

October 16, 1982
Conversation between General Secretary Erich Honecker
and the Crown Prince and Prime Minister of Kuwait,
Sheikh Sa'ad Abdullah Al-Sabah, in Salam Palace on 16
October 1982

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Summary:

Al-Sabah expresses concerns about Israel's invasion of Lebanon, Israeli occupation of other Arab territories, and the conflict between Iran and Iraq. Honecker hopes that East German-Kuwaiti cooperation will help to restore and preserve peace in the Middle East.

Original Language:

German

Contents:

- English Translation

Meeting between the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the SED and Chairman of the State Council of the GDR, Erich Honecker, with the Crown Prince and Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait, Sheikh Saad [Al-]Abdullah [Al-Salim] Al-Sabah^[2], on 16 October 1982 in the [Al-] Salam Palace

Comrade Erich Honecker: I am glad about the opportunity to talk already at the first evening of my visit to Kuwait with you and the leading representatives of your country. We are having high expectations for our visit to Kuwait. We are sharing the prevalent opinion here that politicians in charge of different countries are supposed to know each other. We are acknowledging Kuwait as a country that is playing a great role in the strive of mankind for peace because of its non-aligned policy. This is especially important in a time where new conflict spots are emerging in different regions of the world. The GDR is in favor of extinguishing these fires. As one the most important problems we are considering the deescalation of the situation in the Middle East. From the very beginning we have condemned the Israeli aggression in declarations by the Central Committee and the government.

I have followed the invitation to an official visit in Kuwait with pleasure. We are knowing very well that Kuwait is granting great support to the just cause of the Palestinian people. We are welcoming the decision by the Arab Summit Conference in Fez^[3] concerning a resolution of the Middle East problem, especially the provision about the establishment of an independent Palestinian state under the leadership of the PLO. We are by all means in favor of Israel getting forced to withdraw its forces from Lebanon and all territories occupied in 1967. The situation in the Middle East needs to be calmed down, but we also must not lose sight of the escalation in the overall international situation. It is mainly important to prevent a nuclear global war. This means primarily to end the arms race in order to make survival possible for mankind.

I am glad to express already in the first meeting that the GDR is a state of peace. We are advocating for states to live together peacefully, since there is no reasonable alternative to peaceful coexistence.

We are in favor of expanding the friendly relations between our two states. Opportunities in this regard do exist. The relations of friendship between the GDR and Kuwait are existing for many years and represent a good foundation. I am expecting that our visit will strengthen the friendly relations and underline the agreements on many international basic issues. With interest I have read the numerous comments in your press about the relations to our country. I am thanking you again and I am glad for our meeting.

Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah: Myself and my brothers of the Kuwaiti leadership want to welcome you again very cordially. I want to thank you for your open and honest words about the positions of the GDR. The State of Kuwait and its people are following the policy of the GDR with interest. We do know that the GDR is supporting the Arab cause, especially pertaining to the Palestinian people regaining their rights. With particular satisfaction we have noticed the condemnation of Israel's policy. This policy is condemned by most countries.

We are convinced that your visit will not only open up opportunities to get to know Kuwait's domestic and foreign policy, but that it will also contribute towards expanding relations with the GDR in all areas.

Kuwait is a small state. We are peace-loving and want to cooperate with all countries. Such a cooperation does already exist between the representatives of our states in the United Nations and other international institutions where we are acknowledging the position of the GDR.

There is no doubt that in relations with each other our states can rely on mutual trust, respect, and the non-interference into internal affairs. We have to work toward a further development of relations between both states. This will be helpful to friendly peoples and serve the mutual understanding. At the meeting with His Highness the Emir tomorrow, you will be able to speak openly about all questions.

In the world of today there do exist many problems, of which not just a few are explosive. I am sharing your opinion here. We have to work together in this regard in order to prevent an explosion. Mutual exchange of opinions and coordination between our states are contributing towards that goal. As a small country we are against violence and the thread of violence. There is only one exception here - this is the implementation of the right of the Arabs and the Palestinian people to have their just demands fulfilled. We do not want war for the sake of war but to defend a people expelled from its homelands. In a couple of European states there have been for some time decisions passed to defend the rights of the Arabs. These facts are demonstrating that Europeans are beginning to understand the Palestinian question. President Reagan has made proposals for the Middle East. Some aspects of his proposals are positive, others are unclear and have to be reviewed. In Morocco [at the Fez Summit], the Arabs have reached agreement on a plan of action which can be a starting point for the resolution of the Middle East problem. There we had agreed to forward this plan of action to President Reagan. A commission has been established chaired by King Hassan^[4] of Morocco, which will travel to the United States to meet President Reagan. Another commission was established which is chaired by King Hussein.^[5] That one is supposed to visit the member states of the [U.N.] Security Council in Europe to explain our intentions. We are requesting that also all other countries will review this plan carefully. We are needing their support for our plan of action. If it fails, it can result in the consequence that extremist Palestinian elements will create problems. The latter could become desperate. However, there is still time for a just resolution of the Palestinian question.

We know that Israel is rejecting our plan of action. Now the time has come for the United States to exert direct pressure on Israel to withdraw from Lebanon and the other occupied Arab territories and follow the U.N. Security Council Resolutions 224 and 338.

In the Gulf Area we have established a Cooperation Council [in 1981]. Its members are Kuwait, Saudi-Arabia, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, and Qatar. Its goal is to develop cooperation in the areas of culture, economy, information, and security in the Gulf Region. This Council shall especially contribute towards guaranteeing a high level of security in the Gulf Region. At the same time, it is supposed to be a first step towards the unification of states of this region. Even when unification will not yet succeed, at least a foundation has been laid.

Some remarks about the conflict between Iraq and Iran. Since our country is situated in direct proximity to the battlefields, big problems are arising for us. Recently we have made efforts to create an atmosphere of understanding between Iraq and Iran in order to quickly end the war. Iran is demanding that Iraq is conceding to its demands. For mediation, we have established a Committee of the Islamic States. This committee could not return with news from Iran. Soon the Algerian Foreign Minister will undertake a new attempt to end the conflict. We wish that the Iranian government is agreeing to a ceasefire. Iraq has fulfilled all of Iran's conditions without setting preconditions. We are waiting for Iran's response. According to our information, the Committee of the Islamic States will soon send another delegation to Iraq and Iran. We are running our embassy in Iran with an Acting Ambassador in charge. Our relations with Iran are not bad, although once in a while we are hearing threats coming out of Iran.

Comrade Erich Honecker: I thank you for your explanations on a couple of basic issues of our time, as well as concerning relations with the GDR. The international situation is not at all where it is supposed to be. We are glad that we are agreeing with Kuwait on many international issues and cooperating regarding their resolution. There is full agreement between us on the question of rights of the Palestinians. If this people is not allowed to return, an extremely concerning situation can arise in the Middle East. The GDR is advocating the implementation of the rights of the

Palestinians. Their guarantee can be a foundation for the resolution of the Middle East conflict. The Palestinian issue is met with great attention in the world, also in such states that so far have supported Israel. Regarding Reagan's proposals, there are some questions one can discuss. However, there is no way to bypass the central question - the issue of establishing a state for the Palestinians. The action plan from Fez is representing a foundation in this regard. For the GDR I can say that we are fully and completely supporting this plan, because it is in accordance with our basic position to resolve disputes peacefully. The visits by the commissions you mentioned with the permanent members of the Security Council are to be welcomed. The Western countries are receiving a chance to prove themselves. I want to draw attention that [Soviet General Secretary] L. I. Brezhnev has submitted proposals which are in principle identical to those agreed in Fez. We are sharing the opinion with you that the question of the Palestinian state and the rights of the Palestinians are the fundamental questions. On their basis, solutions can be found for all the other problems in the Middle East.

One cannot be at the same a friend of both sides, of the Arabs and of Israel. The images from Lebanon of the murder of innocent women and children^[6] have deeply shocked us. One can only express the hope that Israel will agree to the proposals made in Fez.

Your information about the Gulf Cooperation Council was very interesting to us. We are viewing this as a good idea, because only on the basis of unity of the Arab states will it be possible to prevent that Israel, which is supported by the United States, cannot just do what it wants. We are welcoming the idea of a Gulf Cooperation Council.

Regarding the conflict between Iraq and Iran, I want to tell you that we are considering it as a disaster for the Arab world, it is damaging to the cause of peace. This war can only serve the interests of the enemies of the Arab countries. We unconditionally support everything that can facilitate an ending of the conflict. Only by ending it, peaceful development in this region can be served, and at the same time it will further peaceful development in other areas. In this sense, we are in favor of representatives from both our states working together in the United Nations and other international institutions.

Our visit to Kuwait is supposed to help with strengthening relations between friends. We are certain that the cooperation between our states will develop further to mutual benefit and in the interest of the preservation of peace. I fully support your proposal that the members of our delegation will meet with your Ministers to talk about questions of common interest.

^[1] Appendix to Report about Erich Honecker's State Visit to Kuwait from 16 to 18 October 1982.

^[2] 1930-2008. Prime Minister of Kuwait 1978-2003, Emir of Kuwait in 2006.

^[3] Held in Fez, Morocco, from 6 to 8 October 1982.

^[4] 1929-1999. King of Morocco 1961-1999.

^[5] 1935-1999. King of Jordan 1952-1999.

^[6] Massacres by Christian militias in Palestinian refugee camps Sabra and Chatila in September 1982.