



PRIME MINISTER'S  
PERSONAL MESSAGE  
SERIAL No. T 28/83

10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

10 March 1983

My dear Prime Minister,

I recall the far ranging and important talks I held with you and with Chairman Deng Xiaoping on the subject of Hong Kong during my visit to Peking in September of last year. As you know, at the conclusion of the meeting with Chairman Deng he and I agreed on a joint statement. In this statement we recognised that there were differences between us but we agreed that talks should take place through diplomatic channels with the common aim of maintaining the future stability and prosperity of Hong Kong.

Since then various meetings have taken place in Peking between the British Ambassador and senior representatives of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It is a great disappointment to me that although six months have elapsed since my visit no real progress has been made through these contacts and we have not yet been able to begin substantive talks on this vital issue.

I fully understand the importance the Chinese Government attach to the matter of sovereignty. But as I explained to you and Chairman Deng it is not constitutionally in my power as Prime Minister acting alone to agree to the transfer of sovereignty; that is a matter which I have to refer to Parliament which alone has the power to decide. If Parliament is to agree to such a transfer of sovereignty, it will need to be part of an overall package of measures guaranteeing the future stability and prosperity of Hong Kong.

/I understand

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OPS  
Subject: Hong Kong  
Future: P+S

I understand your difficulties, but I hope that you will understand mine. In my meeting with you I said that I would be prepared to consider making recommendations on sovereignty to Parliament in certain circumstances. Perhaps it would be helpful if I strengthened that assurance. Provided that agreement could be reached between the British and Chinese Government on administrative arrangements for Hong Kong which would guarantee the future prosperity and stability of Hong Kong, and would be acceptable to the British Parliament and to the people of Hong Kong as well as to the Chinese Government, I would be prepared to recommend to Parliament that sovereignty over the whole of Hong Kong should revert to China.

I profoundly believe that both our governments have a responsibility to achieve an early negotiated solution to this problem and I very much hope that we can co-operate to exercise that joint responsibility. I am confident that if we do so it will be possible to reach a solution consonant with Chinese and British interests and those of the people of Hong Kong. This will be a great contribution to the development of friendly relations between Britain and China to which we attach the highest importance. It would point the way to even closer co-operation between our two governments and peoples.

I have explained my position to you in as frank and as positive way as I can in this message. I hope that in the light of it you and Chairman Deng will agree that the Chinese Government are prepared to enter into substantive talks. I hope that in your reply you will be able to tell me that we can hold the first of such discussions within the next month.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Thatcher

His Excellency Mr. Zhao Ziyang