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SENATOR HENRY M. JACKSON

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STATEMENT BY SENATOR HENRY M. JACKSON

Announcing Agreement on Trade and Emigration  
October 18, 1974

It has been two years since I first offered an amendment to the trade bill conditioning eligibility for trade concessions on respect for the right to emigrate.

Today, near the end of a long and often difficult road, I am pleased, on behalf of Senator Javits, Senator Ribicoff and myself, to announce that an agreement has been reached on emigration from the Soviet Union that should do much to advance the cause of human rights -- to reaffirm on the part of the American people the commitment to individual liberty that has made this nation a symbol to men and women everywhere.

I believe that we have reached a fair and productive compromise. We have agreed upon an unprecedented measure to bring the blessings of liberty to those brave men and women who have asked only for the chance to find freedom in a new land. We have acted on behalf of those of all faiths, of all religions -- on behalf of artists and dancers, workers and students, the educated and the unskilled.

The agreement we have reached and which is contained in an exchange of letters between myself and the Secretary of State should signal an end by the USSR to punitive actions against persons wishing to emigrate. It provides that no unreasonable impediments will be placed in the way of persons wishing to emigrate. It stipulates that applications for emigration will be processed in order without discrimination on the basis of race, religion, national origin, professional status or place of residence. It promises sympathetic and expeditious processing of hardship cases.

It provides that persons imprisoned, who, prior to their imprisonment, expressed an interest in emigrating will be given prompt consideration for emigration upon their release; and it states that sympathetic consideration may be given to the early release of these unfortunate persons.

The agreement is based on, and the Secretary's letter conveys, the assumption that the rate of emigration from the USSR will begin to rise promptly from the 1973 level -- and that it will continue to rise to correspond to the number of applicants. We have agreed with President Ford that a "minimum standard of initial compliance" will be the issuance of 60,000 visas per annum. I wish to emphasize that this figure is not a quota. It is my judgment that,

if the agreement is implemented in good faith, the actual number will exceed 60,000 per annum since there is abundant evidence of a current backlog in excess of 130,000, and the agreement calls for the number to rise to correspond to the number of applicants.

The agreement provides that the Soviet leadership will give "sympathetic consideration and response" in the event that we have indications that these criteria and practices are not being applied.

In reaching this agreement, negotiated over the last several months, we have developed a set of guidelines appropriate for the purpose of determining whether eligibility for trade benefits extended to the USSR as a consequence of this agreement should be continued beyond an initial period of eighteen months. These understandings and interpretations, which have been accepted by the President as appropriate guidelines, are contained in my letter to the Secretary of State. The two letters taken together are a tribute to the perseverance of my fellow Senators and Congressmen and the spirit of cooperation on this issue that we have enjoyed from the first days of the Ford presidency.

When the trade bill reaches the floor of the Senate I will propose an amendment that will authorize the President to waive the restrictions in the Jackson Amendment in circumstances where doing so will substantially promote the objectives of the Jackson-Mills-Vanik Amendment.

This added authority will be renewable at the end of eighteen months if both Houses of Congress agree, by concurrent resolution. Thereafter the authority to further waive the restrictions of the Jackson Amendment can be renewed at one year intervals, provided that neither House of the Congress passes a resolution of disapproval.

I trust that this agreement will be implemented in all its parts, with a generosity of spirit and a full measure of good faith. Nothing would please me more than to join in cosponsoring the concurrent resolution that will be required if, 18 months from now, most-favored-nation treatment is to be continued. But I will not hesitate to oppose that resolution if there is a failure to comply with the understanding we have labored so long to achieve.

I share the joy with which news of this agreement will be greeted by so many who have waited so long. I hope and pray that we will one day look back on this agreement as an early step along the road of a genuine detente.