

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

SPEECH BY HUNGARIAN PRIME MINISTER PETER MEDGYESSY MARKING THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE HUNGARIAN HOLOCAUST OPENING THE HUNGARIAN HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL AND DOCUMENTATION CENTER

HON. TOM LANTOS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 23, 2004

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I had the distinct honor to be in Hungary just a few weeks ago for the opening of the Holocaust Memorial and Documentation Center in Budapest, Hungary. As you know, this year marks the 60th Anniversary of the Nazi German occupation of Hungary and the Hungarian Holocaust. During these dark days sixty years ago, over half a million Hungarian Jews were sent to Nazi extermination camps.

By establishing an official Holocaust Memorial, the government of Hungary has finally acknowledged the responsibility of the Hungarian people for atrocities committed during the Hungarian Holocaust. It is my hope that this Memorial will teach the present and future generations of Hungarians that intolerance and hatred have no place in a free and open and democratic society.

Mr. Speaker, at the dedication of the Hungarian Holocaust Memorial and Documentation Center, many dignitaries and elected Hungarian officials gave moving and eloquent remarks, but none more so than the outstanding address of Hungary's current Prime Minister, Peter Medgyessy. The Prime Minister has been a critical voice in fostering democracy and respect for democratic principles in Hungary. His powerful and poignant remarks made at the opening of the memorial further confirmed his deep commitment to the values of political democracy.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that Prime Minister Medgyessy's speech at the dedication of the Holocaust Memorial in Budapest be placed in the RECORD, and I urge all of my colleagues to read and think about this excellent statement. I am certain they will find it as moving as I do.

ADDRESS BY PETER MEDGYESSY ON THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE HUNGARIAN HOLOCAUST

Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Friends, remembering one of the gravest tragedies of the twentieth century, I would like to share a harrowing story with you. A historian friend of mine showed me a postcard, a few days ago that was written by two Hungarian sisters to their family. The postcard was thrown out of a train at Tatabanya in December 1944. Gyongyi and Erzsi, writers of the postcard try to reassure their loved ones. They write that they are well. The things of their relatives, Lajos and Imre are safe, while the luggage of another relative, Judit did not arrive to the ghetto because the gates were closed. They close the letter by sending many kisses to the children and promising that they would bring presents back from Germany.

Gyongyi was transported to Ravensbruck; and she survived. Her sister, Erzsebet—transported away with her—perished.

Ladies and Gentleman, this national tragedy—the murder of six hundred thousand Hungarians of Jewish origin was a terrible, evil, inhumane crime. It happened here, it happened to us. It happened to people who used to have names, families and lives. We can only live with our joint past if we never forget them. Not just the event but also the people: Gyongyi and Erzsebet, Lajos, Imre and Judit.

We will not forget them because we miss them. We miss them all badly. We have lost them and we have also lost their children and grandchildren. We have lost their dreams, memories, their talents, success and failures. We can see their absence. And we know that we are less in number and less in power without them. This is why this place is so important. We can never give back those many everyday people killed in the Holocaust to their families. However, talking about the past frankly and credibly in their stead is our responsibility. The Holocaust Documentation Center stands here not just for ourselves but rather for them: for Gyongyi and Erzsi.

As the Prime Minister of this Republic I declare that this heinous crime was committed by Hungarians against Hungarians. There is no excuse or explanation. But there are the memories, the common bereavement and—hopefully—reconciliation after sixty years. Reconciliation but no forgetting.

Because bereavement, my friends, the mourning of the nation is always our common pain. This suffering is common in concentration camps, in Reesk and on the 23rd of October 1956. It is the major obligation of every generation after the Holocaust to remember and to make others remember: our children, grandchildren, and all of us. Forgetting is the ally of tyranny. Forgiveness and remembrance are the allies of freedom. We have a task; to search and tell the truth, to correct those who are wrong, and to call to accounts those who lie. And first of all we must bow our heads to those who suffered.

Never before have we Hungarians had so much confidence in our future. Within a matter of days we will become part of an even larger community. New perspectives open up to Hungary. The shaping of a new European, modern Hungarian republic starts now.

This is the time to confirm that we believe in the power of learning and teaching. We are not too lazy to learn from our own history and the example of other nations. We remember the past for the future. We must say also here and now and again for our joint future: never again!

This should be the place of eternal remembrance. Understanding our past is a joint responsibility and a difficult one. Let's bow our heads to all victims of the Holocaust.

TRIBUTE TO LIEUTENANT COLONEL GIFFREY L. COOPER

HON. HOWARD L. BERMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 23, 2004

Mr. BERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Lieutenant Colonel Geoffrey L.

Cooper, the Commanding Officer of the 2nd Battalion, 23rd Marines, for his extraordinary leadership and bravery in action against enemy forces. He has shown strength and courage throughout his many years of heroic service with the United States Marine Corps.

A native of Aurora, Illinois, Lt. Col. Geoffrey L. Cooper is married to June Madsen, and is the father of three daughters, Jennifer, Jessica, and Jacalyn. He graduated from the Marine Corps Recruit Depot in San Diego in November, 1973, and has since had a long and successful military career. In 1980, Lt. Col. Cooper was commissioned as Second Lieutenant upon his graduation from St. Cloud State University in Minnesota. In 1980, he was also assigned to 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment and served as an infantry platoon commander. He was appointed to Infantry Training School at Camp Pendleton, and served as Assistant Officer in Charge from 1983–1986. In 1986, he was assigned as Commanding Officer of Company B, 3rd Light Armored Vehicle Battalion.

Lt. Col. Cooper proved to be a strong leader as the Operations Officer for Headquarters Battalion, 3rd Marine Division, and as Commanding Officer, Headquarters Company, 4th Marine Regiment, Okinawa, Japan. After leaving active duty in 1992, he joined the Individual Mobilization Detachment, Tactical Training Evaluation Control Group (IMADET). He served as the head IMADET representative for more than 75 combined arms exercises. In 2003, he was again activated and assumed command of 2nd Battalion, 23rd Marine Regiment in support of Operation Noble Eagle at Camp Pendleton.

Lt. Col. Cooper, along with the entire 2nd Battalion, 23rd Marines, was activated on February 23, 2002, and was deployed in February 2003. Nine hundred members of this Marine Forces Reserve Unit, combined with the I Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF), conducted the longest series of synchronized combined arms and overland attacks in the history of the Marine Corps. The 800 kilometer advance, which began at the border between Kuwait and Iraq, experienced heavy combat with continued hostilities to the North of Baghdad. The combined combat force successfully destroyed nine Iraqi Divisions.

The battlefield swiftness of the I MEF during its campaign was unmatched by any force to date. The success of the operation was due to valiant efforts of men and women such as Lt. Col. Cooper. Lt. Col. Cooper's many accomplishments are indicated by his many decorations, which include: Navy Marine Corps Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, Navy Achievement Medal with gold star in lieu of second award, Combat Action Ribbon, and the Good Conduct Medal.

Mr. Speaker and distinguished colleagues, please join me in saluting Lt. Col. Cooper's exceptional leadership in the 2nd Battalion, 23rd Marine Regiment. Also, I ask you to join me in wishing future success to Lt. Col. Geoffrey L. Cooper at his new Command, the 1st Marine Division, Camp Pendleton.

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