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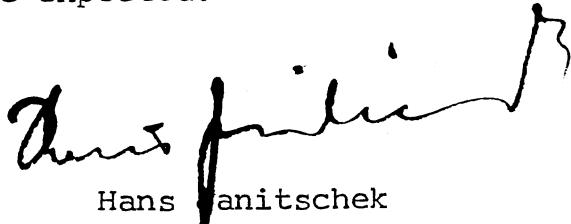
To Bureau Members

Socialist International Mission to the Middle East

9 - 16 March, 1974

## DRAFT REPORT

Please find attached draft of report of the Socialist International Mission to the Middle East for your information. The text is presently being reviewed by Bruno Kreisky and will be circulated shortly. Only minor corrections are expected.



Hans Janitschek

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To Bureau members

SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL VISIT TO THE NEAR EAST  
9th to 16th March, 1974  
led by the Austrian Federal Chancellor Dr. Bruno Kreisky

Summary

The Fact Finding Mission (list of members at end) visited Egypt (9 to 12.3), Syria (12 and 13.3) and Israel (13 to 16.3). The intended visit to Jordan had to be abandoned as King Hussein and his Prime Minister had had to leave unexpectedly on a State visit to Washington. The delegation sent a telegram to the Jordanian Government thanking them for their willingness to receive them and putting forward a later date for a visit.

1. Egypt

The delegation arrived in Cairo on 9 March in the late afternoon and were met by Dr. Mohamed Hafez Ghanem, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Arab Socialist Union (ASU) and by leading Party members. An ASU working session was held the same evening at the Hilton Hotel.

On Sunday the 10th, Bruno Kreisky was received by President Sadat at his country house near Alexandria for two hours' private discussion. Sadat subsequently received the General Secretary of the British Labour Party, Ron Hayward, who brought with him a personal letter from his Prime Minister, Mr. Wilson. The other members of the delegation were received by President Sadat on the morning of Monday the 11th at his country house for a one hour informal meeting.

Bruno Kreisky had this to say about his talk with Sadat.

The President, speaking quite frankly, explained the Egyptian position with regard to the war in the Near East and stressed that he had every intention of making a serious contribution to peace. The Egyptian army had now vindicated their honour, which made the situation easier psychologically. He had already proposed demilitarisation of the Canal Zone in 1971 (the Rogers Plan) and had emphasised that war would be inevitable unless strenuous efforts were made to solve the conflict. No one had then taken him seriously. The stalemate following the 1967 War and the slogan 'no war, no peace' had been unacceptable to Egypt. The President who praised the attitude of the Israeli negotiators at Kilometre 101, intended to proceed carefully and gradually so as to release tension bit by bit. Egypt's chief interest was to rebuild its economy and to apply its resources to peaceful purposes. Nevertheless, the deployment of troops on the Egyptian-Israeli Front could not be taken in isolation; the developments on the Israeli-Syrian Front were of great importance and the problem of the Palestinians had also to be solved.

Bruno Kreisky underlined the great importance for the security of Europe of a peaceful future in the Near East. He himself had made every effort to have the Near East conflict placed on the agenda of the European Security Conference though had not been successful. For the people of this region, which had made so important a contribution to European culture, Europe wanted friendly relations and true co-operation. He himself was glad that the Fact-Finding Mission proposed by him had now come about. The Socialist International naturally had special loyalty towards its Member, the Israeli Labour Party. The resumption of friendly relations was of course also in the interests of the Israeli sister-party. All parties that were members of the SI, including the Israeli party, were positively inclined to the Fact-Finding Mission.

Other matters that were touched on generally in the course of the conversation were oil for Europe, improvement in terms of trade, and the volatile nature of oil prices as discussed by the Club of Rome at the Salzburg Meeting.

After his talk, Bruno Kreisky said that President Sadat had put his views with great determination and conviction but without hatred.

At 6.p.m. there was a discussion with the Foreign Minister, Mr. Fahmy, and senior officials of the Egyptian Foreign Ministry. By way of introduction, Fahmy spoke as follows:

Peace must be permanent and honourable. Egypt had no desire to exhaust its economic potential. Sadat's peace offer had been a turning point. Israel had to recognise the independence and territorial integrity of Egypt and her neighbours. The national rights of the Palestinians, too, had to be taken into account; this was not a question of refugees but a political problem, a problem of national identity. The results of the October War had still not been entirely digested by Israel, as recent voting had shown. The withdrawal of troops had been faithfully implemented and this could be regarded as a good start. A new atmosphere could be felt on both sides. Egypt is prepared to take further steps. Two conditions must, however, be fulfilled - no territorial gains by force, and the recognition of the national identity of the Palestinians. Both sides of course had the opportunity of arming themselves, but what was needed was peace, and if Israel was prepared for this, there would be peace.

In reply to various questions from members of the delegation, Fahmy answered that all States, including the super powers, were agreed on the national identity of the Palestinians. The Palestinians would take part in the Geneva talks 'at the proper time'. But first of all, an armistice had to be cemented with Egypt and Syria.

The Palestinians had offered to live side by side with the Jews in Israel; there was a great difference between Jews and Zionists. The Israelis had rejected the Palestinian offer. Egypt was prepared to conclude a Peace Treaty at any time and also to open up the Suez Canal to Israeli shipping. The real reason behind the October War was the Israeli feeling of superiority. Israel had not wanted to

take Sadat seriously and had not believed a new war possible. Fahmy had told Kreisky back in October 1973 that war was imminent. Egypt had to defend its honour and jog the conscience of the world.

On the question of what contribution could be made by Europe, Fahmy said that the co-chairmanship of the Geneva Conference had been decided behind their backs. They had wanted France and Great Britain to take part and Europe was now technically excluded from the Conference. Egypt wanted a European contribution. Europe if economically united was not so politically. Europe's contribution to date had been sparse. The Arabs, for example, had made a greater contribution than the Europeans towards the re-opening of the Suez Canal. Egypt was very interested in European investment and had just completed agreements of this kind with Switzerland and Germany.

Kreisky referred to the high price of oil and to its effect on European countries' balance of payments. Europe was in no way opposed to new terms of trade but raw material prices should be subject to international control. Austria had made £46 million available in development aid; it now had to pay an additional £161 million for its oil supplies. Sweden had to pay an additional £575 million for its supply of hydrocarbons. This endangered further economic co-operation between the industrialised countries and the developing nations.

Fahmy pointed to the fact that it was Iran and Venezuela and not the Arabs who had been first to increase oil prices. The Arabs had always warned that price increases could have a boomerang effect. Saudi Arabia wanted lower oil prices but Algeria and Iran were opposed to this. Prices would however fall; Government tax policy also played a part. There was now an enormous difference between buying prices and selling prices. The price of wheat, copper, bauxite and rice had risen similarly. In 1972, one metric ton of wheat cost 70 dollars; today it cost 300 dollars. For Egypt, however, it was impossible on political grounds to raise the price of bread. The problem of prices was not only a problem of oil prices.

That evening some three hours was spent in discussions with the ASU Party leadership.\* The delegation were then invited to dine with Dr. Hafez Ghanem.

(\*Annex I) On Monday 11 March there was a discussion with the General Secretary of the Arab League, Dr. Mahmoud Riad, which was followed by lunch. Dr. Riad was extremely sceptical about the efforts to obtain troop withdrawals and a gradual solution of the conflict and stated the conservative Arab viewpoint uncompromisingly.

At 4.45.p.m. there was a meeting at the Arab League building with Yassir Arafat and a number of other Palestinians, some of whom had come from Beirut. One of the Palestinians, Abdul Loutouf, who described himself as the PLO shadow Foreign Minister, a graduate of Cornell University, and a convinced communist, participated in the discussion with particular vehemence. Three other Palestinians, whose names could not be ascertained, were present. Dr. Mahmoud Riad and Dr. Hafez Ghanem were present during the discussion but were not drawn in and appeared embarrassed by some of the statements made by the Palestinians. It transpired from further talks, however, that the

Egyptians regarded Arafat as a moderate and therefore supported him.

Arafat referred first of all to the suffering of the 3.5 million Palestinians, of whom 2 million did not live in their own country. Since 1967, 36,000 had died and 19,000 houses had been destroyed, of which 8,000 were on the West Bank of the Jordan and 6,000 in the Gaza Strip. There were 17,000 prisoners in Israeli concentration camps. In Israel itself there were 500,000 Palestinians. The PLO advocated the creation of a democratic Palestinian State, in which Jews, Christians and Moslems could live together. The Palestinians were not the backward 'red Indians' as they had been stamped by the Israelis; there were 22,000 Palestinian engineers and only 14,000 Israeli. The Palestinians wanted self-determination; the voice of reason did exist in Israel, but not in Golda Meir's government. Lebanon was an example of various religious communities living together; as the example of Pakistan had shown, a unitary religious State can be divided up. A common Jewish-Palestinian State would be supported by many countries, as it would indeed by the Islamic Summit Conference, the Organisation of African Unity, the International Youth Festival in Berlin, etc. 'We are not calling to throw anybody in the sea' - this was only a propagandist distortion.

Bruno Kreisky said that the purpose of his Fact-Finding Mission was to obtain as much information as possible. The SI would welcome a peaceful settlement for all those concerned. He then asked three questions:

- 1) What was the concept of a common State? Not even the Europeans were able to unite themselves into one State.
- 2) Is the PLO prepared to take part in the Geneva Conference?
- 3) How many Palestinians were in fact prepared to re-settle in a new State? Many of them had already found good positions.

Arafat replied that virtually everyone would return to a Palestinian State. This was not a question of material advantages - he himself was a well-paid engineer in Kuwait - but the striving for national identity had not left him in peace. In the room there were seven Palestinians, each holding a different passport. His own family had not been able to see each other for 26 years, as they were of different nationalities. Arafat then asserted that Israel was preventing the emigration of Israelis to other countries. Many Israelis had been prevented from emigrating from Israel to Austria. Bruno Kreisky said that this did not correspond with the facts. Many hundreds of Russian Jews had been received back to Austria from Israel. Arafat mentioned some dozen persons who had fled from Israel to Lebanon. Kreisky replied that Austria had 1100 km of common frontiers with communist countries and there were many who went back and forth across the border. He did not believe it true that Israel was prohibiting people from leaving.

Arafat said that Palestine had at one time stretched from Lebanon to Eilat and from the Jordan to the Mediterranean. With regard to the question of the possibility of separate Palestinian State beyond the Israeli frontiers as set out in Resolution 242, Arafat declared that he knew of no Israeli frontier. Resolution 242 referred to no Palestinians. At this point in the discussion, Loutouf opened up and delivered a highly polemical speech on the need for a unitary Palestinian State. Kreisky enquired whether a Palestinian State would encompass the whole of former Palestine or whether a separate State comprising the West Bank and the Gaza Strip might not be conceivable. Arafat, supported by the Palestinians present, stated that this was conceivable as a 'settlement' but not as a 'solution'. The only final solution would be a large Palestinian State. The PLO was concerned to cut the ties between Israel and other Jews. Israel was promoting immigration and was thereby creating increased tension. The 'secure frontiers' of Resolution 242 were only a pretext for further expansion and the aim was to drive out the Arabs.

Bruno Kreisky continued: first 'settlement' then 'solution'. One of the Palestinians replied that perhaps the Arabs might recognise Israel and Resolution 242, but the Palestinians would not do so. Kreisky tried to discover what the conditions for a 'settlement' might be. Arafat would not commit himself and felt that the Palestinians had not yet been recognised and the latter were only waiting for an offer. Kreisky asked whether the aim was the recognition of a Palestinian National Committee embracing the various groups. This Arafat confirmed.

Kreisky: What if you were to be invited to Geneva?

Arafat: Not as a representative of the refugees. First we must have an invitation and then we can talk about what we are participating as.

During further talks about possible participation at Geneva, one of the Palestinians said: 'We have not yet said no.'

Finally, Arafat said that the creation of a large unitary democratic Palestine was the only workable solution. It would be difficult but the attempt must be made. He thanked Dr. Kreisky for his humanitarian stand point. This was a complex problem, more important than that of South Africa; the South Africans were at least living in their own country. Bruno Kreisky closed the discussion, saying that the Socialist International bound by loyalty to the Israeli Labour Party but wanted, on the other hand, to contribute towards a humanitarian solution of the Palestinian problem.

(\*Annex II) That evening there was a Press Conference and a further session with the ASU. \*

Thursday 12 March: Talks with the Deputy Prime Minister Dr. Abdel Aziz Hegazi, who is responsible for finance, economic affairs and foreign trade. Dr. Hegazi referred to the fact that it had been possible to solve the grave economic problems of the last few years only through socialism; 75% of all industry was nationalised. Co-operation with the 'socialist States' had proved very valuable. During the last six months Egypt had had to pay out 5 thousand million pounds on defence, while war damage had demanded a further 5 thousand million pounds. Altogether the war with Israel had so far cost Egypt ten thousand million pounds. On the other hand, two hundred and fifty million pounds had been invested in large-scale projects and 2.5 thousand million pounds spent on social welfare. Egypt had to increase productivity and thrift. The Soviet Union and East Germany had supported industrial projects but, compared with Israel, Egypt had received appreciable assistance neither from the West nor from the East. Egypt was interested in close economic ties with Europe. Bruno Kreisky advocated increased effort in the way of economic co-operation, particularly through joint ventures. Egypt could play a key role. Peace, however, was the pre-condition. Israel, too, occupied a key position and the SI had ties of loyalty with its Israeli sister party. Egypt was not expected to dissolve its bonds of friendship with the communist countries.

Shortly before the plane left, there was time for a talk with the Deputy President Mahmoud Fawzi. After briefly touching on energy problems, with regard to which Fawzi advocated long-term European-Arab co-operation, he had the following to say on the Palestine problem. The Israeli viewpoint was irreconcilable with that of the Palestinians. A settlement was indeed needed: A Palestinian State embracing the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, Israel continuing to exist within the 1967 frontiers. East Jerusalem would have to be given back to the Arabs; the two City administrations would co-operate, Berlin being an example. Bruno Kreisky referred to the position of the Vatican; achievement of true peace would take time, but a cessation of hostilities should be undertaken immediately.

## 2. SYRIA

Arrived on the afternoon of 12 March - met by the First Deputy Secretary of the Baath Party, Abdallah Al-Ahmar, and a number of Cabinet members. Accommodated at the Hotel Omayyad.

Several hours of discussion began at 5.30 p.m., and were attended by the following on the Syrian side: the Prime Minister, Mahmoud El-Ayoubi; a deputy Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister, Abdel-Halim Khaddam; the Minister of Information; Jaber Bajbouj, Assistant Secretary of the Regional Command; Al-Ahmar, and the Ambassador, Dr. Salahdin Tarazi.

Bruno Kreisky first of all pointed out that the delegation visit had nothing to do with the oil crisis. The SI was interested in getting to know the Syrian view. The conflict in the Near-East affected the interests of European security and Kreisky had therefore suggested that this matter be placed on the agenda for the European Security Conference. However, both our Soviet friends and our American friends had opposed this. Kreisky further pointed out that the SI had a special relationship of loyalty with its Israeli sister party; but at the same time was interested in the achievement of an amicable solution.

Al-Ahmar then reiterated the known Arab view, that the 'secure frontiers' demanded by Israel would be at the expense of other nations. Modern weapons acknowledged no 'secure frontiers'. The October War had proved that, despite the Suez Canal, Israel's frontiers were not secure. The war had altered the balance of power and created a new opportunity for peace. But Israel was creating obstacles to peace through its annexist policy on the Golan Heights.

Mr. Khaddam thanked Bruno Kreisky for his frank expose, with particular reference to loyalty to the Israeli Labour Party. But what opportunities for peace had existed under the Nazis? He asked for a return of the Palestinians to Israel and self-determination for the Palestinians, referring to the 1947 UN Resolution. The Jews enjoyed public sympathy on account of Nazi persecution; but this persecution had not been perpetrated by the Arabs. Why had the Jews not be settled in Bavaria? Recognition of Palestinian rights under the UN Resolutions and withdrawal from all occupied territories were pre-conditions for peace. Khaddam then drew a parallel with the Versailles Peace Treaty of 1919, which had also proved to be anything but permanent.

Kreisky corrected Khaddam, pointing out that Hitler's attempt to alter the Peace Treaty by war had led to a divided Germany. European history contained many examples of injustice. Austria had had to accept the loss of South Tyrol; millions of German-speaking people had been driven from their homes. Austria had not demanded that they be taken back, although this was morally justifiable. Peace should naturally be based on justice. But it was unwise to draw on historical developments in Europe as an example.

Kreisky asked his hosts to outline the present problem of troop withdrawal. Other members of the Delegation enquired whether Syria acknowledged the existence of Israel.

The Prime Minister, Mr. Ayoubi, now entered the discussion while the Foreign Minister, Mr. Khaddam, dropped out. Ayoubi said Israel had to return to the 1967 frontiers and acknowledge the rights of the Palestinians. Why should Soviet emigrants be given the right to settle in Israel but not the Palestinians? Bruno Kreisky mentioned that the Delegation had asked to meet representatives of the Palestinians.

Ayoubi: Golda Meir asked where is the Palestinian people? Dayan asked, where is Palestine? And answered: There, where Israel is. Troop limitation was a new concept and it was accepted as a first step towards withdrawal; the troop concentrations had to be separated from each other. They had asked Israel to draw back to a certain distance. They proposed withdrawal from the territory acquired during the October War, which concerned a small pocket; they had wanted withdrawal from a larger area. In reply to further questions by Kreisky regarding the territorial extent of withdrawal, Ayoubi said: A sufficiently large area to prevent further military encounters. More exact details could not be given as the Syrian delegation had no map ready.

Jaber Bajbouj said that they could not agree to any loss of territory. 170,000 Syrians had been driven from the Golan Heights. As far as the fate of the Palestinians was concerned, this had to be negotiated with the PLO, which was recognised by the Conference of Non-Aligned Countries in Algiers and by the Islamic Conference at Lahore. The Syrian delegation itself included two Palestinians. At thinning-out of troops could only be the first step towards complete withdrawal.

Kreisky replied that the concept of recognition was often over-valued. Recognition is always achieved in the long run: Algeria and East Germany were good examples. Kreisky then explained the opportunities for economic co-operation, stressing that there was no question of wanting to estrange Syria's existing friends, the communist countries. Peace, however, was a pre-condition to such co-operation.

Ayoubi stated his desire for peace and said that the Syrians were often regarded as extremists (Kreisky interjected: I know). Syria was prepared to co-operate with Western Europe. An agreement had been made on electrical engineering with France and Germany; a refinery was being built with Italian help, and Great Britain had set up 15 stock-breeding farms. Ayoubi thanked Austria for proposing that the Near-East conflict be placed on the agenda of the European Security Conference and felt that the October War had confirmed the good sense of this proposal.

This was followed by a working session with the Baath Party at which the possibility of contact with the Socialist International was dealt with, and an official dinner given by Al-Ahmar, which was attended by the entire Syrian Government and the Prime Minister Aycubi.

(\*Annex III) On Thursday the 13th, the Baal Dver refugee camp was visited. The camp housed some 10 thousand Syrian refugees from the Golan Heights. The camp left an impression of poverty, but an impressively modern school was available for the children. No

doubt the feelings of hate and revenge towards Israel were well nurtured here.

At 10.30 a.m. the whole Delegation was received by President Assad for three hours of talks. Assad began by outlining Syria's standpoint on the Near-East conflict, referring to the expansionist aims of Israel and to the Israeli government's refusal to implement the UN Resolutions. Israel had driven 170,000 Syrians from the Golan Heights and had consequently violated both international law and the Geneva Conventions. Israel was making propaganda out of the few dozen Israeli prisoners that were still in Syrian hands while millions of homeless Arabs were being simply forgotten. The Conventions on Prisoners of War should also be extended to the population in the occupied territories, but Israel was opposed to this. Syria in principal supported Resolution 242; however, what did 'secure frontiers' mean in an age of long-range weaponry? From the security point of view, the Galileean hills (on the western side of the Jordan valley) were probably better placed for Israel. If all countries were to strive for 'secure frontiers' this would be a return to the law of the jungle.

Bruno Kreisky enquired into the Syrian ideas on troop diminution as a first step on the long road to a political solution. President Assad said that Syria advocated a thinning out of troops, but first of all the armistice would have to be stabilised. The limited withdrawals should cover sufficiently wide areas for the utilisation of weapons to become unfeasible. Israel wanted the limited withdrawals to apply only to the areas occupied during the October War, while Syria wanted this to apply to the whole Front (which would in practical terms mean a withdrawal by Israel to the pre-October War armistice line). The withdrawals proposed by Israel would cover only 16 km out of a total front line of 70 km. Assad then outlined the position on the Golan Heights on a map supplied by a Delegation member and subsequently by means of a Syrian relief map. A large area was concerned, which, the President stressed, was densely populated; up till the October War, some 200,000 Syrians had lived in 173 townships (of which 50,000 in Kuneitra). Today only 20,000 Syrian inhabitants remained; the rest were to be found in Syrian refugee camps. There was a clear distinction between limited withdrawals in an unoccupied desert such as Sinai and those in a populated area such as the Golan Heights. The President gave the impression that he was interested above all in a return by the refugees to their former settlements but he feared that Israel, by creating military villages had already achieved a fait accompli.

Questioned about Israel's need for security, the President indicated in very general and quite imprecise terms, without in any event committing himself, that the Syrian-Israeli dividing line could run along the first range of foothills of the Golan Heights bordering on Israel.

In reply to a question by Kreisky, as to whether Syria was prepared to accept UN troops, Assad again referred to the distinction between an unoccupied desert and a populated plateau and felt that the UN observers should simply be granted more authority. At the same time he asked whether the Delegation had a 'UN occupation' of the territory in mind. Kreisky replied that it was not a matter of 'occupation' as the UN presence did not mean any interference with administration.

Assad: It all depends on the line, the UN presence could be discussed later. In principle, we do not want UN troops.

Kreisky: But what does limited withdrawal mean? Who would control the area and ensure that no further enemy infiltration would take place?

Assad: The UN will guarantee security; Or the States represented at the Geneva Conference, or the States of the Socialist International. We asked for a European representative at Geneva; we are prepared for any international guarantee. But the distances are too short for any UNEF; we do not want troops, but observers; but we are for limited withdrawal.

Kreisky: The UNEF are not fighting troops but observers of a kind; it is just that they are more in number than the observers.

Assad: This is why I have urged reinforcement of the UN observers. UN troops could not, in any event, prevent a re-kindling of hostilities.

Mr. Loevberg then raised the question of the Palestinians. Assad said that Syria could no more speak for the Palestinians than could Egypt. Any solution that might seem acceptable to the Palestinians will also be acceptable to Syria.

Finally, Bruno Kreisky asked about the economic consequences of the conflict. Assad did not give precise figures, but limited himself to saying that 70% of the budget went on military expenditure and that the war damage could be assessed at about one thousand million pounds sterling.

Consequent upon this discussion, President Assad invited Kreisky to private talks, which lasted about an hour. In the course of the talk Assad continued to stress that the Syrians felt no antipathy towards the Jews but were only fighting militant Zionism.

The Delegation left by air at about 4.p.m. It had originally been intended to overfly Beirut for reasons of military security, and make an interim stop at Nicosia. During the flight, however, it was announced that after crossing the Golan Heights, the aircraft would land directly at Tel Aviv.

### 3. ISRAEL

The aircraft landed at Tel Aviv on the 13th March at about 6.p.m. The Delegation was met by the Deputy Prime Minister, Yigal Allon, the Secretary-General of the Israeli Labour Party, Aharon Yadlin and other officers of the party. First of all, a brief press conference was held at the airport, at which Bruno Kreisky sketched out the broad lines of the Fact-Finding Mission's terms of reference and again confirmed that the visit was not a 'policy making' venture. While in Syria security arrangements had been barely evident, in Israel the large number of heavily-armed security men accompanying the Delegation throughout their visit was noticeable. After travelling to the Hotel Accadia at Herzlia, there was a dinner given by Yadlin that same evening, followed by a discussion. A number of senior party officers, members of the government and publishers attended the dinner. During the discussion, Israeli voices were repeatedly raised in protest over the lack of understanding in Europe for Israel's position; the complaint was put with particular eloquence by the editor-in-chief of the newspaper 'Dawar'.

On Thursday the 14th the Delegation, in a motorcade strongly guarded by security men, went to Jerusalem, where they visited the main points of interest and the Holy Places.

At 12.30 the Delegation was received by the Speaker of the Knesset Yisrael Yeshayahu, a Yemenite Jew. The Speaker went straight on to the offensive and expressed his deep disappointment at the attitude of certain European countries towards Israel; at the same time he declared his mistrust in every one of President Sadat's assertions, particularly as there was no way of knowing how long the present regime in Egypt would remain in power. Bruno Kreisky referred to the very serious energy problem, which could lead to a real economic crisis in Europe with its resultant political consequences. The declaration by the 9 EEC countries had perhaps not been worded to happiest effect; but the European governments felt a high measure of responsibility towards peace. The Delegation had not come to bargain but to seek information; an impression had been gained of certain developments, but there had been reluctance in drawing too far-reaching conclusions therefrom. On the question of the permanency of governments, Kreisky referred to the fact that this problem was also to be found in other parts of the world and that one had, at any rate, to adopt a working hypothesis.

In the course of a lunch at the Knesset, which was given by the Director-General of the Foreign Ministry, Aharon Kidron, in the absence of the Foreign Minister, Mr. Eban, the Director for European Affairs, Johanan Meroz, the Director for Economic Affairs, Itzhak Minervi, and the Director for Middle East Affairs, Mrs Yael Veret,

replied to the Delegation on a comprehensive list of queries. Mr. Kieroz let it be clearly known that he considered it undesirable for the European countries to become 'mixed up' with the Near East conflict. Mr. Minervi referred to the consequences of the hydrocarbons crisis and Mrs Veret, a well-known Arabist, gave an interesting insight into the Palestinian problem in particular.

After lunch, the Yad Vashem and the Israeli Museum were visited.

This was followed by three and a half hours of talks with the Prime Minister, Golda Meir, which were also attended on behalf of the Israeli side by the Minister of Information Shimon Perez, Yitzhak Rabin, the Minister for Home Affairs Mr. Burg, the Attorney General Gideon Hausner, and Mr. Rosen. Bruno Kreisky discussed the impressions he had gained on his journey on behalf of the delegation.

Sadat cannot accept stalemate; he is very pleased that the agreement on limited withdrawals is operating and had described the Israeli representative at the talks as an honourable man. But Sadat could not proceed in isolation. The question therefore arose of how the other Arab states were to be persuaded to follow Egypt's example. Sadat had received an assurance from Boumedienne that only the States directly concerned in the war could decide (and not people like Ghadafi). Sadat had said that he would no longer stand when he completed his two years of office but this certainly meant little as they were now in the process of building him up as a revolutionary hero. Sadat needed the war to eliminate the Egyptian feeling of inferiority. Large economic projects had therefore had to be postponed. Egypt did not want to be dependent on either the Soviet Union or on the USA and was seeking contract with the democratic countries of Europe. Fahmy had asserted that Europe had discovered its affinities with the Arabs only after the oil crisis. The attitude of the ASU was not aggressive; Sadat wanted closer ties with the SI; this had been agreed on the condition that the SI's loyalty to the Israeli Labour Party was acknowledged.

Within the ASU a certain internal democracy prevailed. Mahmoud Riad was taking a hard line; the Delegation had said that if he required Israel to be swept from the map, its Fact-Finding Mission would cease. Even Riad recognised Israel as fact. The Delegation had been disappointed in Arafat as a person. He regarded a Palestinian State in Gaza and the West Bank as a 'settlement' and not as a 'solution'; he had left the door open to an invitation to Geneva. Chanem regarded Arafat as of goodwill and a moderate; Hussein is, in PLC eyes, a yet greater enemy than Israel. Fawzi was moderate and felt that the opportunity merely for the Palestinians to return was important; perhaps only 10% would take advantage of this. Fawzi is well-intentioned and enjoys Sadat's confidence. In Syria, Khaddam was regarded as something of a radical. Assad appeared not to insist on the return of the whole of the Golan Heights; he might

possibly admit observers, but not foreign soldiers (Golda Meir believes that only 70,000 and not 200,000 lived on the Golan Heights in 1967). What was most important, was for the Syrians who had fled from the Golan Heights to be returned to their homes, for which the return of Kuneitra as above all necessary. Assad drew a distinction between the Zionists and Jews. Kreisky had replied to him that as long as Israel was endangered it would not be easy to convince the world of this view.

Rabin enquired in detail whether the Syrians were insisting on the return of all territory, whether simultaneous agreements with Syria and Egypt were indispensable, and as to attitudes to a Palestinian State in Gaza and the West Bank. Golda Meir believed that Sadat had a serious interest in a settlement on economic grounds. This view was supported by Kreisky as Egypt, in whose State party peasants and workers were equally represented, had also to do something for the people. Golda Meir considered the 'legitimate rights of the Palestinians' as a pretext for the destruction of Israel. She regarded the Palestinian solution in the context of the Jordanian State; a Palestinian State on the West Bank and Gaza would be impracticable and would only be a thorn in the flesh of Israel; the solution lay in a Palestinian Jordan or in a Jordanian Palestine. Perez feared that the Palestinians would introduce Soviet troops and weapons into the Jerusalem suburbs. Kreisky pointed out that absorption of the Palestinians into other Arab states was impossible: The Palestinians ran Lebanon.

At a dinner given that evening, Golda Meir in an address stated that her initial reaction to the Fact-Finding Mission had been one of reserve; she now saw that the Delegation had in fact acquired valuable information.

On Friday the 15th the Delegation left Jerusalem for Tel Aviv, where they met the leader of the opposition party 'Likud', Menachem Begin. Kreisky again reported on his talks in Egypt and Syria and with the Palestinians. When a Deputy, Dr. Rinald, remarked that the PLO had never revoked the Palestinian Charter which provided for the annihilation of Israel, Kreisky said that paper was paper; in Europe they had co-existence but no peace treaty. When all the official statements by German Foreign Ministers on reunion are read, there would be great difficulty in reconciling this with the present situation. Finally Mr. Begin stated that Israel would never withdraw from the 1967 lines; Palestine was the Israeli homeland, Israel would look after its own refugees and the Arabs should accept theirs. 'We can never take them back'.

After talks with the Histadrut federation of trades unions, Bruno Kreisky attended an Israeli Labour Party lunch in Beit Berl and spoke on the subject of 'Disengagement and the East-West problem'. Subsequently a press conference was held. That afternoon the Ginossar Kibbutz was visited, where the Deputy Prime Minister Yigal Allon acted as host at dinner.

The dinner was attended by Palestinian officials from the occupied West Bank, including the Mayors of Hebron (Jabery) and Bethlehem. In a very frank discussion the Palestinians stated that they had no complaints at cultural and economic level but that they would nevertheless like to get rid of the regime of occupation. The Palestinians wanted self-determination. It was not clear who actually represented the Palestinians; as Jabery remarked, there were few communists amongst the Arabs. An Israeli sociologist suggested a confederation of Palestinians with Jordan or Israel, which was described by the Palestinians as a Utopia. Allon stressed the need to find a solution for the Palestinians, but disputed the competence of the PLC; he would welcome a federation between the West Bank and Jordan, but on a voluntary basis; a religious solution would have to be found for Jerusalem, but without new divisions.

On Saturday the 16th the Delegation was taken to the front line on the Golan Heights. Knocked-out tanks and vehicles were everywhere and minefields were continually indicated. Syrian barracks and dwelling houses had been destroyed, and only the occasional Israeli military village could be seen.

At about 12 noon lunch was taken with General Dayan at his house, a number of Israeli ministers, including Perez, again attending. Dayan pointed to the fact that Jews and Arabs had been living together happily in Israel for 26 years; an agreement would eventually be made first with Egypt, and then with Syria.

Bruno Kreisky then turned to the question of troop withdrawals in Syria; he had gained the impression that the Syrians were interested in a solution to the refugee problem and, particularly, in a return of territory; Israel ought to make specific proposals so that not only the refugees from the October War but a larger number could return to their homes; this would be a token of goodwill not only to Cairo but to the world in general, and could be the first step in a return of the 1967 refugees. Dayan declared that he was prepared to double the number of refugees returning (40,000 instead of 20,000), but he doubted whether the Syrians were prepared to live under Israeli administration. Bruno Kreisky referred to the need to make progress not only in Egypt but also in Syria, and also in the Palestine problem. Dayan: If it is a matter of bilateral withdrawal, yes, but no unilateral take-over by Syrian troops. Perez added that Syria had not given the least indication that the Syrian government were interested in a settlement.

Towards 2 p.m. the Delegation left Tel Aviv and arrived at Vienna towards 7 p.m., having made an interim stop in Athens.

MEMBERS

Leader

Dr. Bruno Kreisky, Chairman of Austrian Socialist Party,  
Federal Chancellor

Germany

Hans Eberhard Dingels, International Secretary of the German Social  
Democratic Party

Italy

Dr. Pietro Lezzi, Member of Parliament, Socialist Party International  
Secretary.

France

Robert Pontillon, Socialist Party International Secretary, Member of the  
Central Committee of the Socialist Party, Mayor of Suresnes (Paris)

Great Britain

Ron Hayward, General Secretary of the British Labour Party.

Sweden

Bertil Loefberg, Minister, Member of the Swedish Government.

Bernt Carlsson, International Secretary of the Swedish Socialist Party

Holland

Zelus ter Bek, Member of Parliament, International Secretary of the  
Dutch Labour Party

Japan

Eki Sone, Member of Parliament, Member of the Central Committee of the  
Japanese Democratic Socialist Party.

Socialist International

Hans Janitschek, General Secretary

Accompanying Dr. Kreisky

Ambassador Dr. Hans Thalberg