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FOREIGN POLICY POSITIONS OF FORMER PRIME MINISTER OLOF PALME

Olof Palme's championing of the rights of the Third World, and his campaigning for disarmament and peace set him apart from other world leaders. His need for universal recognition as an international statesman drove his overall behavior in the international arena. His actions on the world stage helped to magnify Sweden's prominence beyond the normal scope of a small, neutral nation.

US-Swedish Relations

Throughout his political career, Palme maintained that he was not anti-American, but only opposed to certain US policies.

- Beginning in the mid 1960s, he vociferously denounced US policy toward Southeast Asia. In February 1968 in Stockholm, Palme marched alongside the North Vietnamese ambassador to Moscow to protest US bombing in North Vietnam.
- More recently, Palme has criticized US policy and actions in the Western Hemisphere, specifically the invasion of Grenada and the mining of harbors in Nicaragua.
- Despite these positions, Palme, who studied in the US as a young man, maintained that he held a basically positive view of the United States. On several occasions, though, he forcefully stated his disappointment at having never been invited to the US in an official capacity.

Swedish-Soviet Relations

In his last year of office, Palme attempted to renew the cordial, but cautious relations Sweden and the Soviet Union shared during most of the post-war era which were damaged by the Whiskey on the Rocks submarine incident in 1981.

- Palme believed his official visit to Moscow scheduled for April 1986 would significantly enhance the Swedish-Soviet dialogue.
- In response to continued suspected Soviet submarine incursions since 1981, Palme was trying to elicit a Soviet guarantee that they would respect Swedish neutrality and territorial integrity.

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- But Palme did not shrink from criticism of the Soviets. In 1979 he deplored "Soviet interference in Afghanistan's internal affairs" and in 1981 criticized Soviet complicity in precipitating the imposition of martial law in Poland.

Nuclear Disarmament Issues

Beginning in the mid 1970s, Palme increasingly focused his attention on nuclear and disarmament issues.

- In 1980 he founded the Independent Commission for Disarmament and Security Issues (also known as the Palme Commission) which espoused political, economic, and moral justifications for slowing the arms race.
- In 1982 Palme publicly proposed the creation of a nuclear-free corridor in Central Europe. When this received little support, Palme then resuscitated the early 1960s Finnish concept of a Nordic nuclear weapons-free zone.
- In 1984 he presented the Five Continent Peace Initiative (with support from the governments of India, Mexico, Tanzania, Greece, and Argentina) to the United Nations General Assembly. The primary goal of the participating countries is a halt to the testing, production and deployment of nuclear weapons.

Third World Concerns

Palme could not resist revolutionary causes that he believed would appeal to West European or Third World audiences. He long identified himself as a rescuer of the oppressed, underprivileged, and socially deprived.

- In 1975 he began advocating a new international economic order and emphasized the developed nations' responsibilities to help the lesser developed countries close the gap in wealth and living standards between them. He adhered to this theme throughout the remainder of his career.
- Palme sent significant development aid to Vietnam following the end of the war and maintained it during his tenure as prime minister.

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Regional Conflicts

Palme devoted much of his time to seeking solutions to what he publicly called pressing global problems.

- In 1977 he was a special witness for the UN Security Council debate on South Africa. Just before his death, Palme said it was his horror over the injustices of South Africa's apartheid policies that first brought him into politics.
- From 1980 until his death, he served as the official UN mediator for the Iran-Iraq conflict.
- During a 1984 trip to Central America, Palme advised the Sandinistas to improve their human rights practices and hold democratic elections in order to earn increased international support.

Technology Transfer

Palme gave high priority to continued Swedish access to US high technology, and cooperated with US officials on the issue of export controls.

- He was instrumental in formulating his country's recent export control measures--introduced in February--which more strictly monitor and control the illicit transfer of technology through Sweden to the Soviet bloc.



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Former Prime Minister Olof Palme

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