



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

8 October 1985

I am writing to thank you for your letter, addressed to Nigel Wicks, about the possibility that Mr. Bonici may raise with the Prime Minister at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting a project to restore the wartime operations room at Lascarts. It was very helpful to have forewarning of this and I will ensure that the Prime Minister is briefed. I know that she will be grateful for your thoughtfulness.

(C.D. Powell)

The Lord Lewin, K.G., G.C.B., M.V.O., D.S.C.

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From the Private Secretary

8 October 1985

I enclose a copy of a letter from Lord Lewin about a project to restore the wartime operations room in Malta which the Maltese Prime Minister may raise with the Prime Minister at CHOGM. It would be helpful if a note on this could be included in the official briefing.

I am copying this letter and enclosure to Richard Mottram (Ministry of Defence).

(C.D. Powell)

Peter Ricketts, Esq.,
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as from Counsel

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6th October 1985



CDP to see

Dear Mr Wickes:

If the Prime Minister has any conversation with Mr Mifond Bonici, the new Prime Minister of Malta, during the coming Commonwealth meeting, it is possible that he will raise with her a project to restore the wartime operations room at Lascaris as part of the National War Museum, and it might be useful for her to have a brief.

The idea was born in conversations between Mintoff and James Callaghan at a similar meeting in 1978, but it went into limbo during the period of difficult relations between our countries. Bonici has adopted a policy of conciliation, and the agreement of HMCG to deal the wrecks in Grand Harbour has made a major contribution.

In July I was asked by the Maltese government, through the High Commissioner in London, Mr Cassar, to go out and advise on the Operations Room project. Mr Cassar knew of my earlier involvement,

in 1978, as First Sea Lord, I had a hand in sending out some experts to write a report, and he also knew that I had other wartime connections with Malta. I went, for five days, in August, and at a meeting with Mr Bonici and his Foreign Minister, the decision was taken to go ahead with the project. For my part I undertook to seek the help and advice of the Imperial War Museum and the Royal Air Force Museum. This I have done, and both the Chairman of Trustees and the Directors have expressed their enthusiastic readiness to assist.

I also advised Mr Bonici on the management that I thought would be necessary to complete the restoration by August 1986, which was his aim. The Maltese businessman that I recommended should be put in charge of the project, Mr Valentin Buge, has taken a firm grip and I have every confidence that he will be successful. I am acting as the link between him and our Museums.

My visit coincided with the anniversary of the ~~convoy~~ convoy to Malta in August 1942, Operation Pedestal, which arrived (the five surviving ships out of fourteen) on the 15th August, the Feast of Santa Maria, and

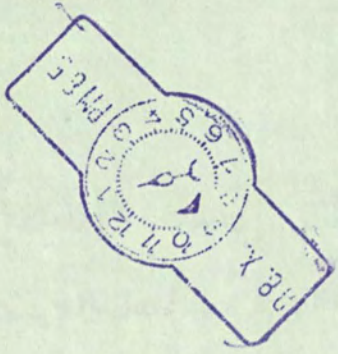


in Malta the convoy is known as the Santa Maria
convoy. At my meeting with him, Mr Bonici decided
that the anniversary - which fell on the next day - should
be marked by an official ceremony at the National
War Memorial, at which the Deputy Prime Minister
and I laid wreaths. This was significant because it
was the first official recognition of the war in Malta
since our final withdrawal in 1979.

I'm sorry to write at such length and in
manuscript about a very minor matter in Commonwealth
Conference terms, but it might be helpful to have
this information tucked up your sleeve!

Yours sincerely

Lucy Ferris



COMMERCIAL