

U.S., Soviets Discuss Human Rights, But Fail To Bridge Gap On Mideast

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Secretary of State George Shultz said that he and Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze disagreed sharply in two days of meetings on the structure of an international peace conference on the Middle East.

The United States views such a conference as ceremonial and leading to direct negotiations between the parties, Shultz told reporters after 12 hours of talks with Shevardnadze.

But he said the Soviets view a conference as having authority to impose a solution. Such a conception "is really sharply different from ours," Shultz said.

The current U.S. Middle East peace initiative contains a provision for an international peace conference to be convened prior to the first round of direct negotiations between Arab countries and Israel. Under the U.S. formula, the five members of the United Nations Security Council would chair the conference, which could not impose solutions.

Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir opposes both an international peace conference that could impose solutions, as well as a purely ceremonial one, while Foreign Minister Shimon Peres supports a ceremonial conference, as contained in the U.S. plan.

Shamir said last week in Washington that Shultz had convinced him last fall to agree to an international conference chaired by the two superpowers, and said he would be willing to go to Moscow. But such a conference could not impose solutions.

Jordan reportedly rejected that idea, insisting on wider international involvement.

Shultz did not say how Soviet rejection of the international peace conference provision affects the vitality of his initiative, but said he would

return to the Middle East if there was "even a remote chance of being constructive. I don't have to have a high probability" of success, he added.

Asher Naim, information minister at the Israeli Embassy here, said at the National Press Club that Shultz would return to the region within two weeks.

On human rights, Shultz said that topic "as always" was first on the agenda at his meeting with Shevardnadze, and was the principle subject at Shevardnadze's meeting with President Reagan. During that meeting, Reagan announced that a summit will be held in Moscow May 29 to June 2.

A new forum for discussing human rights was initiated recently. From now on, in addition to the usual human rights discussions at high-level U.S.-Soviet meetings, a special "round-table" will be convened.

Shultz said that in his talks with Shevardnadze, he noted that the Soviet Union has permitted an increase in German and Armenian ethnic emigration, "but at the same time we expressed our concern that Jewish emigration seems to have reached a plateau."

He said Shevardnadze called for improvement in U.S. human rights policies. He said that racial discrimination still exists and that capital punishment for minors should be eliminated.

Shevardnadze, speaking through a translator at a news conference at the Soviet Embassy, termed the human rights discussions "increasingly constructive" and said "we have agreed that we should just continue an extremely critical manner of conversation on these matters, that we should abandon this accusatory and denouncing matter of talk on these questions."

He said the Politburo increasingly has been approving "legislation in the sphere of human rights and meeting the spiritual and material demands of people."

JDC's "Operation Passover": Matza And Wine To Every Jew

This Passover, when Jews in communities around the world gather to raise the Passover plate and recite the ancient lines "This is the bread of affliction," these words will carry a special message.

Over the past few months, The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) has been engaged in a world wide effort to distribute matza and other Passover goods needed to conduct the traditional "Seder." Matza, matza meal, wine, soups, oil, spices -- all kosher for Pesach -- were purchased and shipped to Jewish communities in need as part of the annual JDC Operation Passover.

Heinz Eppler, President of JDC, says: "We are proud of this effort. Our Operation Passover will make certain that Jews can celebrate a kosher Passover in their communities, whether it is a private home in India, a community center in Hungary, a village in Ethiopia or a small community gathering in Portugal. Even the small Jewish community of Egypt, where the very events related in the Haggadah took place, received a JDC shipment," says Eppler.

This year, JDC has distributed more than 200,000 pounds of matzot baked for Pesach under strict Rabbinical supervision, approximately 30,000 pounds of matza meal, wine, jam, gefilte fish and other Passover foods.

On announcing the completion of "Operation Passover," Heinz Eppler pointed out that "it is a very special holiday in the Jewish calendar; it marks the event that made the Jews a nation - and celebrates the bonds that unite us all as one people."

NEW YORK (JTA) — Eight Orthodox organizations have formed the Orthodox Jewish Political Coalition, which will travel to Washington April 19-20 to advocate their cause before Congress, the State Department and the White House.

1988 JEWISH GRADUATES

(High School, University or Post-Graduate-January or June)

To be included in the special "Jewish Graduates" section in a June issue of the *Israelite*, please fill out the form below and mail (by May 5th) to Faye Steinberg, c/o Jewish Federation, 1030 East Twain Avenue, Las Vegas, Nevada 89109. All graduates-high school, university and post-graduate-are encouraged to participate in this yearly endeavor.

Please send the basic information in by May 5th. Any last-minute honors, awards or other information can be inserted until May 19th. If you have any questions, call Faye at 735-3881.

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