

cc Malta relations



bc EFA  
Sir A. Auckland  
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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

28 November 1983

For Peter,

CHOGM: MALTA

The Foreign Minister of Malta raised with the Prime Minister at her lunch for Commonwealth Heads of Government today the problem of bombs and wrecks in Maltese waters. The Prime Minister said that she could not improve on the offers we had made to solve this problem but she would look into it again on her return. She could make no promises. Dr. Trigona said that he hoped that we would not propose a further mission of enquiry. What was needed was practical action to remove the bombs and wrecks.

I sat next to Dr. Trigona at the luncheon. He said that he was greatly concerned to improve bilateral relations between Malta and the UK generally. But at present he was a lone voice in his Cabinet when he talked in these terms. He would be able to swing opinion in favour of a rapprochement with Britain if we could now take practical action over the bombs and wrecks problem. He did not wish to go over the legal issues again nor was he asking us to improve on the offers we had made. But he hoped that we could very shortly send to Malta a wreck removal team and a bomb removal team, the latter to deal with bombs under grain silos which, I understood, were under construction. At a later point in the conversation he said that the grain silos would begin to be used soon, whether there had been disposal work or not. (He did not say so but implied that in these circumstances we would be responsible for any damage.)

I said to Dr. Trigona that I could not go one iota beyond what the Prime Minister had said. She had said that we would examine the matter again and we would do so. He asked whether we would then send a message to him through the Maltese High Commission. I said I did not want to be committed on procedure. When we had looked into the matter, and if we had any message to send, we would get it to him by appropriate means. He then asked whether I could visit Malta. I said that I did not think this would be helpful. We would do these things through the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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