

May 27, 1980

**Conversation between Soviet Foreign Minister
Comrade Andrei Gromyko with US Secretary of State
Edmund S. Muskie, 27 May 1980**

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Summary:

Muskie and Gromyko discuss tensions between the Soviet Union and United States following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

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On information given by comrade P. A. Abrassimov to Comrade E. Honecker about a Conversation between USSR Foreign Minister Comrade A. GROMYKO with the US Secretary of State, E. MUSKIE[1]

Muskie: President Carter is for an improvement in Soviet-American relations. He was always very balanced towards the Soviet Union. But the Afghanistan events have created hindrances.

Gromyko: The American side scratched the agreement made with President Ford in Vladivostok [in 1974]. SALT II was signed in Vienna, but not ratified; that is breaking your word. Then there was the discovery of the Soviet rocket brigade on Cuba. After the US lost Iran, they tried to compensate for this loss through Afghanistan. The USSR's intervention prevented this. As is well known we hesitated for a long time before we agreed to the request to send troops. Since the danger became extremely great we couldn't just watch any more and sent a limited troop contingent at the express wish of the Afghan government and in accordance with the treaty.

Muskie: It's a matter of finding a way out. Maybe the USSR could help liberate the American hostages in Iran.

Gromyko: We have expressly declared ourselves against the hostage taking at the UN. But we are against any foreign intervention in the affairs of Iran. The US has gathered a large fleet in the Persian Gulf that is not only aimed at Iran and the Arab countries. But we also have a large Soviet fleet [three illegible words].

Muskie: We must, however, solve the Afghanistan matter.

Gromyko: You know our position. Once there is no longer any foreign interference from Pakistan or [infringements on] the sovereignty and independence of the government of Afghanistan, then we are ready, at the request of the Afghani government, to withdraw our troops.

Muskie: We want to go back to normal relations between the US and USSR. But public opinion in the US must be taken into account.

Gromyko: We are ready to normalize relations. You must stop boycott politics.[2] Maybe you can find a way so the American athletes can participate in the Olympic Games. Maybe they will find a solution that smoothes the way.

Muskie: President Carter has made his decision.

Gromyko: The President decides sometimes this way and sometimes that way.

Muskie: Participation at the Olympic Games is impossible. I consider this meeting very useful. He [Muskie] is interested in further meetings with such an experienced diplomat as Gromyko. Gromyko has been in diplomacy for 20 years and Muskie only 20 days.

Gromyko: We agree to continue contacts and talks between us.

Muskie: I would like to assure [you] that I took over my position on the condition that the Secretary of State must be absolutely independent to conduct foreign policy and not Carter's retinue.

[1] The first high-level Soviet-American meeting since the Soviet invasion took place on 16 May 1980 in Vienna on the occasion of the anniversary celebrations for the 1955 Austrian State Treaty that had provided for an end to the occupation of Austria. Muskie and Gromyko conferred for three hours at the Hofburg Palace.

[2] In response to the Soviet invasion, President Carter had threatened to boycott the 1980 Olympic Summer Games in Moscow. The US Olympic Committee voted on 12 April 1980 to endorse the president's call for a boycott.