

bastion of Federal health care discrimination. Via Executive Order we have at last initiated parity coverage of treatment for mental illness for our federal employees and their families. Can we now do any less for our Medicare beneficiaries? I urge my colleagues to join with me in righting this wrong.

LITHUANIA COMMEMORATES HOLOCAUST IN MEMORIAL CONCERT AT D.C. JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER

**HON. TOM LANTOS**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, October 10, 2000*

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, a few days ago the Embassy of Lithuania here in Washington held a Memorial Concert honoring the victims of the Holocaust in Lithuania. The event here was held in connection with the government of Lithuania's designation of September 23 as a National Mourning Day for Holocaust Victims in Lithuania. That date was chosen, Mr. Speaker, because on September 23, 1943, all of the Jews remaining in the Vilnius ghetto were killed by the Nazi forces occupying Lithuania at that time.

Because of the press of Congressional business, I was not able to attend the Memorial Concert, but my wife Annette was there and made remarks in my behalf. I want to recognize Ambassador Stasys Sakalauskas for hosting this important event here in Washington to remember the Holocaust victims in Lithuania, and I want to acknowledge the effort of the Lithuanian government for establishing this national day of mourning for Holocaust victims. In Lithuania, 95% of the pre-war Jewish community of approximately 220,000 perished in the Holocaust. In fact, some say that no other nation lost a larger percentage of its Jewish population. Before World War II, Vilnius—"the Jerusalem of the North"—was an impressive cultural and intellectual center of Jewish life. After the war, almost all Jews were gone and everything was destroyed.

Mr. Speaker, my wife and I have been to Lithuania many times. Last January, we visited the beautiful forest at Panarai, where serenity and peace now stand in stark contrast to the unimagineable horrors that took place in that killing field during World War II. We also visited the KGB museum, where we laid a wreath at the memorial for the martyrs, not just as a protocol procedure or diplomatic gesture, but as a deeply felt tribute to the many men and women who gave their lives for freedom and independence. As Hungarian Holocaust survivors, we both have lived under Communist and Fascist governments, as well as democratic ones, so we both identify emotionally and personally with many of the triumphs and tragedies of Lithuania's national past.

Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to report to my colleagues that Lithuania has made significant progress since its independence a decade ago in remembering and making restitution for the horrors of the Holocaust. I welcome the many positive steps that the government of Lithuania has taken.

Mr. Speaker, at the Memorial Concert here in Washington D.C., just a few days ago, Ambassador Sakalauskas made particularly appropriate remarks. I ask that his statement be

place in the RECORD, and I urge my colleagues to give thoughtful attention to his comments and to the progress that Lithuania has made.

REMARKS AT MEMORIAL CONCERT AT THE D.C. JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER, SEPTEMBER 27, 2000

Ambassador Stasys Sakalauskas

Ladies and Gentlemen, first, I want to thank you all for joining us at this first joint event with the District of Columbia Jewish Community Center. I take this opportunity to express my deep appreciation to the leadership of the Jewish Community Center for co-sponsoring this event. We are gathered here today for a very special, meaningful and sad occasion—the 23rd of September 1943, when the Vilnius Ghetto was liquidated in Nazi-occupied Lithuania. In Lithuania, this day is a national day for mourning, and since 1993, the 23rd of September is marked as Lithuania's national day for the commemoration of victims of the Holocaust.

The absolute majority of the 220,000 strong pre-war Jewish community—colorful, flourishing, full of joy and sorrows—vanished in Nazi-occupied Lithuania. It is shameful that the hands of local collaborators were marked with the blood of innocent children, elderly women and men—people killed because they were Jews. No words are enough to express the pain of the immeasurable loss, and we understand that. At the same time we pay our highest respect to those citizens, who despite the threat of death to themselves and their families saved their Jewish neighbors.

Emerging 10 years ago from the Soviet and Nazi occupations, Lithuania has gone through an awakening of consciousness and conscience. We, individually, and as a people, made mistakes. But the fact we recognize our mistakes and try to do everything to correct them is encouraging and shows our resolve to do better. We are committed to continue the investigation and prosecution of persons suspected in collaboration with Nazi Germany and participation in the mass murders of innocent people.

One accused war criminal died yesterday. We did a lot to bring Aleksandras Lileikis to justice, even resorting to amending the Lithuanian criminal code. He was already on trial, but, unfortunately, we were late to give him a verdict. Today the Office of the Prosecutor General of Lithuania has expressed its regret that due to the defendant's death the course of justice was obstructed. At the same time the Prosecutor strongly pledged to continue the work of bringing to justice other alleged war criminals.

We in Lithuania are committed to examine our history. The Lithuanian historical commission has a mandate from His Excellency Valdas Adamkus, President of Lithuania, to investigate what happened in Lithuania almost 60 years ago and make it public no matter how painful it is. We have to come to terms with our past. We will continue the discussion that went on for the last 50 years in most European countries and in the United States, but was missing in Lithuania due to the Soviet occupation.

Our future depends on providing all our children the truth, and knowledge of the most horrible crimes committed in the 20th century. Therefore, we are committed to continue our efforts towards Holocaust education, remembrance and research and to implement to the fullest possible extent the National Holocaust Education program, as a vehicle of preventing injustice, discrimination and extremism.

We will stay alert and recognize early signs of extremism and we will continue to combat racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism. We are committed to secure for the

small remaining Lithuanian Jewish community all the possibilities to develop and cherish its ethnic culture, education, traditions. Lithuania must once again be built as an open society and a mature democracy where the people of different cultures and traditions would be always united by mutual sympathy, respect and understanding.

Next week Vilnius will host a major International Forum on Holocaust-era looted cultural assets. We see the Vilnius Forum as another important step in paying tribute to the lost Jewish community. We cannot re-write our past. What we can do is to put forth every effort to make sure that horrors like those are never forgotten and never happen again on the Earth.

Now, I would like to ask everyone to stand up and honor those who perished with a minute of silence.

HONORING THE HONORABLE IGNACIO "BUCK" CRUZ, THE MAYOR OF MERIZO

**HON. ROBERT A. UNDERWOOD**

OF GUAM

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, October 10, 2000*

Mr. UNDERWOOD. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this occasion to commend a municipal leader, a former marine, and a fellow educator. The Honorable Ignacio "Buck" Cruz, the mayor of Merizo, is a native son who has unselfishly contributed years of valuable service to his home village of Merizo and the island of Guam. Mayor Cruz has chosen to retire at the end of his term later this year.

The son of Ramon Padilla Cruz and Justa Santiago Cruz, Mayor Cruz was the youngest of six children. Born in the village of Merizo in 1927, Mayor Cruz had the experience of attending Japanese school during the island's occupation in World War II. He later attended the University of Guam where he majored in Psychology and Sociology. Prior to graduating with honors, Mayor Cruz was a model student who was listed in the Who's Who Among Students and Universities and Colleges in America.

Mayor Cruz worked as a teacher prior to enlisting in the United States Marine Corps in 1951. While in the Marine Corps, he enrolled in a number of professional military courses including the Staff Non-Commissioned Officer School and the Officers Basic Extension Course. Having been a Marine Corps Drill Instructor, Mayor Cruz also holds the distinction of attaining the rank of Master Gunnery Sergeant, the highest enlisted rank in the United States Marine Corps.

As mayor of the village of Merizo, he also served as Chairman of the Merizo Municipal Planning Council Foundation and as a Notary Public in and for the Territory of Guam. Mayor Cruz is a Knight of Columbus in the 4th Degree and, in the past, has served as a parochial school teacher. He has occupied leadership positions in a number of civic organizations. He served as president of the Guam Club of Hawaii, the Guam Society of Norfolk, and the Hafa Adai Club of Okinawa. In addition, he chaired the Board of Directors for the Guam Senior Citizens Division and the Guam Environmental Protection Agency as well as the Merizo Elementary School PTA, the Merizo Water Festival and the Boy Scouts Troop Committee of Merizo. Mayor Cruz has