



CONFIDENTIAL

Prime Minister

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MR. ALEXANDER

Yes.

For note. Agree line in para 7 of attached paper? Ph

British Policy in the Antarctic - Minerals

on MODRA's desk

The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary has circulated a memorandum (OD(81) 9) explaining the line he proposes the British delegation should take at a meeting of Antarctic Treaty states opening on 23rd February in Buenos Aires. No Minister is expected to object to the line Lord Carrington proposes and there is no reason why the Prime Minister should do so either.

2. You should however be aware that there remains an underlying difference of view between the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Department of Energy. The Department of Energy consider that the energy and mineral potential of the Antarctic is such that we should press very strongly our rights stemming from our sovereignty over part of the continent. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office think that we should be unwise to go for more than can be achieved by a consensus among the states party to the Antarctic Treaty. Some of these, like ourselves, claim territory, while others, including the United States and Soviet Union who are most active in Antarctica, have no such claims. Our own claim is in any case disputed by Argentina and Chile. On the other hand, the mineral and seabed rights conferred by sovereignty are those most likely to provide defence against encroachment by the International Seabed Authority to be set up under the expected United Nations Law of the Sea Convention. The difference of approach is papered over in the tactical line agreed for next week's meeting, but may need to be discussed collectively at some stage, possibly prior to the next Antarctic Treaty consultative meeting in June.

(Robert Armstrong)

(Approved by Sir R Armstrong and signed on his behalf)

20th February 1981

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(подпись)

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