

RECORD OF THE MAIN CONTENT OF A. A. GROMYKO'S CONVERSATION
WITH US PRESIDENT J. CARTER

September 23, 1977, Washington

Excerpts dealing with Middle East

[...]

J. CARTER. [...]

We also are interested in achieving a settlement in the Middle East. Vance reported to me that judging from his conversation with you, the Soviet position on this question is close to ours. In the past the Soviet Union was close to the Arab states and the USA was close, mainly, to Israel. But even today we are interested in the preservation of peace in the Middle East, in guaranteeing the independence of Israel by peaceful methods. Over the last several years we won the respect and trust of a number of Arab countries. We are trying to conduct a just and even handed policy in this region and we hope that together with you we will be able to further a peaceful settlement. Sometimes the Soviet Union's approach to the problems of the Middle East, in our view, was not constructive enough. I only state the fact, however. I am not complaining.

We intend to keep you informed on the development of the situation in the Middle East, on the position of those countries with whom we have regular contact. And I hope that you too will keep us informed, in particular about the PLO position.

[...]

A. A. GROMYKO. [...]

Now about the Middle East. This is a large topic. I do not think we should spend a lot of time at your place discussing it. More so since we already had an exchange of opinions on this question with Secretary Vance. And we have found out that there are some identical elements in our positions. We also handed over some information to the American side which was not known to you.

We are strongly convinced that if Israel had taken a more sober position and had accepted the idea of a small state for the Palestinian Arabs, the PLO would have been ready to officially declare the recognition of Israel as an independent sovereign state in the Middle East. In other words, it would have recognized the reality. But this is exactly what Israel is striving for. Now it has more chances than ever to achieve it. Of course I am saying this not on behalf of Palestinians. They did not authorize us to make any statements. But we are saying this on the basis of knowing their position, and on the basis of our recent conversations with Arafat in Moscow.

So, is it really not possible to find a solution of the issue who must be the first to take a step forward, Israel or Palestinians? This is exactly what diplomacy is for: to solve such problems. It is possible, for example, to find a solution under which such a recognition of the Palestinian state by Israel and Israel by the Palestinians would be declared by both sides simultaneously.

We share the opinion of Secretary Vance that peace in the Middle East should mean not only an armistice but also the establishment of normal relations between the two sides.

So let us together strive for the convocation of the Geneva Conference on the Middle East already this year. And all Arab delegation could take part in this Conference, if the Arabs themselves would agree with that. But in any case the Palestinians, the PLO must be represented in Geneva. Let us try to do it. We are ready to make every effort possible in this direction.

Whether you want it or not, the lack of a settlement in the Middle East throws a shadow on our mutual relations. We think that removing this shadow would serve the interests of both of us.

Maybe you supply arms to the Middle East with joy, we know to whom these arms go, and to many other countries. As for us, we do it without any particular joy. If a really stable peace would be established in the Middle East we would not supply the arms there, if, of course, the others would not do it. It would be the ideal situation for which one should strive.

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