

KREISKY AND ARAFAT

Many people will now want to avoid Austria as though it were a plague. And in some sense, Bruno Kreisky, its chancellor, has turned Austria into a plague area because of his loving treatment of Arafat.

When American Jews and other Americans refused to travel to Mexico a few years ago because of that country's abject endorsement of "Zionism-is-racism," their primary motivation was not economic boycott. Their primary motivation was dignity: you just do not go to enjoy yourself in a country which insults and threatens you.

It so happens that this mass avoidance did affect Mexico economically. There would not be quite such an effect on Austria. But the primary motivation would be the same. As Dr. Alexander Seidman of San Francisco points out, avoiding travel to Austria now "is important for the sake of our self-respect." And a clear pattern of avoidance could be an embarrassment to Austria.

Is this an over-reaction? Kreisky invited Arafat to Vienna for three days of talk. Full state honors were accorded to Arafat, from Kreisky's embrace at the airport to the usual official receptions. It ended with a joint statement attacking Israel's settlements in the West Bank.

Irving Howe, a critic of Israel's settlement policies in the West Bank, asked: "Why was it necessary for Kreisky to greet Arafat with such effusive affection? Why agree to a joint statement criticizing Israel's settlement policies in the West Bank but saying nothing about either PLO terrorism or the 'principled' refusal of the PLO to recognize Israel's right to exist?"

But this is not just a matter of choosing up sides between one nationalism and another. Forget about the Middle East for the moment. If the important political actors in the free world do not recognize the significance of the PLO *on the world scene*, then more than Israel will be lost.

As Robert Moss of London's *Economist* explained recently, the PLO "is the Soviet's favorite, and its leaders make regular visits to the capitals of the Soviet bloc and maintain close contacts with Russian embassies and KGB ... The recent track record of the PLO in coordinating international terrorist actions and providing a substitute for the KGB, demolishes the naive hopes of those who maintain that the creation of an independent Palestinian state would provide a solution to the violent assault on Western societies in which it has served as a motor."

The name of the game is not a Palestinian state. The name of the game is the assault on America and the free world. A PLO state is just a gambit in that game. That is the message about the PLO which must be hammered home again and again with our own Congressmen and political leaders. And Kreisky has weakened the future of the free world by giving official house and prestige to its enemy.

But the emotional bite, for Jews, is even deeper. Kreisky said: "I am sure the PLO does not believe in the destruction of Israel." We don't know what Arafat whispered in Kreisky's ear. But publicly, explicitly, loudly, officially, unqualifiedly, the PLO stands for: the destruction of the Israeli state; and the "removal" of all Jews whose families were not living in Palestine in 1917.

The most prominent and direct forerunners of Nazism first appeared in Austria, with the nationalist-socialist, anti-semitic political slogans of such as Schonener and Lueger. The head of Austria, which might be called the birthplace of Nazi thought, has now officially welcomed a man who wants to "remove" the refugees created by that Nazism. Indeed, Arafat's terrorists are still engaged in murdering a number of those refugees and their descendants.

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Kreisky, born a Jew, apparently has the stomach for such an ugly display. But, communicating their reasons to the Austrian Consul, many Americans will not have the stomach to travel to Austria under such circumstances.

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