



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

31 December 1981

The Prime Minister has asked me to thank you for your letter of 9 December about the closure of Gibraltar Dockyard.

Mrs. Thatcher appreciates the concern which has been expressed about the effect of the closure on the Gibraltar economy and the dockyard workforce. Consultations between the Government and Gibraltar Ministers are taking place to consider alternative ways to support the economy.

You will be aware that the decision to close the dockyard was taken against the background of the major and radical examination of the defence programme which was announced in the Secretary of State for Defence's White Paper in June (Cmnd 8288). The main thrust of this review was to concentrate resources on our front line forces. Inevitably this allocation of resources has meant that support facilities have had to be cut back.

The Prime Minister cannot, therefore, hold out any hope that the decision to close Gibraltar Dockyard can be reversed, but she feels it would be useful if you and your colleagues could meet the Minister of State for the Armed Forces, Mr. Peter Blaker, at the Ministry of Defence to discuss the position. If you agree, perhaps you could contact Mr. Blaker's Private Secretary (on 01 218 6326) to arrange a date.

W. F. S. RICKETT

A.H. Kitson, Esq.

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10 DOWNING STREET

PRIME MINISTER

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Alex Kitson of the TGWU has written to you about the closure of the Gibraltar Dockyard.

Content that I should reply as attached?

WR

Yes not

29 December, 1981.



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE  
MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1  
Telephone 01-~~9387022~~ 218 6169

MO 5/16

24th December 1981

*Alan John,*

CLOSURE OF GIBRALTAR DOCKYARD

Thank you for your letter of 11th December to David Omand enclosing correspondence from Mr Kitson of the TGWU asking the Prime Minister to receive a delegation to present a case for keeping the Dockyard open.

We do not consider that there is any need for the Prime Minister to receive this delegation. Mr Peter Blaker, the Minister of State for the Armed Forces intends to invite Trade Union officials to meet him in an effort to persuade them to withdraw their opposition to any local initiatives on commercialisation of the dockyards, and this meeting would be a suitable opportunity for the TGWU delegation to make representations on issues about which they have written to the Prime Minister.

/ Subject to your agreement to this proposal I attach a draft reply to Mr Kitson.

A copy of this letter goes to Roderic Lyne (FCO) whose officials may wish to inform the Governor of Gibraltar of this approach.

*Yours ever*

*Henry Piper*

(D T PIPER)

A J Coles Esq

DRAFT REPLY FROM PS/PRIME MINISTER TO MR A H KITSON  
DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY TRANSPORT AND GENERAL WORKERS UNION

CLOSURE OF GIBRALTAR DOCKYARD

The Prime Minister has asked me to ~~reply on her behalf~~ <sup>thank you for</sup> to your letter of 9th December about the closure of Gibraltar Dockyard.

~~She~~ <sup>must</sup> fully appreciates the concern which has been expressed about the effect of the closure on the Gibraltar economy and the dockyard workforce. Consultations between the Government and Gibraltar Ministers are taking place to consider alternative ways to support the economy.

You will be aware that the decision to close the dockyard was taken against the background of the major and radical examination of the defence programme which was announced in the Secretary of State for Defence's White Paper in June (Cmnd 8288). The main thrust of this review was to concentrate resources on our front line forces. Inevitably this allocation of resources has ~~involved curtailment in~~ <sup>meant that</sup> support facilities <sup>have had to be cut back.</sup>

Prime Minister  
The ~~cannot~~, therefore, hold out any hope that the decision to close Gibraltar Dockyard can be reversed, but ~~considers~~ <sup>she feels</sup> that it would be useful if you and your colleagues could meet the Minister of State for the Armed Forces, Mr Peter Blaker, at the Ministry of Defence to discuss the position. If ~~this proposal is acceptable to you~~ <sup>you agree</sup>, perhaps you ~~would~~ contact Mr Blaker's Private Secretary (on 01-218 6326) to arrange a ~~mutually convenient~~ date.

CONFIDENTIAL

MT Gibraltar

PRIME MINISTER

GIBRALTAR

You will recall that the Foreign Secretary mentioned this morning the concern of the Chief Minister of Gibraltar that the Gibraltar Government might have to pay for some of the defence assets in Gibraltar dockyard.

I attach the minutes of the OD meeting on 12 November. You will see that it was decided that appropriate concessions could be made if it appeared that difficulties with the Gibraltarians could be mitigated by offering transfer of dockyard land and assets and of surplus Ministry of Defence buildings and reclaimed land outside the dockyard. But the Committee decided that it would be premature to agree to such concessions at the outset.

Parliamentary authority will be needed in order to make any gift of Government property. While I am in little doubt that Sir Joshua Hassan knows that he can obtain this concession at the end of the day, our negotiating team, headed by Mr. Peter Blaker, do not wish to make the concession too early. It is one of the few cards we have to play in a negotiation which we hope will result in our handing over the dockyard at minimum cost to ourselves.

A.S.C. 14/12

p.a.

15/12

14 December 1981

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Chased 22/12  
will be here  
on 24/12



→ 0  
21/12

10 DOWNING STREET

MR. KITSON

*From the Private Secretary*

11 December 1981

Closure of Naval Dockyard,  
Gibraltar

I enclose a copy of a letter which the Prime Minister has received from the Deputy General Secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union.

I should be grateful for your advice on Mr. Kitson's request that the Prime Minister should receive a delegation of the unions concerned, together with an appropriate draft reply.

I am copying this letter and enclosure to Roderic Lyne (Foreign and Commonwealth Office).

David Omand Esq  
Ministry of Defence.

A. J. COLES

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MFJ

11 December 1981

I am writing on behalf of the  
Prime Minister to thank you for your  
letter of 9 December.

Your letter is receiving attention  
and a reply will be sent to you as soon  
as possible.

AJC

A.H. Kitson, Esq.

*su*

# Transport and General Workers Union



TRANSPORT HOUSE · SMITH SQUARE · WESTMINSTER · LONDON S.W.1P 3JB.

OUR REF AK/MBM/EM

TELEPHONE 01-828 7788 TELEGRAMS TRANSUNION LONDON SW1 TELEX No 919009

YOUR REF

9th December 1981

Rt. Hon. M. Thatcher, M.P.,  
Prime Minister,  
10 Downing Street,  
London S.W.1.

Dear Prime Minister,

Closure of Naval Dockyard, Gibraltar

On Monday, 23rd November 1981 we were informed by letter of your Government's decision to close the Royal Naval Dockyard in Gibraltar.

As a union we represent some 6,000-plus of the workforce on the 'Rock' and, therefore, are vitally concerned with the future of Gibraltar and the prospects for the Gibraltarian people.

Together with our National Secretary for Public Services, I visited Gibraltar for three days last week and had a series of meetings with all concerned including the Governor and Chief Minister and we are very concerned that the Royal Naval Dockyard, which is the jugular vein of the Gibraltarian economy, stays open and to this end I would request that you receive a delegation of the joint unions concerned, together with some local representatives of the trade unions in Gibraltar in order that we can put to you our case for keeping the Dockyard open.

Yours very sincerely,

A.H. KITSON,  
Deputy General Secretary