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21 OCT 1958 16th October, 1958.

Your reference: WN.1081/3
Please quote: WIS. 220/440/01

Dear Anderson: WN 1081/5

Thank you for your letter of the 9th September about the boundary between the continental shelf adjacent to Surinam and British Guiana.

2. First, let me say that the letter which Revell signed on my behalf on the 24th September on the general question of the terms of the draft Treaty on the boundary between the two countries was actually written before your letter was received, and I am not very clear why it took so long to leave the office.

3. The question now is whether what was said in that letter about the continental shelf requires some re-thinking in view of the Dutch desire to push ahead with an Exchange of Notes on that particular aspect. In practice, this is a matter on which there is plainly no difference of principle between ourselves and the Netherlands authorities. We are both wedded to the principle of the "median line", but we have the practical difficulty to which you refer of drawing the line with absolute certainty, since some of the data on which it is to be based is not beyond question. On this there are, as I see it, two possible courses which we could follow; namely, we could propose the line which Commander Kennedy drew for us last year as being, in our view, the best shot that can be made at it, although we would, of course, for this purpose have to invoke his aid once more in projecting the line beyond the 25 fathom line; or, if need be, we could look to a physical survey of

/ the

C. M. ANDERSON, ESQ.,
Foreign Office.

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the coastal areas so far as may be necessary to establish the line beyond all doubt. Naturally, we would prefer to avoid the expense of an exercise of this nature if it is at all possible to do so, and I suggest that our best course would be to have the line projected as best we can and put it to the Netherlands authorities as our proposal, and see how they re-act.

4. I very much agree with you that as the Dutch are now anxious to press ahead with the defining of the boundary of the continental shelf it would suit us better, rather than proceeding as they propose to a conclusion by an Exchange of Notes on that single issue, to take the line that we would prefer to take this as an essential part of the draft Treaty as a whole. In other words, we should now take the same line on the definition of the continental shelf boundary as they have taken on the matter of the fishing rights on the Corentyne.

5. I expect you will have heard that the question of the Treaty and specifically of the continental shelf came up in discussion which I had with the Netherlands Ambassador and the Surinam Minister at lunch yesterday. On the matter of the continental shelf, we agreed that there was nothing between us on how the line should be drawn, but there might be the difficulty that I have mentioned above. On the matter of the Treaty itself, I mentioned to the Ambassador that we were now at an advanced stage of drafting, and he then asked me what we were proposing about the New River territory. I thought it best to shy away from this and say that our normal approach was to build upon the Agreements of the 1930's and to make no more than the minor modifications which the simple passage of time dictated, including some reference to fishing rights on the Corentyne River.

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6. We let it go at that. But there is, I think, no doubt that when we are able to put our draft of the Treaty to the Netherlands authorities the matter of the New River territory is going to be dragged in by them.

7. I fear this can only mean that agreement on the terms of the Treaty is something that lies a very long way ahead of us unless we have ourselves some levers to move matters a little more speedily. Agreement on the boundary of the continental shelf might prove useful as such a lever, so we now have an added reason for treating this as part of the Treaty as a whole rather than as a matter to be dealt with separately by an Exchange of Notes.

8. I am sending copies of this letter to Ryan at the Admiralty and Brigadier Walters in the Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation.

Yours ever
Edmund Scarlett
(E. A. Scarlett)

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