

RECORD OF THE MAIN CONTENTS OF A.A. GROMYKO'S NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE  
SECRETARY OF STATE OF THE USA C. VANCE

Geneva, May 18-20, 1977

*Excerpt on the Middle East*

[ ... ]

May 19, 1977

[ ... ]

A.A. GROMYKO: In particular, I would like to stress that the main thing is that you and we are co-chairmen of the Geneva Middle East Peace Conference. Who, if not we, are to take care that the work of that conference is resumed as soon as possible and that it successfully begins to work. The USSR and the USA can not but be interested in a resolution of the Middle East problem. The Arab states also have a right to ask why the USA and the USSR do not take the initiative to convene the Geneva conference, why they remain ambivalent to that issue.

Wouldn't it be possible in a short communiqué about the results of our meeting here in Geneva, taking into account these ideas and not hiding the core of the issue, to write two or three phrases to the effect that both sides support the liquidation of the dangerous hotbed of tension in the Middle East and that in order to achieve that goal it is necessary to resume the Geneva conference which was convened to provide a resolution to the Middle East conflict which will satisfy all the interested sides. It would be possible not to name a concrete date for resumption of the work of the conference, but instead to limit it by pointing out a month or two months, say, September-October or October-November. In any case, it makes sense to write that the sides support the convening of the conference not later than autumn of this year. This would give a positive impetus to the course of Middle Eastern affairs, it would push both the Arabs and Israel towards corresponding actions, and would provide a positive influence on Soviet-American relations. In this regard we, of course, do not assert that the Geneva Conference, as soon as its work resumes, will finish in the course of one week review of all the issues. This is hardly possible. For this, significant issues are needed. But convening the conference would start the process, moreover, apparently, a complex and difficult process towards reaching a settlement. And that is the main thing. As far as we are concerned, we are ready for that. I think that you will agree that the USSR and the USA have positive experience of work at international conferences and with due cooperation they could do a lot to provide a just and stable peace in the Middle East.

C. VANCE: You touched on a very important question. I personally have also spoken in favor of a resumption in the work of the Geneva conference five or seven times. I agree to make such a note in the communiqué where it would be said that the sides will act towards convening the Geneva conference in autumn of this year. I suggest that that will be sufficient. I think that it will not be difficult to agree on the concrete arrangements, and we could assign our experts to prepare such arrangements.

A.A. GROMYKO: It is possible to approach this issue as you suggest. Specificity in matters of this type is more preferable. Therefore, we proposed to name a month or two. But we do not object to naming autumn of this year as the date for resumption of the work of the Geneva conference.

C. VANCE: We will consider that this issue is agreed.

A.A. GROMYKO: Regarding the issue of the representation of the Palestinians at the Geneva conference, I would like to say the following. In accord with our approach, the Palestinians, in the person of the Palestine Liberation Organization, may be represented at the Geneva conference either by a separate delegation, or as a member of common Arab delegation. It is important that the Palestinians themselves settled on that or another resolution which fits them best of all. Really, for the sake of this -- whether the Palestinians will be represented by a separate delegation or included in the ranks of some sort of a joint delegation -- does it make sense to risk a new war in the Middle East? Really, does Israel or other Arab states want the loss of tens of thousands more people? I do not think that there is any government in the Middle East which would be interested in this.

I attentively listened to your remarks that a cessation of war is insufficient and that everyone with whom you spoke -- I mean the Arab leaders and representatives of Israel -- shared the opinion that a broader approach towards a genuine and stable peace in that region is demanded. We also stand behind this, and here we have no difference of opinion with you. We support a situation where all states in the Middle East can live in conditions of peace. This applies in equal measure to Israel too.

C. VANCE: I accept your remarks with great satisfaction, insofar as the United States believes that this entire issue is an important element of a Middle East settlement.

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