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From the office of Trevor Chinn

22nd May 1986

Charles Powell, Esq.,
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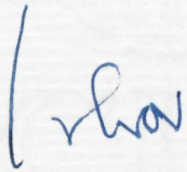
Dear Charles

As promised I enclose a briefing note for the Prime Minister
in regard to her visit to Ashkelon.

I look forward to seeing you in Jerusalem on Sunday.

Kindest regards,

Yours sincerely,



Trevor Chinn

BRIEFING ON PROJECT RENEWAL ASHEKON

Project Renewal, started in 1978, was designed to raise the quality of life in over 100 Israeli communities living below the poverty line. Each of these communities was to be twinned with a Jewish community in the Diaspora. British Jewry was twinned with Ashkelon, a town of 60,000 people of whom 45,000 lived in six separate depressed districts.

For the majority of the 'Renewal' area residents, Ashkelon had become their second home, since most of them were refugees from countries such as: Morocco; Iraq; Iran; Syria and Yemen. They came in such large numbers that it was found extremely difficult to provide adequate housing, educational and social amenities to satisfy all of their needs. As a result, for many years they lived in crowded conditions, had to put up with inadequate services, and sustained themselves in an environment which, while friendly, was totally unprepared.

When the first British Jewry mission visited Ashkelon in 1979, it found a forgotten, neglected town, suffering from overcrowding, limited job opportunities, a high crime rate, poor housing, and barely adequate social services. They found a city in the throes of a cycle of depression and deprivation.

A Steering Committee, based in the UK, was set up by the Joint Israel Appeal in association with the charity, The Jewish Philanthropic Association for Israel and the Middle East, to undertake the task of social rehabilitation and renewal. Trevor Chinn, National President of the JIA and Chairman of Lex Service PLC, asked Henry Strage, a senior Director of McKinsey & Company, to join him as Co-Chairman of the UK Committee.

The Committee decided that its first task was to launch half a dozen so-called preemptive strike projects, designed to have a high impact and a high visibility on the 'Renewal' residents. Such a strategy would demonstrate in practical terms the clear, unswerving dedication of the Committee to making lasting and meaningful change. Initial projects included a programme of refurbishment of substandard kindergartens, construction of mothers' laundry clubs to provide a setting for social community activities, an extensive sports programme which created an English style youth football league, a scholarship programme and the beginnings of a volunteer programme.

With these projects under way, it was decided that, however, wellmeaning, urban renewal was not an undertaking for the enthusiastic layman; a well documented catalogue of failures clearly suggested that there were lessons to be learned. And so a series of studies was undertaken, under the guidance of London based specialists Nathaniel and Dalia Lichfield. They brought together a cross cultural and multi-disciplined team to define the problems of Ashkelon in more precise terms, to prepare a strategy for intervention, and to initiate a programme of implementation.

It was decided early on in the process that every project, every programme, every initiative, must be based on real, not token, resident involvement. The bottom line of every project was 'to help the people of Ashkelon to help themselves'.

Ashkelon's neighbourhood chairmen, the lay leaders of the city's Residents Council, have led the way in developing the ideas of "self help" and shared decision making among the people of Ashkelon. The chairmen, together with their committees, participate in and influence the entire renewal process. The community management skills which they have

developed through extensive Project Renewal training have helped them to become really effective in voicing the needs of the people.

Only by having the citizens of Ashkelon involved in the 'Renewal' process was it felt that there was a chance really to make a difference. And so, from the very beginning and throughout the 7 years in which the project has been going, the UK Steering Committee and the residents have been involved together - in planning, decision making, execution, monitoring, control, and budgeting.

After 7 years of intensive work, the impact of over 200 separate projects on the quality of life in the city and the fabric of the community as a whole is evident everywhere. The cycle of despair has been turned into a cycle of hope. Today people are concerned about their destinies. Pride in their city and a constant effort to find more and better creative activities to improve the quality of their lives has become a living testament to the success of the effort. The programme has acted as a catalyst for recruiting the hearts and minds of the total population.

While a few of the projects have involved physical renewal, the majority have been concerned primarily with the development of community activities, the introduction of educational programmes, projects for improving health care, bringing social and educational amenities, and significantly improving the environment. What once was a black spot on the southern coast of Israel is today regarded as an oasis. Where just a few years ago sand and rubbish were the predominant sight between built up areas, today there are hundreds of parks and thousands of flowers. Ashkelon is regarded today as an example of the success of the impact of Project Renewal. Residents, whose dream 7 years ago was to move to a 'better area', are now fiercely proud of their own cleaner, greener housing districts.

As a result of the joint efforts of British Jewry through the Project Renewal Committee and the people of Ashkelon, Project Renewal Ashkelon has been uniquely recognised as a model to be emulated in the other 160 'Renewal' neighbourhoods identified as being disadvantaged. The arithmetic of urban development can hardly tell the whole story. But it does provide an impressive benchmark. Thus, for example:

- * The dental clinic manned by volunteer dentists from the UK who donate 2 weeks of their time has attracted more than 350 dentists and has carried out over 60,000 treatments.
- * A programme which brings British volunteers of all ages to Ashkelon to teach in schools, sports programmes, summer camps, and help in hospitals has attracted over 5,000 people.
- * Forty new kindergartens have been built and renovated.
- * Another creative 'first of its kind' project, the English Teaching Resource Centre, initiated by Inter-Action and supported by the British Council, has received nationwide recognition, and has plans for extending its activities in many other cities.
- * Imaginative community environmental art programme of sculptures - some 40 in all - have brightened up what were previously drab surroundings, and the success of this form of community activity was highlighted in the first International Community Sculpture conference and exhibition held last year in Jerusalem.

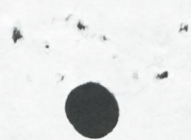
The careful planning of projects, imaginative use of community resources, and translation of successful initiatives throughout the world to Ashkelon has allowed this Project Renewal effort to be exceptionally cost effective. Every segment of the city's activities has been affected by Renewal. Whether it is children involved in keeping their city clean as part of the Beautiful Israel environmental project, young adults involved in various social rehabilitation centres, mothers running their own clubs or going to literacy classes, or the senior citizens participating in a vast array of activities - no one has been left out of Renewal.

After 7 years, the UK Steering Committee is now planning the next phase of the involvement. This phase envisages the gradual reduction in budgets for programmes, and the eventual handover of all education, health and social welfare projects to total local control.

The Prime Minister's visit includes a Community Centre run by residents and professional community workers, in one of the poorest districts, where slums have been changed into a 'rose garden'; and the cornerstone laying ceremony of the Henry Ronson ORT School. This school will enable the educational programme in Ashkelon to change from a 4 year high school (14-18) to a 6 year (12-18), thereby extending the years of integration.

* * *

Ashkelon has benefitted from the imagination and commitment of both dedicated amateurs and experienced professionals, who have together moulded a resident involvement programme. Many of the ideas used in the programmes have come from the experience of the UK professionals concerned with social rehabilitation and urban renewal.





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R30/5

28th May, 1986

Pine Minister

CDP
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The Rt Hon Margaret Thatcher, MP,
10 Downing Street,
London, SW1.

Dear Prime Minister

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Your visit to Ashkelon was, as I am sure you realise, an enormous success. From your speech it was quite evident that you understood clearly the complex processes of urban renewal and particularly the crucially important human dimensions. We in the Joint Israel Appeal, representing British Jewry's efforts in Ashkelon, are immensely appreciative of your visit and your endorsement of our efforts. We know that the approach that we brought to Ashkelon - and the positive impact we achieved - was unique in terms of such efforts in Israel from the various Jewish communities abroad and feel that it was a very specific blend of British as well as Jewish values and attitudes that produced this success. Thank you very much indeed for your encouragement.

All of us who participated in your visit to Ashkelon will treasure the occasion in our memories. The many thousands of volunteers from Britain to Ashkelon and the many more thousands of contributors through our charity to our endeavours there will value your visit as an encouragement of their involvement.

Yours sincerely

Trevor Chinn

REMARKS BY THE PRIME MINISTER AT ASHKELON COMMUNITY CENTRE,
26 MAY 1986

Ashkelon is an ancient city. Its name is familiar to British people from the Bible. This visit is an opportunity for me to see the modern Ashkelon, and the contribution to it by British Jewry.

I am grateful to Mayor Dayan and the people of Ashkelon for their warm welcome. Mayor Dayan visited Britain in February as a guest of the Foreign Office. I hope his visit was as valuable as mine to Israel. He certainly did not enjoy such pleasant weather!

Many countries nowadays face the challenge of catering for citizens of different cultural heritages. In Israel this issue has understandably been of central importance. In Ashkelon you have tackled this problem imaginatively and with success, and I am delighted that British volunteers and British financial assistance have made such a contribution.

