

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

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THE WHITE HOUSE

PRESS CONFERENCE  
OF  
SENATOR ABRAHAM A. RIBICOFF  
OF CONNECTICUT  
SENATOR HENRY M. JACKSON  
OF WASHINGTON  
AND  
SENATOR JACOB K. JAVITS  
OF NEW YORK

THE BRIEFING ROOM

9:31 A.M. EDT

MR. TER HORST: Gentlemen, the President had breakfast this morning from 8 to 9:10 with the three Senators in the Residence. This is his first breakfast in the Residence. They obviously discussed many things, but they particularly concentrated on the trade bill, and I have here to talk to you the three Senators who had breakfast with the President, Senators Jackson, Javits and Ribicoff, and I will turn the meeting over to Senator Jackson.

SENATOR JACKSON: We had a most productive meeting with the President and Dr. Kissinger. I might just point out that the three of us have been meeting with Dr. Kissinger over a period now of several months in an effort to negotiate a solution in connection with the amendment to the trade bill, providing for free emigration from the Communist countries.

We want to express our appreciation to President Ford for directly participating in this matter. This is the first time that a President has been involved in these discussions. I think it is fair to say that we made very good progress.

We are hopeful that we will be able to resolve this matter in time for appropriate action by this Congress. We are deeply indebted to the direct interest of President Ford in connection with this long dispute that has existed between our Government and specifically and more particularly the Soviet Union.

I will ask my colleagues to also comment.

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SENATOR JAVITS: First, I would like to associate myself with everything Senator Jackson has said; second, to emphasize that the role of the President, in my judgment, will prove to be decisive in this matter in terms of our arriving at an agreement without in any way surrendering the fine objectives which Senator Jackson initiated, and which already have had such splendid results in terms of loosening up the situation respecting the Soviet Union.

We have had a relapse this year as against 1973, but we believe that conditions can be restored if the Russians really want a trade bill and really want to do some justice in this situation. We will soon find that out.

I would like to emphasize that my strong feeling from the breakfast was that my colleagues in the Senate -- and I certainly feel that way -- want a trade bill, and if it is humanly possible, we will come to an agreement, at the same time observing in conscience the wonderful objectives which Senator Jackson has set for the three of us.

SENATOR RIBICOFF: I am deeply impressed with President Ford's involvement in the Jackson amendment. I am confident that his personal involvement will make it possible to come to an understanding on the Jackson amendment without in any way going back and downgrading the objectives of the Jackson amendment.

I am confident that these discussions that have taken place now involving the President personally will succeed, and with their success a trade bill can be passed in this session of Congress.

SENATOR JACKSON: We will be glad to entertain any questions.

Q On what lines do you think the compromise on agreement might emerge, and specifically, sir, when you talk about the President's initiative, do you mean with the Senate or with the Russians, or both?

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SENATOR JACKSON: The President's initiative here runs to both. He met, I believe, with Mr. Dobrynin yesterday. The President's direct intervention in this matter, which is the new development -- this had not taken place before -- has given it new momentum, new movement. The issues that we are struggling with of course are basically harassment, for those who try to apply, and numbers, but we can report, all three of us, that the results this morning, I think represent the biggest movement thus far.

Q May I follow up, sir?

SENATOR JACKSON: Yes, sir.

Q Are you suggesting that the President is now about to make a new initiative with the Russians?

SENATOR JACKSON: The President has already, with the talks yesterday, undertaken new initiatives with the Russians on this specific point, and this goes to the heart of the trade bill. I think my colleagues would agree on that. Senator Ribicoff is on the Committee on Finance and it is a key to what happens on the trade bill, very candidly, and the significance of it, from the standpoint of what Congress will do on the trade bill, the real significance is in the area of human rights, and that is the thing we want to emphasize.

SENATOR RIBICOFF: My feeling is with the President's involvement we get off dead center on the Jackson amendment as far as the Russians are concerned and as far as the trade bill is concerned, and I am confident the objectives of the Jackson amendment will be achieved. The formula is in the process of being worked out. There are a lot of technicalities, this is rewriting of the law, but I do believe with the President's initiative and involvement, we will be able to solve this problem here in this country and with the Soviet Union.

Q Would you gentlemen describe in a little more detail what the President's initiative was? He apparently said something to Dobrynin yesterday.

SENATOR JACKSON: Obviously when you are in the area of negotiations, we cannot discuss the substance of those talks, otherwise we defeat the whole objective here of reaching an accord. But I would say that the significant development is the President's direct participation and as a result of that participation and with Mr. Dobrynin's return here, there has been movement. Mr. Dobrynin had not planned to come to Washington at this time, but he has made a special return trip early and he has addressed himself to this specific problem in our relations with the Soviet Union. That is the significance of it.

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Q You seem to be implying that the Russians may be willing to come across with something in agreement with your amendment. Is that correct?

SENATOR JACKSON: We are moving in the direction of an agreement, and there has been significant Russian movement. I think that is the best way to describe it.

SENATOR RIBICOFF: I would even add further that it is important for the Soviet Union to understand the meaning of the Jackson amendment and its role in any trade bill and their desire for MFN and credits.

My feeling is that they now understand this, and I am confident that there will be movement on the Soviet Union's part which will enable Senator Jackson, Senator Javits and myself and 76 cosponsors to achieve the objective and at the same time of achieving the objective that the Soviet Union can get MFN with certain safeguards.

Q You say you are moving in the direction of an agreement. Is that an agreement with the Russians or an agreement by you to modify or drop in some way your amendment?

SENATOR JACKSON: The amendment will not be dropped. It will be in the direction of granting the President certain discretion which we have to work out. This is a subject of negotiation, but the amendment per se will be in the bill, and we are exploring the possibility of how we will relate the understandings that will be worked out between the President and the Congress and the President, of course, in turn, has to have understanding with the Russians, but we don't negotiate directly with the Russians.

Q What does your amendment say then in its refinement?

SENATOR JACKSON: This is what we are negotiating and we are dealing with the basic target of granting to the President certain authority which he does not now have in the bill as it passed the House, but that would be, in turn, tied to the understanding that will be reached between the President and ourselves.

Q Has Dr. Kissinger changed his mind from earlier when he said that your amendment would be an interference in Russian internal affairs?

SENATOR JACKSON: We didn't discuss that today.

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Q Did you make any reference to that feeling of his?

SENATOR JAVITS: May I just say in talking about the form of the amendment, et cetera, we miss the forest for the trees. What we are seeking is substance; in other words, will people be able to get out of the Soviet Union who want to emigrate in adequate numbers, considering the number that want to get out without the harassment and sanctions that they have endured, and we are satisfied -- and my colleagues will correct me if I am wrong -- we are satisfied that this President will himself see that whatever is agreed to is performed, and there are lots of things he can do which are in and out of the Jackson amendment.

Q What you have said, to my mind, does not adapt to completely free movement.

SENATOR JACKSON: Look, let's make one thing very clear. The three of us have never insisted that the amendment would contemplate that those who want to leave all leave at once. That has not ever been the position. What we are spelling out is a rational, sensible approach of free movement that is realistic and achievable, and what we want is progress, and we want more than what is happening now.

They have cut back to 1000 a month, and that is going in the wrong direction. We are interested in human rights, we want to see movement in this area and at this stage of the negotiation, there is movement.

Q Did you discuss Cyprus and the possible expulsion of U.S. troops from Greece?

SENATOR JACKSON: Well, on the light side, the biggest problem I have had, frankly, was getting the big Cyprus bill through the Senate Interior Committee yesterday, and we got it through by one vote, and I don't envy any President dealing with anything called Cyprus. It is tough. We had a brief discussion about it, but we were just brought up to date.

Q Will there be something in writing between the United States and the Soviet government regarding the Jackson amendment, which will ensure, as you have said, the free movement of people?

SENATOR JACKSON: That will be a matter, of course, that the President will have to work out. There will be written exchanges between the President and the Congress.

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Q Will it be with the Russians?

SENATOR JACKSON: You know, that is up to the President, he is the one who will have to guarantee, and what arrangements he makes with the Russians that will be a matter for him. But he has assured us that whatever is worked out that he will see that the guarantees are there, period. And we will rely on his integrity for those assurances, and we have faith in that integrity.

Q Is it fair to say that the President's well-known desire to arrange compromises and so forth has prevailed upon you to back away a bit from the earliest forms of your amendment?

SENATOR JACKSON: No. The substance of the amendment will be there. We have faith in the President, in his ability to be prudent and to exercise that kind of judgment that will help achieve what we all have in mind, and I think it is fair to say that the President has a very, very strong sympathy for what we are seeking to do affirmatively.

SENATOR RIBICOFF: If I may add, there is no backing away. The objectives of the Jackson amendment, which is to move minorities out of the Soviet Union, will be achieved if the negotiations now going on, the President's involvement, succeed and I am confident that they will.

SENATOR JACKSON: May I say finally that Congressman Vanik and Congressman Mills will be kept advised by this, because, as you know, that amendment passed the House four to one, and we are working together as a team, and we are grateful for the spirit of Grand Rapids, which was the first breakfast --

Q Did he cook his own breakfast and what did you have?

SENATOR JACKSON: We had an unusual breakfast, scrambled eggs and orange juice, and we had a choice of English muffins and sweet rolls, bacon and sausages, and I had tea. (Laughter)

I don't know where that puts me, but I have very strong feelings about tea. I take a firm stand on tea. (Laughter)

Q Do you have any idea as to when you might get an answer from the Russians developing from this?

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SENATOR JACKSON: The President is in touch. Mr. Dobrynin made a special trip back. We are going to work over the weekend. We are making real progress.

Q Did he come back just to discuss the trade bill?

SENATOR JACKSON: He was not scheduled to be back here this month, and the trip was largely on this subject. He made a special trip back for that purpose.

THE PRESS: Thank you, gentlemen.

MORE (AT 9:47 A.M. EDT)