

Ref. A05108

MR ALEXANDER



to PM  
Prime Minister  
You may like to glance at the  
summary raise mte.

(4)

PM

British Policy in the Antarctic - Minerals

In his memorandum (OD(81) 34) the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary invites his OD colleagues' assent to the United Kingdom's participation in negotiations to set the ground rules for the exploitation of the Antarctic's mineral resources. No Minister is expected to disagree with Lord Carrington's analysis of United Kingdom objectives in the Antarctic, nor with his preferred method for pursuing those objectives. I do not think that the Prime Minister need object: provided that our delegation has firm instructions (as Lord Carrington proposes), participation on the basis proposed will not prejudice the United Kingdom position on points at issue in the negotiations themselves, and we remain free to block the negotiations if we cannot get our way in them.

2. Lord Carrington has confined himself, as he did in his earlier memorandum (OD(81) 9), to a request for endorsement of one initial negotiating line. The underlying difference of view between the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Department of Energy, described in my minute of 20 February (A04306), is no nearer resolution. The consultations with other claimant states, which Lord Carrington proposes undertaking after the forthcoming Buenos Aires meeting, should help to clarify the position. There is, incidentally, little likelihood of the United Nations Law of the Sea Conference reaching a conclusion for some time if at all, because of American doubts centring on the proposed International Seabed Authority.

RA

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

18 June 1981

