

Two steps back

Setbacks plague Middle East peace

President Bush said Thursday that the world was on "the brink of a historic breakthrough" that could lead to a Middle East peace conference.

But if past headlines are any indication, the world is no closer to Middle East peace today than it ever has been.

Since the defeat of Iraqi forces that invaded Kuwait, talk of a Middle East peace conference has drifted on and off the front pages of newspapers around the world.

Each story tells of new breakthroughs to bring negotiators closer to the bargaining table. Or of new setbacks to push them further away.

A peace conference sounds simple enough. Leaders of the quarrelling Middle East states would meet to talk out their differences. The rest of the world would wait with halted breath for a happy ending.

But for Muslims, Jews and Christians, for Palestinians, Israelis, Arabs, Americans and others, nothing is so simple.

Each player in the possible peace conference brings along a history's worth of conflict with other players. Each conflict requires the settlement of grievances that have festered at least for decades.

Ironing out the differences will be no easy chore, especially with new wrinkles developing daily.

Last week, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir announced plans to move forward with building settlements for Jewish Russian immigrants in the occupied territories.

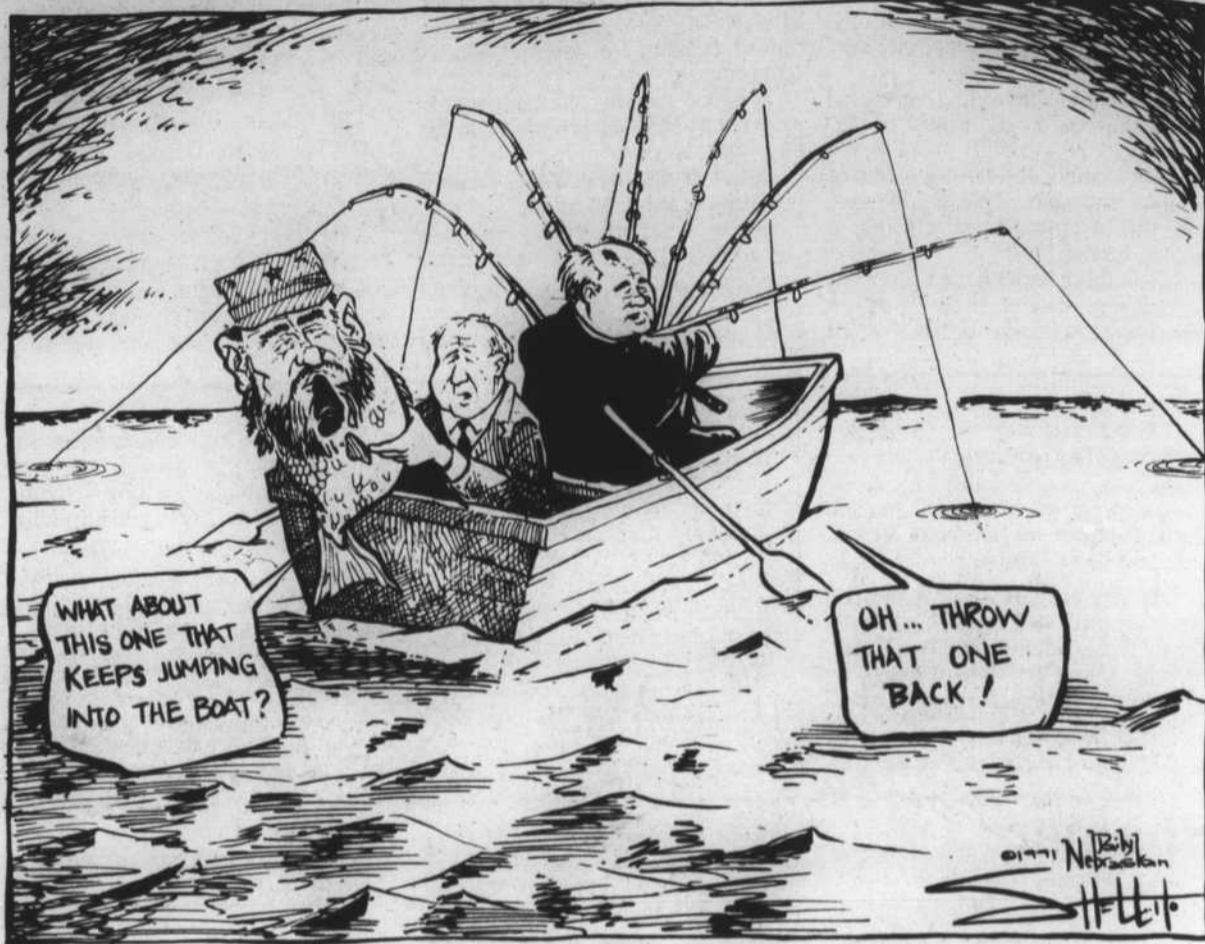
Thursday, Bush countered with a veto threat to delay action on an Israeli request for \$10 billion in loans to move forward with immigrant housing developments. Shamir responded by saying the United States was morally obligated to provide the loans.

This week also saw Israel release Palestinian prisoners, a move that seemed to be a gesture of truce.

But Palestinians said Thursday that the gesture is too small. One step forward. Two steps back.

Bush may believe the world is teetering on the brink of resolving the crisis in the Middle East, but it will take more than threats and hostage peddling to tip the scales toward peace.

-J.P.



CHRIS POTTER

U.S. leading world, not nation

Three years of successful foreign policy and lucky happenstance have wrenched the United States from Cold War stalemate and thrust it into a period of indisputable world leadership.

But a nation's world leadership entails a double burden. One burden is to lead the world. The other is to lead the nation. President Bush and Congress, undeniably successful in foreign policy, have failed to provide solutions to the most pressing concerns of the people right here in Downhome, USA.

This is not to take away from the role the United States played in some of the most remarkable events in the 20th century. First came the anti-Communist revolutions in Eastern Europe. Then came the decisive U.S. response to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait despite the dithering of other nations.

Now comes the most important of all recent foreign events, the political and economic collapse of the Soviet Union. The Soviet collapse leaves the United States as the sole heir to world power. As one seasoned observer put it, "the center of world power is the unchallenged superpower, the United States."

Before gloating over world paramouncy, however, Americans should examine the state of affairs in their own country. They should also examine the domestic costs of sustaining that paramouncy.

After all, nationalism and economic collapse, not U.S. foreign policy, led to the failure of communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. And our own economic crisis forced us to depend largely on other countries for the cash to carry out Desert Storm.

Democrats have seized on President Bush's lack of a serious domes-



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tic policy as their main campaign issue. But the fact is that the predominantly Democratic Congress, too, has failed to provide comprehensive and long-term solutions to domestic woes. Obsessed with re-election, lawmakers have largely abdicated their responsibilities to the president.

Even a brief listing of pressing domestic issues, each calling for decisive leadership, would crowd the page. A partial list would include the environment, the national deficit, the recession, AIDS, Social Security, affirmative action, abortion, the Savings and Loan bail out, the BCCI scandal, poverty, education, drugs, the legal litigation explosion, NASA's troubles, gang violence, health care, crime and racial conflict.

On virtually every one of these issues, Bush and Congress have taken a laissez faire attitude when many actually require a program on the order of FDR's New Deal or LBJ's Great Society.

Instead of creating such programs, Congress and the president have resorted to what amounts to little more

than cheerleading. Bush proclaims that he is the environment president, the education president and the crime president, as if such proclamations alone will resolve these issues. His "Thousand Points of Light" volunteer program is noble in conception but sadly insufficient in execution.

Behind their failure to create the massive governmental programs necessary to address domestic issues is a fairly obvious reason: They cost taxpayer money. Large government programs tend to produce enormously inefficient bureaucracies, black holes into which money pours with little visible result.

But the new world order, one in which the risk of global superpower warfare is virtually nil, allows the United States a solution to scarce funds. One of the massively inefficient bureaucracies currently in place can be reduced radically. Congress and the president must rechannel money from the defense department toward new domestic programs.

How many families mired in poverty could be fed for the cost of one defense department toilet seat? How many Americans could receive adequate health care for the cost of one defense department airplane? How many endangered species could be saved for the cost of one defense department tank?

A nation's international leadership ultimately depends on its domestic strength. The Soviet Union recently has given dramatic proof of that truth. If the United States is to sustain its newly acquired international role, it must address domestic problems with the same decisive and immediate action with which it addresses foreign problems.

Potter is a senior physics, philosophy, history and math major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

Reader applauds column, supports unpopular opinion

I would like to applaud Chuck Green for his tell-it-like-it-is column ("Double standards need burial," DN, Sept. 11, 1991) on double standards. I am not a white male, but I am fully aware of the abundance of reverse prejudice in our society. The "only white males can be sexist, racist, etc." attitude is tiring and really needs to be put to rest. People need to lighten up and not be so quick themselves to throw around labels such as "prejudiced" and "sexist" based on someone's skin color or gender. They are being just as sexist and prejudiced themselves by doing so, as Green has pointed out.

I often feel uncomfortable about having white skin and being somewhat conservative because people will automatically assume that I am racist or prejudiced. This is not right. I do not feel that there is any justification for these automatic judgments other than that they are the socially acceptable attitude to have right now.

Green's opinion is definitely not a popular one, nor is it very trendy. For that reason, he has my respect and, I'm sure, that of many others.

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Old American perspective changing for the better

It is interesting to note the number of cynics there are in the world today.

The situation with the Soviet Union is a perfect example. Last Thursday, columnist Paul Domeier told us that we shouldn't "get swept up in the moment" and "lose our perspective."

For the last 40 years, the perspective that Americans have been living with could keep the most negative cynics on Cloud 9 permanently. The perspective has been that the Soviet Union is an evil monarchy cloaked in communism, that it is hell-bent on keeping itself afloat and would be willing to destroy the world to do so.

For the first time in a long time, the skeptics are being proven wrong. The American people aren't stupid. They

realize the reasons for all the changes in the Soviet Union. We aren't excited because the Soviet Union is turning into another America. We are excited because, for the first time, we are being given the opportunity to grasp onto an identity of a people that is good, rather than evil or anything else; and that for the first time in 40 years, we are given the peace of mind in knowing that there may be a chance that someday we will be able to wake up and know that we don't have the potential of destroying the world and ourselves at any moment.

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Letters will be selected for publication on the basis of clarity, originality, timeliness and space available. The Daily Nebraskan retains the right to edit all material submitted.

Anonymous submissions will not be considered for publication. Letters should include the author's name, year in school, major and group affiliation, if any. Requests to withhold names will not be granted.

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EDITORIAL POLICY

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