

Joint U.S.-Soviet Statement on the Middle East (1 October 1977)

United States. Cong. Committee on Foreign Affairs, US House of Representatives. *Search for Peace in the Middle East Documents and Statements, 1967-1979*, Report Prepared for the Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East of the Committee on Foreign Affairs. Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1979. 159-60. Print.



Figure 2 (L) Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and USSR Minister of Foreign Affairs Andrei Gromyko (R), shown here c. 1978 (Public Domain, U.S.)

Before coming to office in January 1977, the Carter Administration sought to discontinue the step-by-step negotiations initiated by the Ford administration. Carter and his advisers were interested in creating a comprehensive Middle East peace. The Carter Administration believed that a reconvened Geneva Conference, first held in December 1973, was the most appropriate mechanism to bring all the parties together to achieve a comprehensive peace. Many efforts were made to entice Syrian, Jordanian, PLO or other Palestinian representation to join. In keeping with the desire to return to Geneva, the administration believed that it was imperative to have the Soviet Union play a role of co-convenor of a new conference. Naively, the Carter Administration believed that Moscow would be helpful in persuading both Palestinian and Syrian participation in a reconvened Geneva Conference. In late May, it secretly detailed two senior level State Department officials to draft a document that would form the basis for a U.S.-

Soviet understanding about Middle East peace. During its drafting the document was not shown to Egyptians or Israelis; therefore, when the statement was issued, both Cairo and Jerusalem were taken by surprise. In the secret meetings which Israeli and Egyptian officials had in Morocco two weeks prior to the issuance of this statement, a meeting that the Carter Center knew nothing about, both Israeli and Egyptian sides agreed that they did not want any major Soviet role in upcoming diplomacy. Both Egyptian President Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Begin had reason to dislike Soviet threats to their respective country's national prerogatives. The depth of these reactions was unanticipated by the Carter Administration, but least anticipated was the negative reaction which the October statement stimulated from the American Jewish community. The Carter administration failed to realize that Egyptian President Sadat's primary

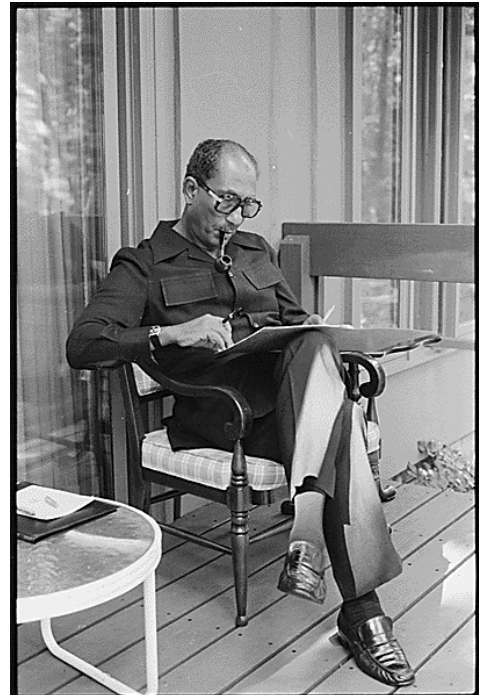


Figure 1 Egyptian President Sadat was weary of Soviet influence on the peace process. (Shown here c. 1978 at Camp David, Public Domain U.S.)

international guarantees of such borders as well as the observance of the terms of the settlement can also be established should the contracting parties so desire. The United States and the Soviet Union are ready to participate in these guarantees subject to their constitutional processes;

4. The United States and the Soviet Union believe that the only right and effective way for achieving a fundamental solution to all aspects of the Middle East problem in its entirety is negotiations within the framework of the Geneva Peace Conference, specially convened for these purposes, with participation in its work of the representatives of all parties involved in the conflict, including those of the Palestinian people, and legal and contractual formalization of the decisions reached at the Conference;
5. In their capacity as co-chairmen of the Geneva Conference, the United States and the USSR affirm their intention, through joint efforts and in their contacts with the parties concerned, to facilitate in every way the resumption of the work of the Conference not later than December 1977. The co-chairmen note that there still exist several questions of a procedural and organizational nature which remain to be agreed upon by the participants to the Conference;
6. Guided by the goal of achieving a just political settlement in the Middle East and of eliminating the explosive situation in this area of the world, the United States and the USSR appeal to all parties in the conflict to understand the necessity for careful consideration of each other's legitimate rights and interests and to demonstrate mutual readiness to act accordingly.