

## 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*

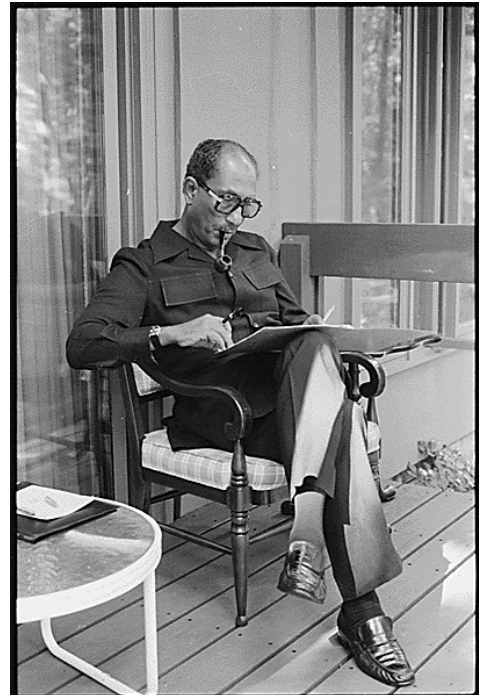


Figure 1 Egyptian President Sadat was weary of Soviet influence on the peace process. (Shown here c. 1978 at Camp David, Public Domain U.S.)

*interest was in having Egyptian Sinai returned to its sovereignty; he was not willing to wait for the Syrians, Palestinians, or other Arabs to deflect fulfillment of that intention with all Arabs*



**Figure 3 Israeli Prime Minister Begin also sought to exclude the Soviets from the negotiation process. (Public Domain)**

*meeting together, in what was a sure fire way to slow down achieving this core objective. In part, the Carter Administration wanted to solve the Palestinian issue with Moscow's participation. Sadat halted that prospect when he went to Jerusalem in November 1977. This US-Soviet Declaration did not of its own accord push Sadat to meet with the Israelis directly; however, it added to his frustration and impatience. The knowledge, in general terms, in advance that the Israelis were prepared to negotiate an*

*agreement over Sinai's return added weight to Sadat's decision to visit Israel. In the Egyptian-Israeli negotiations that followed in 1978 and 1979, little was heard again about bringing the Soviets into the diplomatic theater, now dominated by Begin and Sadat and later catalyzed by American choreography.*

—Ken Stein, January 2010

Having exchanged views regarding the unsafe situation which remains in the Middle East, U.S. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and Member of the Politbureau of the Central Committee of the CPSU, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the USSR A. A. Gromyko have the following statement to make on behalf of their countries, which are co-chairmen of the Geneva Peace Conference on the Middle East;

1. Both governments are convinced that vital interest of the peoples of this area, as well as the interests of strengthening peace and international security in general, urgently dictate the necessity of achieving, as soon as possible, a just and lasting settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. This settlement should be comprehensive, incorporating all parties concerned and all questions;
2. The United States and the Soviet Union believe that, within the framework of a comprehensive settlement of the Middle East problem, all specific questions of the settlement should be resolved, including such key issues as withdrawal of Israeli Armed Forces from territories occupied in the 1967 conflict; the resolution of the Palestinian question, including insuring the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people; termination of the state of war; and establishment of normal peaceful relations on the basis of mutual recognition of the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political independence;
3. The two governments believe that, in addition to such measures for insuring the security of the borders between Israel and the neighboring Arab states as the establishment of demilitarized zones and the agreed stationing in them of UN troops or observers,

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.