

ROMANIA DOES NOT DESERVE SPECIAL U.S. FAVORS

Congressional concern for promoting human rights evinced in its demands for economic sanctions against South Africa, in fairness, should also apply to Romania. The regime of Nicolae Ceausescu is one of the world's most repressive dictatorships. Yet Romania continues to be given special and generous treatment by the U.S.

Specifically, exports from Romania to the U.S. enjoy most-favored nation (MFN) status, which significantly reduces tariffs on them. To obtain this for Romania, the U.S. has had to waive the Jackson-Vanik Amendment of the 1974 Trade Act, which prohibits the use of government credits and MFN treatment to communist (or "nonmarket") countries unless they can demonstrate progress in human rights, particularly emigration. MFN is of great benefit to the Ceausescu regime, providing it with badly needed hard currency, credits, and greater legitimacy. At the same time, MFN increases the U.S. trade deficit: while total two-way trade between the U.S. and Romania increased from about \$450 million in 1976 to over \$1.21 billion in 1984, U.S. exports to Romania have held virtually steady from \$249 million in 1976 to \$246 million in 1984. According to U.S. Commerce Department official figures, in the first half of 1985, total U.S. imports from Romania amounted to \$460 million, while U.S. exports to Romania were only \$94.5 million. During the same period in 1984, the U.S. imported \$390.7 million worth of goods from Romania, but exported only \$157.7 million to Romania.

The purpose of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment is "to assure the continued dedication of the U.S. to fundamental human rights." Yet Romania has done little to promote such rights. At the very time the U.S. Senate was debating the wisdom of waiving the Amendment for Romania, the Romanian government arrested two Baptist ministers, Buni and Benjamin Cocar, while a Baptist lay leader, Constantin Sfatcu, was sentenced to seven years of hard labor for disseminating Bibles.

These events should surprise no one who has followed Romania's behavior for the past decade. According to former U.S. Ambassador to Romania David Funderburk, Romania has "outfoxed" the U.S. Many of those Romanians allowed to emigrate reportedly are criminals "dumped" on the U.S., agents instructed to infiltrate the emigre community, or dissidents forcibly exiled. Bona fide emigrants, by contrast, are encountering increased harassment.

Romania's human rights record is appalling. The regime persecutes religious believers; uses psychiatric hospitals for political purposes; censors almost everything; bans free labor unions; and literally pulverizes Bibles to turn them into toilet paper. And what is worse, Romania actively supports terrorism.

General Ion Mihai Pacepa, deputy director of the Romanian foreign intelligence service (the CIE) and personal advisor to President Ceausescu until his defection to the U.S. in 1978, told The Heritage Foundation that

...terrorism is a significant part of the Romanian government's foreign and domestic policy. Concerning its foreign terrorism, besides conducting assassination operations against expelled dissidents, political opponents in emigre organizations and defectors, Bucharest is secretly involved in international terrorism on the broader scale. A few examples are the paramilitary training schools run by Romania for members of the Western Communist Parties, who receive training in sabotage, diversion and guerrilla tactics; Romania's political and material support of the Palestine Liberation Organization and its terrorist detachments...and the secret cooperation of the Romanian government with the Libyan security forces.

In light of Romania's record, it is time for the U.S. government to abide by the Jackson-Vanik Amendment, which is the law of the land, and deny MFN status to the repressive Ceausescu regime. Bills have been introduced in Congress--S. 1492 by Senator Jesse Helms (R-NC) and H.R. 3057 by Congressman Philip M. Crane (R-IL)--to do just that. Congressman Crane told the Senate Subcommittee on International Trade of consistent reports from Romania "of emigration taxes, of religious persecution, and of the systematic repression of all those who criticize the government." The State Department, however, opposes the Helms and Crane efforts. This makes the State Department Ceausescu's accomplice. If the U.S. at last ended its special favors to Romania, the U.S. Congress and the Reagan Administration would be demonstrating that the Jackson-Vanik law is not a dead letter and that the U.S. genuinely cares about human rights, not just in South Africa but behind the Iron Curtain.

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For further information:

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