

CONFIDENTIAL

SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL MISSION TO THE MIDDLE EAST

Discussion held at meeting of the Bureau of the
Socialist International, London, 6 January, 1974,
and decisions taken by the Bureau

The following is the detailed note which the Bureau of the International instructed the Secretariat to prepare and circulate to the members of the mission in advance of the preparatory meeting of mission members :

Karl Czernetz (Austrian Socialist Party), who had been elected rapporteur for the preparation of the mission by the Bureau meeting on December 9, introduced a confidential document (attached) which had been circulated to members of the Bureau and which contained proposals concerning the terms of reference and dates of the mission and countries to be visited by the mission. The views on these questions of the parties which were to participate in, or be represented in, the mission had been sought, and replies from the Austrian, Belgian, British, Dutch, French, Italian Social Democratic and Luxembourg Parties were included in the document. Replies from the German party and the Swedish party (which it had been agreed should represent the Scandinavian parties) had not been received at the time when the document had been prepared and it had therefore not been possible to include them in the document. Karl Czernetz said that although there were some differences of emphasis, there appeared to be fairly general agreement as regards the terms of reference which he had proposed for the mission (see page 3 of the attached document); there was also an additional proposal from the British party that the mission should "study and report on the possibilities of contact between the Socialist International and various sections of Arab political opinion, particularly those who claim to be socialists". There was, however, a major difference of opinion between those parties which wished the mission to visit only those countries most directly involved in the Arab-Israel conflict (Egypt, Israel, Jordan and Syria) and

those parties which wished the mission to visit a greater number of countries; the Bureau would have to reach a decision concerning the countries to be visited by the mission, and if a substantial number of countries were to be visited, it might be necessary for the mission to make not one single trip, but two trips (it had been decided by the Bureau on 9 December 1973, that the members of the mission should all travel together, and should all visit the same countries, without which proper evaluation and comparison would be very difficult), in order to ensure high-level participation; if two trips were to be made, a decision would also be needed as regards which countries were to be visited on each trip. Regarding the dates of the mission, Karl Czernetz proposed late February/March (see pp.6-7 of attached document), instead of January, which had been envisaged by the Bureau at its December 9 meeting.

Rodney Balcomb (secretariat of the Socialist International) informed the Bureau that after the (attached) document had been produced and circulated, the Secretariat had been informed by the French Socialist Party that in addition to the reservations felt by the French Socialist Party as regards visiting Syria, the French Socialist Party also had certain reservations concerning a visit to Libya by the mission.

Bernt Carlsson (Swedish Social Democratic Party) stated that, as regards the terms of reference which had been proposed for the mission, his Party objected to the point relating to frontiers and did not want this point to be included in the terms of reference for the mission; the other points of the terms of reference, he said, were acceptable to his Party. He said that his Party supported the British proposal (see above) for political contacts with the Arabs at Party level. Regarding the question of which countries should be visited by the mission, he said that his Party saw no point in going to Israel now that the General Elections in Israel had taken place; as regards which Arab countries should be visited, his Party felt that the mission should cover a broad political spectrum even including Saudi Arabia and also supported the idea of having talks with the Palestinian leaders. Regarding the timing of the mission, Bernt Carlsson said that his Party did not feel that there was any hurry for the group to leave and no need for it to leave immediately; his Party felt that it should be made very clear that the mission of the International was not an alternative to the Geneva conference, but a Party mission. He said that the expectations which might be aroused by the mission should be kept to a minimum in order to avoid any possible impression of failure.

Gerhard Kleipsties (German Social Democratic Party) stated that his Party agreed generally with the draft proposals put forward by the Rapporteur. He said that what the Bureau now had to discuss was whether the mission should visit simply the four countries principally involved in the Arab-Israel conflict or whether Algeria, Tunisia and Libya could also be included in the mission's itinerary. He said that if it was possible to visit countries additional to the four countries principally involved in the Arab-Israel conflict, then Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya should all be visited and not just one of these latter countries. He said that his Party considered it important that

the mission should discuss what could be done to improve economic and social conditions in the Arab countries visited by the mission, and he said that in the Arab world there was a wish to open a dialogue with the member Parties of the Socialist International.

Karl Czernetz, referring to the views expressed by Parties on the proposed terms of reference which had been circulated, said that, as Rapporteur, he had no objection to the proposal of the Dutch Party to change the phrase "a humane solution of the problem of Palestinian refugees" contained in the proposed terms of reference to read : "a humane and political solution of the problem of Palestinian refugees". Regarding the countries to be visited by the mission Karl Czernetz said that he personally thought it important to visit Libya, as Libya had some influence in Egypt; he also thought it would be useful to visit Algeria and Tunisia which were countries bordering on southern Europe; he said that Bruno Kreisky was in favour of visiting these countries. Karl Czernetz said that the Bureau must decide whether

the mission should visit a small group of countries or a largernumber of countries. If a smaller number of countries were to be visited then this could be Egypt, Libya, Jordan, Israel, Syria and meetings with Palestinian leaders, or the Bureau might share the view of Bruno Kreisky that a largernumber of countries should be visited. If a larger number of countries were visited this would take about two weeks and in order to ensure the high-level participation originally proposed by the Party Leaders' conference, it would therefore be necessary to make two trips of about a week instead of one single trip of two weeks. In the event of two separate trips being made, it would be necessary to decide which countries should be visited on each trip. The division of countries could be made in one of two ways : either the countries most directly involved in the war could be visited in the first trip and the remaining countries in the second trip, or the division of countries could be made on the basis of geographical convenience. Karl Czernetz proposed that, if it were

decided to visit a larger number of countries, the countries should be divided into two trips on a geographical basis. He proposed that on the first trip Israel, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia and Algeria should be visited, with the remaining countries to be visited on the second trip. As regards dates he proposed that the first trip should be made at the end of February or beginning of March and that, if a second trip were to be made, this should be made at the end of March.

Gerhard Kleipsties said that, as it had been decided that the delegation should be high-level, and as it was not possible to know at this stage what the situation might be in the Middle East by March, it was perhaps preferable that the terms of reference should not be too detailed and should be as simple and as few in number as possible; in particular, the question of borders was perhaps a Pandora's box which should not be opened.

Francis Cassar said that there now appeared to be a change in the objectives and substance of the mission which had originally been proposed by the Party Leaders' conference. Instead of the high-level mission in January 1974 which had been suggested by the Party Leaders, it was now proposed to send a mission in March which would be at the level of members of Party secretariats; the Bureau was trying to wait and see what

would happen at the Geneva Conference. In view of all this, Francis Cassar said that he wished to "declare an interest" and that he would take no part in the discussions or decisions of the Bureau regarding the mission.

Paavo Lipponen (Finnish Social Democratic Party) stated that his Party felt that there was no need to send a mission to the Middle East very quickly; the mission should not leave until the new Israeli government had been formed and perhaps March would be the best time for the mission to go. As regards the proposed terms of reference for the mission contained in the document which had been circulated to the Bureau, his Party did not wish that any of the four points (a) (b) (c) and (d) should be dropped, but felt that point (b) relating to frontiers, and point (c) relating to the Palestinians should not in any way be made public. As regards point (c) of the proposed terms of reference, he felt that the wording should not imply any kind of partiality and proposed that the wording of section (c) (which in any case should not be made public) should be "as a solution to guarantee the rights of the Palestinian Arabs". Regarding the question of which countries should be visited he said he agreed that countries not directly involved in the conflict should be visited and that the mission should visit at least Algeria and Saudi Arabia and possibly also Tunisia; it would not be so useful, he thought, to visit Libya. He felt that it would be necessary to make two separate trips and felt that the mission itself should decide which countries should be visited on each trip. Paavo Lipponen drew attention to the fact that it had been decided at the Bureau meeting on December 9, that one representative of the Scandinavian member Parties should participate in the mission to the Middle East; this meant, he said, that the Finnish Party by this definition would not be represented in the mission and he requested therefore that the mission to the Middle East should include not a representative of the Scandinavian parties, but a representative of the Nordic parties so that in this way the Finnish Party was represented in the mission. (his Party was not asking, however, that one of the actual members of the mission should be a member of the Finnish Social Democratic Party). The Bureau agreed to this request from Paavo Lipponen.

Harry van den Bergh (Dutch Labour Party) stated that it was the position of his Party that there should be direct contact and direct negotiations between Israel and the Arab States with which she was at war in order to arrive at a just peace. Now that bilateral talks were going on at the Geneva Conference, he said, it was the view of his Party that a mission of the International to the Middle East should not in any way attempt to compete with or intervene in the Geneva talks. His Party was hoping that the Dutch representative on the mission to the Middle East would be a government minister, but they would not be prepared to send a government minister if the mission tried to compete with or gave the impression of competing with the Geneva conference; if the mission tried to do this it would in any case make itself ridiculous. However, his Party believed that the International should have links with democratic socialist-minded parties in the Arab World insofar as there were any, and his Party felt that the International should try to deepen relations in the long-term between Israel and the Arab States

and between Europe and the Arabs, including relations of economic co-operation. He felt that a mission of the International with such objectives as he had just outlined could be sent to the Middle East in March or April when the Geneva Conference was seen to be going successfully, and in such an event his Party would try to send a government minister as their representative on the mission.

Tom McNally (British Labour Party) agreed with previous speakers that the terms of reference of the mission should be as few and as simple as possible, and that the mission should not attempt to compete with or duplicate in any way the work of the Geneva Conference. He felt that a mission of the International could go to the Middle East in the spring with the general objective of investigating the possibilities of economic and political co-operation in the Middle East.

Antonio Cariglia (Italian Social Democratic Party) stated that by March there might have been developments at the Geneva Conference and that this could be a good time for the mission of the International to leave. He said that his Party was in general agreement with the terms of reference which had been proposed and felt that the terms of reference should not be too detailed. He said that the International was a political organisation and that the mission must therefore consider all political questions. He said that the resolutions which had been adopted by various bodies of the International could not be set aside and should be borne in mind by the mission. Questions which he felt the mission should, for example, bear in mind were: * the right of Israel to exist and to have secure frontiers; the question of relations between Europe, Israel and other Middle Eastern countries in order to promote economic development in the area; and the impact on Europe and the developing world of certain decisions taken by Arab countries.

Victor Larock (Belgian Socialist Party) stated that as regards point (c) of the terms of reference, this should refer not to "Palestinian refugees" but simply to "Palestinians". He said that the Bureau should today not take a final decision on the countries to be visited but he felt that Lebanon should be included in the itinerary of the mission.

Michael Harish (Israel Labour Party) stated that in principle his Party agreed with the idea of sending a mission to the Middle East. He said that the remarks which he was about to make were intended to try to put the mission into the context of the work of the International. The idea of sending a mission to the Middle East came up, he said, at the Party Leaders' conference in November 1973, in the context of the October war between Israel and the Arabs. Before the October war, the International had already established the Middle East Study Group to study Arab political forces with which the International could establish contact. It was not logical now, he said, to have a mission going which would confuse these two issues; if it did, then it would be taking over the work of the Middle East Study Group and at this point the Study Group would have come to an end. He said that the Bureau should first define whether the proposed mission to the Middle East was to take place on the basis of what had been proposed at the Party Leaders' Conference. From that, he said, one came to the question of borders. The

*insert : "the problem of the Palestinian Arabs, the solution to which should be both humane and political";

International could not and should not attempt to draw up borders; neither the Israelis nor the Arabs would wish this. However, the mission should look into the question of borders and should find out the position of the different countries on this question. Regarding the countries to be visited by the mission, Michael Harish said that there were two types of countries: firstly, the four countries directly involved in the Israel-Arab conflict and within this context there was also the Palestinian question; secondly, there were other countries such as Algeria, Libya, Tunisia, etc. The Bureau should say why the mission should visit these latter countries. He said that he was not opposed to the mission visiting Libya, because Libya had an influence upon Egypt and Syria. In this context, however, Saudi Arabia was very important because President Sadat of Egypt could not have started the October war without the agreement and financial support of King Faisal. Therefore Saudi Arabia and Libya had to be considered more or less on the same basis. Then there were other North African countries: Tunisia was different from Algeria and Libya as regards its internal political structure; there were other countries bordering Europe which it was not proposed that the mission should visit. Returning to the proposed terms of reference for the mission Michael Harish said that he was not opposed to the formulation of the Dutch Labour Party referring to a "humane and political" solution of the problem of Palestinian refugees. He said that he saw this question in terms of the regime where most of the Palestinians were now living, but that others might see this question differently. In his view, both the question of borders and the question of the Palestinians had to be studied by the mission.

Ian Mikardo (British Labour Party; Acting Chairman of the Bureau), summing up, said that there was a limit to which the Bureau could tell the participants what they should discuss, and the participants also had some rights to decide exactly when they should go; he also drew attention to the practical travel difficulties of visiting a number of Middle Eastern countries within a short space of time. He said that it was now known who would be the members of the mission and it was known that the period being considered for the mission was mid-February-mid-March. He proposed therefore that a preparatory meeting should be convened of the members of the mission together with the Chairman and General Secretary. He proposed also that the secretariat of the International should make a careful and detailed note of the discussion in the Bureau, setting out all the views put forward during the discussion; this note should be circulated to the members of the mission before the preparatory meeting and the members of the mission at the preparatory meeting should reach conclusions concerning the exact dates of the mission, the countries to be visited and the terms of reference. Following the preparatory meeting, a note of the conclusions of the meeting should be circulated to the members of the Bureau, so that if any Bureau member found any of the conclusions unacceptable, a meeting of the Bureau could be convened to discuss that particular conclusion.

Michael Harish said that, as regards the countries to be visited by the mission, it was important that the first group of countries to be visited should include the four countries principally involved in the conflict, i.e., Israel, Egypt, Jordan and Syria; he wanted the Bureau to take a decision on

this question, but provided that these four countries were visited he did not mind what other countries were visited by the mission.

The Bureau agreed to the proposals of Ian Mikardo regarding a preparatory meeting of members of the mission. The Bureau also agreed that Israel, Egypt, Jordan and Syria must be visited by the mission, and must be in the first group of countries to be visited, but left it to the preparatory meeting of members of the mission to decide (subject to final approval by Bureau members as proposed above by Ian Mikardo) which other countries should be visited by the mission. The Bureau reaffirmed its decision of December 9, 1973, that the first country to be visited by the mission should be Israel.

Harry van den Bergh raised the question of publicity concerning the mission and asked whether the mission would give any press conferences or interviews during or after its visit to the Middle East.

The Bureau decided that since the Middle East mission was a mission of the Bureau of the International, the report of the findings of the mission must be made to the Bureau and it would be for the Bureau to decide what should or should not be published. The mission should therefore not give any press conferences or interviews before the report of the mission had been presented to the Bureau.

Hans Janitschek asked what information the Secretariat was allowed to publish concerning the mission at this stage. The Bureau agreed that it could be announced at this stage that the Bureau had decided to send a fact-finding mission to the Middle East between mid-February and mid-March which would be led by Bruno Kreisky. The Parties which would be participating in the mission could be named, but no names of individuals were to be made public; no other information should be published at this stage.

The question was raised as to whether a member of the staff of the Secretariat of the International should accompany the mission to the Middle East and it was agreed that the members of the mission should decide on this question at their preparatory meeting.

Harry van den Bergh drew attention to the fact that sending a party member to the Middle East on the proposed mission posed a difficult financial problem for the Dutch Labour Party. He asked whether the Bureau was prepared to find arrangements to help overcome this problem.

Ian Mikardo pointed out that a representative of the Dutch Labour Party who participated in the mission would also be representing the Belgian and Luxembourg Parties, and enquired whether it might not be possible to obtain financial assistance from those two Parties.