

KANTOOR VAN DIE BURGEMEESTER,
MUNISIPALE KANTORE,
SIMONSTAD.
7995



THE MAYOR'S PARLOUR,
MUNICIPAL OFFICES,
SIMON'S TOWN.
7995

GJW/jms

26 June 1979

R217

The Hon. The Prime Minister
10, Downing Street
LONDON
UNITED KINGDOM

Dear Mrs Thatcher,

This letter is addressed to you by myself as a concerned son of South Africa of British stock and whose forbears have lived in this old, small but well known Town, the Cape's second oldest port, since 1848.

This Town, of which I have the great honour to be the Mayor, has had a long, proud, important and intimate relationship with Her Majesty's Royal Navy from 1795, and more especially since the founding of the Royal Naval Base and Dock Yard here in 1814, until the year 1957, when, in terms of the Simon's Town Agreement, our South African Navy took over the responsibility for maintaining the Naval Base, with open access to and availability of the base to ships of the Royal Navy at all times thereafter.

It was a matter of tremendous regret to us in our Town, when your predecessor-in-office decided to allow the Simon's Town Agreement to lapse.

No longer were the long sleek lines of British warships, flying the Royal Naval Ensign, seen in Simon's Bay and cheerful British Jack Tars, welcome guests as always, seen in the streets of this old-world Town.

2/...



I am much moved to write this letter to you, Madame, because I believe quite honestly - and it is, no doubt, a view held by so many, not only in our country but also in yours - that the apparently politically expedient decision by your predecessor to allow the Simon's Town Agreement to lapse, cannot redound to the actual benefit of our respective countries, nor even to those who are jointly referred to as "the West", for obvious strategic reasons. I am convinced, as I am sure you are, that the political decision of your predecessor did not then, nor does it now, accord with the strategic planning of the upper echelons of the Royal Navy.

Our Town, due to the long influence of the Royal Navy, is known, even today, as one of the most "British" Towns in South Africa - and I say this quite proudly, notwithstanding my being a truly loyal South African - and the Royal Navy's traditions, its history and its relics are most zealously guarded and maintained by us as part of the make-up of this Town.

Likewise, our South African Navy, so assiduously modelled on its British predecessor, maintains and holds dear its heritage derived from the Royal Navy. Through the veins of so many of our present townfolk of all colours and creeds, courses the blood of their Royal Naval forbears.

Our South African Navy has recently completed a fine new extension to the original magnificent East Yard Harbour Works at Simon's Town, completed in 1910 by Sir John Jackson, and I am sure that we South Africans, indeed all our Townfolk and a vast number of your own compatriots would be delighted, even relieved, for your Government to take the bold, and, if I may say so, logical step to reactivate the Simon's Town Agreement.

What a joy it would be to all us Simonstonians to arise one morning and through the growing light of dawn to make out, and identify once more, as of old, a British Man-of-War, with Royal Naval Ensign proudly blowing at the Jackstaff in our South-Easter.



Even "the West" would rejoice at the fact that the vital sea route around Africa now had two guardians - the Royal and the South African Navies.

May I, therefore, Madame, on behalf of my Town, respectfully suggest to you that you visit us here at Simon's Town and be our Honoured guest, for while, in the process of your visit, you may, at first hand, be so placed to evaluate fully, and thus come to a decision on the future of the Simon's Town Agreement.

With kindest regards.

I have the honour to remain, Madame,

Yours very sincerely

Gordon Wilson

GORDON WILSON
MAYOR