation struggling to preserve its centuries-old traditions and customs. Today the Republic of Armenia is an independent, freedom-loving Nation and a friend of the United States and to the democratic world.

Monday, April 24, will mark the 85th anniversary of one of the most gruesome human atrocities in the 20th century. Sadly, it was the systematic killing of 1.5 million Armenian men and women. Ironically, Mr. Speaker, it was none other than Adolph Hitler who began to immortalize the Armenian atrocities when he, questioning those who were questioning his own determination to commit his own atrocities and his own genocide, he said, After all, who will remember the Armenians?

As we do not ignore the occurrence of the Nazi Holocaust, we must not ignore the Armenian genocide. Many people across the world will concede this is a very tender and difficult event to discuss, but in order for us to discontinue the mistakes of the past we must never forget it happened, and we must never stop speaking out against such horrors.

As a strong and fervent supporter of the Republic of Armenia, I am alarmed that the Turkish government is still refusing to acknowledge what happened and instead is attempting to rewrite history. It is vital that we do not let political agendas get in the way of doing what is right.

Mr. Speaker, I call upon the Turkish government to accept complete accountability for the Armenian genocide. To heal the wounds of the past, the Turkish government must first recognize its responsibility for the actions of past leaders. Nothing we can do or say will bring back those who perished, but we can honor those who lost their homes, their freedom, their lives, by teaching future generations the lessons of this atrocity.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on the subject of my special order tonight, which is the Armenian genocide.

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

There was no objection.

THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today, as my colleagues and I do every year at this time, in a proud but solemn tradition to remember and pay tribute to the victims of one of history's worst crimes against humanity, the Armenian genocide of 1915 to 1923.

This evening my colleagues will be discussing various aspects of this tragedy, including what actually happened, how it affected the victims, the survivors and their descendants, how the perpetrators and their descendants have responded, the reaction of the United States and other major nations, and what lessons the Armenian genocide teaches us today.

Since we are constrained by time limitations, I will also be submitting for the RECORD some additional information.

Mr. Speaker, the Armenian genocide was the systematic extermination, the murder of 1.5 Armenian men, women, and children during the Ottoman Turkish empire. This is of the first genocide of the 20th century, but sadly, not the last. Sadder still, at the dawn of the 21st century we continue to see the phenomenon of genocide. Such is the danger of ignoring or forgetting the lessons of the Armenian genocide.

April 24 marks the 85th anniversary of the unleashing of the Armenian genocide. On that dark day in 1915, some 200 Armenian religious, political, and intellectual leaders from the Turkish capital of Constantinople, now Istanbul, were arrested and exiled in one fell swoop, silencing the leading representatives of the Armenian community in the Ottoman capital.

This was the beginning of the genocide. Over the years from 1915 to 1923, millions of men, women, and children

were deported, forced into slave labor, and tortured by the government of the Young Turk Committee, and 1.5 million of them were killed.

The deportations and killings finally ended with the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, although efforts to erase all traces of the Armenian presence in the area continued. To this day, the Republican of Turkey refuses to acknowledge the fact that this massive crime against humanity took place on soil under its control and in the name of Turkish nationalism.

Not only does Turkey deny that the genocide ever took place, it has mounted an aggressive effort to try to present an alternative and false version of history, using its extensive financial and lobbying resources in this country.

Recently the Turkish government signed a \$1.8 million contract for the lobbying services of three very prominent former members of this House to argue Turkey's case in the halls of power here in Washington. While the major focus of their efforts is trying to secure a \$4 billion attack helicopter sale, two of these lobbyists and former Congressmen, according to the April 8 edition of the National Journal, were recently here on Capitol Hill trying to persuade leaders of this House not to support legislation affirming U.S. recognition of the genocide.

Mr. Speaker, the sponsors of that legislation, House Resolution 398, the gentleman from California (Mr. RADANOVICH) and the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BONIOR), will also be speaking tonight. I want to praise them for taking the lead on this bipartisan initiative which currently has 38 cosponsors and which has obviously caused some concern within the Turkish government.

I regret to say that the United States still does not officially recognize the Armenian genocide. Bowing to strong pressure from Turkey, the U.S. State Department and American presidents of both parties have for more than 15 years shied away from referring to the tragic events of 1915 through 1923 by the word "genocide", thus minimizing and not accurately conveying what really happened beginning 85 years ago.

This legislation is an effort to address this shameful lapse in our own Nation's record as a champion of human rights and historical fact.

Mr. Speaker, the Armenian people are united in suffering and the spirit of remembrance with the Jewish people, who were, of course, also the victims of genocide in the 20th century. I wanted to cite a letter from Mrs. Rima Feller-Varzhapetyan, president of the Jewish community of Armenia.

In a letter to the Congress of the United States, which I will submit for the RECORD, Mrs. Varzhapetyan wrote, "Had the world recognized and condemned the genocide at the time, it is unlikely that the word Holocaust would have become known to the Jewish people."

She also states, "We believe that what happened to Armenians at the beginning of the century is not an issue