(1)

PRIME MINISTER

VISIT TO ISRAEL

The Foreign Office have asked for some preliminary guidance on what you would like to do during your visit to Israel in May.

Certain engagements are unavoidable. You will obviously have to have meetings with Mr. Peres and Mr. Shamir as well as Rabin and Teddy Kollek. Although the Foreign Office have not suggested it, I think you should also call on President Herzog. You would also probably need to visit the Knesset. You would be based in West Jerusalem and - if you agree - staying at the King David Hotel.

The question then arises what other visits you might pay outside Jerusalem. The Foreign Office's suggestions are:

(1) The Weizmann Institute. I am sure that you will wish to do this given that there is a chair endowed in your name.

(2) Kibbutz Side Boker. This has the grave of David Ben Gurion. I have consulted David Wolfson who advises this.

(3) A modern development town. The alternatives suggested are Ashkelon, which has been adopted and financially supported by the Jewish community in Britain. But Mr. Renton visited it recently and was not impressed. Or Beersheva in the Negev desert. David Wolfson thinks this is probably the better of the two.

(4) The Israeli Dead Sea Works from which Cable Belt Limited are building a conveyor system. This is pretty distant and probably rather dull. I am inclined to advise against it.

There may be other particular sites in Israel proper which you would like to see or which have been recommended to you by constituents.

There then also arises the question of whether you should visit East Jerusalem and/or towns in the occupied territories. The Foreign Secretary's recommendation is against this on the grounds that any visit would lead the Israelis to impose a massive security presence which would make it look as though you were paying the visit under their auspices, thus inflaming Arab opinion. He recommends that you should, following the pattern of his own visit, go to the British Consulate-General in East Jerusalem to meet a small number of moderate, non-PLO Palestinians. I think this advice is probably sound though the temptation to go to the West Bank to see for yourself what conditions are like there will be strong. There is unfortunately no way one can restrain the Israelis from accompanying you.

I should be grateful to know whether you are generally content with the arrangements described above as a basis for planning.

C.D.P.

Is it not possible to go and visit one of the Mayors (a new one has just been sacked) on the West Bank?

MT

(C. D. POWELL)
14 February 1986

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CPC

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary 26 February 1986

PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO ISRAEL

Thank you for your letter of 25 February about a possible visit by the Prime Minister to one of the Mayors in the Occupied Territories.

The Prime Minister agrees on reflection to limit her contact with Palestinians on this occasion to a meeting at the Consulate General in East Jerusalem. I should be grateful if particular efforts could be made to ensure that a really high calibre group of Palestinians are invited and that adequate time is set aside in the programme for a full discussion.

(Charles Powell)

R.N. Culshaw, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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cc PC

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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

25 February 1986

Prime Minister
I am sure that you should meet leading West Bankers including Mayors at the Consulate-General in East Jerusalem. The question of visiting a Mayor in his own town is more difficult. Freij of Bethlehem is the easiest, but cuts little ice with the Arabs generally. Agree to stick to a meeting in the Consulate-General?
CDP 25/2

Prime Minister's Visit to Israel

Your letter of ~~17~~ February asked about a possible visit by the Prime Minister to one of the Mayors in the Occupied Territories.

Sir Geoffrey Howe attaches great importance to the Palestinian element in the Prime Minister's programme. It needs to be judged carefully, given the close interest with which it will be followed by both the Israelis and the Arabs.

Yes

Any call on a Mayor would entail risks. First, we would have to liaise closely with the Israelis over security arrangements, while taking care to avoid any implication that we recognised Israel's authority in the West Bank (except as a military occupier). Second, the wrong kind of media coverage could give an impression of the Prime Minister's visit to the Occupied Territories which would do us damage in the Arab world. These are substantial difficulties, to be counted alongside the obvious drawback that the Israelis would resent whatever time the Prime Minister spent in the Occupied Territories as distinct from Israel.

The choice of Mayor to visit would also not be easy. If we are to maintain the proposed meeting at the Jerusalem Consulate General, time would rule out a visit to Gaza. For different reasons Nablus and Hebron would not be suitable, and all the other West Bank towns except Bethlehem lack Mayors of adequate standing (most of those who had such standing are no longer in office).

The Foreign Secretary therefore looked hardest at the possibility of the Prime Minister visiting Bethlehem to meet Mayor Freij. It has attractions as a Christian town and well known tourist site, and Mayor Freij is a moderate. But he is thought by some Palestinians to be a collaborator, and others might ask why we had singled him out for special treatment. In Bethlehem, as elsewhere, the publicity and security arrangements would be largely beyond our control.

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On balance therefore Sir Geoffrey still thinks that the disadvantages of including any Palestinian element except the meeting at the Consulate General outweigh the potential advantages. He thinks that to invite a group of distinguished past and present Mayors and other leading West Bank Palestinians to meet the Prime Minister at the Consulate General would effectively demonstrate our readiness to listen to Palestinian concerns, would be welcomed by our Arab friends, and would not upset our Israeli hosts unduly. If however the Prime Minister nevertheless strongly wished in addition to call on one Mayor, then for the reasons given above Bethlehem seems the best choice.

Yours ever,

(R N Culshaw)
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq
PS/10 Downing Street

PM TOURS

Visit to Iran

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bcPC

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

17 February 1986

Dear Robert,

PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO ISRAEL

Thank you for your letter of 14 February setting out some preliminary ideas for the Prime Minister's programme in Israel. As regards the proposed engagements on Israeli territory, the Prime Minister is broadly content with what is proposed. She agrees to stay at the King David Hotel in West Jerusalem and to have meetings with those listed in your letter, though she would also like to call on President Herzog if that is appropriate. She would like to visit the Weizmann Institute and the Kibbutz Side Boker. Of the two development towns she would prefer to see Beersheva. She is not convinced that the Conveyor Belt from the Israeli Dead Sea Works is sufficiently attractive to be worth a considerable journey. It is possible that the Prime Minister will have some further suggestions of her own to make so you should not suggest to the Israelis that this list is exclusive.

As regards engagements in East Jerusalem and the occupied territories, the Prime Minister takes the point about the difficulty of her appearing to pay visits under Israeli auspices. She has, however, asked whether it would not be possible to visit one of the Mayors on the West Bank and I should be grateful if further consideration could be given to this. It would not necessarily rule out the option of meeting a small group of moderate Palestinians at the Consulate-General in East Jerusalem.

I hope that this gives you enough to work on for the time being.

Yours sincerely

Charles Powell

(C. D. POWELL)

Robert Culshaw, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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Personal

Private Secretary

Charles

2 thoughts from me personally:

1) Tim Renton went to Ashkelon, and was not impressed

2) Not all the arguments against the Old City apply with equal force to Bethlehem

Robin. 14/ii

cc PC
DC

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

14 February 1986

Dear Charles,

Prime Minister's Visit to Israel

Thank you for your letter of 4 February. The Israelis have agreed that the Prime Minister should arrive after dusk on Saturday 24 May and depart early on 27 May. News of the approximate timing of the visit has already leaked to the Israeli press: our Embassy have stressed to the Israeli Government our wish that the exact dates should be kept confidential.

This will be the first visit to Israel by a British Prime Minister in office. It will be a major event for the Israelis and closely followed in the Arab world. Sir Geoffrey Howe considers that the greatest care will be needed in arranging the Prime Minister's programme to take account of the sensitivities of both sides.

Engagements on Israeli Territory

These should not cause major difficulties. The Prime Minister may wish to consider the following possibilities:

(a) The Weizmann Institute, which has strong British links and a chair endowed in the Prime Minister's name;

(b) Kibbutz Side Boker and the grave of David Ben Gurion, the founder of modern Israel for whom Mr Peres worked for many years (Mr Peres would probably accompany the Prime Minister on this part of the programme);

(c) Ashkelon, a development town adopted and financially supported by the Jewish community in Britain. An alternative would be a visit to Beersheva, another development town in the Negev desert. Beersheva was the scene of General Allenby's victory in 1917 which led to the liberation of Palestine (a modest Allenby memorial still stands).

/(d)

(d) The Israeli Dead Sea Works, from which Cable Belt Ltd are building a 18km conveyor system to carry potash. This is the only significant construction project secured by a British firm in recent years. Most British firms eschew involvement in construction projects because of possible repercussions on business in the Arab world. We should need to check whether Cable Belt would welcome the publicity which would be generated by a visit.

Engagements in West Jerusalem

It is standard practice for prominent visitors to stay at the King David Hotel (the French and FRG Presidents have done so recently), to meet the Israeli Prime Minister at his office in West Jerusalem, and to meet Parliamentarians at the Knesset. There is no reason to digress from this well-worn path. Sir Geoffrey Howe recommends that the Prime Minister should also offer any return hospitality - a reception would be the most manageable - at the hotel, and should receive calls there by Mr Shamir (who will become Prime Minister again in October), Mr Rabin (Defence Minister and a former Prime Minister) and Mr Kollek (the Mayor of Jerusalem).

Engagements in East Jerusalem/Occupied Territories

Sir Geoffrey Howe strongly recommends that the Prime Minister's programme should include some time in the Occupied Territories, even though this may be difficult to handle with the Israelis. There are a number of possibilities:

(a) A meeting with a small group of moderate Palestinians at the British Consulate General in East Jerusalem;

(b) a sightseeing tour of the Old City in East Jerusalem;

(c) a call on Major Freij and tour of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem;

(d) a visit to a major town such as Nablus, Hebron or Gaza.

Sir Geoffrey Howe recommends option (a) only. He held a meeting on these lines during his own visit in October 1984. This demonstrated our interest in listening to Palestinian concerns and was well received in the Arab world. We told the Israelis of our intentions at an early stage and gained their

/grudging

grudging cooperation. Sir Geoffrey's programme also included the Old City (option (b)). President von Weizsacker made a private visit there in October 1985, although this nearly went wrong when a group of Israeli officials unexpectedly accompanied him. But tension has greatly increased following serious disturbances in January on the Temple Mount sparked off by a visit by Israeli Members of the Knesset which ended in an acrimonious debate in the Security Council. The danger of further incidents will be particularly high during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan in which the Prime Minister's visit falls. Because of these problems (which they might even be inclined to exaggerate for their own political purposes), the Israelis would insist on a major and obtrusive security presence in the Old City. The visit - which would inevitably be a major media event - might then appear to be under Israeli auspices, and this could lead to damaging misunderstandings in the Arab world about our position on the status of Jerusalem. On balance, Sir Geoffrey believes that the Prime Minister should forego visiting the Old City.

Options (c) and (d) would also attract a conspicuous Israeli security operation and are open to the same objections. So far as we know Mr Renton's visit to Gaza in December 1985 was the first by a visiting British Minister to Occupied Arab territory outside Jerusalem. The Israelis probably only acquiesced in this because they did not wish to spoil the atmosphere for the visit of Mr Peres to London. The Israelis would baulk at the allocation to a tour of Occupied Territory of a significant portion of the Prime Minister's short stay. Our Consul-General in Jerusalem also points out that the selection of one area or personality in the Occupied Territories to receive such a visit might create jealousies and misunderstandings among the Palestinians. Sir Geoffrey Howe therefore recommends against.

Mr Squire intends to start detailed planning with Mr Peres' political adviser in early March. But he has asked if possible to have preliminary guidance on the Prime Minister's preferences in time for an internal meeting of Israeli officials on 17 February. Accordingly I enclose a draft telegram of instructions to Tel Aviv which if the Prime Minister agrees might be despatched by the Resident Clerk over the weekend. If Mr Thatcher is not to accompany the Prime Minister, paragraph 4 should be deleted.

Yours ever

R N Culshaw

(R N Culshaw)
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq
PS/10 Downing Street

OUT TELEGRAM

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YOUR TELNO 52: PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO ISRAEL

1. Please tell the Israelis that the Prime Minister would welcome visits to the Weizmann Institute, Side Boker and either Ashkelon or Beersheva (preferably the former). For your information, we are checking that a visit to the Dead Sea Works would be welcome to Cable Belt.

2. We assume that the Prime Minister will stay at the King David Hotel and will have talks with Mr Peres at his office. The Prime Minister would welcome calls at the hotel by Mr Shamir Mr Rabin and Mayor Kollek. Any return hospitality could also be given at the hotel. The Prime Minister would also welcome a meeting with parliamentarians at the Knesset.

3. You should also tell the Israelis that as they would expect we intend that the Prime Minister should have a private Palestinian occasion during her visit. We expect that this will take the form of a meeting at the house of HMCG Jerusalem. Instructions on this will follow when we can see more clearly

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how it might most suitably be fitted into the rest of the programme.

4. You should also say that we expect Mr Thatcher to accompany the Prime Minister. We should be grateful for your suggestions for his programme.

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