

June 15, 1973

**Excerpts from a Record of a Meeting between Soviet
journalist, Victor Louis, and General Director of the
Prime Minister's Office, Mordechai Gazit**

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Summary:

Record of a meeting between Mordechai Gazit (MG), General Director of the Israeli Prime Minister's Office, and Victor Louis (VL), a Soviet journalist. The meeting was held the week before a summit meeting between Richard Nixon and Leonid Brezhnev. The two discussed the immigration of Jews from the Soviet Union and the low state of Israeli-Soviet relations.

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M E E T I N G

June 15, 1973

VL: I never miss a chance to come here. It wasn't your invitation; it was an invitation starting in January, so no one could say I planned it to coincide with the discussions in New York. So I have a sort of nice official cover. I won't embarrass anyone. Well, unfortunately even if I write something about Israel, it seems a kind of political issue and Arab ambassadors begin to complain immediately. My last story six months victory fighting for tax resumption, protest from a number of Arab states embarrassed Russia. That is why I come here on this pretext. It was for a cover.

I don't know in which way you have been briefed about me and you have your own reservations. Again, I'd like to sort of publicize myself in a way that I hope I prove in a way, if any proof is necessary, my sympathy towards Israel and the way I am speaking here is non-Soviet official; I am not a Soviet official - that is not the way I talk in Moscow about Israel with any Russian official. That is why I take the liberty to put things straightforward and please don't take it as a sort of or black-mailing or whatever, otherwise we will start with diplomatic language.

Well, I know that you have your contacts which I should know and you have your way of expressing the high policy, what-not, and so on. Well, apart from political things there are some number of personal things concerning Brezhnev which sort of coincide now and again especially after Dr. Kahane wasn't allowed to go. I have always maintained the idea that the Israeli government understands the position and the problem of relations which is different to audience, coming here and a little excited you know

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to absorb the state interest if not the personal ones. So, the importance of the Brezhnev visit to the States, an assurance on the American side, assurance on Kissinger's side, and all the Jewish demands with no exceptions (...bus passing..)

the place was a mess you know, and Brandt and you know and going to the States now. So the general feeling is that for the people in Moscow still believe that the Zionist organizations are aimed from here and directed from here and you couldn't explain to them that you can press one button or another button, that it doesn't work that way, the way it works in Moscow. Because you[?] are a Russian specialist, you understand you couldn't expect from people to think in a different mentality. Like the Watergate affair, the ^MAmericans Mr. Nixon's embarrassment.

There is no Watergate coverage in Russia at all, and all the Watergate in Russia is the Voice of America, is jammed in Moscow. The Voice of America would tell the impressions... of Watergate so the idea is one would think if you tell Israelis, you know, please don't embarrass Brezhnev too much, just press another button like Watergate and ^{it} will be finished, and they couldn't understand why you can't stop that in America. Well, that is the way of mentality of the mediocre people. And only two days left, you know. (...bus passing..) You see, the idea is ^{one} once should personally think, I personally think that if my country's situation to the extent that the favour of the visit, is always like in the good old jokes, always blame Jews for that. I don't like this, that it will go on blaming Jews for that, blame them for any man in the world what he wants to demand to blame the state of Israel.

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This ⁷armed pressure either program but there is a limit.
 And you haven't got the Russian background, and a number of the things you
 have to feel in your skin and not have it explained to you. And
 because the man might come home and say: well, look after all the insults I
 got because of Jews, stop it, finish it. All right, another
 ten years or whatever it is, but you should understand ^{the} sort of mentality of
 dictatorship in the sense that a man can do the . Personal thing
 is involved, you know, it is too much at stake for nothing. Well, that is the
 sort of a feeling at home, and tell you, look I talk to people and I
 couldn't speak on behalf of Israel saying, look American
 citizens to do what they want and there will be demonstrations. It will be
 hardly any American well-guarded White House, well-guarded Camp
 David, Houston is a military base you know, and is always
 isolated. But what I may suggest to you, if it is all right, not only a
 sort of personal [?]backing which is always quite sort of pleasant, if you could
 say through your usual contacts so you got the message
 and you are doing your best under the circumstances. Because there
 are a number of people who jumped at our people and said, well, look, it is
 directed from Israel. And now it is unfashionable to blame Americans, Jewish
 Americans for anything that might happen. Kissinger under-
 lined the American spirit and Jewish allegiance, so what. So that means they
 wash [?]their hands [?]of the idea. So if something happens, the people to blame
 are the Israelis. That is a kind of personal thing which I will appreciate
 (...bus passing...) kind of a personal level. I don't like to put

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I might be affected or Russia might be more active (...bus passing...) That is the first part of it.

MG: whether you want me to react on it, or you want to go on with other points. I could react to this, if you are interested. The situation is a complicated one for the simple reason that on the one hand, there is some aliya from the Soviet Union and we are glad .Last year over 30,000 people came. We are not happy with the precise figure but we are happy with the phenomenon of the aliya for those who want to come.

Now, we have already indicated on several occasions, public occasions the fact that we the contradiction doesn't make too much sense to us. Maybe it can be explained to a people who, as you say, feel on the skin the Russian way of thinking, or there is some other reason that has to do with general considerations in the Soviet Union which I don't follow too closely. But the contradiction is that on the one hand this phenomenon of immigration is taking place, at the same time there are all kinds of difficulties. one item I read. There are many more items - professors on a hunger strike today because of Jews in Russian, and I am certain that in the paper you can find two or three more items like that. So on the one hand, you have this favorable phenomenon, and on the other hand, you have those really public events that are taking place all the time. The result is public opinion, Jewish public opinion and other public opinion, is quite worried because this is a development or rather a problem of Russian Jewry has been a problem which the world press has not followed for many years, something like 8 or 10 or more years. This has become part of the things

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covered by the press, and I think you will not disagree with me when I say that in the Soviet Union now it is all to the good. There is a little more possibility to let such news come out than in Stalin's era, so one knows about arrests and even hunger strikes. Right now there is a hunger strike of Jewish scientists. So the public opinion has its effect.

Now regarding American organizations and American Jews, as you said yourself, we do not Israeli Zionist cause and to Jewish causes in general. And they are worried, deeply worried. But they would be happy if tomorrow there is nothing to worry about or so little to worry about that one emphasizes the good part and just ignores some side issues. But right now you have on the one hand a phenomenon which is favorable but not large enough, but favorable nevertheless, and at the same time the other things. So this is how we feel about it. Now American Jewish organizations are responsible organizations. They . To the best of my knowledge and from what I read in the papers, from what I hear from time to time from people who come back, from their impressions, etc. they are certainly anything of the kind you have described . Certainly they will not do anything of the kind. I hope - for this I cannot vouch at all - I hope that some small splinter, not even splinter, completely fringe organizations will not do something. As you know, the Israel government concerning violent activities has expressed itself in the past, quite unequivocally. But now we are dealing with psychology, the psychology of a man, Mr. Brezhnev. This is difficult, what can we do regarding a man we have not met . Even though this would also be possible,

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theoretically. The objective reasons would not justify such an action. People would just be angry for controllable. So this is basically what I have to say about it. I could add particular impressions later regarding what I call the non-positive, the negative, phenomenon of the same problem, the corrupt[?] men, the things which are still possible to grant anyone who has some logic regarding people who are sent to Siberia and the accusations, the allegations, I don't know, indictments against them are very, very flimsy to put it politely. So I don't know whether it is fair to say it but I heard from David Bartur that you yourself years ago wrote on the victim of that sort of thing and were sent to a camp.

VL: people in Israel who came from a camp. This is a way of delusion. You couldn't sort of blame anyone, that is like earthquake. I spent nearly ten years and came out, others spent more time or less time, but this is like war. There is no one to blame for it. It is the system. All the cruelty which goes on now, people sent to Siberia, the Russians think it is justifiable and this is complete justice because it is not only Jews that are sent there. The same thing is done to Russians.

have a list I keep saying give me the list of people officials, and it doesn't mean anything will telephone me and say: Look, we couldn't let this one out or the other just got another list now. There are a number of explanations, acceptable or not, but there are some reasons for that. There are a few scientists they wouldn't like to let out them out. They wouldn't let them out. It is not a question of bargaining. They say they couldn't let three or four scientists

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out. We wouldn't let people who on the same idea. There is a limit. If you wouldn't do anything we wouldn't let you out. People overdoing it. Then they said, look, while I am here in the office, you Ginsburg, would never leave the Soviet Union, and poor Ginsburg is going to stay in the Soviet Union because of this personal attitude of the official. There is no logic in that. Nor other things like, there is one colonel on the list, . They don't have anything against him personally, they would let him out, but he is a colonel. Well, you know, the colonel will come to Tel-Aviv, then he will be sent on a trip like David Marcus and others, but who cares about David Marcus Soviet Colonel. General ? , because he is a general. That is a good title. Then there will be the Col. Varshansky who would know all the military secrets. That would be embarrassing for the army. So let him sit for a while. This is the sort of logic that goes behind. The other people - personally I was utterly surprised. I haven't checked it myself, but the same top official told me for instance, I saw him the day before yesterday, and he said too much fuss about it, what is the reason. He said up to today, that is the day before yesterday, he hasn't applied officially so we couldn't grant it. Well, it might sound like nonsense. Or he hasn't got enough documents.

MG: It was over a year.

VL: I have friends here for whom I brought letters and parcels from ? . He was going to support the Jewish and protest in front of the Central Committee. protest among others.

I was talking to people yesterday. There are officials there.

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He's been told now, ,as soon as you apply, bring all the documents necessary, keep you mouth shut and we will let you out. But he has not applied and the official told me: look, in a private conversation, we couldn't to apply before he gives an interview to Israeli radio.

MG: What an idiot.

VL: All right, he is an idiot. As soon as you say you are going to Israel they will kick you out of the party. Or they wouldn't give you documents. They also make difficulties in the studio. They said they wouldn't give him a document for that and that. But officially, from the point of view of immigration officials, nobody can give an Israeli visa to a person who wants to go to Israel but he hasn't done it formally. He has to do it formally. People ask me from London for instance to help Tiompkin. And there is a headline in the "Daily Express", this poor woman in a camp, but she is in a camp; it is not Auschwitz. There is a limit. And there are also family problems. a father who wants to go to Israel. He is absolutely ready to take his daughter. And the mother wants to stay in Russia . Gentlemen, where is the limit? How could we discuss that on a sort of common international level ? For instance, the father was against his son going, pressing and trying to prevent his son from going. Now I saw him three days ago and now he said we want to go to Israel. We feel . How change it. Every Jewish family is a sort of small tragedy. You know that yourself. But pick up certain things, you know.

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MG: Regarding such cases, regarding this phenomenon of families, I think if there had been some kind of arrangement by which we would be able to discuss such cases - you say to us ? hasn't yet filled out a form. So then we say to you, okay suggest it to him. And we can talk to him and you can talk to him. Then this problem is settled and one other point of aggravation, point of trouble does not exist. Or if you take the son of Levitch. He is not a great scientist. It is the father. He is the son. And he has been sent, and apparently been sent to a camp where he is not physically fit to be. The climate is not good for him.

VL: .. (Noise...) sent to Sinai, the climate is not all that ideal

MG: In any case, he has been sent. I don't know he has been sent, because he wants to go to Israel and he agitated.

VL: That's right.

MG: Okay. It is well known now about this problem of the son. I am not talking about the father, let's assume about the father it is more complicated. But about the son. As long as the son, this keeps appearing in the press every week at least or maybe more, if you take all the press.

VL: Why ^{complicate it?} complicated I mean, you have to fight for some people. Without fighting it wouldn't help. But sometimes officials come to the idea and say: Look, shut your mouth for two or three months and we will let you out. The same thing happened with David Marcus for instance. I am pushing his case, and then I told him if you shut up for two or three months then -

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'I am going on a hunger strike tomorrow.' I said, David, it is up to you, go ahead. What else can I do? immediately be taken up as a sort of deadline that's a guarantee. I said: I am not cheating you. Then another thing, a number of ladies like Shira Marcus, all right look, French Embassy, nice black dress and nice diamonds and then suffering again, giving interviews. All right, Shira let out. Why keep the widow of a tragic man, etc. Then Shira goes to Paris and gives an interview there saying it's a right time to pressure Russia because there's no bread, people are in a miserable position and the government, there is no bread in Russia. All right, what about other ladies there? There is a kind of a limit to that, you see. So that anyone who says look, let another madam out, she is of now use in Russia. She is a lady of society, she will go again to Paris and London and New York and make all these anti-Soviet statements, not exactly anti-Soviet, everything is considered to be anti-Soviet, but I'll say . You couldn't talk about Russia, talking about attitudes, look, now in Russia they are short of bread, that is the time. It will help others. There is a brutality in Russia. Sometimes they say no to you and you can do whatever you want, that's the force (...bus passing...)

MG: Here you are a little bit confused. I will tell you why. On the one hand, you say that there is a problem, namely that there is brutality, officialdom a certain logic which I am to understand. Okay, this being so, you say, sometimes the right thing to do, if one protests, goes on a hunger strike, and there is therefore a kind of war going

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on inside the Soviet Union, because as long as you have this problem with officialdom and so on, then you must have a counter-balancing factor. But let's look at it from the other side, from our side, and from the point of view of those who have left already. Those who have left argue if this is so, then we also must make a ,and some of them make noises which really irritate. And irritate us. There is the uncle of the Zalmenson woman, 28 years old I understand, and he is a typical man just that, but from his point of view he has a grievance, and not only from his point of view, he would like to see his niece here and she is in prison. And so on. If in a society where there are more controls than in Western society, where you can try and influence by pressure and even sometimes by sending to Siberia, Thank God that was 20 years ago, but still people - we cannot send people to Siberia. So we do not control this. We can try and convince and persuade etc. sometimes, but here again the contradiction that I sense in your analysis is that you say there must be some protest, it hurts, the fact that stories get published in the western press, and it does help occasionally. Therefore it is a very difficult thing to handle if it could be handled at all, and it is not--have I Made myself clear?

VL: Yes. It's contradiction. The only thing I said is if there is someone who could - probably no one exists in the world who could - know the extreme to it. There is a limit. Israelis protest and Americans protest. It is overdone. It might overweight the necessity.

Talking about the people involved in the airplane attempt. The officials said now we couldn't let them out of prison, logically. They

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would let them out and then there would be protest in Russia: 'the Jews can have everything they want, they get out of prison.' It is too much. You see, as soon as one of them will be released in July or something from this airplane in Leningrad case, or some of them are already released - not the woman, I am talking about the others. Their terms finish in July or August or whatever it is, but anyhow two of them are coming out this year. So there is no problem. They could go to Israel the following day, but we couldn't reduce their sentence at the present moment.

MG: eventually because first of all .

VL: was a British spy as well. (laughter). He was accused of that, I am sorry. So there is no rational attitude. Thousands of Russians are being accused. I was a Brazilian spy, I was an American spy. So it is not an exception, I am sorry. You know one man because he is Jewish but what about another five or ten Russians who go to prison as American spies or British spies. Sorry, we have to take it. You couldn't change it. But you have to understand it at least.

MG: I think I understand you perfectly. I really thank you very much because it just verifies what was in my mind. However, I think you understand my points too. Because it is a very . I think not the question is, as you say, can one find the balance. And when psychology is involved or certain logic is involved of a different kind which cannot exactly be gauged, especially when one has no control over all this. People are reacting independently. Yesterday there was a Knesset decision and already

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today in one paper, regular citizens said: why in the adopted decision wasn't the name of Jackson mentioned? It wasn't mentioned because the majority of the Knesset felt that to mention Mr. Jackson would be construed as intervention in internal matters of the U.S. Although I could have argued that this is a Knesset, the Knesset has functions, and therefore the Knesset could say it is not intervention, but still. People already get up according to one paper government pressured because the name of Jackson wasn't mentioned. The fact that there was a reference to public opinion in America and American leaders, in addition to President Nixon's showing understanding for this problem and also senators but not by name, was not enough. One doesn't have control over such things. So to the point that you do not have control - by you I mean Moscow in general, ^{over} officialdom, ^{over} a certain mentality which is built into the regime, how can one have control over the actions of individuals in a free society.

But coming back to your point about Mr. Brezhnev, you know we made already certain statements, one by our Ambassador in the States, in which the hope was expressed that this meeting would be a good meeting relations between East and West were concerned, in favour of that detente, improvement of relations. We were not cold war mongers, we are not interested in cold war. This is certainly our position. Now I don't know what else. About Kahane, my suggestion to you is that our friend . He could explain to you precisely because this is a separate authority of course, the legal authority, what has happened there there are certain limitations, I don't know enough about it. And he will explain this

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to you. But beyond this, we cannot, the facts are such that we cannot go beyond this, especially as we both are agreed that in principle the interest that one takes in this problem in the press and even the protests of people in the Soviet Union do advance this cause, which is a just cause, that people who want to leave should be able to leave and go to Israel. So I think if I may say so, we have more or less limitations of existing

VL (unintelligible)

MG (")

VL: about curbing our limitations, they decrease now. It is not artificial, because that is what they claim. In Moscow about 6,000 applications before, now about 5,000 applications. It is a seasonal thing. There are letters coming from Israel whether it is so good or not so good, think and decided and so on. There are other people who would like to and haven't applied. There are those who got permission to go and haven't left. It is more of a family thing. ^{With} Very small exceptions, the question is now about 30 people or 60 people for whom you are sort of fighting constantly, otherwise there are no objections and they don't like to have any kind of Polish [?] solution or whatever. So then it is prepared and sort of established and will go on.

From the Foreign Office, they think they might satisfy the interest of Embassy sort of thing which a number of people Dutch Embassy.

MG: In the office space?

VL: Office space available and extra people. Well, they are sort

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of considering that, but this is minor technical things, but again sort of extra- , and Arabs might interpret , you know, this is more reason for that.

Another thing is how would you think about the idea of tourism before the diplomatic relations or relatives coming here on the pretext of being tourists. Because there are a number of people who would like to go and see Israel for themselves. It is positive or bad or what would be your reaction?

MG: I don't have an immediate reaction to that. I would have to refer it to people who deal with this and have ideas about it. In principle, I would say in the past we were in favour of this sort of thing, but the assumption being that it was on a bilateral basis, in other words, if there are tourists they go both ways. Our tourists can go there and your tourists can come here. If it is on a unilateral basis, I don't know. Incidentally, last night I heard over the radio a Mr. Agnon, Yakov

Agnon, who was asked about his visit to the Soviet Union just recently, several weeks ago, and he gave a very interesting talk about it. He was very much impressed with the Soviet Union. very friendly to him. It's a pity I didn't tape it, I didn't have a tape recorder. I think you would have liked it. So this is an example, and he incidentally said he may go back there because one of his films didn't come clearly

July, and then probably he will go back. So in principle, such a development is a favourable one. Whether in the context of the unification of families this is a good thing and how it should be handled and so on, I think we would like to discuss this with a few people.

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VL: People do come here as tourists, not exactly as tourists, with a relative visa. And then for a couple of months. It is much easier now because a lot of people go to France and America. In principle, it is much easier than ever before. Some of my Jewish friends who went to France and to visit an uncle or whatever it is, they were allowed to go to France.

MG: We do have it more with Rumania.

VL: relations much easier of course.

MG: Also much less expensive.

VL: Then Hammer was in Moscow, he has been to my house-

MG: The millionaire?

VL: Yes. He sent me a cable and he said I had to go to Paris and talk to Kesar, have to do something for Israel, you know. He has got his own ideas and his own contacts. I met Kesar in Budapest and in Moscow. He is a specialist on East-West trade advisor to Nixon, very clever and very capable man. as Americans are, you know, taking care of his clients. There are a few things because Hammer suggests that the Soviet Union should start a little bit of trade with Israel, because there is a most favorable national agreement which still exists between the Soviet Union and Israel. He thinks it might help to get in the States with Jackson. This is the sort of more personal interest I would say than anything else. I am not in the position to agree on trade, but it might be nice to mention and discuss it. Because the trouble is have to push it from all sorts of different angles, it helps to maneuver between and to maneuver

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between Arabs and the pressures whatever it is whether it
 an international festival or exchange of trade, you know, and who knows what.
 So I mean in state terms here in general, anyone who is ready to open something
 And whether Israel is interested, with a sort of neutral trade where no one
 could blame Russia. Of course, you couldn't give me an answer immediately
 but are you ready to bring anything constructive and push it (...bus passing.
 Well, that is the Hammer idea which he was also trying to sell Moscow and
 push there but again

Then comes the political question. It would be interesting to know
 if there is anything else you could add to the well-known position, official
 well-know position, unofficially if you have come to any, how shall I say,
 concessions or minor concessions, promises of concessions. If there is
 anything you haven't said before. Because the political position - again
 I am not using the right terminology, the Russian standpoint

Egyptian one has been presented (...bus passing..) like to discuss
 and whether there is anything else, pure Egyptian position. Well a lot
 of people, the majority of people, are in favour of better negotiations
 between Arabs and the Israelis, and the Arabs are sort of provoking Russia
 to - push Russia to be responsible to that. (referring to paper MG is
 holding) Anything in the paper?

MG: in the meantime, Ambassador Malik has already
 said speech.

VL: Has he said Russia is interfering?

MG: No, certainly not.

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VL: Well, this is the Egyptian delegation in Moscow, much more unbending and strict and tougher. Even tougher than they ever were before. no concessions, straightforward attitude and

. So what can Russia do? People for heavens' sake, the example of Vietnam, they are better socialists and have been fighting, their capital was even bombed, still they together. in one way or another, whether Rhodes version, direct talks, and so on. But Egypt would appreciate it of course if Russia would start to press the issue. In this case they would say: Look, what else can we do, they pressure us. This is what they would like.

MG: Let me get this straight. The Egyptians would like to have Russian pressure?

VL: That is what the Russians understand, that the Egyptians would like to have Russian pressure. That if the Russians would press for direct negotiations, they could present the case as a sort of pressure from the Soviet Union and that there would be no way out. And the Soviets don't like to be used to be blamed for that by the rest of the Arabs. That is the sort of behind the ,as far as I understand. But in principle, Russia is much in favour of negotiations beginning.

MG: That is a sort of change in the Soviet position because in 1969, the Soviet Union what seemed at certain moments an inclination towards negotiations. But of course much more important than the question of the Soviet Union's being in favour of it is the question of the

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VL: Sometimes I am mixed up, I am not choosing the words, I would say. It is not a sort of unofficial message. It's more of a summary, so it's easier for you to understand the moods.

MG: understand the mood. If I understand correctly, you have a feeling, you personally, that this latest visit by the Egyptians gave the impression that the Egyptians are more inclined to direct negotiations but would like the negotiations to be-

VL: No, they are not. Their position is much tougher than before.

MG: However?

VL: However, Russia is more and more now in favour always
 advises talks, more and more in favour as the only way out. But
 probably the influence of the Americans at the same time that we
 could press the issue. And Egypt, also some people there one of
 the solutions would like that Russia, one had the impression, would like the
 Russians to press them, not sort of advise them. There is a sort of ridicu-
 lous thing which I heard from Americans, off the record, that we know more
 about the position in the Middle East, negotiations in the Middle East,
 from the Americans than we know from the Egyptians. That's the-

MG: Attitudes.

VL: Attitudes or let's say approaches on the Egyptian side give us less than the American side. So that is the attitude of these people. But we are sort of so tied up with the Arab world that we couldn't sort of break loose, and I would say that at the meeting now we will be more bound by our alliance to Egypt, and the ridiculous thing would be that if the Egyptians would change Russia is not doing anything, if they

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will change their position, because if it will go on then the Soviets will be in an idiotic position as before that they are trying to press for something that the Egyptians are already not insisting on because of previous instructions, previous decisions, we stick to that. Egypt being more flexible on this position, they could shift away from the rigid Russian position which the Russians should do, without sort of trying to find the language of conciliation. (...bas passing...) That is the sort of . I am interested to know if there is anything you could suggest sort of behind the scenes, if you could absorb all that, shall I say, deadlock between the Russians and the Egyptian diplomacy and American diplomacy, if there is anything you feel can be done, if there is anything new which you could give off the record. I know you have your own way of funneling your thinking but then there is less possibility to discuss. If there is anything new, because from all that is known it is not, not concessions, any ideas if you think the Egyptians might change and it would help Russia to be prepared for that and push sometimes Egypt, and then Russia would be responsible for all their decisions, because that is what the Egyptians would like and that is what makes people headaches there.

MG: I don't know if I have any new ideas or if anyone can have any new ideas because the situation is such that it is difficult to have any. But I think I could explain to you several things one tends to forget. Because it is a ? tendency to forget such things and this doesn't help. I agree with you one hundred per cent when you said that in the past, maybe this is a hangover, Soviet policy was one hundred per cent identified with the Egyptian position. Kissinger said and I think he is right. I had a talk

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with the Soviet in Washington, before the Six Day War and I made the same point: It is not good for you. I made the point to when he was Ambassador - it is not good for you. I fail to understand why a super power should commit itself so heavily on the side of one country, especially with a country that is basically a problematic country in this generation - I hope not in fifty years time - but Egypt is problematic, and you will get yourself into trouble. So therefore to the point that the Soviet Union detaches itself, , face saving-wise, from this sort of commitment which is not a political commitment, this would be a good thing for all concerned, I think. Also for the Egyptians eventually because it would bring about a closer realization of things as they are, they would become more realistic, it would sober them up a little. This is the first point I'd like to make. The second point is this. You say concessions. What is our position? We say we are ready to compromise. A compromise from the Egyptian point of view is unacceptable because they want everything one hundred per cent back. And if our experience with past arrangements was a good one, and if there were not 1948 and not 1956, 1967 and the war of attrition - but all this happened. So we say therefore, look, gentlemen, because the situation in the Middle East is what it is, Egypt has problems, and today there is Kadafi and tomorrow there will be an Egyptian Kadafi, or even this crazy man Kadafi could take over theoretically speaking, if we could have an arrangement by which we get what we want - secure enough borders, after all it's a desert, it's a good thing, thank God for geography, because we have a desert, we can have a defensible line.

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We can be indifferent then to what happens with Mr. Kadhafi in Egypt, and if he assembles his tanks, we wouldn't like it very much, but no war would come about and the cost is a very low cost. Even regarding that particular cost the Egyptians could come up with all kinds of face-savers, with all kinds of ingenious arrangements to make it easier from their point of view, for the symbolical aspect, historical aspect, emotional aspect, sentimental aspect, the fact that they are boxed in with their position and so on. But the outcome of it would be as I described, namely that we get secure, recognized, i.e., defensible borders. This would be a concession. Because we could have taken another attitude. We could have said: you are untrustworthy to us and because you are untrustworthy we shall now wait and expect the moment when you become trustworthy and then we shall negotiate. We could have taken this position.

VL: How much of the Egyptian territory do you think is necessary? divide Sinai and then it starts with all the desert here, you know, and Jerusalem is probably you have settled now and that .
Is there anything new?

MG: Now, you see, here I can only refer you to what we have said. People get angry sometimes when we repeat the position, but you see in a democracy (...bus passing...) that position. I can show you a speech by the Prime Minister, addressed to ? , in which she said to him: Look, six years have passed - it was then five years - we never drew a map. We have drawn up a map and we don't have an ultimatum position, we must start negotiating. We could have drawn up a map. I think it would have been a mistake. Even a map which would look nice, would look acceptable to friends of Israel,

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from our point of view it would . So we haven't drawn a map.
 But as I said to you, there is no secret. We don't want all of Sinai but
 we want a defensible border. There would have to be a new line in the Sinai
 Peninsula, not where the cease fire lines are now and not where the '67 lines
 were, to be drawn on the ground, on the basis of negotiations.

Incidentally, since you mentioned negotiations and so on, I felt
 that Mr. Malik's speech the day before yesterday, in which again he said
 the Soviet Union would never agree to anything which would be done outside
 the United Nations concerning the countries, this was the
 idea, I felt very unhappy about it. Because what does it mean, the UN?
 Altogether, it means that we have to take into account an organization which
 by its very arithmetic is anti-Israel. Why should we take this seriously,
 how helpful is such a statement at a time when all over the globe one is
 negotiating differently, directly?

VL: But withdrawing the army in direct negotiations
 something to is it possible to discuss it, is it feasible
 under any circumstances or direct negotiations is sort of-

MG: Now, we have always said and that goes back to 1970, and again
 restated in 1971, that we would agree also to indirect negotiations. In
 other words, we would agree to meetings concerning the Suez Canal agreement,
 we stated publicly, there was a Cabinet decision on February 2, 1972, in
 which we said that we agree to proximity talks. They are indirect talks.
 And the Suez Canal agreement involves some withdrawal, which answers your
 question could Israel withdraw without direct negotiations. Theoretically,

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the answer is maybe yes, although if you want to know what I think, I think even with the Suez agreement, after talking for two or three months in proximity talks, the moment must come when we meet to discuss the final details. Even if it is not the final agreement but only an interim agreement for the opening of the Suez Canal, logically the parties should meet. Everywhere in human history, whenever there is a cease fire, there are officers meeting, and here we have a cease fire without officers meeting. Without even - and this is a bad point I am making here but it indicates how completely isolated we are - even the UN observers very important work, but even they on both sides are not directly attached. (...bus passing..)

VL: Maybe this sort of thing could agreement on the -

MG: (unintelligible)

VL: What do you want from Russia? That is easier for you because there is no decision in principle. What apart from all the usual known statements, I mean what do you feel personally as a politician . . .

MG: You are talking now about Egypt?

VL: I am talking in general. In Russia, when I talk about the subject I talk with different people, talking about the Middle East and they don't care about North America, and the others who are with America, about the Middle East or Sinai, they don't care. But for you, it is sort of in the rôle.

MG: on the Jewish problem, the proposition that we would like very much to see free communication, which means also no harassment,

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no arrests, and also a solution of the very difficult problems which

. This is regarding the Jewish question. Regarding our bilateral relations, I think that we have in 1967 seen when there are difficulties this is the time to break off relations, and if the Soviet Union is ready to set up relations we will certainly consider that. I would add one little point. If we this time set up relations we shouldn't do it - because we had in our history ups and downs - this time it should be done so that we do not get into each other's hair within two weeks or three months. It should be a much more serious renewal of relations. So if we set up relations and then three days later you say we are aggressors and that sort of thing, this is a little bit - So this is regarding relations. I am talking generally because I know this is not going to happen.

Regarding the Middle East question, we think that here objectively speaking, not talking now about the U.S. and the Soviet Union, super powers, Egypt, first of all Egypt, let's forget Syria for a moment. Here objectively we are facing a situation where the Egyptians have a regime which for reasons about which one can be sorry has not yet decided to make peace, to start serious progress towards conciliation. Therefore what can we suggest? We can only suggest that one helps the Egyptian president, the Egyptian regime towards the realization that he must make peace, that he must become accustomed to the idea of making peace. We think on the whole we are moving in this direction. It is not tangible but we are moving in this direction, and some of the things you said also show that on the one hand, they assumed a very tough position, and on the other, they also feel

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they have reached a point where it cannot go any more as it was. And they say therefore confrontation, they say we must go to war (...bus passing..) very serious business to go to war.

VL: Are you willing to give Egypt another lesson, as some people keep saying?

MG: Certainly not. From our point of view, this is completely unnecessary, against our interests. But we are ready if they start, we are ready.

VL: Because the Russian military information is that you would win this war.

MG: We don't want to win a war, we want to win a peace. The cease fire lines as they are at the present time are good cease fire lines and we are not to fight over the cease fire lines, what we are anxious is to reach agreement concerning final lines. Now some people could argue that maybe the Egyptians are in such a mood that without another war they will never agree to anything without that. We doubt that. We don't think another war will necessarily bring about peace. We think that there is a process that will lead eventually to peace. We don't know whether it will last two years or much more, but we think there is such a process. We would like to see that what we are saying, the way we analyze the situation, is more generally accepted. In other words, do not come to us as you were in the habit before and say: Look, here, we want you that what will happen is this, and you are doomed and you are endangering the very existence of the State of Israel, etc., etc. that you do feel that Israel and

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between you, that hopefully the partners at a certain moment will begin to negotiate their differences but talk to each other and eventually there will be reconciliation and not all kinds of postures. There have been too much posturing and too much polemics in Egypt. Now, if this would be kind of even indirectly the result of the summit, for example

Middle East, accepts the Middle East mentality, this is the Middle East mentality, whether one likes it or not. I think that would be a contribution towards this process which I described.

VL: in the meeting now with Brezhnev, Nixon, one should expect apart from all this an important one, super nations, super powers changes the situation or help the peace to some extent in the Middle East, there wouldn't be any danger now of two powers fighting each other whether it's Vietnam or Israel. question of the Middle East now become as number one solving the problem here. So there will be propaganda on both sides and somehow to understand that anything could happen after the meeting when both sides will be agreeing to help, you know, and at the same time one might expect that the Arab states might try to undermine the spirit of the meeting itself trying to before the meeting itself. It's too involved to understand, so probably after the meeting, you know, when these official documents are published, etc., it would help change the position unfortunately Russia still stick to the idea that we have to support Egypt because otherwise the Arab world position as such, you know. No one could say look, the American (...bus passing..) It's muddled.

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MG: Yes, I agree. You say it is a muddle, but it could easily become less of a muddle. If for example, without even saying so much publicly, you would reach a conclusion, and the last summit was a little in this direction, at least this is how the Egyptians interpreted it, they were very unhappy about the last time so if you were to accept, whether you state in publicly or not is another question, that you have a policy, you have interests in the Middle East, you have a fleet in the Mediterranean, and so on, but at the same time, there are certain aspects that should be better left alone, that if you get involved in them your commitment becomes very heavy and this causes you all kinds of problems. In other words, that although the does have international interests, it also does have some aspects which are of a purely national character, national Israeli and Egyptian, and there are certain things, which one regrets, maybe from your point of view you would like the final outcome of the solution to be this, while Israel would like it to be that. True. Everybody is entitled to his own idea, but that it would be best for all concerned if it is recognized and maybe not stated, but tacitly one acts upon it, that there are national . Mr. Brandt when he was here just the other day he more or less took the line that certain aspects of this problem - he was very much , when a man like Brandt starts talking about peace, he gets excited. You can feel it. When he talks about peace, he gets excited, peace in Europe, etc. But he said that it is his understanding that the problem here was peace. Maybe one can bring a kind of - I think he is not practical about it but the idea is

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useful[?] but to bring about a kind of regional peace and leave the national aspects - that was not his expression, but I think this could have been the idea - the national aspects aside for the moment. In other words, the expression of defensible borders, how neighbors live with each others, what borders they have, this is for the countries themselves to negotiate, this cannot be enforced. Altogether peace cannot be enforced. Maybe certain aspects of a more general character can be brought about, also not enforced, one needs cooperation. This is the crux. The question of the borders being the crux, the center for this, this should not become the very point upon which all involved, all interested, get themselves into trouble. This is what I would hope could be brought about, announced or unannounced. not so much interested about announcements, because people understand even without an announcement. Now, what would the Egyptians do afterwards? That is their problem. Maybe they would become more realistic, maybe they would become unhappy for six or nine months, but eventually they would become more realistic. (..bus passing..) problem as a nation, as a country, and they can't pin everything on this, which has become for them out of proportion, completely out of proportion into a kind of national trauma. I think it is unnatural. I don't think it is healthy for them, and I think they basically realize that this is not healthy for them, not their real national problem. This is what I can say, I don't have any new ideas but I think those are the facts of life.

VL: But they are unpredictable to us as well, you see, and I would say concerning your prediction and the predictions of the Israelis, not only of great interest but also a source of information.

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A message from Jerusalem sometimes gives more than
 And sometimes people, I mean they don't know
 how to deal with these people mixed up.
 message from Cairo.
 we don't know

Another thing. Once the attitude is, there is a kind of, that is
 my own idea, if there is a sort of Soviet-Israel club or Russian culture
 club or whatever it is, done by Israelis with the help of ^{the} Russians embassies
 and propaganda, in the sense or whatever it is. I am trying
 to find a way Soviet cultural center reciprocity Israel
 culture center in Russia, but ^{if} there is anything, I can always talk to
 the here, the friends I know and discuss it and so, under your
 guidance, I think it might be an idea because it will be a kind of a body,
 it is my purpose, a kind of body [?] not for Soviet propaganda here, but this
 is a body if there is something positive in the link of Israel with Russia,
 Russia culture whatever it is, it will be a kind of recognizable link

but at the same time, it might be a kind of substitute of a
 body on whose behalf one could speak. They could help. It would be something
 which is sort of supported and recognized Russian
 specialist to explain instead of all that private messages, secret messages,
 sometimes a word from this kind of club would mean something.
 You know, this is a sort of again feelings of Soviet psychology, non-
 political, whatever it is. That is my thinking, which I don't want to push
 without your blessing. I talked in Moscow about it, they said, well, in
 theory if it won't be anti-Soviet, of course we would help. send

exhibitions of from Moscow, whatever it is, but it would be

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a kind of mutual thing which is already pressing and pushing
 this case some people might go there and
 even solve the problem
 Well, that is for you to think and decide about it.

MG: Yes, I would want to add this, not officially, I would like to
 say just personally what I feel, and I think more people than just myself
 would feel about it. Point number one is that our experience with substitute
 arrangements of this kind has not been a good one. If we did that then
 for the next 20 years you just have that and you have nothing else. This
 has been our diplomatic experience with such arrangements, and I think the
 time will come in a year or two or three or more when we
 change completely our relations. Then such a thing may become an obstacle.
 Point number 2 is that I believe our relations so stormy and
 unhappy since 1962 or '63, for ten years now, such an unhappy affair
 our relations with you, in the field of commerce it never worked
 nicely. So that because of this unhappy past, any arrangement we make must
 be on a healthy foundation.

VL: All or nothing.

MG: I give you my personal view. It is a matter of checking with
 my immediate superiors and certainly with the Prime Minister. And they
 may think too and she may feel too that is an important thing and
 but if she were to ask me what an average Israeli felt about
 this problem and talked with her about this problem, I could guess by intro-
 spection what she would say would be in terms of what I am saying.

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VL: Another thing is if I may ask you, from my journalistic position, matters of trying to help sort of a names count, keep it in confidence and I didn't say to anyone I was meeting with you. From your side someone asking you whether I saw or haven't seen you-

MG: You see, here we have a little problem. We must settle it, This is completely off the record, obviously. Regarding whether we met or not, what is the situation there? It is already in all the papers they said of course Victor Lewis is not here officially and so on, but one has to remember that last time when he was here he met with the Director-General of the Prime Minister's office, etc. So supposing - this morning I had a call from , the Israeli press officer. I thought now he is going to ask me whether I am going to meet with you or not. Thank God he asked me about Bourguiba. There is a story that the Prime Minister and Bourguiba would meet. But he would have asked me, just 20 minutes before you arrived.

VL: And he could have

MG: I really would have been in a fix, because if I lied . So therefore, I think that if asked, we should say that you requested the meeting, the meeting took place and was of a general character.

VL: Because I could walk out now and someone might be waiting for me.

MG: You have a car, don't you? I could give you my car.

VL: It took me about two months, when I met Kissinger, I had to change my , to fly immediately to Washington, because his problem with the State Department, and the visa people and they

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know the security people. I slept with this friend, I went to see him with my pajama in the bag and showed my driving license. I don't like to embarrass anybody, but on my last meeting with Dinitz, for example, when I was asked directly about the meeting, what could I say? Then the exact words were there saying Victor Lewis says that now he is going back to Moscow, which is my original words, if someone made a statement from this end, because I always play the role, if anyone would like to talk with me I talk with him.

MG: We are not taking the initiative, I think. I offer a suggestion but I think we shouldn't take the initiative, but when asked, to say, yes there was a meeting. I would say, yes, I met yesterday with the London Times correspondent, and today I met with Mr. Victor Lewis. What did you discuss? Just general things.

VL: I am going to write a general story as I usually do.

MG: Yes, but you said you will be meeting with other people, too.

VL: I am not to push that. you would like to talk

to Dayan ? I shook hands with Dayan yesterday he asked,

is it right that you'd like to talk with me, or would like me ?

I said it's a pleasure meeting you now, I'll be very pleased to talk with you

Well, in this case, you have to go to the Minister of Foreign Affairs or

the Ministry of Defense to ask for permission. And then Moses, he knows

everyone here - whom would you like to talk to? I said I need names,

business I could discuss with you, any journalist, I'd like to shake hands.

You are known people who are dealing with the Middle East most

people scandal. For Heaven's sakes, you are

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chief of the party, how could you go so low, let him talk to

This again

psychology, so if there is any chances from a journa-

listic point of view, if you don't mind, without asking embarrassing questions

if I could meet anyone

. If Golda would feel better, I'd be

delighted to kiss her hand and just say goodbye or whatever it is. If not,

can I talk to Sapir, can I talk to Dayan? If they would like to say any-

thing, I mean what has been said in the papers

they tell me

what has been said in the press. If they have any questions to ask me I

will be quite pleased to answer them, the way I understand, off the record.

I don't want to embarrass anyone but it's much more pleasant

coming back, they ask whome have you seen? So I say all right, I

talked to Dayan

. It's not a question of personal prestige.

I have more publicity than I need, I have to play it down, but that helps the

cause. So, if I have any inquiries.

MG: You are a newspaper man so therefore you can ask for interviews.

VL: Yes, I can ask for interviews but whether the interviews will

be granted or not.

MG: That I don't know. But I happen to know, for example, that
as you mentioned Mr. Sapir, he is leaving the country. So this I don't
know about. This is a practical matter.

But I want to ask you personally for my own gratification. From my
point of view, when I inform Mrs. Meir of this conversation, what am I
going to say to her, roughly speaking what you said to Mr. Dinitz last
time, that you came to this country and so on, but at the same time

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you were representing certain ideas which you discussed with people. How do you want me to- ?

VL: You can say that. If there wouldn't be a conference, nobody would associate me with Moscow. I could come of my own initiative, but there would be too much embarrassment in Moscow at this time. So then I raised the question invited discussion people then talking about aliya people responsible for explain the position to the Israeli officials

MG: Then I can say to Mrs. Meir that before coming here, before coming to this conference, you thought it would be a good idea to talk to some of your friends in Moscow, and this means for all practical purposes friends dealing in more or less three separate-

VL: Soviet officials.

MG: Dealing with three subjects. First, the Middle East, second, the summit meeting, and third, aliya.

VL: An example, about aliya . Three or four times, I usually go and ask what is going on, etc. So it is the same here. So they give me last minute information. I say I am now going to Israel, do you have any questions to raise, whether its Foreign Office, whether it's political row, whether its advisors, what do you want to know. So now I put it in a sort of summary way, because they say: Look, tell them so and so. It is not the way I put it, but it's the way I get the message ultimatum, but that's the way people speak. You know put it this way. And your answers, they go to the appropriate departments.

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MG: Yes, okay.

VL: If there will be anything else, I am planning to be here a week. If there is anything you would like. I am planning to to Elath on Friday and come back on Sunday morning. Then to see some friends here and then go back home. I will be here until Wednesday. In Jerusalem, and other places as well. If I any politicians, simply ask to shake hands. If you could help me, if you wish to help me, thank you. If not -

MG: Fine.

M E E T I N G

June 15, 1973

VL: I never miss a chance to come here. It wasn't your invitation; it was an invitation starting in January, so no one could say I planned it to coincide with the discussions in New York. So I have a sort of nice official cover. I won't embarrass anyone. Well, unfortunately even if I write something about Israel, it seems a kind of political issue and Arab ambassadors begin to complain immediately... That is why I come here on this pretext. It was for a cover.

I don't know in which way you have been briefed about me and you have your own reservations. Again, I'd like to sort of publicize myself in a way that I hope I prove in a way, if any proof is necessary, my sympathy towards Israel and the way I am speaking here is non-Soviet official; I am not a Soviet official - that is not the way I talk in Moscow about Israel with any Russian official. That is why I take the liberty to put things straightforward and please don't take it as a sort of... black-mailing or whatever, otherwise we will start with diplomatic language. Well, I know that you have your contacts which I should know and you have your way of expressing the high policy, what-not, and so on. Well, apart from political things there are some number of personal things concerning Brezhnev which sort of coincide now and again especially after Dr. [Mair] Kahane [a right-wing Israeli activist who became known for his struggle for Soviet Jews' right to immigrate] wasn't allowed to go...

So the general feeling is that for the people in Moscow still believe that the Zionist organizations are aimed from here and directed from here and you couldn't explain to them that you can[not] press one button or another button, that it doesn't work that way, the way it works in Moscow. Because you are a Russian specialist, you understand you couldn't expect from people to think in a different mentality...

There is no Watergate coverage in Russia at all, and all the Watergate in Russia is the Voice of America, is jammed in Moscow. The Voice of America would tell the impressions... So the idea is one would think [that] if you tell Israelis, you know, please don't embarrass Brezhnev too much, just press another button like Watergate and it will be finished, and they couldn't understand why you can't stop that in America. Well, that is the way of mentality of the mediocre people. And only one two days left, you know [before the Nixon-Brezhnev summit]. You see, the idea is one should personally think, I personally think that if my country's situation to the extent that the favor of the visit, is always like in the good old jokes, always blame Jews for that. I don't like this, that it will go on blaming Jews for that ...

And you haven't got the Russian background, and a number of the things you have to feel in your skin and not have it explained to you. And because the man [Brezhnev] might come home and say: well, look after all the insults [i.e. - anti-Soviet demonstration of American Jews] I got because of Jews, stop it, finish it. All right, another ten years [of a halt to the immigration of Soviet Jews] or whatever it is, but you should understand this sort of mentality of dictatorship in the sense that a man can [make this decision]. [A] personal thing is involved, you know, it is too much at stake for nothing. Well, that is the sort of feeling at home and [let me] tell you, look I talk to people and I couldn't speak on behalf of Israel saying, look American citizens to do what they want and there will be demonstrations. It will be hardly any American [Jew being able to demonstrate in front of a] well-guarded White House, well-guarded Camp David, Houston is a military base you know, and is always isolated. But what I may suggest to you, if it is all right... if you could say through your usual contacts so you got the message and you are doing your best under the circumstances. Because there are a number of people who jumped at our people and said, well, look, it is directed from Israel. And now it is unfashionable to blame Americans, Jewish Americans for anything that might happen...

MG: [I do not know] whether you want me to react on it, or you want to go on with other points. I could react to this, if you are interested. The situation is a complicated one for the simple reason that on the one hand, there is some aliya [Hebrew for immigration] from the Soviet Union and we are glad. Last year over 30,000 people came. We are not happy with the precise figure but we are happy with the phenomenon of the aliya for those who want to come.

Now, we have already indicated on several occasions, public occasions the fact that... the contradiction doesn't make too much sense to us. Maybe it can be explained to a people who, as you say, feel on the skin the Russian way of thinking, or there is some other reason that has to do with general considerations in the Soviet Union which I don't follow too closely. But the contradiction is that on the one hand this phenomenon of immigration is taking place, at the same time there are all kinds of difficulties... The result is public opinion, Jewish public opinion and other public opinion, is quite worried because this is a development or rather a problem of Russian Jewry has been a problem which the world press has not followed for many years something like 8 or 10 or more years. This has become part of the things covered by the press, and I think you will not disagree with me when I say that in the Soviet Union now it is all to the good. There is a little more possibility to let such news come out than in Stalin's era, so one knows about arrests and even hunger strikes. Right now there is a hunger strike of Jewish scientists. So the public opinion has its effect.

Now regarding American organizations and American Jews, as you said yourself, we do not [have control over] Israeli Zionist cause and [over] Jewish causes in general. And they are worried, deeply worried. But they would be happy if tomorrow there is nothing to worry about or so little to worry about that one emphasizes the good part and just ignores some side issues. But right now you have on the one hand a phenomenon which is favorable but not large enough, but favorable nevertheless, and at the same time the other things. So, this is how we feel about it. Now American Jewish organizations are responsible organizations... To the best of my knowledge and from what I read in papers, from what I hear from time to time from people who come back, from their impressions, etc. they are certainly [will not do] anything of the kind you described. Certainly they will not do anything of the kind. I hope - for this I cannot vouch at all - I hope that some small splinter, not even splinter, completely fringe organizations will not do something. As you know, the Israel government concerning violent activities has expressed itself in the past, quite unequivocally. But now we are dealing with psychology, the psychology of a man, Mr. Brezhnev. This is difficult, what can we do regarding a man we have not met [Redacted]. Even though this would also be possible, theoretically... So this is basically what I have to say about it. I could add particular impressions later regarding what I call the non-positive, the negative, phenomenon... regarding people who are sent to Siberia and the accusations, the allegations, I don't know, indictments against them are very, very flimsy to put it politely. So I don't know whether it is fair to say it but I heard from David Bartur that you yourself years ago wrote on the victim of that sort of thing and were sent to a camp.

VL: ... You couldn't sort of blame anyone [for sending people to the camps], that is like earthquake. I spent nearly ten years [in a camp] and came out, others spent more time or less time, but this is like war. There is no one to blame for it. It is the system. All the cruelty which goes on now, people sent to Siberia, the Russians think it is justifiable and this is complete justice because it is not only Jews that are sent there. The same thing is done to the Russians...

I keep saying give me the list of people [you want to get out]... There are a number of explanations [which the Soviet government uses], acceptable or not, but there are some reasons for [refusing immigration of certain individuals]. There are a few students they wouldn't like to let them out.... It is not a question of bargaining. They say they couldn't let three or four scientists out... Then they said, look, while I am here in the office, you Ginsburg, would never leave the Soviet Union, and poor

Ginsburg is going to stay in the Soviet Union because of this personal attitude of the official. There is no logic to that. Nor other things like, there is one colonel on the list... They don't have anything against him personally, they would let him out, but he is a colonel. Well, you know, the colonel will come to Tel-Aviv, then he will be sent on a trip... Then there will be Col. Varshansky who would know all the military secrets. That would be embarrassing for the army. So let him sit for a while. This is the sort of logic that goes behind. The other people – personally I was utterly surprised. I haven't checked it myself, but the same top official told me for instance, I saw him the day before yesterday, and he said [to me, 'why these is] too much fuss about it, what is the reason... [that specific applicant has] been told now[:] as soon as you apply, bring all the documents necessary, keep your mouth shut and we will let you out. But he has not applied and the official told me: look, in a private conversation, we couldn't [let him] apply before [because] he gives an interview to Israeli radio.

MG: What an idiot.

VL: All right, he is an idiot. As soon as you say you are going to Israel they will kick you out of the party. Or they wouldn't give you documents.... People ask me from London for instance to help Tiompkin. And there is a headline in the "Daily Express", this poor woman in a camp, but she is in a [labor] camp; it is no Auschwitz. There is a limit. And there are also family problems... a father who wants to go to Israel. He is absolutely ready to take his daughter. And the mother wants to stay in Russia. Gentlemen, where is the limit? How could we discuss that on a sort of common international level? For instance, the father was against his son going, pressing [to stay] and trying to prevent his son from going. Now I saw him three days ago and now he said[:] we want to go to Israel... Every Jewish family is a sort of small tragedy...

MG: Regarding such cases, regarding this phenomenon of families, I think if there has been some kind of arrangement by which we would be able to discuss such cases – you can say to us: [so and so] hasn't yet filled out a form. So then we say to you, okay suggest it to him. And we can talk to him and you can talk to him. Then his problem is settled and one other point of aggravation, point of trouble does not exist. Or if you take the son of Levitch. He is not a great scientists. It is the father. He is the son. And he has been sent, and apparently been sent to a camp where he is not physically fit to be. The climate is not good for him... As long as the son [is there], this keeps appearing in the press every week at least or maybe more, if you take all the press. [Why] complicate it?

VL: ... There is a brutality in Russia. Sometimes they say no to you and you can do whatever you want, that's the [power of the bureaucracy].

MG: Here you are a little bit confused. I will tell you why. On the one hand, you say that there is a problem, namely that there is a brutality, officialdom a certain logic which I am [unable] to understand. Okay, this being so, you say sometimes the right thing to do, if one protests, goes on a hunger strike, and there is therefore a kind of war going on inside the Soviet Union, because as long as you have this problem with officialdom and so on, then you must have a counter-balancing factor. But let's look at it from the other side, from our side, and from the point of view of those who have left already. Those who have left argue if this is so, then we also must make [noises], and some of them make noises which really irritate. And irritate us... So we do not control this. We can try and convince and persuade etc. sometimes, but here again the contradiction that I sense in your analysis is that you say there must be some protest, it hurts, the fact that stories get published in the western press and it does help occasionally...

VL: Yes. It's contradiction. The only thing I said is if there is someone who could – probably no one exists in the world who could – know the extreme to it. There is a

limit. Israelis protest and Americans protest. It is overdone. It might overweight the necessity.

Talking about the people involved in the [Leningrad] airplane [hijacking] attempt [on 15 June 1970 by a group of Soviet Jews who were denied permission to immigrate]. The officials said now we couldn't let them out of prison logically. They would let them out and then there would be protests in Russia: 'the Jews can have everything they want, they get out of prison.' It is too much. You see, as soon as one of them will be released in July or something from this airplane in Leningrad case, or some of them are already released - not the woman, I am talking about the others. Their terms finish in July or August or whatever it is, but anyhow two of them are coming out this year. So there is no problem. They could go to Israel the following day, but we couldn't reduce their sentence at the present moment...

MG: I think I understand you perfectly. I really thank you very much because it just verifies what was in my mind. However, I think you understand my points too... I think now the question is, as you say, [whether] can one find the balance. And when psychology is involved or certain logic is involved of a different kind which cannot exactly be gauged, especially when one has no control over all this. People are reacting independently... So to the point that you do not have control - by you I mean Moscow in general, over officialdom, over certain mentality which is built into the regime, how can one have control over the actions of individuals in a free society.

But coming back to your point about Mr. Brezhnev, you know we made already certain statements, one by our Ambassador in the States, in which the hope was expressed that this meeting would be a good meeting [and as far as] relations between East and West were concerned, [Israel was] in favor of détente, improvement of relations. We were not cold war mongers, we are not interested in cold war. This is certainly our position...

VL: [Now,] about curbing out limitations, they decrease now. It is not artificial, because that is what they claim. In Moscow [there were] about 6,000 applications before, now about 5,000 applications. It is a seasonal thing. There are letters coming from Israel whether it is so good or not so good, [Soviet Jews] think and decide and so on. There are other people who would like to and haven't applied. With There are those who [do] not [have] permission to go and haven't left. It is more of a family thing. Very small exceptions, the question is now about 30 people or 60 people for whom you are sort of fighting constantly, otherwise there are no objections...

Another thing is how would you think about the idea of tourism before the diplomatic relations or relatives coming here on the pretext of being tourists. Because there are a number of people who would like to go and see Israel for themselves. It is positive or bad or what would be your reaction?

MG: I don't have an immediate reaction to that. I would have to refer it to people who deal with this and have ideas about it. In principle, I would say in the past we were in favor of this sort of thing, but the assumption being that it was on a bilateral basis, in other words, if there are tourists they go both ways. Our tourists can go there and your tourists can come here. If it is on a unilateral basis, I don't know...

VL: People do come here as tourists, not exactly as tourists, with a relative visa. And then for a couple of months. It is much easier now because a lot of people go to France and America. In principle it is much easier than ever before. Some of my Jewish friends who went to France and to visit an uncle or whatever it is, they were allowed to go to France...

VL: [Armand] Hammer was in Moscow, he has been to my house-

MG: The millionaire?

VL: Yes... There are a few things because Hammer suggests that the Soviet Union should start a little bit of trade with Israel, because there is a most favorable national agreement which still exists between the Soviet Union and Israel. He thinks it might help to get [support] in the States with [Senator Henry 'Scoop' Jackson [D-Washington]]. This is the sort of more personal interest I would say than anything else. I am not in the position to agree on trade, but it might be nice to mention and discuss it... So I mean in state terms here in general, anyone who is ready to open something... And whether Israel is interested, with a sort of neutral trade where no one could blame Russia. Of course, you couldn't give me an answer immediately but you are ready to bring anything constructive and push it... Well, that is the Hammer idea which he was also trying to sell Moscow and push there but again then comes the political question. It would be interesting to know if there is anything else you could add to the well-known position, officially well-known position, unofficially if you have come to any, and how shall I say, concessions or minor concessions, promises of concessions. If there is anything you haven't said before... Well a lot of people, the majority of people, are in favor of better negotiations between Arabs and Israelis, and the Arabs are sort of provoking Russia to - push to be responsible to that... the Egyptian delegation in Moscow, much more unbending and strict and tougher. Even tougher than they ever were before. [They offered] no concessions... But Egypt would appreciate it of course if Russia would start to press the issue. In this case they would say: Look, what else can we do, they pressure us. This is what they would like.

MG: Let me get this straight. The Egyptians would like to have Russian pressure?

VL: That is what the Russians understand, that the Egyptians would like to have Russian pressure. That is [why] the Russians would press for direct negotiations, they could present the case as a sort of pressure from the Soviet Union and that there would be no way out. And the Soviets don't like to be used to [be] blamed for that by the rest of the Arabs... But in principle, Russia is much in favor of negotiations beginning.

MG: That is sort of change in the Soviet position...

VL: Sometimes I am mixed up, I am not choosing the words, I would say. It is not a sort of unofficial message. It's more of a summary, so it's easier for you to understand the moods.

MG: [I] understand the mood. If I understand correctly, you have a feeling, you personally, that this latest visit by the Egyptians gave the impression that the Egyptians are more inclined to direct negotiations but would like the negotiations to be-

VL: No they are not. Their position is much tougher than before.

MG: However?

VL: However, Russia is more and more now in favor [of negotiations and] always advises [the Arabs to start] talks, and more and more in favor as the only way out.... And [in] Egypt also come people there [that]... would like that Russia, one had the impression, would like the Russians to press them, not sort of advise them. There is a sort of ridiculous thing which I heard from Americans, off the record, that we know more about the position in the Middle East, negotiations in the Middle East, from the Americans than we know from the Egyptians. That's the-

MG: Attitudes.

VL: Attitudes or let's say approaches on the Egyptian side. [They] give us less than the American side. So that is the attitude of these people. But we are sort of so tied up with the Arab world that we couldn't sort of break loose, and I would say that at the meeting now we will be more bound by our alliance to Egypt, and the ridiculous thing would be that if the Egyptians would change [their position and] Russia is not doing anything, if they will change their position, because if it will go on then the Soviets will be in an idiotic position as before that they are trying to press for something that the Egyptians are already not insisting on because of previous instruction, previous decisions, we stick to that. Egypt being more flexible on this position, they could shift away from the rigid Russian position which the Russians should do, without sort of trying to find language of conciliation... I am interested to know if there is anything you could suggest sort of behind the scenes, if you could absorb all that, shall I say, deadlock between the Russians and the Egyptians diplomacy and American diplomacy, if there is anything you feel can be done, if there is anything new which could give off the record... I know you have your own way of funneling your thinking but then there is less possibility to discuss. If there is anything new, because from all that is known it is not, not concessions, any ideas if you think the Egyptians might change and it would help Russia to be prepared for that and push sometimes Egypt, and then Russia would be responsible for all their decisions, because that is what the Egyptians would like and that is what makes people headaches there.

MG: I don't know if I have any new ideas or if anyone can have any new ideas because the situation is such that it is difficult to have any. But I think I could explain to you several things one tends to forget. Because [there] is a tendency to forget such things and this doesn't help. I agree with you one hundred per cent when you said that in the past, maybe this is a hangover, Soviet policy was one hundred per cent identified with the Egyptian position. Kissinger said [that] and I think he is right. I had a talk with [a] Soviet [official] in Washington, before the Six Day War and I made the same point: It is not good for you... I fail to understand why a super power should commit itself so heavily on the side of one country, especially with a country that is basically a problematic country in this generation - I hope not in fifty years time - but Egypt is problematic, and you will get yourself into trouble. So therefore to the point that the Soviet Union detaches itself, face saving-wise, from this sort of commitment which is not a political commitment, this would be a good thing for all concerned, I think. Also [it would be a good thing] for the Egyptians eventually because it would bring about a closer realization of things as they are, they would become more realistic, it would sober them up a little. This is the first point I'd like to make. The second point is this. You [asked about] concessions. What is our position? We say we are ready to compromise. A compromise from the Egyptian point of view is unacceptable because they want everything one hundred percent back. And if our experience with past arrangements was a good one, and if there were not 1948 and not 1956, 1967 and the war of attrition - but all this happened. So we say therefore, look, gentlemen, because the situation in the Middle East is what it is, Egypt has problem, and today there is [Libyan dictator, Muamar] Kadafi and tomorrow there will be an Egyptian Kadafi, or even this crazy man Kadafi could take over theoretically speaking, if we could have an arrangement by which we get what we want -secure borders, after all it's a desert, it's a good thing, thank God for geography, because we have a desert, we can have a defensible line.

We can be indifferent then to what happens with Mr. Kadafi in Egypt, and if he assembles his tanks, we wouldn't like it very much, but no war would come about and the cost is a very low cost. Even regarding that particular cost the Egyptians could come up with all kinds of face-savers, with all kinds of ingenious arrangements to make it easier from their point of view, for the symbolical aspect, historical aspect, emotional aspect, sentimental aspect, the fact that they are boxed in with their position and so on. But the outcome of it would be as I described, namely that we get

secure [and] recognized i.e. defensible borders. This would be a concession [on our part]. Because we could have taken another attitude. We could have said: you are untrustworthy to us and because you are untrustworthy we shall now wait and expect the moment when you become trustworthy and then we shall negotiate. We could have taken this position.

VL: How much of the Egyptian territory do you think is necessary? [You want to] divide Sinai and then it starts with all the desert here, you know, and Jerusalem is probably you have settled now and that [is a fact on the ground]. Is there anything new?

MG: Now, you see, here I can only refer you to what we have said. People get angry sometimes when we repeat this position, but you see in a democracy [we have no other choice than taking] that position... We could have drawn up the map. I think it would have been a mistake. Even a map which would look nice, would look acceptable to friends of Israel... So we haven't drawn a map. But as I said to you, there is no secret. We don't want all of Sinai but we want a defensible border. There would have to be a new line in the Sinai Peninsula, not where the cease fire lines are now and not where the '67 lines were, to be drawn on the ground, on the basis of negotiations.

Incidentally, since you mentioned negotiations and so on, I felt that Mr. Malik's speech the day before yesterday, in which again he said the Soviet Union would never agree to anything which would be done outside the United Nations concerning the countries, this was the idea, I felt very unhappy about it. Because what does it mean, the UN? Altogether, it means that we have to take into account an organization which by its very arithmetic is anti-Israel. Why should we take this seriously, how helpful is such a statement at a time when all over the globe one is negotiating different, directly?...

VL: What do you want from Russia? That is easier for you because there is no decision in principle. What apart from all the usual known statements, I mean what do you feel personally as a politician...

MG: You are talking now about Egypt?

VL: I am talking in general. In Russia, when I talk about the subject I talk with different people, talking about the Middle East [with bureaucrats running Moscow's Middle East policy] and they don't care about North America, and the others who are [dealing] with America, [do not care] about the Middle East or Sinai, they don't care. But for you, it is sort of in the role.

MG: [I want to come back to] the Jewish problem, the proposition that we would like very much to see free communication, which means also no harassment, no arrests, and also a solution of the very difficult problems which [we have talked about]. This is regarding the Jewish question. Regarding our bilateral relations, I think that we have in 1967 seen when there are difficulties this is the time to break off relations, and if the Soviet Union is ready to set up relations we will certainly consider that. I would add one little point. If we this time set up relations we shouldn't do it - because we had in our history ups and downs - this time it should be done so that we do not get in each other's hair within two weeks or three months. It should be a much more serious renewal of relations. So if we set up relations and then three days later you say we are aggressors and that sort of thing, this is a little bit - So this is regarding relations. I am talking generally because I know this is not going to happen.

Regarding the Middle East question, we think that here objectively speaking, not talking now about the U.S. and the Soviet Union... first of all Egypt, let's forget Syria

for a moment. Here objectively we are facing a situation where the Egyptians have a regime which for [its own] reasons about which one can be sorry has not yet decided to make peace, to start serious progress towards conciliation. Therefore what can we suggest? We can only suggest that one helps the Egyptian president, the Egyptian regime towards the realization that he must make peace, that he must become accustomed to the idea of making peace. We think on the whole we are moving in this direction. It is not tangible but we are moving in this direction, and some of the things you said also show that on the one hand, they assumed a very tough position and on the other, they also feel they have reached a point where it cannot go any more as it was. And they say therefore [that they want] confrontation, they say we must go to war... very serious business to go to war.

VL: Are you willing to give Egypt another lesson, as some people keep saying?

MG: Certainly not. From our point of view, this is completely unnecessary, against our interests. But we are ready if they start, we are ready.

VL: Because the Russian military information is that you would win this war

MG: We don't want to win a war, we want to win a peace. The cease fire lines as they are at present time are good cease fire lines and we are not [looking forward] to fight over the cease fire lines, what we are anxious is to reach agreement concerning final lines. Now some people could argue that maybe the Egyptians are in such a mood that without another war they will never agree to anything without that. We doubt that. We don't think another war will necessarily bring about peace. We think that there is a process that will lead eventually to peace. We don't know whether it will last two years or much more, but we think there is such a process. We would like to see that what we are saying, the way we analyze the situation, is more generally accepted. In other words, do not come to us as you were in the habit before and say: Look, here, we want you that what will happen is this, and you are doomed and you are endangering the very existence of the State of Israel, etc., etc...

VL: In the meeting now with Brezhnev, Nixon, one should expect apart from all this... super nations, super power [stuff, Nixon and Brezhnev will discuss] changes the situation or help the peace to some extent in the Middle East, there wouldn't be any danger now of two powers fighting each other whether it's Vietnam or Israel. [In] the meeting [the] question of the Middle East now become as number one... So there will be propaganda on both sides and [you need] somehow to understand that anything could happen after the meeting when both sides will be agreeing to help, you know, and at the same time one might expect that the Arab states might try to undermine the spirit of the meeting itself... unfortunately Russia still stick to the idea that we have to support Egypt because otherwise the Arab world [would turn against the Soviet Union]...

MG: Yes, I agree. You say it is a muddle, but it could easily become less of a muddle. If for example, without even saying so much publicly, you would reach a conclusion, and the last summit was a little in this direction, at least this is how the Egyptians interpreted it, they were very unhappy about the last [summit] so if you were to accept, whether you state in publicly or not is another question, that you have a policy, you have interests in the Middle East, you have a fleet in the Mediterranean, and so on, but at the same time, there are certain aspects that should be better left alone, that if you get involved in them your commitment becomes very heavy and this causes you all kinds of problems... In other words, the expression of defensible borders, how neighbors live with each others, what borders they have, this is for the countries themselves to negotiate, this cannot be enforced. Altogether peace cannot be enforced... This is the crux. The question of the borders being the crux, the center for this, this should not become the very point upon which all involved, all interested, get themselves into trouble. This is what I would hope could be brought about,

announced or unannounced... Now, what would the Egyptians do afterwards? That is their problem. Maybe they would become more realistic, maybe they would become unhappy for six or nine months, but eventually they would become more realistic... [The Egyptians] can't pin everything on [the border question], which has become for them out of proportion, completely out of proportion into a kind of national trauma. I think it is unnatural. I don't think it is healthy for them, and I think they basically realize that this is not healthy for them, not their real national problem. This is what I can say, I don't have any new ideas but I think those are the facts of life.

VL: But [the Egyptians] are unpredictable to us all as well, you see, and I would say concerning your prediction and the predictions of the Israelis [that they are] not only of great interest but also a source of information. A [message] from Jerusalem sometimes gives more than [a] message from Cairo...

Another thing. Once the attitude is, there is a kind of, that is my own idea, if there is a sort of the Soviet-Israel club or Russian culture club for whatever it is, done by the Israelis with the help of Russians embassies and propaganda... I am trying to find a way if [a] Soviet cultural center [would be reciprocated by an] Israel culture center in Russia, but [if] there is anything, I can always talk to [you about it, then deliver the message to] the friends I know [in the Soviet government] and discuss it [with them]... [these cultural centers] will be a kind of recognizable link but at the same time, it might be a kind of substitute of a body on whose behalf one could speak. They could help. It would be something which is sort of supported and recognized [conduit for communications]... instead of all that private messages, secret messages, sometimes a word from this kind of club would mean something. You know, this is a sort of again feelings of Soviet psychology, non-political, whatever it is. That is my thinking, which I don't want to push without your blessing. I talked in Moscow about it, they said, well, in theory if it won't be anti-Soviet, of course we would help...

MG: Yes, I would want to add this, not officially, I would like to say just personally what I feel, and I think more people than just myself would feel about it. Point number one is that our experience with substitute arrangements of this kind has not been a good one. If we did that then for the next 20 years you just have that and you have nothing else. This has been our diplomatic experience with such arrangements, and I think the time will come in a year or two or three or more when we... will change completely our relations. Then such a thing may become an obstacle. Point number 2 is that I believe [that] our relations [were] so stormy and unhappy since 1962 or '63, for ten years now, such an unhappy affair our relations with you, in the field of commerce it never worked nicely. So that because of this unhappy past, any arrangement we make must be on a healthy foundation.

VL: All or nothing.

MG: I give you my personal view. It is a matter of checking with my immediate superiors and certainly with the Prime Minister. And they may think too and she may feel too that is an important thing and [Redacted] but if she were to ask me what an average Israeli felt about this problem and talked with her about this problem, I could guess by introspection what she would say would be in terms of what I am saying.

VL: Another thing is if I may ask you, from my journalistic position... keep it in confidence and I didn't say to anyone I was meeting with you. From your side someone asking you whether I saw or haven't seen you-

MG: You see, here we have a little problem. We must settle it. This is completely off the record, obviously. Regarding whether we met or not, what is the situation there? It is already in all the papers they said of course Victor Lewis is not here officially and so on, but one has to remember that last time when he was here he met with

Director-General of the Prime Minister's office, etc. So supposing – this morning I had a call from the Israeli press officer. I thought now he is going to ask me whether I am going to meet with you or not... I really would have been in a fix, because if I lied. So therefore, I think that if asked we should say that you requested the meeting, the meeting took place and was not of a general character.

VL: ... I don't like to embarrass anybody, but on my last meeting with [Simcha] Dinitz [formerly Director General of the Prime Minister's office and at the time of this meeting Israeli ambassador to Washington], for example, when I was asked directly about the meeting, what could I say? Then the exact words were there saying Victor Lewis says that now he is going back to Moscow, which is my original words, if someone made a statement from this end... because I always play the role, if anyone would like to talk with me I talk with him.

MG: We are not taking the initiative, I think. I offer a suggestion but I think we shouldn't take the initiative, but when asked, to say, yes there was a meeting. I would say, yes, I met yesterday with the London Times correspondent and today I met with Mr. Victor Lewis. What did you discuss? Just general things.

VL: I am going to write a general story as I usually do...

MG: But I want to ask you personally for my own gratification. From my point of view, when I inform Mrs. Meir of this conversation, what am I going to say to her, roughly speaking what you said to Mr. Dinitz last time, that you came to this country and so on, but at the same time you were representing certain ideas which you discussed with people. How do you want me to - ?

VL: You can say that...

MG: Then I can say to Mrs. Meir that before coming here, before coming to this conference, you thought it would be a good idea to talk to come of your friends in Moscow, and this means for all practical purposes friends dealing in more or less three separate-

VL: Soviet officials.

MG: Dealing with three subjects. First, the Middle East, second the summit meeting, and third, aliya.

VL: An example, about aliya. Three or four times, I usually go and ask what is going on, etc. So it is the same here. So they give me last minute information. I say I am now going to Israel, do you have any questions to raise, whether its Foreign Office, whether it's political row, whether it's advisors, what do you want to know. So now I put it in a sort of summary way, because they say: Look, tell them so and so. It is not the way I put it, but it's the way I get the message [I do not want to give you an] ultimatum, but that's the way people speak... And your answers, they go on to the appropriate departments.

MG: Yes, okay.

VL: If there will be anything else, I am planning to be here a week. If there is anything you would like. I am planning to to Elath on Friday and come back on Sunday morning. Then to see some friends here and then go back home. I will be here until Wednesday. In Jerusalem, and other places as well. If I [can meet] any politicians, simply ask to shake hands. If you could help me, if you wish to help me, thank you. If you -

MG: Fine.