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May 18, 1961

MAY 18 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. ROBERTSON
THE WHITE HOUSE

Recategorized as
Category "A"

September 30, 1966

/s/ Warren A. Henderson

Subject: American Scientists' Visit
to Israel's Dioxane Reactor

During a brief conversation with Ambassador-designate Melworth Barber on May 16 the President expressed interest in two aspects of the forthcoming secret visit of two American scientists to the Dioxane reactor in Israel: (1) our agreement that the visit should be carried out without publicity, and (2) the absence of a "neutral" scientist.

The two problems raised by the President are, of course, related. We have long believed and repeatedly stressed to the Israelis that it is in their interest to allay world fears by permitting objective, international inspection of the Dioxane reactor or normal access by scientists. In response to our approaches, Prime Minister Ben-Gurion replied, in effect, that Israel's national pride will not permit it to be singled out from all other nations; and unless and until other nations agree to international inspection and control, Israel is not prepared to submit to such inspection. Ben-Gurion made it clear that if a visit to the reactor were to take place at this stage, it would have to be carried out by Americans and without publicity.

Rather than have no visit, we considered that we should respect Prime Minister Ben-Gurion's sensitivities. We did not agree that complete and continued secrecy as to the results of the visit would be possible. We pointed out that appropriate U.S. Government agencies and perhaps certain friendly governments might in due course have to be told. We hope that once our own initial evaluation has taken place it may prove easier to persuade Israel to accept visits by scientists of other countries or publicized, international inspection by the IAEA or some other group containing neutral representatives. Failing this, it would still be possible to convey to Arab leaders our conviction regarding the peaceful nature of Israel's atomic research program if, in fact, the current visit and future inspections confirm Israel's earlier public statements.

Ambassador-designate Barber thought the President would be interested in the above background.

/s/ Melvin L. Mantell

L.B. Battle

Executive Secretary

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A true copy of signed original.

NEA: [unclear] Crawford:nkf 5/17/61 [unclear] S/AE - Mr. Farley (draft)

We request this subject
be covered in briefing
book for President's
meeting with Ben-
Gurion. per B.
Smith 5/22/61

NEA - Mr. Russell
informed 5/23/61

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