

*Russ*      *and*

PRIME MINISTER

cc. Mr. Wicks  
Mr. Powell

Your speech tomorrow (Wednesday)

Robin Harris at Conservative Central Office has told me that Central Office have received an unusually large number of calls expressing concern about Libya and the use of British bases. (There were some Alliance inspired calls but most were from Conservatives. It was the biggest reaction since the Falklands. As the day proceeded, more supportive calls were received. Constituencies also reported concern.) The concern expressed appears not to be very specific. I rather expected this sense of anxiety and have tried to analyse why: and your speech ought to address these anxieties as far as possible.

I think that at the root is worry about President Reagan ("too impulsive") provoking Qadhafi ("not a rational human being"); that Qadhafi might now do anything; that people are unconvinced about what precisely and how much the US action will achieve; and that therefore the risks will outweigh any gains.

I suspect there is also concern about why the US had to involve Britain and cannot go it alone. The fear here is that British targets will be singled out by Libyan hit-men.

More generally I think Britons are always worried about innocent civilian casualties. Television pictures of weeping mothers <sup>and children</sup> are making a big impact.

....!

~~the report~~

Terror (explains the redist  
relevance of her society to defend  
it to defend itself - the last month  
with arms. Terror ~~is~~ their opponent.  
We have used every effort to counter by political  
means - resolution; diplomatic action.

To deal with these anxieties the speech should therefore make the following points:

- to give as comprehensive list as possible of Libyan terrorist outrages.
- and to show that the problem is faced by Britain and other countries and not just by the US; and that therefore the responsibility is shared.
- yes, there are risks in taking action; but spell out clearly the risks of not taking action, above all the risk to innocent life.
- the importance of using F-111s (made by the Prime Minister today but worthy of further emphasis)
- the restraint shown in years by the US in the face of Libyan provocation, in order to show Reagan's lack of impulsiveness.

Sp

STEPHEN SHERBOURNE

15.4.86

Minister  
in cold blood  
damage

Some F 111  
had to be  
made.