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PM has read  
AD 295

MR POWELL

12 May 1986

PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO ISRAEL

1. I am worried that our action against terrorism, both Libyan and Syrian, and our support for US action could get us into a position where our Middle East policy is seen as virtually indistinguishable from that of the United States, even that of Israel, with consequent damage to our Middle East interests. This danger would be most acute if the Israelis, who have their own reasons for doing so, were to strike at Syrian positions in the Lebanon and cite Syrian terrorism, eg El Al, in justification. I doubt whether they will do this before 24 May. Nor do I think we shall have another US raid on Libya in that period. But even without that, given the terrorist background and the total lapse of movement over Arab/Israel the Prime Minister's visit to Israel will need careful handling if it is not to feed misperceptions.

2. It is too late to arrange a balancing visit, eg Cairo, so we shall have to depend on words. There will have to be clear statements on terrorism in the speeches. But they should not be too long. And they will need to be accompanied, in fact overshadowed, by our prescriptions on the central Arab/Israel peace issue and perhaps on Lebanon. It is natural when visiting Israel to seek to say things that please the Israelis. But on this occasion the trick will be to say things that - to a carefully judged extent - displease them.

3. I have no illusions that this will change hearts or relaunch the peace process. But it will re-emphasise that, particularly in the Middle East, we have an independent policy and thereby do something to protect our interests in the Arab world.

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4. The draft included with the FCO letter of 9 May makes a good beginning.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'P. Cradock', with a small horizontal line underneath.

PERCY CRADOCK