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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

18 September 1986

Dear Charles

The Antarctic: Letter from Lord Shackleton

In your letter of 3[✓] ^{at trap} September to Tony Galsworthy you asked for a draft reply to Lord Shackleton's letter of 2[✓] September to the Prime Minister about Antarctica. I now enclose a draft, which has been agreed with the Department of Education and Science (DES).

As a result of the recent correspondence between Sir Geoffrey Howe and the Secretary of State for Education and Science about British Antarctic Survey (BAS) funding, the Prime Minister indicated that she is strongly of the view that the higher level of activity by BAS, on which Ministers agreed in 1982, should be maintained; she also requested the Cabinet Office to chair an ad hoc group of officials from DES, FCO and Treasury to consider the funding problem and report as soon as possible (your letter of 9 September to Rob Smith refers). In these circumstances, the draft reply, while endorsing Lord Shackleton's points about Britain's scientific contribution in Antarctica, seeks to reassure him of the Government's resolve to maintain Britain's visibility in Antarctica; and it recognises the fundamental contribution which the British Antarctic Survey makes to the latter via its expanded programme of activity.

I am copying this letter to Rob Smith and to Jill Rutter.

Yours ever

R N Culshaw

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Private Secretary

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FROM: Prime Minister

Reference

DEPARTMENT:

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TO:

Your Reference

- Top Secret
- Secret
- Confidential
- Restricted
- Unclassified

The Rt Hon Lord Shackleton KG, PC,

OBE

Copies to:

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PRIVACY MARKING

SUBJECT:

.....In Confidence

CAVEAT.....

Thank you for your letter of 2 September about the Antarctic situation and the work and funding of the British Antarctic Survey.

I readily endorse your remarks about the major contribution which Britain in the shape of the British Antarctic Survey makes to scientific research in the Antarctic. The "ozone hole" discovery is an excellent and topical example of work of worldwide significance in terms both of major advances in human knowledge, and of wider potential relevance to future living conditions. Advances of this kind contribute greatly to our international prestige.

I entirely take your point about the relationship between the three British territories in the South Atlantic, and the need for coherence and consistency in our policy towards them. It is certainly important that we give no signal of a reduced commitment to the British

/Antarctic

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Antarctic Territory, to the Falkland Islands, or to South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands. We consequently recognise the need to maintain British visibility in the Antarctic, of which the ~~expanded programme of the British Antarctic Survey~~ ^{activities are} is of course a fundamental component. ^{Their funding is under} ~~Its funding is a matter of continuing review.~~ ^{discussion at the next.}

[C]

I too regard the Mount Pleasant Airport development as potentially significant for Antarctic activities. As I said in a recent letter to Aubrey Buxton, we are at present thinking in terms of a future role for the Falklands in facilitating access to economic resources in the South-West Atlantic and Antarctica, particularly through civilian use of the new airport.

CU.

ARGENTINA (relation) PTU

