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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 14, 1980

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DOLE URGES CLEMENCY FOR SOVIET JEWISH DISSIDENT SHCHARANSKY

WASHINGTON -- Senator Bob Dole (R.-Kansas) sent a letter today to Soviet President Leonid Brezhnev urging the release of imprisoned Jewish dissident Anatoly Shcharansky. Referring to a new report that Mr. Shcharansky, a leader in the Soviet human rights movement, had collapsed and been hospitalized while serving in a Siberian prison camp, Dole wrote:

"As Anatoly Shcharansky's health continues to deteriorate to the point that hospitalization has already been proven necessary, I strongly urge you to release Mr. Shcharansky and allow him to join his wife, Avital, in Israel.

"His health is deteriorating as a result of prison conditions. In a recent letter to his wife, Mr. Shcharansky indicated that he was admitted to a hospital in a remote Soviet labor camp after he collapsed while working. In view of Mr. Shcharansky's declining health, continued imprisonment could place him on the brink of death."

Dole, a member of the Commission of the Security and Cooperation of Europe, established to implement the Helsinki Accords on human rights, then reminded President Brezhnev of the Soviet Union's commitment to that treaty:

"In addition to the humanitarian considerations raised by the treatment of Mr. Shcharansky, the Soviet Union should bear in mind that violations of human rights treaty commitments at this critical period endanger world peace and have ramifications that go far beyond the internal affairs of a nation. Instead, they are a matter of universal interest.

"Mr. Shcharansky's only 'crime' was the advocacy of human rights. The Helsinki Accords, as you know, stress the sanctity of the recognition of human rights by all governments. Because the government of the Soviet Union signed the Helsinki Accords on behalf of its people, I believe it should make every effort to honor that agreement.

"Especially in light of the review conference to be held next month in Madrid, a granting of clemency to Mr. Shcharansky at this time would be a most positive action."

Senator Dole previously wrote numerous times to the Soviet leader when the ailing Shcharansky was arrested in 1977. These previous letters signed by Dole and colleagues in the U.S. Senate requested that President Brezhnev alleviate Shcharansky's harsh prison conditions, allow his mother the right to visit him, re-examine the evidence used in his trial and release him to join his wife in Israel.