

From: Richard Hickmet, M.P.



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

For mtg.
C. M. Higgins
Cab off

Rt Hon Margaret Thatcher MP
The Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London SW1

24 January 1985

Dear Prime Minister,

SECOND BOSPHORUS BRIDGE, TURKEY

I am writing to you as a matter of urgency about the Turks' decision to build a second Bosphorus bridge.

The first Bosphorus bridge was designed by Freeman, Fox & Partners and built by the Cleveland Bridge Company and paid for itself within three years. Every Turk is proud of the first Bosphorus bridge and is aware of the fact that it was designed and built by this country.

The Turks now want us to build the second Bosphorus bridge and Trafalgar House, the holding company for Cleveland Redpath Engineering Limited, will win the contract provided adequate ECGD cover can be provided and also, most importantly, if an AT&P grant (Aid for Trade Promotion, I think) is provided.

The total contract, including approach roads of 240 kilometres is worth US\$500 million of which some US\$150 million to US\$170 million would be exported to Turkey. The contract is worth to Cleveland Redpath £45 million and it is of fundamental importance to that company if they are to maintain their world dominance in bridge building that they win the contract. In addition, and most importantly bearing in mind the political implications of the North East, the contract is of vital importance to the future employment of the 1,008 employees who work in Darlington for that company.

In addition, all the steel to be used in the construction of the bridge will be made by BSC Scunthorpe in my constituency. The contract will take 4 days of the total steel production of BSC Scunthorpe.

The Turks want the British to build the bridge but we are facing strong competition from the Japanese, who are prepared to offer the sort of cover and aid which Cleveland Redpath are seeking from the Government.

The grant required is in the order of £11 million sterling with the ECGD cover on a 60:40 basis for the balance. I understand that the Treasury is most reluctant to make such a grant although I understand that the DTI firmly support this project.

I cannot stress the importance of this contract as far as British prestige is concerned. Although the sums involved are far less, it is of much greater prestige value than the sale of British Aerospace Airbus to Turkey. Every vehicle that crosses the Bosphorus into the Middle East and beyond or from the Middle East and into Europe will be crossing two bridges, both built by the British. As a shop window for our exports to an expanding economy which we should support, it would be of unrivalled value.

I do hope that Michael Fallon and I might come and see you to discuss this matter if there is any clarification. ^{required} It is a matter of urgency as I understand the Treasury will be making a final decision within the next day or two.

Yours ever,
Richard.

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