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Foreign Pol.
Prime Minister 22

Ref. A03762

MR. ALEXANDER

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In
[Signature]

British Policy in the Antarctic
(OD(80) 72)

The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary circulated a paper on this subject on 1st December to seek the agreement of his OD colleagues to the line which should be taken at an Antarctic Treaty meeting beginning in Washington on 8th December. The memorandum defines the broad British objectives in Antarctica and concludes that we should continue to pursue those objectives within the framework of the Antarctic Treaty although we should not at this stage exclude the option of seeking an exclusive accommodation with Argentina and Chile.

attached.

2. The only Department to have reacted strongly to this paper is the Department of Energy, largely because they do not feel that they have been adequately consulted in its preparation. The Secretary of State for Energy is likely to write to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary today (copied to the Prime Minister and other OD colleagues) proposing that the British position at next week's meeting in Washington should be entirely reserved, and that the Department of Energy should be represented in the British Delegation.

3. The Prime Minister is not recommended to intervene in this situation at this stage. To reserve our position at next week's meeting is tantamount to continuing to seek a solution within the Antarctic Treaty framework which is the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's preferred course of action. It is not yet clear to what extent there are real differences of view between the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Secretary of State for Energy, but if the matter cannot be cleared up between them in correspondence it may be necessary for the problem to be discussed in OD at a later date.

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[Signature]
(D.J. Wright)

5th December, 1980

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SECRETARY OF STATE FOR ENERGY
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Rt Hon Lord Carrington PC KCMG MC MP
Foreign Secretary
Downing Street
LONDON
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5 December 1980

Dear Peter

ANTARCTICA

OD (80) 72 - attached

I have carefully considered your Memorandum of 1 December to OD Committee about British policy in the Antarctic.

This is a difficult issue and I am concerned that the Memorandum does not explain the precise object of the meeting in Washington. I would therefore prefer not to form a view at this stage but to consider our policy in the light of the experience of our representatives at the Washington meeting, one of whom will, I hope, be from this Department.

Given the risks of prejudicing our claim to any Antarctic hydrocarbons I would like our representatives to be given a more restricted brief than that suggested in paragraph 10 of the FCO paper. Their mandate could be to listen without commitment to what others have to say about a possible Antarctic Treaty regime but to reserve our position completely, making it clear if necessary that we are not, by taking part in the meeting, accepting such an idea in principle. As a secondary task our representatives could sound the other claimants about their willingness to join with us in an appropriate arrangement for joint exploration of Antarctic resources for the benefit of the claimant states.

I am copying this letter to other members of OD and to the Secretaries of State for Education and Science, Industry and Environment.

*Yours
Daw*

D A R HOWELL

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-5 DEC 1980

