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GRS 230
CONFIDENTIAL
FM TEL AVIV
TO PRIORITY FCO
TELNO 149
OF 010830Z MAY

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PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT: ASHKELON

1. WE HAVE NOW WALKED OVER THE GROUND AT ASHKELON AND DISCUSSED PLANS WITH THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES.
2. THEY ARE PROPOSING THAT THE PRIME MINISTER SHOULD:
 - A) BE RECEIVED IN A COMMUNITY CENTRE (DONATED BY BURTONS) BY THE MAYOR AND OTHERS INCLUDING TREVOR CHINN AND MEET BRITISH VOLUNTEERS, WITH BRIEF EXCHANGES OF SPEECHES AND PRESENTS.
 - B) MOVE TO THE SITE OF THE NEW SCHOOL TO LAY CORNERSTONE, WITH A VERY BRIEF SPEECH FROM GERALD RONSON.
3. THE FIRST OF THESE PROPOSALS SEEMS TO ME A GOOD ONE. THE MEETING SHOULD BE CONGENIAL AND ATTRACT GOOD PUBLICITY BOTH HERE AND IN UK. I AM A LITTLE LESS SURE ABOUT THE SCHOOL CEREMONY. THE SITE IS SOME MINUTES DRIVE FROM THE TOWN CENTRE AND AT THE MOMENT CONSISTS ONLY OF A LARGE AND ENTIRELY UNDEVELOPED FIELD. THIS WOULD MAKE FOR A NOT VERY PHOTOGENIC (AND HOT) CEREMONY. DROPPING IT WOULD HELP TO RELIEVE A VERY TIGHT SCHEDULE. BUT THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES COULD ARRANGE A RESPECTABLE AUDIENCE (SCHOOL CHILDREN WOULD BE GIVEN A SPECIAL HOLIDAY). I HAVE NO STRONG RECOMMENDATION ON WHETHER THE PRIME MINISTER SHOULD GO AHEAD WITH THIS PART OF THE VISIT TO ASHKELON: THE MAIN CONSIDERATIONS ARE THE BENEFITS IN RELATIONS WITH ANGLO-JEWRY WHICH YOU ARE BEST PLACED TO ASSESS.

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*Re CAS
a la P Cadout*

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

8 May 1986

PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO ISRAEL

Tel Aviv telegram number 149 drew attention to a problem in connection with the Prime Minister's visit to Ashkelon, and in particular whether it would be possible for the Prime Minister to visit the site of the new school and to lay a corner stone. I have asked Sir David Wolfson to discuss this with Mr Gerald Ronson's office here and to suggest that the Prime Minister should in some way commemorate the opening of the new school in a ceremony at the Community Centre so that she would not need to make a separate visit to the site. Mr Ronson's office are apparently considering this but it would be helpful if the Embassy in Tel Aviv could also follow the idea up.

On a separate point, Tel Aviv's telegram number 162 deals with Mr Thatcher's programme. I am willing to put to him the possibility of a visit to the British School of Archaeology and St John's Hospital. But I see that his programme for 25 May continues to provide for him to visit Neve Shalom. I ought to have made clear in my earlier letter that he is not particularly keen to do this, and if allocation of the whole time between 1500 and 1800 on 25 May would enable him to undertake more visits to firms with links with Britain in or around Tel Aviv he would prefer this. I should be grateful if this point could be put once again to the Embassy in Tel Aviv.

Lastly, Sir D. Wolfson has now decided that he will travel to Israel with the main party in the VC10.

CHARLES POWELL

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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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