

News from Senator

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DOLE GIVES QUALIFIED SUPPORT TO ROMANIAN MFN STATUS

WASHINGTON -- Senator Bob Dole (R.-Kan.) made the following statement today before the Finance Committee subcommittee on international trade on the extension of the Most Favored Nation status for Romania, Hungary and China:

"I have long been concerned with the emigration problems that have plagued those seeking exit from the socialist republic of Romania. As co-chairman of the Helsinki Commission and Chairman of the Finance Committee, I would like to address this issue as it relates to the hearing today on extension of the President's authority to waive Section 402 of the Trade Act of 1974.

"While I intend to support extension of the waiver authority and MFN treatment for Romania, I have serious reservations. Although the number of Romanians allowed to emigrate in 1980 was impressive, this fine record has slid during the first six months of 1981. Largely due to sharp increases in Romanian emigrants to the United States and the Federal Republic of Germany, the 1980 emigration figure was 16.8 thousand, compared to 10.4 thousand in 1979. While emigration to Israel in 1980 was up slightly over 1979, it has dropped in the first half of 1981; 308 approvals were granted as compared to 360 in the first half of 1980. Even though I am pleased with the overall Romanian emigration figures for this past year, I think the decline in approvals to Israel should be a matter of serious concern in this waiver hearing.

"I would like to point out that not only should we be concerned with numbers here, but also with long and obfuscating emigration application procedures, and with reports of harassment of those who apply for exit. Let me cite a couple of examples:

"Mr. Brigitte Alexandres, of Washington, D.C., has been trying for ten years to gain approval from Romanian authorities for her granddaughter, Diana Diplan, to visit her in the United States. While Diana has gone through all of the proper procedures for her application to exit, her case has been delayed and obfuscated for an inordinate number of years. Diana is now a young woman. When her application was first filed, she was an eight-year-old child.

"Ectarina and Decebal Dimitrescu and their children have been seeking to emigrate to Canada to join Ectarina's sister and brother-in-law, Eufrosina and Ioan Marcu, since 1979. Since their application to emigrate they have been subjected to various forms of harassment: they were given different answers each time they interviewed as a part of their application, their mail was withheld and their telephone calls were made as difficult as possible. Ectarina was fired from her job on November 1, 1980 -- eleven days before the opening of the Madrid Helsinki Conference. After having taught as a professor for 23 years, she was declared incapable of teaching because she had made a request to emigrate. Decebal and his son, both engineers, are frequently transferred from one city to another, with no explanation. These are only a couple of examples of the type of harassment that constantly goes on in Romania toward emigration applicants.

"I would like to cite a passage from some correspondence I recently received from Eufrosina Marcu, whom the Dimitrescus wish to join:"

The Romanian people are first-rate martyrs, some of them are content to lead a day-to-day existence, without dreams and without ideals, happy when they are able to obtain a bottle of milk or yogurt for the children, or a pound of meat, regardless of the price.

Others (through hope, or through despair) try to resist all these decisions dictated and it is then that misfortunes begin to rain down on them and their families.

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Romanian citizens have no way of being able to express their discontent in their own country with the system of government which is imposed on them, and to declare with their heads high that they have had enough of servitude and want to be free in their native land.

This is why some more courageous ones leave for the free world never to return, once they manage to obtain possession of a passport, thus winning some justice for themselves and forgetting for a few moments the despair they have left behind them, for the more courageous ones, a new life begins, with all its achievements and even its failures, but a life that is at last normal.

The Romanian government, in fact, has turned my family into hostages in their own country, as their only way of taking spiteful revenge against those of us who have chosen to live in freedom.

"It is for the sake of people like those mentioned above -- who pursue freedom above all else -- that I share with the committee my deepfelt concern about the prolonged application procedures and the harsh and frequent harassment they face. The standards of both Section 402 and the final act of the Helsinki Act must be observed.

"In addition to my reserved support of extension of MFN trade status to Romania, I support its extension to Hungary and China. Although the number of emigrants leaving Hungary has declined in recent years, this is largely due to the country's high standard of living and relaxed touring policies. While emigration practices from the People's Republic of China have been tight, restrictive immigration policies in Hong Kong and the United States have precipitated that.

"With my support of extension to the three countries in question, I wish to emphasize my sincere concern about the emigration practices of Romania. We cannot close our eyes to the confinement of those Romanians seeking the kind of freedom that we as Americans have come to take for granted."