

## INTERVIEW WITH ISRAEL GAT

Barbara Taufar introduces Israel Gat: Israel Gat, director of the international department of Israel's Labour party, met Bruno Kreisky in Vienna even very often. They also met during the SI negotiations.

BT: Israel, could you tell me when did you meet Kreisky the last time?

IG: The last time was around half a year before he died.

BT: How was that meeting?

IG: I don't remember exactly. I went to visit him. His house there. So this meeting, was not something very special that I can remember. But the meetings before were more meaningful.

BT: How many times did you meet him and in what capacity?

IG: I met him - I don't know - tens of times, hundreds of times, I think.

BT: As a representative of the international department of the Mifleget Avoda (Hebrew for Labour party).

IG: As director of the international department and as somebody who took care and who was in contact with him about the Israeli problem. I was one of those who was in contact with him about the Israeli-Arab conflict, Israeli historical problems, views, you know, and so on.

BT: Now, let us go back to the beginning. I would like to know when did you hear for the very first time the name Kreisky and what did it mean to you?

IG: Yes, I knew about him years back.

BT: Try to be concrete.

IG: Something in the beginning of the sixties, I knew already about him.

BT: What was known about him in Israel in the Mifleget Avoda and in the circles where you were dealing with?

IG: At that time we did not deal with Bruno Kreisky, I just knew about him. I knew about his being Jewish, being one of the leaders of the Socialist party of Austria, of his problem with Jewish people as such and so forth.

BT: Why was it known in that time that he had problems with the Jewish people as such?

IG: Again, I would not say problems, the problem of him as being somebody who was never really brought up as a Jew. You know, he belonged to one of the families assimilated families in Austria.

BT: Yes, but in the sixties, when he was Secretary of state of Foreign Affairs and later on foreign minister, there was never any discussion about Judaism with any Israeli partner, if I remember right?

IG: That is true, what you are saying, that what we knew about his positions, I mean, we heard about his position.

BT: That he was not a Zionist?

IG: That he was not a Zionist, that he had his own views, you know.

BT: Which means already in the sixties the Labour party knew about him and they were a little bit suspicious about the man?

IG: Not suspicious. You know the story that Léon Blum and Herzl both were reporting about the Dreyfus trial. And one became Zionist out of this and the other one became the leader of the Socialist party. So it is not something that you are against him, but just one, who did not identify himself with Zionism, with the state of Israel. And he had also critical views, although at that time we did not hear about his critical views.

BT: Now, critical views. There were also other Jews in the world like Kissinger, who was not a Zionist, and he also had critical views, if I remember right. He even said that loudly, and there was even a book written about it. So I don't think that critical views per se would have made the problem?

IG: No. That was not a problem, you know.

BT: How did the Labour party react when Kreisky met in the sixties Nasser for the first time and when he started - due to the job he had - to meet other Arab leaders? Was there any awareness here about it?

IG: Not much. I mean, we knew, of course, like anybody else out of the news that he met this and this person and other persons. But this was not part of the discussion at that time. He was then not the leader of Austria. He was not the prime minister. He was not the chancellor.

BT: How were the relations in the sixties between Israel and Austria? Or let us say, if you remember better, between the Labour party and Austria?

IG: At that time Austria and Germany, there was still the, the

BT: Wiedergutmachung (reparation) discussions.

IG: Yes. Not only this but the background of the Holocaust. So the relationship with Germany and Austria was special. Special from the point of view which, by the way, continues still to be, for example, with Germany up today. I mean, there are different things that Germany would like today to do, they are not doing, because they have this past. So this was true also. At that time even more so, because it was closer to the Second World War. So at that time, I can't remember Kreisky being a problem. He was then meeting Arab leaders. And this made him a sort of person, who is accepted everywhere. He is a sort of man who goes all over the world and he is accepted everywhere.

BT: But it was not yet any subject in discussions in the Labour party in the sixties?

IG: No, not yet.

BT: When he started the Middle East trips in the framework of the Socialist International, of course, he very much became a focus of the interest of the socialists here. Tell me something about it, because it was not easy.

IG: His first visit at all to Israel was, if I remember correctly, January or February '74, and I welcomed him on the airport.

BT: You knew him already?

IG: I knew him already from the Socialist International and meetings before. So I knew him already years back. I mean, he knew me, I knew him. We were speaking friendly, you know, and so on. And I was practically his guide here in Israel.

BT: How was that, emotionally, if you remember? I suppose you watched him.

IG: The whole thing was a very emotional visit here, especially the meeting with his brother. It was his first meeting with his brother for years. Maybe, I can't remember now exactly, if this was, if he saw him just before the war or if he saw him even after the war. If I remember correctly, he saw him just before the war, which means something like what? Like twenty something years, and so on. And as you know, he was a sick person, his brother. And on this occasion he met also the brother's son. And this was a very dramatic moment. Both of them were crying, you know, and this I have never seen, of course, Kreisky so emotional and so ... he was on the point, really, of a certain breakdown. It was not a show. It was a very close meeting. It was him, myself, the son of the brother, maybe one other person. So it was really very close...

BT: In Tel Aviv?

IG: In Tel Aviv. And this made a very great impact on us, Kreisky and the whole thing with his family here.

BT: He came here for what purpose?

IG: He came here as part of a Middle East tour immediately after the war in order to create an atmosphere of ..., playing a role for the Socialist International, doing something for the peace process. So he was positive and already at that time. He came here from Cairo. And in Cairo he had a very dramatic visit that he reported about it. And after this there were many discussions about this visit.

BT: Maybe you go into detail?

IG: This was still Golda, as prime minister.

BT: Of course, Golda's relationship with Kreisky was after the Yom Kippur War and Schönau ...

IG: After Schönau.

BT: So how was that?

IG: After Schönau and again: I mean the whole thing with Schönau. What happened with Schönau was that Kreisky said something about the whole thing of changing the camp and he will give another camp, you know, and so on, and so forth. And Golda Meir, being very sceptical, because she was a politician with years of experience, she was sceptical. Will he keep his word and will Vienna continue to be the centre of Jews coming from the East ...?

BT: Well, she is reported to have told him that actually he, being a Jew, he has to obey what she wants from him?

IG: This ..., maybe she said this in Vienna when they had the meeting. But I am speaking of here. Here, I was present at all the meetings.

BT: And how was it here? Between the two?

IG: That is what I want to say. Here, this was already after Kreisky has kept his promise, and she was very much influenced by this, positively.

BT: So there was no anger anymore, or was there a tense situation between the two?

IG: In my mind, no, there was no anger. Because, as I am saying, he did two things that she knew about. One was this thing which, you know where he at the end came out that he promised something and he kept what he promised. And Vienna continued to be very successfully for years the centre of Jews coming from the Soviet Union. So this was one point, why she was impressed by Kreisky. And the second thing was his visit in Cairo. He came here from Cairo, and in Cairo he did something very special. You must remember that this was two months after the war of Yom Kippur. And he

stood there at the hotel, I can't remember the name of the hotel in Cairo. I'm telling you what he told us, what he told Golda and which turned out to be true. And he came there, he was there in the hotel, and thousands of people gathered around the hotel ...

BT: Clapping?

IG: ... clapping and hailing Kreisky for what he did, for what sort of friend he is to the Arabs and to Egypt, and so on. And he came out and spoke to them and said to them, „It is true. I am your friend. But I am also a friend of Israel. And I am telling you this now, two months after the war, after thousands of people were killed.“

BT: He made this speech to the masses?

IG: To the masses in Cairo two months after the war! So those two things influenced very much her view about him, which was not really negative, because he was a clever person, a wise person. He knew a lot. He was intellectual, you see. And all this Golda Meir felt, not only saw and heard, but also felt. So those two last things were impressing, which means added positive views about him. So all in all, I think the visit was very good and her attitude was positiv.

BT: What was discussed during that meeting? What was the Israeli position and how did Kreisky react to it?

IG: He was speaking about the Palestinian-Israeli peace, of course. He was speaking that we should come together, meet together. And this he was doing with me for years after this.

BT: Yes, but I speak now about this meeting.

IG: At this meeting we were talking also about Palestinians, we were talking about the Palestinian, about the Israeli-Egyptian peace, about the Syrian-Israeli peace. We were talking about the whole Middle Eastern situation and the peace process between the countries. Now, to speak about these things two months after the war, it was not a simple thing, and he did it in a very successful way, I mean, clear way of presenting the things how and what can be done, what should be done to come to a peace agreement with the Egyptians. I can't say that he foresaw the peace agreement with Sadat, because it is very difficult ... I can't also remember the details, but if I remember he said something like: „I am sure you can achieve peace with the Egyptians.“

BT: He was convinced about it?

IG: He was convinced about it.

BT: Was Golda convinced that he could be helpful? How did she look at the Socialist International as a helpful channel to the Arab world?

IG: She was positive. She thought like all of us at that time that the Socialist International is playing an important role for bringing together, for trying to make peace. And we all thought all at the end of the road, even if there will be no peace, it serves Israel. It's a body which to my mind serves Israel.

BT: The idea of being comrades, of all being socialists, which means of having a common bond, was that still very strong between Kreisky and the Israeli Labour party?

IG: It was very strong, but I think it was more than this. This was also a part, I mean, immediately after the war but also before the war the Socialist International, Socialist movements, which existed before the war, they were friendly to Zionism and friendly to Israel - not Israel but Palestine at that time - and the Zionist aspirations. And Kreisky was part of this legend that social democracy is with us, with the progressive movements in the Middle East. So we saw in the Socialist International a positive movement for Israel.

BT: He admired very much, it was said, the developments in Israel and the success of the so-called Israeli enterprise?

IG: Yes, very much. We visited a couple of kibbutzim. We visited moshavim (i.e. smallholders' cooperatives), we visited the cooperative movement, Histadrut. So we visited practically everything, which had to do with the labour movement, the historical labour movement in that time. He was very much impressed by it.

BT: A few months later Golda had to leave office and Yitzhak Rabin came to power. It is told that Kreisky had immediately a very bad relationship with Yitzhak Rabin. He also wrote about it. How did you watch that develop and what was the real reason for it?

IG: You see, because one thing was really funny. At the beginning, when he was on the first visit in Israel, we came to a meeting - it was a meeting, I think an official meeting with the government only ... There was a body at that time „sareinu“, which means „our ministers“. And this meeting ..., Golda, of course, was chairing this meeting and Rabin was already minister at that time, minister of labour. And we came out of this meeting and Kreisky said to me, what was his name, the name of this man? I said to him, Yitzhak Rabin. So he said, „I think he is going to be the leader of your party.“ And this was before any fight for the power. This was the real, the first meeting. This was January or February 74. And he already then saw that Rabin has leadership qualities and he is going to be the leader of the party. So on one hand, he was very positive towards this person from the point of view of capability, leadership, and so on. But then, of course, he had different sorts of views through the Socialist International, through our meetings together.

BT: He found him a very dry, militaristic person in that time.

IG: He cannot say militaristic, because Rabin, I mean, he can appear militaristic, but he didn't say anything militaristic. He was dry, because he was a dry person. He was not the sort of person that ...

BT: He was not a charmer like Peres?

IG: No, no, no.

BT: There was again a meeting of Kreisky in Israel. I think it was '77, because I was here already, when he came to the Dan Hotel and he gave his speech at the Labour party congress. Why was he invited?

IG: He was invited like all the leaders of the Socialist International to come to the congresses. Some of them came, some of them did not come. Some of them came even in '77, when we lost power. They came to save the Labour party.

BT: In that time, I remember, Kreisky had already very explicit views, which were not very much liked. Although people listened to him during his speech carefully, he only got a very polite applause. And Rabin didn't even go to the reception afterwards for him. What had happened?

IG: His view vis-à-vis the Palestinians, this was the critical problem with Kreisky at that time. And I'm telling you this as a dove, somebody who thinks that the whole peace process was right now, that we did the right thing. And even in that time I wanted to have contact with the PLO, which Willy tried to arrange for me, by the way. But I think he was wrong, because as long as the PLO didn't stop the terror, there was no room for us going forward and making with them business and starting to deal with them. He thought that we should, first of all, talk to them and then, they will start to talk also to us. This could not happen and did not happen. It also proved historically that Kreisky was wrong in this. We started with the talks secretly. Secretly that is all right, no problem about this, but officially to recognise them, and so on, this was for the moment when they announced, „We are going to make peace.“ And that's it.

BT: Now let us go back to this meeting here in Tel Aviv in winter '77, I think. Why was there a rather cold reception for him? Because he was in that time not yet so involved with the Palestinians.

IG: I don't know really, if he knew already Issam Sartawi. I think he knew him already. Maybe not, I don't know. Kreisky was also a type of person who was a total intellectual. I mean, it doesn't matter what sort of conflict he has got as a person - he saw a historical way and he said, „That's the way.“ So he from the beginning thought that we should talk with the Palestinians, they would then give peace.

BT: The Labour party was emotionally, of course, not ready, because there were a lot of terror attacks in that time.

IG: Of course.

BT: Which means already the mentioning of making peace and starting to talk with the Palestinian was actually almost a frivolous act to do.

IG: No, it could have come, like it happened afterwards with the Norwegians. I mean to come and say, „I am going to see to it that they stop terror.“ Next morning you meet them, to try to do it in this way.

BT: Yes, but Kreisky had the idea that first you have to start talking with each other and then the peace process will start. Because out of the blue people will not stop their terrorist actions.

IG: Yes, but he didn't even ask for that. He didn't. I mean, he didn't come to us and said: „Look, I can arrange quietly, speak with Rabin before, and after this with Shimon“ - to come and say: „Look, you know, I have good relations with the PLO. I am going to arrange secretly a representative of you and a representative of the PLO to meet somewhere in the world and talk about different situations to do things together.“ He didn't say that. Never.

BT: Never?

IG: Never.

BT: What did he want then from you?

IG: He wanted from us that we should announce that the PLO is our partner and we are going to talk with them.

BT: Without preliminary talks?

IG: Without preliminary talks, without arranging things, without all this sort of very basic, diplomatic work, which should have been done. It cannot be, cannot happen without it.

BT: Did you never ask him, „Why don't you arrange firstly secret talks with them, because we need to know more about our future partner?“

IG: I tried it. And this was one of the things that he did by introducing to me Issam Sartawi and, with whom I had good relations. And we started to have some talks at that time.

BT: That was when?

IG: Something like '78.

BT: Not before?



IG: No, no, not before. '78 I think, yes. And at that time we were not anymore in the government. So we didn't have really the power to do this. But even as opposition party we could have taken a decision, to do this in this or the other way. But it didn't come to it, because it was not enough. And Sartawi was not empowered by Arafat to do this.

BT: Now going back to these times, to the seventies, Kreisky was not only meeting with Palestinians, he met also with Qaddafi. How was the reaction of the leaders of the Labour party, when it came to his relationships to Qaddafi, for example?

IG: The attitude was very, very negative, all over the country, not only in the Labour party. I mean, one can understand his being friendly with Arafat, because he thinks that Arafat with us together, they have to make peace at the end of the day. But why with this crazy Qaddafi?

BT: Why do you say crazy? You really believe that this man was or is crazy?

IG: Not only that we think! He was in a psychiatric home in Cairo. So it was not something theoretical, it was something we knew. This man is crazy.

BT: Did you tell Kreisky?

IG: Of course, we talked many times about it.

BT: How was his reaction?

IG: His reaction was, „Yes, but he is the leader of the people and we should see to it that even those, who are crazy and make very damaging things, that they should make less damaging things. We should make them to be more reasonable.“ I am not saying that he, Kreisky, did not have reasons why to do this. But I am saying this was not accepted here.

BT: The reaction in that time by the newspapers was extremely aggressive, extremely insulting, ...

IG: You are speaking about Israel?

BT: ...and Kreisky, even while helping by bringing the Jews here to Israel, he was insulted of being a traitor, of being a self-hating Jew, etc. And these are the less insulting words. How do you explain this enormous emotional uproar against ..., against him?

IG: Again we have to see everything in the perspective of time, of that time. I mean again, him meeting Qaddafi, him meeting Arafat - who even today has some problems with his image, I mean, even when you are already making peace with him, and we think we did the right thing, he has some problems with his appearing, how he

appears, you know, and so on. So all these things and him being friendly with all those persons, you get a negative view about him. Maybe I can tell you here the story, which might interest you also for this interview. Some time in '76, we were still in power, Rabin was prime minister and there was a meeting of the bureau of the party and I was a member then. And there was a lot of criticism. Something had happened in the Socialist International, I can't remember. And he was severely criticised.

BT: By whom?

IG: By everybody.

BT: In the Socialist International?

IG: No, no in the bureau of the party here. So everyone was criticising, including the very severe criticism of Galili. So I asked the floor and I stood up and told them all the things about Kreisky, positive. There were some people who thought that I committed suicide, political suicide, at that time. I told them I did the right thing. And to be fair and frank, this just proves how much people don't know somebody. Even if you hate, you need some basis for hating somebody, you know. But it was a sort of hatred which didn't have enough basis. Because after I told all those things, all of a sudden the whole hall ... it was ... You know, the bureaux of the parties are usual big bodies. There were something like sixty, seventy, eighty, maybe ninety people there in the hall, upstairs. And I was telling all those things. I was telling the story with him speaking immediately after the war in Cairo and all these things, doing a favour. Golda was still here, she was not yet out. She was still a member of the bureau, and she admitted all those things that I said, you know, and so on. So the whole atmosphere all of a sudden ...

BT: Crumbled.

IG: ... not crumbled, but a little bit changed. And Galili shouted to me in the room, „Okay, then go and kiss your friend“, you know, something like this.

BT: Very aggressive!

IG: Very, very aggressive. Still while I was speaking, during my speech, while I was speaking, he said this to me, you know. So I said, „Okay, Israel,“ he was also Israel like myself, so I said, „Okay Israel, if that's what you understand from my speech, I am sorry that this is only the narrow thing that you can see. But what can I do? I cannot do more than this.“ And I still continued to speak a little bit more about it. Then Galili came to me, who had never spoken to me, because we had never many things to do together, and he invited me to lunch, to tell him about Kreisky. He did not know those things. Which means again, although Kreisky was a well-known person, Kreisky, his balanced views about Israel and the Arab world were not seen by many.

BT: Well, wasn't it also because the press distorted so many things here?

IG: Yes, might be the press. But again, we cannot always blame the press. I mean, it is a mixture of inviting criticism about himself. On one hand he was supposed to be a person who knows the Middle East. Now he knew a lot of things about the Middle East. But then there were a lot of things he did not know.

BT: Can you explain?

IG: Yes, he did not know, for example, ... he was not grown up in a Zionist family. He was grown up in an assimilated family of Jews who were sort of Austrian Mosaic Glaubens - people who believed in Moses and not in Jesus, but Austrians. That is how he grew up. Okay. Now, he did not know many things about the Zionist movement. He did not know the many theoretical socialist things about the Zionist movement, socialist movement and the Zionist movement, you know. So all those things he did not know. He did not know that we tried for many, many years to create a bi-national state, that this was the basic idea, that one day we should do this.

BT: And that the Palestinians and the Arabs rejected it?

IG: They didn't accept it. You see, all these sorts of things he did not know. Afterwards he knew a lot, he read a lot.

BT: Did he ask you a lot of questions, when you were with him?

IG: Oh, a lot of questions. We were speaking for hours.

BT: When you came to him, for example, was the business done immediately and then you went into private talking-sessions, or how would that go? Or would he complain a lot about politicians in Israel, how he is treated in Israel ..., and you would give him a lecture about things he does not understand?

IG: It was a mixture of everything. I can remember once, it was on a Saturday evening, and it was arranged, I will come to him in the morning. So I didn't arrange anything for this day. It was a free day. I came to him at ten o'clock into the villa and I stayed with him until eleven o'clock in the night. Thirteen hours, thirteen hours of Middle East! And I liked this talk, it was a fantastic talk with him, because he was an intelligent person. And I think he *was*, because otherwise he would not have kept me there for thirteen hours.

BT: He gave you a lecture or you lectured?

IG: He gave me a lecture, and I lectured him about many things that he did not know and he admitted, he did not know. It was an exchange of views: what should we do, tactically and politically, in the Socialist International? Is there still a role for the Socialist International? Is there still a role for him? We really talked all the time. I think even today that he had a positive role in the Middle East, in the whole peace process.

BT: Would you consider him thinking about peace, before the time was ready here for peace?

IG: I think so. I think so. He was a sort of prophet before the time.

BT: Was he emotionally involved in Israel, or was it only a humanitarian problem for him, or a political problem?

IG: It was a mixture of both. Especially after the Second World War it was clear that there is no other solution for the Jewish people but a Jewish state. And he more or less came to this conclusion, although - as I said - he did not grow up as Zionist.

BT: Yes, but he always said for him Israel has to exist, so the Jews would find a secure home, if they are ever again threatened somewhere. Basically, he respected very much the existence of Israel and he never, never denied that. How come that with all the sympathy, for example, you had towards him and he had for many years for Peres - how come that even in the Labour party there was such an uproar of emotional feelings for Kreisky?

IG: Again, because Kreisky thought that he should play a sort of balanced view, in order to be the sort of tool to bring the peace, you know, to make a little bit the peace coming forward, and so on.

BT: So why wasn't it possible for Shimon Peres to have a permanent close relationship with him as he had, for example, with Willy Brandt?

IG: Because Willy Brandt was less involved in the policies, in the real political making of decisions about the Middle East. It was easier with him, because Willy Brandt never was so outspoken like Kreisky.

BT: Because he was Jewish?

IG: Maybe, because he was Jewish and he dared to do this, maybe this too. But I told you this, I think, to be honest to Kreisky, to be fair to Kreisky. I think this was his view. It can happen in politics that somebody speaks up his mind.

BT: Now, why could Shimon Peres not accept that?

IG: Shimon Peres could not accept this as a leader of a Labour party, because for the same reason - just to give you an example - for the same reason as we could not accept the Finnish Declaration. We cannot accept that somebody, who is not carrying the burden or the security problems that we carry here, comes and starts to teach us, what to do. And that is, one of the reasons why the United States was more successful, in the whole approach to the Middle East conflict. And today it proves again that, in spite of the United States being so friendly to Israel, they are accepted also among the Arab countries, because they never say, who is good and who is bad,

what is good and what is bad. What they tried to do all the time was, to try to bring us together. If Kreisky would have limited himself only to this, he would have had another image in Israel. He tried to be more active in the peace process and more active and tried to say, now you are right, now you are half right. You know, this sort of things.

BT: How much of his political work for peace in the Middle East was in your opinion worthless because of his very emotional remarks against Begin, against Shamir, against the Israeli army - a „gang of bandits“ he said, or that there is no Jewish people, if you remember the famous interview? How much were his efforts worthless after these remarks?

IG: With the years, when he became less and less influential in those issues, he started to be more and more bitter and more and more irresponsible with his remarks. This was not always Kreisky. It was a sort of a development, but it decreased his ability or understanding that he can do something for the peace process. By declaring all these sorts of things, is, if you want to play a role, not helpful. If you don't want to play a role, why are you saying those things? If you just want to say it in order to take it out from your heart, I mean, to free your heart a little bit and feel free, okay, then it's all right.

BT: Did you never discuss with your own comrades in the Labour party that Kreisky was very frustrated by the incapacities, it seems, of the socialists to make a courageous step forward? Remember the remarks he made that he wanted so much to bring Peres and Tohami together - so that the Labour party would make the peace with Egypt - and that Rabin did not allow Peres to go there. There is another version that Rabin thought this offer was never true. He was never even approached by Kreisky. There are many conflicting stories. Maybe Kreisky gave up the idea and thought the Labour party is not ready or not willing to make peace. Did you discuss that with him?

IG: I discussed it with him many times, and he accused us of this sort of things. I will give you an example: a couple of times we were speaking about Arafat, and he was presenting him as an example of a leader of a national movement, he even compared him with Ben Gurion. He said Arafat - that's Ben Gurion. Arafat is doing today the things that Ben Gurion did in his time. So I said to him, again I spoke with him very friendly, so I said to him, „Bruno, there are things that you don't know. Now, if you say this in public, people will laugh, because you don't know history. I mean, that's just a chapter of history. But because we are speaking very frankly, you can tell me everything and I can tell you everything. Arafat“ - I am speaking about that time, because Arafat has changed over the time, but I am speaking about that time when we were speaking - „Arafat is not Ben Gurion. I don't know if you know, you Bruno, the story with the ship „Altalena“. This was a time when we were in war with all the Arab countries, all the Arab countries attacked us, but Ben Gurion as prime minister sent a cease-fire. One of the things in cease-fire was that there should not come any armament and here comes Begin with a ship full with armament.“ So I said to Kreisky, „Look, the independence day was an 18th of May. And this was some time

in July. And Ben Gurion ordered Begin not to bring the ship and Begin brought the ship. So Ben Gurion ordered troops. And the troops shot the ship and sank it and killed sixteen Jews, two years after the Holocaust."

BT: How did he react to the story?

IG: He did not know the story of the Altalena and he understood my view, that Arafat is not yet Ben Gurion - something like this. He understands my view. He did not say that he accepts it or something like this. But he said that he now understands why we see Arafat so different as a leader. Why he does not have the leadership of Ben Gurion.

BT: Tell me, Israel, I suppose that you and Shimon Peres tried very hard to make it clear to him that he could be useful with the Arab world and with the Palestinians, if he would organise secret talks? But Peres used to say to Kreisky that he cannot accept his views, because, if he would make them public in Israel as the views of the Labour party, he would lose the next elections. Peres was accused also from many in Labour, in the middle of the seventies, when Begin had come to power, that he shifted the Labour party very much to the right. How did the internal conflicts of the Labour party reflect on the relationship to Kreisky, to the Socialist International and then again vice versa, back from their side to Israeli Labour politics? started.

IG: It had a difficult and complex influence on both sides, in all directions. All the time we tended somehow to say, to think, that we represent the middle of the map. Now the moment you represent, the middle of the map, you have to give a feeling to the nation that you, first of all, see to their security and after this you are having policies and so on, which hopefully might bring peace. Which means, the same slogan that we are saying today, but it is not a slogan, it is a way: we are looking for peace with security. But we thought that this should be the formula and we should come to the nation. Now you cannot come to the nation after terrorist attacks, and say nothing has happened. And this we explained to Kreisky all the time. „You come and speak about one sort of thing, nice things, friendly things, everything is all right. Just one thing: the next day there is an attack of the Fatah. This cannot be together, this cannot go together. As long as this goes together, we cannot go with this peace process.“ This was on one hand. In the other hand, Begin did the peace with Egypt. So something happened in the Arab world, although it did not happen yet among the Palestinians with Fatah. It happened with Sadat. So that's why I am saying, the whole thing was very complex, not because of our relationship with Kreisky, but the whole history was complex. And out of this complexity came a sort of accepting things that Kreisky is doing. As long as he is doing sort of middle of the road, but not accepting his criticism about us and helping - what we thought at that time - helping the Palestinians against us, and there are severe and critical interests, which are in danger.

BT: During that time, when there was a lot of terror in the world coming from the Middle East, you travelled a much to Europe. Do you remember speaking with Kreisky about security affairs and how did he react?

IG: He understood security, but he thought in the general lines of politics and that politicians make the security. If you will have peace with Arafat, there will be no war, so you don't need security.

BT: But then there was a time when terror also made its way to Vienna. And I remember Vienna was called in the Israeli press once a Metropolis of terror „because of Kreisky's Middle East views. Suddenly you had Abu Nidal people threatening even Kreisky's life and then you had Libyan terrorists here and later on you had Iranian terrorists here. Was he starting to think differently about terror attacks, when he himself was threatened?

IG: No, I did not hear this ever from him. I mean, from this point of view maybe he was quite courageous, coming and saying, „This is my view. I am personally involved, okay.“ I mean it's not okay, but it's part of life. He was a sort of person, I think, who was basically, not very much worried about his life. I mean he was threatened more than once...

BT: Did you ever ask him, how he feels about terrorist attacks on Austrians, on the airport, at the United Nations people, at the OPEC-people?

IG: He was very critical against those terrorist activities. He was never for terror. This must be clear! He was the sort of person who understood, why there is terror. And he wanted this reasoning for why there is terror, this to throw it away and to diminish it, to make it not existent. And this was very difficult. We were talking not once about this thing. And we were accusing him, we were saying to him, „You see because of your view - it is not because of this, that they are coming to Austria, they are coming to Austria, because they attack everywhere where it is possible to attack, the terrorists - but part of it is your views, which don't accept that there is such a thing. You see, there is terror, there is terror against you, against us, against everybody.“ From this point of view I don't think that he had a sort of closed-up view on how and what to do and how to fight terror. He is not Netanyahu, who was specialising on these things, and he is not even Kissinger, who sort of half-specialised on how to deal with terror as such, you know.

BT: You think he looked at terror as an unpleasant phenomena on the way to make peace?

IG: He saw it ..., in other words, he saw in it an unsolved political issue.

BT: A political issue?

IG: Yes.

BT: When you said before that there were problems of selling him and his politics even to Labour party members, how did you personally then continue the relationship as a representative of the Labour party with him? What was there to talk about?

IG: No, there were many things to talk to him. a) First he was a pleasant person, an intelligent person to talk with, nothing to do with the, with Inhalt (content). No, there was a lot of things to talk, b) he was one of the leaders of Socialist International. We were there. I mean, people who don't understand the Socialist International, they don't understand something very basic. There is a body which is called Socialist International, and like a mechanic of every such a body, it's the sheer fact that you meet people and then you talk. And this sheer fact, that we met and we had to talk and we talked, this created a sort of constant airing of views and trying to influence the other. There were many things to talk all the time. All the time to try to convince him that he is wrong.

BT: Which means, there was also in the framework of the Socialist International a friction with him concerning the views he wanted his fellow members to adopt?

IG: Yes, there was a friction with him. a) Because many parties did not accept what he said and his views. Many parties, I mean, the majority did accept, but did not want to take any step against us. So all in all, he had also differences of views with leaders which had nothing to do with the Middle East

BT: He had met Issam Sartawi. And I suppose that this was for you in the Labour party a moment when all the bells started to ring. You very quickly realised that there was a very strong influence from Sartawi to Kreisky, which, of course, had its continuation not only in official Austrian politics but also in the Socialist International. Maybe you can give me some details about that time, how the Labour party and how you and Peres thought to react?

IG: I don't know exactly what Peres was really thinking. Shimon Peres was coming from time to time to important meetings, you know, but I was there on the daily basis, I mean, all the contacts and so on - Now, my attitude was from the beginning that Sartawi and the PLO are not members of the SI and they cannot participate in the SI.

BT: At any meeting?

IG: At any meeting. Now the truth is that, if there would have been a vote, there would have been a vote against me, against us. But the moment we put it categorically, look, if you think they are social democrats, then take them, without us, without us, We are leaving immediately. The same day that he is entering. So this was too critical for the SI to come and say the PLO are social democrats.

BT: You did not even in that time accept an observer status?

IG: Nothing whatsoever, Sartawi was never observer. I accepted on behalf of the Labour party that he should participate as somebody who comes there and participates as a journalist or something like this. And this was his status, he was there as a journalist. But this does not mean that I did not meet him on a personal level for talks of hours.



BT: While officially there were not yet any relationships between the PLO and the Labour party?

IG: Absolutely.

BT: But the Socialist International people knew and the journalists who were there, knew that you met with Sartawi?

IG: Yes.

BT: How did Peres react to your meetings with Sartawi?

IG: He was positive.

BT: Did you have any guidelines what to discuss with him?

IG: No, I basically discussed Labour party views. So I never get into problems, I always reported to Shimon and others.

BT: Yes, but what did you discuss with Sartawi?

IG: We discussed everything, the peace process, the personality, the work together, how to make peace, ...

BT: Did he ever mention to you to start regular secret peace talks?

IG: Who?

BT: Sartawi.

IG: No, no. He did never mention it.

BT: Did you propose it to him?

IG: No, I did not propose it to him, I don't think it came yet to this stage. At the end, when Kreisky was not there anymore and - what's his name - Wischniewski took over, then there was a time, when we met and we were talking about the possibilities to start and try to see, this was very near to his death.

BT: Let us go to the Lebanon invasion. I think, this was a crucial moment in the relations between the Israeli Labour party and Kreisky. The labour party voted with Begin for going forty kilometres into Lebanon and Kreisky said, „An invasion is an invasion“ and he wanted actually to throw out the Israeli Labour party from the Socialist International. How did you react? I suppose you went very quickly to him to Vienna to explain things?

IG: I explained this to him, but more than this, I explained to Willy Brandt. Because he was at that time not so important anymore, and Willy Brandt was the chairman, the president of the Socialist International and he did not take the line of Kreisky. He never thought that the SI can throw out the Labour party or even take into consideration such a thing.

BT: So, basically, you and the Labour party had the feeling that Kreisky cannot hurt you anymore?

IG: No, maybe he can hurt us. He did hurt us.

BT: But you did not take him serious anymore?

IG: He cannot, cannot, cannot be so ..., let us put it even more than this, to put the whole thing really in the right proportions: SI is not an important organisation, never was an important organisation, like all the international organisations, they are unimportant. At that time, the moment he mentioned to throw us out of the SI we made a tour through all the countries we thought we should speak to them, which are the stock countries in the SI. None of them was ready to do this, even to think about it. So he was practically neutralised.

BT: But, nevertheless, he could hurt you insofar that he accepted and he helped Mapam becoming a full member of the Socialist International, about which the Labour party was not very happy ?

IG: That's true. Yes. That's true, but again this was our mistake, the mistake of the labour party. I was very friendly with Mapam and Mapam people and the Mapam leadership and up to date with the situation in Mapam. But then - we are speaking of interests of parties - I said to Shimon, „Shimon, now we have to say clear our minds, speak up our minds. If we say now no to Mapam, if either us or them, they don't come. But are you ready to do this?“ Shimon was not ready, because he knew, if he would have put it categorically, he helped Mapam, internationally, but not us.

BT: Was he afraid to do so out of internal political reasons?

IG: Internal political reasons, yes. He wanted Mapam to support him, to support his possibility to become prime minister, I mean all, all politics.

BT: Did you ever made use of Kreisky personally, in relationship to other countries? In the seventies there was still the cold war going on. Did you ever make use of him in your relationship, let us say, with Russia, or with China, or with other Eastern bloc countries, or with Arab countries, besides those countries he anyway worked with?

IG: Yes, we did make use of him, because we knew his contacts, and so on. We knew that he will want this, to be of help. He was a sort of go-between the Russians at that time and other East European countries there around.

BT: Can you go into details?

IG: No, I am not sure I know enough. You see, to be fair to you, I mean, those were mostly things that I was of bringing through information. Asking him for things that the government had asked for, you know. And then again, starting from 1977, we were not anymore in power. So we had really a very short period of time that we could take advantage of him as a head of government, you see. And after this, we were not anymore in government. But I know, that the government of Begin at that time did a couple of things, if I remember correctly, through me, including some restrictions on the Russian Jews coming via Vienna - that Kreisky should do something about it, with the Russians. There were some other things vis-a-vis Jewish properties in the Eastern bloc, how we can start to do something about it.

BT: To get it back for the Jews?

IG: Yes. To get it back, or to start to make a sort of list.

BT: But it was always in relationship with Jewish people or Jewish property or the state, the state of affairs for the Jews? It was never something else?

IG: I don't know. I can't remember. Maybe I should look at the documents and see a little bit more, but then I really have to read a lot. No, I really can't remember now anything that I was involved in.

BT: After the Lebanon war Kreisky became - at the request of Begin - involved in the prisoner exchange. Suddenly the Israelis saw that this man became extremely helpful, even by criticising Israeli occupation and Begin himself as a politician. What did this make in the Labour party? Did the people perceive him maybe in the end of days a little bit different or did they take it for natural?

IG: Due to the fact that he was involved for so many years in the Middle Eastern business affairs, mingled around, they took it sort of natural. I mean, he was always involved, sometimes positive, mostly negative, but he was involved in the things. And here he helped a lot. So I mean he was always either helpful or not helpful, there were many things where he was helpful. This was one of the helpful things, what he did - what's his name - Kreisky. But I don't think that there was special thinking about him.

at that time. That was the general attitude that he was a confused figure from the point of view of the state, because at times he did good, at times he did bad for the state.

BT: Do you think that the Israelis per se had a problem with him, because they got the feeling that he did not like them? ... Let us say, if you take Clinton and the way Clinton talks about Israel and about religion and quoting from the Bible, everyone in Israel fell in love with him, yes? Now, Kreisky was not behaving that gentle.

IG: That's true. But then you must remember, there were other Jewish persons who were also very severely criticised and had less, far less criticism than Kreisky. They were already criticised. For example, Kissinger. Was very severely criticised, he was called by Begin „Jew boy“. Not many people were called „Jew boy“ by a Jew, you know. But that is another thing. So all this criticism was part of this feeling of an estranged Jew, this was perfect, this sort of feeling towards Kreisky, an estranged Jew.

BT: Why did this disturb the Israelis so much that maybe Kreisky was an estranged Jew, which means a Jew who was not identifying himself with the same things as the Israelis thought a Jew has to?

IG: Because he was involved in politics and he could bring damage. And he sometimes brought damage according to the view of the majority of the people here.

BT: For example?

IG: For example, his attitude, his praising Arafat as a democrat, as a leader, as a I don't know what. His attitude to Qaddafi, his calling him somebody who should, whom we shouldn't ...

BT: Ignore?

IG: ...ignore him, or have a better attitude towards him and so on. All this sort of things brought to him negative views.

BT: Because he was Jewish or because he just said it?

IG: Because he said it. But the fact that he is Jewish, made it even more extreme, the attitude against him.

BT: Isn't that actually an example that the Israelis had a problem and not so much Kreisky?

IG: Of course, we have a problem with this thing. I mean the Jewish people before the Second World War, they were divided. The majority, the vast majority, the enormous majority was non-Zionist and only a very small minority was Zionist. And here came the Second World War and changed the whole thing upside down. And in this whole

upside down one comes out remaining still so much on anti-Zionist. Not so much a Zionist, for accepting the existence of the state, because there is no way out, you know. Not for a convinced Zionist. And this hurt many people here. From the start. So not only he had problems with us, we had problems with him, there's no talking about it.

BT: Would you say that Kreisky was not sensitive enough concerning the Holocaust trauma of the Israelis?

IG: No, I think he was sensitive about this, but he was not sensitive enough about the centrality of the meaning of Israel. And this I don't think he got this, in spite of hours and hours of talks that he had with me and we had with other people. And many people talked to him for hours and hours. He felt what the Holocaust did to the Jewish people and to the world, but he did not feel the centrality and the meaning of Israel for the Jewish people, in general.

BT: Could you explain what you mean by that?

IG: It was clear to Kreisky that Israel is a necessity and maybe there is no way out and Israel should exist, and it does exist, and we should do many things for it to exist, but no more than this. It is a strict sort of thing, which became a necessity, but no more than this.

BT: You have the feeling that he did not look at Israel as an almost historical development of Jewish greatness, of spiritual greatness?

IG: Yes, this is part of it. And it's also part of the fact that because he was not educated in a real Jewish family.

BT: But many Jews were not educated in a real, let us say, Jewishly conscious family before the Second World War.

IG: That's true, but many of those Jews learned afterwards, learned not only the state of Israel or accepted the state or supported the state, but they learned about Judaism. For example, take Einstein. He came out of also some ..., this sort of family, you see, assimilated family in Germany. But he learned a lot about it.

BT: Would you say that Kreisky was not interested in the philosophical aspects of Jewishness?

IG: Absolutely.

BT: He was not a philosophical-minded person?

IG: No, not at all. I don't know about it generally speaking. But on this issue he was not a philosophical-minded person. He was a very much a political-minded person - that is a different thing - but not a philosophical-minded person.

BT: So when you would discuss with him, what was so disturbing for many Israelis here? That he was called a self-hating Jew? And that he was a Jewish traitor? And that many Israelis felt that he hurt their Jewish pride or their Jewish identity? Did he understand what you, meant?

IG: Maybe he understood by ... - how do you say - by intellect, by thinking. He did not feel it, you know. This was not part of him, this was not part of him.

BT: Did he reject it, or do you think he didn't feel it, he couldn't follow you?

IG: He couldn't follow, you see. I give you an example. I..., once I had a discussion. We were in a restaurant together with his wife and who else was there? I can't remember now. Somebody else was there, too. And ... I am not religious. So we took some pork steaks or something like this. And as we sat, we talked about pork, kosher, take this or this. Now, he saw in this a primitive attitude. I didn't see a need not to eat, because I am not religious. I ate a pork at the same place where he ate it. So from this point of view there was no difference between us and the attitude, you see. But there was a difference of him, not understanding the Jewish mind. Because pork for the Jewish people is not only pork, something not kosher. It is something which is part of the gentile world. I mean, the moment you eat pork, you consciously know that you eat pork, a Jew becomes a gentile. I speak as a Jew, you know. So this, this was not part of him. He did not grow up in such a family. He did not feel this, maybe he has never even heard about it. Many Israelis and even those who are, I mean, clerically atheistic like my wife, she is religiously atheistic, you know what I mean, but for her the fact that a person like Kreisky does not know such basic things about the Jewish people! What this means, pork, to us, is a symbol for us. For an anti-Semitic, you know. It is very difficult to explain many things, you know.

BT: The relationships between the Israeli Labour party and the Austrian Sozialistische Partei (socialist party) went, for a long time very well. If you look back, was there any change between the party relationships, when Kreisky came to power? Let us say, between the sixties and the seventies?

IG: I think the fact that Kreisky came to power and him being the leader of the party, made the party more important. So from this point of view it was a more relevant party for us to deal with, you know. Usually, there are sixty or seventy parties in the Socialist International. But then you say „Well, we'll find the most important and we speak with them,“ and you have settled with them. So Austria was one of those. Now this was not necessarily so. This became so because of Kreisky. It's true there was a tradition of social democracy in Austria already long before him. But Kreisky gave it a new, a new, a new stage, a new higher, one level, at least.

BT: But didn't you also feel that the socialist party in Austria, its high-ranking members, for example, became maybe less ..., less favourable towards Israel than they were in the sixties, when Kreisky came to power with all his open criticism against Israel?

IG: That's true, but then it is very difficult to compare. Now it is true that maybe in the time when Kreisky became the leader, it became clear that there is Kreisky and that's it. There was no party at that time, he was the party at that time. This is true in one way. And it is true that he influenced the party to take not always such positive attitudes towards us. But that is true for all the parties. I mean, the forties, the fifties and the sixties were very easy for us, because of the political situation, because of the Holocaust, because of many, many reasons together. So this was true about the Austrian party, too. But it's a combination of two things: a) historical moment, historical period and b) the personality of Kreisky.

BT: How was it with the financial cooperation or financial help between the Austrian socialist movement and the Mifletet Avoda, the socialist movement in Israel? I am asking, because there was a very generous giving between the Austrian labour movement and the Histadrut here. Millions of shillings, which also ended up in not such clean channels in the last years, as we know. How was the backing, the financial backing developing during the Kreisky time?

IG: I can't really remember times that we approached the party or the party gave us, as a party, money. It is true that here and there Kreisky had relations with some rich people and he could influence them to help us here and there, but not so much. I think it was much more at the end of his days, when he tried to help Meretz, and so on, but not us as a party. I can't really remember big money that came from Austria to us.

BT: Never? Not even ...?

IG: Never, that I remember. He was quite closed to us.

BT: So money questions or help for money for election campaigns here, this was never discussed with him, between you and him?

IG: At that time it was not discussed.

BT: At that time means in the seventies?

IG: In the seventies it was not discussed, although we already got help from the Germans. Got help from the Germans, from the British Labour party, from other parties, ...

BT: So from a financial point of view Austria was not important?

IG: No. Not very important. As I am telling you, there were some people who were rich and he influenced them to help us. That's true.

BT: Like Karl Kahane?

IG: Like Karl Kahane ... Who else? I can't remember really the names, but basically,

this was not an important source of help.

BT: In the seventies and in the eighties, as long as Kreisky was in power, was Austria Kreisky?

IG: You mean when?

BT: In the seventies and in the early eighties, as long as Kreisky was chancellor.

IG: Austria was Kreisky. As long as Kreisky was the chancellor, he was the leader of the party, and so on. He was a very dominant figure. What could I tell you, he was Austria. He was Austria.

BT: Which means no other relationships were really strong enough to - let us say - ease the situation? Because it was a heavy relationship and sometimes a very troubled one between Kreisky's Austria and the Israeli Labour party, for example.

IG: No, we had good relations with the trade unions. There were some figures in the socialist party who were friendly to Israel. But by and large, as I am saying, he was so dominant that this was all.

BT: Do you remember the development of the relationship between Shimon Peres and Kreisky?

IG: Look, up to '77, when he became the leader of the party, Shimon, had relations, but very sporadic and unimportant relations. Because the relations were at that time either with Golda, most of the years, and before her Eshkol and after her, it was Rabin and he got along. So Shimon was practically out. Out of touch, you know. And then he became the leader of the party and we were out of power. There was a combination of many things that influenced this relationship. But you are right saying that he had a critical view about him.

BT: You mean Kreisky on Peres or Peres on Kreisky?

IG: I think both of each other,...

BT: From the beginning?

IG: No, not from the beginning. This developed also.

BT: Why?

IG: Because he, Shimon, was a good speaker.

BT: I am asking, because Kreisky seemed to have been quite charmed by Peres for a while?!



IG: That's what I am saying. He, Shimon Peres, had some of the qualities of Kreisky. He was a good speaker, he was charming, you know, and so on.

BT: If he wanted!

IG: If he wanted, yes. So, Kreisky liked those things. But then it came out that he as independent, he does not take his influence, he is not influenced very much by him, when it comes to the facts, when it comes to daily politics, you know, and so on.

BT: Wasn't it also the influence Sartawi started to have on Kreisky concerning Middle East developments?

IG: Maybe yes.

BT: When Peres saw that he could not influence Kreisky as he tried with Brandt and Palme?

IG: Again, maybe yes. But again I have very little proof for it. Maybe yes. But, as I am saying, I think it was a matter of personalities. Both of them quite, quite influential and strong people who didn't accept one another, especially when there is a conflict of interests, when it comes to the role that Kreisky thinks he wants to play for us in the peace process.

BT: What role did he want to play in your opinion?

IG: He wanted to be - we can speak today about it - the United States of the Middle East. The same sort of role, influential ... Practically, I mean, if the US really wanted something, then they at least got to. And he thought he can come into such a situation and could succeed but never could in his life, never! Because Austria is not the US.

BT: Wasn't there a different conception - do you think - in his point of view there?

IG: Conception ...

BT: Because he knew that he was not such a superpower like America or Russia. He was not a naïve politician, by all means. So didn't he have a different concept than maybe the Americans? Because the Americans can threaten, of course. And they have the means to threaten, as we know.

IG: Yes. He thought also that he can threaten. Or Europe can threaten. It's nonsense. When it comes to categorical things, they cannot threaten. The US can threaten, that's true. But Europe cannot threaten, at least not at the moment. They could have threatened, if they would have taken the same role like the US, which they didn't, you see. Now, he thought that if Europe is breaking, with the finance and assistance and weapons and everything to Israel, so the moment you stop this, it's a real hurt on (corr: to) Israel. So this ..., Europe didn't take over this role. But he thought that he with his personality can fulfil this role of being the imposer of peace, you know, and

so on. Now, he had this impression, as I am saying, that he with his personality, and hemless (?) Kreisky, and so on, can impose (of) peace on the Middle East. He cannot. And even the US cannot. The US knew this already long ago.

BT: You mean it was not only the Israelis but also the Arabs who would have had to reject Kreisky's imposing peace on the Middle East?

IG: If it would have been in their interest, yes.

BT: Did you discuss it with him?

IG: With whom, with Kreisky?

BT: Yes.

IG: Many times.

BT: How was his reaction?

IG: He understood what I am saying, but he didn't accept what I am saying, because he thought he is doing ..., he is going in a way ..., from his point of view - the Arabs say he is a strong character, a strong person - he is going in the right way. He thinks that's right and that's it. ...

BT: How long did he think that way?

IG: He thought that way, I think, from the beginning.

BT: Did he think also that way when Camp David happened? Because Camp David and the peace negotiations - Egypt, Israel, America - were a proof that Europe was out.

IG: Out of the game?

BT: Yes.

IG: Yes, he understood, that the role is then smaller and smaller for Europe and for him. This made him to some extent even more bitter and more pushy and more willing to do things. So from this point of view I think he was influenced by the peace process of with Egypt, Camp David. But this does not mean that he accepted it or he took it in, you know.

BT: The way how you explain it, it was actually quite a tragic relationship of many unfulfilled desires on both sides?

IG: Yes, yes. I think you are right. Well, it was a sort of situation where both sides were dissatisfied with each other. To some extent as you said. I think it was not

correct. I think it was not right, because I think that the perception of Israel vis-à-vis Kreisky was more negative than it really should have been. Because, as I am saying, Kreisky was by far more understanding Israel and supportive of Israel, than we understood. And when I say „we“, I mean those who did not know him.

BT: So why couldn't those who knew him, influence intellectuals, journalists, opinion-makers and politicians to try everything to smooth the situation so that a fruitful relationship, a really fruitful relationship would happen?

IG: Because I don't think we were as influential as that, those who knew him enough and particularly thought of him positive. There were people who were thinking all positive. I thought of him, I think up today, of him positive. But we were not in such a position that we could really influence the whole view, you know.

BT: It was much more hawkish than in the Labour party?

IG: Yes, of course, it was. And the second thing, he did not help us very much. Every time we tried to do something he came with another declaration, another sort of thing and all this undermined what we were doing here. So this was not helpful.

BT: Do you think that his declarations came out of a sense of frustration, that he couldn't influence anything here. That nothing was moving in the way, he would have liked to see?

IG: Yes, also. But I really think that he saw the whole thing sort of blocked. Because of our stupid views, you know, because of stupid people. Maybe stupid is too strong, but not clever politicians and statesmen. Politicians and maybe not statesmen. He was accusing the people here of the Labour party of even those things. So maybe he was ..., to some extent he was right.

BT: The point is: don't you think that Kreisky was deeply worried that, if the Israelis would not adopt his peace vision, that this country would not have a future?

IG: Yes. He thought this way, as I am saying, he thought this way. Again, something that maybe I did not emphasise enough, I want to be fair against Kreisky: part of his views was the tragic view about Israel, if we don't adapt ourselves and make peace with the region, the Arabs will swallow us. So it was not something only because of his wish, his ego, and so on. It was something objective. A worry about the country, a worry about the people. About this we have to be fair. And I have heard this sort of views from him many, many times. And I don't think he did it for me as a show, because I was not a piece of show for him, he could have spoken to me frankly and he did expect to speak frank. So from this point of view, I have no doubt that he worried about Israel. He was worried about the historical tendency, the trend towards conflict.

BT: Today, after Rabin and Peres started Oslo with Arafat, how do you today look at Kreisky and at the things he told you almost twenty years ago about his vision of peace in the Middle East?

IG: You know, there is this very famous story of the boy of twelve, who comes to his father and says to him, „I want to marry.“ His father says to him, „No, you cannot marry.“ Then when he comes again at twenty-five, he says to his father, „I want to marry.“ And his father says, „Yes, you can marry.“ So the son asks, „Why didn't you approve? But today?“ „It was not the time then.“ So I think that most of the things that Kreisky foresaw then, were not right at that time, but they are right today and Kreisky did not do enough to make those things right. Maybe he could have made them. I am not saying that he was a sort of magician, that he could do everything. Maybe he was the sort of person that saw things, but he could not do them.

BT: Would you agree that Kreisky was not understood?

IG: Maybe by some people he was not understood. But those who did understand him, ...

BT: When?

IG: ... some of those who did understand him did not think that he did enough or he had power enough to do it. Because some people were saying, „Yes, he thinks right and he should have done this.“ But I am not sure today that he could have done this. In order to make, to play this role, you must be very, very strong, you must have a lot of power behind you. And this has practically only the United States. What I am saying is, that I don't think that in addition to the United States somebody can play this role.

BT: Also not Kreisky?

IG: Also not Kreisky.

BT: Thank you.