

Summer traditionally has been the season when Congress has scrutinized Romania's human rights record in connection with the annual Most-Favored-Nation (MFN) status review. Because Romania renounced this status in February of this year, no MFN hearings took place. Yet Romania was the subject of much congressional attention this summer.

On July 28, Representative Robert Dornan introduced H. Res. 505, condemning the systematic violation of internationally recognized human rights by the Government of Romania. He was joined by 60 co-sponsors. And on August 11, the Senate unanimously adopted Resolution 461, introduced by Commissioner Frank Lautenberg, condemning Romania for its human rights abuses, particularly its plan to raze villages. In introducing the resolution, Commissioner Lautenberg noted that this plan "is only one part of an overall pattern in which the Romanian Government continues to violate the human rights of all of its citizens . . ." He went on to point out, "It has a sad history of denying ethnic minorities, among them 2.5 million Hungarians, Germans, Serbs, Croats, Saxons, and Ukrainians, the right to preserve their unique cultural heritage and native language, and the right of their children to be educated in their native tongue."

Also on the House side, Chairman Steny Hoyer presented an update on human rights and human contacts-related develop-

ments in Romania since last summer. He pointed out that while legal Romanian emigration to the United States has declined over the past year, the flow of Romanian refugees fleeing into Hungary and other neighboring countries has turned into a flood.

Chairman Hoyer noted the Commission's continuing concern over prisoners of conscience and the state of religious and minority rights in Romania. President Ceausescu proclaimed two amnesties during the period in review, and one of them was particularly far-reaching. However, disturbing cases are still coming to light, including that of Baptist Nesto-Corneliu Popescu, who has been incarcerated in a psychiatric facility since October 1987 because of his outspoken criticism of Romanian policies. Popescu, his family and Western diplomats familiar with the case maintain that he is sane.

Hoyer pointed out that Romania's economic situation continues to deteriorate. While hunger and malnutrition have taken hold in the population, President Ceausescu is proceeding with a costly modernization campaign with the stated goal of placing urban and rural conditions on an even level. Unfortunately, that level will be exceedingly low.

Copies of a more detailed Commission update on human rights in Romania are available on request.

Commission Holds Briefing with Soviet Pentecostal Activists

Two Soviet Pentecostal emigration leaders, Boris Perchatkin and Vitaly Istomin, spoke on August 4 at a Helsinki Commission public briefing, chaired by Representative Chris Smith (R-NJ). During the session, the two religious activists presented their prepared statement and responded to numerous questions.

Both activists come from the devout Pentecostal community of Nakhodka, a Pacific coast city. Both men were leaders of its decade-long Pentecostal emigration campaign, and both were imprisoned for a total of 4 years for their religious and emigration activities. Perchatkin emigrated from the Soviet Union in July, while Istomin came to the United States in March.

Perchatkin and Istomin summed up the history of Soviet repression of the Nakhodka Pentecostal community: its members have been subjected to 80 trials, and have spent a total of 350 years in Soviet labor camps, where seven people died; four members were executed for their religious beliefs; and four sets of parents were forced by the authorities to place their children in orphanages. In addition, Leonid Litvinenko, Pavel Grigoryants, Nikolai Vins, and two other Pentecostals are still imprisoned because they refuse to request pardons.

Turning to the present situation, the activists noted that a record number of several thousand Soviet Pentecostals were allowed to emigrate to the West in 1988. Most Soviet Pentecostals emigrate on German or Israeli vyzovs. Only a few Pentecostals have managed to get out using American vyzovs which the Soviet authorities do not like to accept.

Under Soviet law, all religious organizations are required to register with the Soviet Government. The Pentecostals have been reluctant to do so; however, because registration requires the fulfillment of some conditions which violate their beliefs. Perchatkin and Istomin estimated that out of a total of 200,000 unregistered Pentecostals, some 70,000 seek to emigrate in order to escape religious persecution.

The Soviet state today still has an anti-religious ideology, as seen in the two anti-religious articles in the Criminal Code. Accordingly, for most Soviet Pentecostals, Gorbachev's reform program merely represents a brief breathing spell before the anti-religious drive is continued. In fact, they feel that even the current lull in repression is due only to Western pressure and publicity.

Perchatkin and Istomin have organized a Soviet Pentecostal emigration advocacy group in West Springfield, Massachusetts because they feel there is a need for a better support system for Soviet Pentecostals when they first arrive in the West.

