

Helms Scores Treatment of Solzhenitsyn

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Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) charged yesterday that President Ford declined to meet with dissident Russian author Alexander I. Solzhenitsyn because White House advisers warned such a meeting would offend the Soviet Union.

Helms, in a Senate speech, said Mr. Ford's advisers took the position, "Oh no, Mr. President, it might make the Russians mad at us," if he were to extend an invitation to the exiled Soviet writer to visit him at the White House.

The White House has maintained Mr. Ford could not see the Nobel Prize winner because of the President's "crowded schedule." But press secretary Ron Neesen said yesterday he "thinks it is fair to say" that a meeting between Mr. Ford and Solzhenitsyn would have foreign policy implications.

Helms said, "This country has come to a sad impasse when the United States of America must tremble in timidity and refuse to see a man dedicated to freedom."

"If the President has time for soccer players and actors, surely he will have time for a man who was ready to lay down his life in defense of freedom."

Solzhenitsyn delivered a speech to the AFL-CIO leadership in Washington last week that was highly critical of Soviet communism and America's detente policy with Russia.

Neesen maintained Mr. Ford's busy schedule prevented a White House invitation, but he added there are usually "a variety of reasons" for such decisions.

Without revealing its recommendations, Neesen also said the National Security Council, headed by Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger, had advised the President about seeing Solzhenitsyn.

"I regret the President himself did not make a personal decision on this," Helms said. "Certainly this is a slap in the face against all the freedom-loving people throughout the world."