

Q. Yes. Is that what normalization means?

Secretary Vance: Yes, that is what it means ultimately.

Middle East Situation

Q. I think we had best go to the Middle East because your time is running out.

Secretary Vance: Yes, I am running out of time.

Q. And we couldn't have a session without the Middle East.

Secretary Vance: Sure.

Q. Okay, we might as well go right to the heart of it. Must there be a Palestinian state for there to be peace in the Middle East? Bluntly, but—

Secretary Vance: That is up to the parties to decide. I think it is necessary if one is going to achieve a settlement to recognize the legitimate requirements of the Palestinian people. And I have said this many times before.

Q. Well, do their legitimate interests include nationhood?

Secretary Vance: Well, that is up to them to decide how that might be done.

Q. Excuse me, when you say "them," you mean the parties or do you mean the Palestinians?

Secretary Vance: The parties.

Q. Do you still look for a resumption—do you hope for a resumption of the Middle East Peace Conference some time?

Secretary Vance: Yes. My view is that it is important to have a resumption of a Geneva conference in 1977.

I think, as I have said, that despite the difficulties which exist, the situation is more— is improved from what it was nine months or a year ago and that there are opportunities to make progress this year.

Let me say, further, that I think it is terribly important that progress be made this

year, because if progress is not made this year, then, as I see it, there is danger that other factors may arise which may destroy the more favorable conditions which currently exist.

Department Comments on Subject of Human Rights in Czechoslovakia

Following is a statement read to news correspondents on January 26 by Frederick Z. Brown, Director, Office of Press Relations.

I would like to make a brief statement on the subject of human rights in Czechoslovakia.

Some 300 individuals in that country have petitioned the government to guarantee the rights accorded them by the Czechoslovak Constitution, the international covenants on civil and political and on economic, social, and cultural rights, and by the Helsinki Final Act.¹ We have noted that the signers of Charter 77 explicitly state that it is not a document of political opposition. Some of the signers have reportedly been detained or harassed.

As you know, the Helsinki Final Act provides that:

In the field of human rights and fundamental freedoms, the participating States will act in conformity with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. They will also fulfill their obligations as set forth in the international declarations and agreements in this field, including inter alia the International Covenants on Human Rights, by which they may be bound.

All signatories of the Helsinki Final Act are pledged to promote, respect, and observe human rights and fundamental freedoms for all. We must strongly deplore the violation of such rights and freedoms wherever they occur.

¹ For text of the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, signed at Helsinki on Aug. 1, 1975, see BULLETIN of Sept. 1, 1975, p. 323.