

Remarks at the Awards Presentation Ceremony for Emigration Assistance to Ethiopian Jews

June 4, 1991

I am just delighted to see all of you here in the Rose Garden to celebrate a wonderful thing and to honor four people of the many who participated in permitting people to go home. And I have had a chance to express my personal appreciation to Senator Boschwitz and this team of able American diplomats who made possible a humanitarian rescue mission of heroic proportions.

Their efforts set the stage for an airlift over the weekend of May 24th which brought freedom for one of history's most remarkable people, the Ethiopian Jews.

As civil war escalated in that country, we worried. This year it grew stronger, and prospects for the Falashas' departure to Israel were jeopardized. And their future security looked increasingly in question. And I know everybody out here that has talked to me about this and checked in with friends in the administration felt very strongly about that.

In April, as insurgent forces closed in on the capital, I called Rudy Boschwitz. I asked Senator Boschwitz to go to Addis Ababa urgently as a personal emissary of the President to seek to arrange the expedited departure of the Ethiopian Jews. Events since Senator Boschwitz and his team took their trip have unfolded with dazzling speed. And thanks to him and especially to his colleagues here and others who aren't with us today, arrangements were put in place between Israel and Ethiopia for one of the most bold humanitarian airlifts in history. It succeeded, in less than 24 hours, in carrying more than 14,000 Ethiopian Jews to new lives in Israel.

The London roundtable, chaired by the United States, resulted in a joint declaration by the Ethiopian combatants who have agreed to organize an all-parties conference to select a transitional government there. We view that decision as a commitment to the democratic process and hope that all Ethiopian political parties and groups in Ethiopia will take advantage of this opportunity to help build a pluralistic future

for their country.

As I say, for all of us here today and I think for all the Jews around the world, this was an event of emotional proportions. And I just want you to know that I share in that emotional feeling that something wonderful has happened.

So, in recognition of his extraordinary efforts to arrange for the evacuation of the Falashas at this crucial moment during this period of dramatic political change in Ethiopia, I am today awarding Senator Boschwitz the Presidential Citizen's Medal. And at the same time, I am presenting special awards for exceptional service to the three individuals who made up the Senator's courageous diplomatic team. And Rudy sings their praises to high heavens for the work they did: Irvin Hicks, a Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs; Robert Frasure, the Director of the African Affairs here in the White House at the National Security Council; and then one who's not with us today but is ably represented, Robert Houdek, our Charge d'Affaires of our Embassy in Addis, operating under fire, under great pressure, performing admirably. Mrs. Mary Houdek is accepting the award on behalf of her husband who is still in Ethiopia.

And in presenting these awards, I also want to make special mention of someone else, and I'm talking about Assistant Secretary Hank Cohen in his role in this remarkable odyssey. Operation Solomon represents a culmination for his leadership over the years on this question of the Ethiopian Jews. And all of this occurred at the same time when the Angola accords were signed, a negotiation in which, as we all know, Hank Cohen played an extraordinarily important role.

I salute the contribution which all of them have made to this tremendous success in removing the Ethiopian Jews from harm's way and reuniting them with their loved ones in Israel. And I also salute your

efforts to bring peace and democracy to that country, to Ethiopia, a troubled country with which we feel a special kinship in spite of the years of bad relations under the previous regime.

And now it's a privilege and a pleasure to get on with this small awards ceremony, but I think I speak for everybody in the audience when I say we do this with grateful hearts. And now I might ask my military aide, Major Boschwitz—[laughter]—Major Boschwitz. [Laughter] Sorry—Major Bonwit to—close, Dave—to read the first citation, if you would, sir.

Note: The President spoke at 3:19 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former Senator Rudy Boschwitz; Irvin Hicks, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs; Robert C. Frasure, National Security Council Director for African Affairs; Robert G. Houdek, Charge d'Affaires at the U.S. Embassy in Ethiopia, and his wife, Mary; Herman J. Cohen, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, and Major David F. Bonwit, Marine Corps Aide to the President.

Appointment of the 1991–1992 White House Fellows

June 4, 1991

The President today announced the appointments of the 1991–1992 White House fellows. This is the 27th class of fellows since the program was established in 1964. Sixteen fellows were chosen from nearly 800 applicants who were screened by 11 regional panels. The President's Commission on White House Fellowships, chaired by Ronna Romney, interviewed the 32 national finalists prior to recommending the 16 persons to the President. Their year of government service will begin September 1, 1991.

Fellows serve for 1 year as members of the White House staff or as special assistants to members of the Cabinet. In addition to the work assignments, the fellowship includes an education program that parallels and broadens the unique experience of working at the highest levels of the Federal Government. The program is open to U.S. citizens in the early stages of their careers and from all occupations and professions. Federal Government employees are not eligible, with the exception of career Armed Forces personnel. Leadership, character, intellectual and professional ability, and commitment to community and national service are the principal criteria employed in the selection of fellows.

Applications for the 1992–1993 program may be obtained by contacting the President's Commission on White House Fellow-

ships, 712 Jackson Place, NW., Washington, DC 20503.

The 1991–1992 White House fellows are:

Anderson, Betsy L., of New York, NY, is a corporate attorney associated with Davis, Polk & Wardwell in New York City. Ms. Anderson, a Rhodes scholar, received a B.A. degree in jurisprudence from Oxford University in 1982 and a J.D. degree from the Yale Law School in 1984. Following graduation from Yale, she served for 2 years as a law clerk to the Honorable Charles S. Haight, Jr., U.S. District Judge for the Southern District of New York. Ms. Anderson was born October 5, 1956, in Phelps, WI.

Broz, Joseph S., of Evergreen, CO, a theoretical physicist, received a bachelor's degree in physics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in Cambridge. He recently obtained a doctorate from the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich, Switzerland. While an undergraduate, he founded a consulting practice in energy research and development and in 1985 cofounded a joint U.S.-French public manufacturing company. Dr. Broz was born November 7, 1956, in Omaha, NE.

Caldwell, William B., IV, of Columbus, GA, serves as a major in the U.S. Army assigned to the 82d Airborne Division stationed at Fort Bragg, NC. He graduated from the U.S. Military Academy, West Point, NY, in 1976. Major Caldwell received a master of science degree in systems technology from the Naval Postgrad-