

On one other issue of concern to you, I know, that of the plight of Jews in the Soviet Union, I wish to tell you that Mr. Shamir and I exchanged views on this matter this morning. We agreed on the gravity of the situation and the need to use every available avenue to urge the Soviet Union to permit the emigration of Jews who wish to leave that country. In that context, I referred to the Experts Meeting on Human Rights, as part of the continuing process of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, to be held in Ottawa starting on May 7. This will be the first CSCE meeting exclusively devoted to human rights, and the first held in North America.

With respect to the situation in the Middle East you will be aware of the many developments in that region which all of us who desire peace are watching with great interest. Mr. Shamir and I talked of these issues and if there was not always complete agreement between us we achieved a good understanding of each others views. Canadian government policy has been and remains to support all constructive efforts to move from confrontation to negotiation of regional issues. Canadians welcome Israel's announced intentions to withdraw completely its forces from Lebanon. We hope that Stage III of the planned withdrawal will receive Cabinet support and be implemented.

I reiterated the earnest desire of the Canadian government, despite our modest influence on events in that part of the world, to contribute in any way possible to the search for a lasting peaceful settlement which, as I said at the General Assembly last September, must be based on the legitimate rights of both sides: Israel's to secure and recognized boundaries and the Palestinians right to a homeland within a clearly defined territory, the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The importance of the parties to the dispute exploring any possibilities that might emerge for promoting a negotiated settlement cannot be minimized and, in this respect, I have been heartened by the developments of the last few weeks.

A settlement to the Iran-Iraq war, as evidenced by the recent renewed fighting, remains elusive. In this dismal situation, we have been encouraged by the initiatives of the UN Secretary-General Pérez de Cuéllar, and I was able to tell him so directly last week, in urging both sides to respect international humanitarian law, particularly with respect to the applicability of the Geneva Conventions to this conflict. We have strongly supported him in his efforts and we hope that the recent report of the mission of inquiry to the region will clarify the situation with respect to the treatment of prisoners of war and the adherence to international legal conventions. The Secretary-General's efforts deserve and will continue to have our strong support.