

SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL

88a ST. JOHN'S WOOD HIGH STREET, LONDON NW8 7SJ, GREAT BRITAIN

SI PARTER LEADERS' CONFERENCE IN BOMMERSVIK 1979

SHIMON PERES, Israel

79 07 20/mb

Remarks after Bruno Kreisky's account of the meeting i Vienna with YASSIR ARAFAT.

The Israeli people, a large part of whom are survivors of the Holocaust, and who have behind them five wars all aimed at their physical destruction, must be forgiven if they are sensitive about dealings with those still pursuing the same aim

We agree that the achievement of peace must now be the main task, and we appreciate the contributions by the SI towards this end. We also agree that peace must be comprehensive, and that the treaty with Egypt was a first step, whilst one of overriding importance. Our neighbours and we are entitled to the experience of a peaceful life without being threatened or threatening anybody.

We also agree that the next step should be a solution to the Palestinian issue, making possible a sense of fairness, self-respect and reason. Partners to it should be the Palestinians and Jordan.

It is necessary to establish basic facts as to who can be realistic partners. It is necessary to be aware where the Palestinians actually are: in Trans-Jordan (Jordan) they constitute a substantial majority of the about 2 million inhabitants; there are 700 000 in the West Bank, some 400 000 in Gaza. Incidentally 600 000 live in Israel as Israeli citizen with full rights, many of them integrated in our Party up to the level of membership in the Knesset.

A considerable number live as refugees in Lebanon. We are sensitive, indeed, feel pain in view of the refugee issue and have a deep desire to contribute to its solution even where there might be detrimental aspects, because we are moved by the humanitarian aspect.

We are aware of the need to deal with the whole issue based on recognition of the right of the Palestinians to determine their own future. Peaceful negotiation should be conducted with the participation of elected Palestinian representatives.

A solution would solve problems also for us, because we have no desire whatsoever to govern the fate of others or, Heaven forbid, to play the role of some Herrenvolk. We do not want to rule over an additional 1-2 million Arabs. Freedom means not to be ruled by others and not be rulers of others.

Therefore, we would favour returning most of the territory of the West Bank and Gaza to Arab rule and keep only small sections vital to our security. The Palestinians are entitled both to self-government and to honour and self-respect.

Our answer to the issue is that the solution must be reached with the Government of Jordan and the Palestinian population. We do not favour two States, the competition of which would merely cause renewed tensions and worries, even aggressions. The territory of one State would make possible refugee rehabilitation. It would create a reasonable basis for necessary demilitarisation. After all, the Palestinians on both sides of the Jordan river are one family, with one faith and one language.

We are thus faced with a choice between Jordan and the PLO. Whichever of the options we choose, we lose the other. Now, it is out of the question for us, and would serve no purpose to make the other choice, and not for secondary reasons, but for reasons of life and death.

The first reason is the so-called Palestinian Covenant, a threatening international document. It originated in 1964, at a time when we did not have the West Bank at all. It declares the Balfour Declaration, the League of Nations Mandate, the UN resolution of 1947. It denies the right of Jews who came to the country after 1917 to remain there. It is no question of this territory or that, but a demand to wipe out the very existence of Israel. It proclaims us to be a religion, not a nation, although we have conceived of ourselves as a nation for 4000 years, they perhaps for 20 - and still, it does not occur to us to contest their claim to nationhood. They proclaim us to be racist, although we have never been but the victims of racism.

Despite the impressions of Comrade Kreisky we remain with the Palestinian Charter which is formally reconfirmed every year and thus remains the basic document. It implies literally speaking the destruction of our people, and as long as it stands unchanged, so must our attitude.

Secondly, there is terror. I cannot believe that any Social Democrat can support or even tolerate it. You must understand our sensitivity towards the senseless murder of innocent civilians. Never have they attacked any military target or installation, only schoolchildren, airport passengers, supermarkets. They murdered under the Olympic flag, and most recently they shot one 4-year old girl hostage in the head and smashed the skull of her sister of 2 years against a rock on the seashore. On the very day of the meeting in Vienna we caught a group of infiltrators who came to take new hostages.

Third, the PLO is a supermarket of half a dozen organisations, each taking its orders from a different Arab Government, while none of them can give orders to Syria, Libya, etc. The Syrian-controlled SAIKA fell upon the Egyptian Embassy without even notifying Arafat. He, therefore, is not even in control of the components of PLO and their actions.

What happened in Vienna was that Arafat did not change, but his position and prestige were enhanced. The net result was an increase in his recognised standing, without any change on his part, ideological or pragmatic.

He was permitted to compare us to Nazis without any reservations being uttered. We, who with all the murderers we have caught never carried out even one execution. We, who have no gallows, and through our whole statehood executed only Adolf Eichmann. After all, we are not in the West Bank, because we woke up one morning with an appetite for territory. We came in possession of it, because King Hussein would not heed all our appeals to keep the peace, and we had to act in pure self-defence.

We do not doubt the good intentions underlying the meeting in Vienna, but it was detached from realistic positions. We are glad that the intention to invite the PLO to the SI has been denied, but the mere rumour caused harm to our Party.

We feel that our Party leaders in the SI ought to express themselves unequivocally on the issue of terror. We do not want them or anyone else to defend us. We shall, if need be, defend ourselves. But they should be unequivocal on our right to do so and to have conditions enabling us to do so. We do not want territories, but security for our lives and our freedom.

The SI should not be a supermarket of policies like the UN. It must live and work on its ideological concepts which unite us. I trust, and we shall make every contribution, so that our partnership - for we really belong here - and the understanding between us will continue in the future as in the past.

- - -