

Ref. A082/0290

MR COLES

We shall have sovereignty over H-K and how long not

Prime Minister

We still do not know the answers to two

questions:-

- (a) is the Chinese position on administration merely an opening position?*
- (b) what do they mean by "administration" anyway.*

A.F.C. 26

The Future of Hong Kong

In your minute of 22 November you said that the Prime Minister had asked for the evidence for the conclusion in JIC(82)(WSI) 46 that "British administration appears to be ruled out" by China in the context of a solution to the problem of Hong Kong.

attached

2. The item on Hong Kong in JIC(82)(WSI) 46, represented a short summary of JIC(82)(N) 117, which I sent to you under cover of my minute of 19 November. The full report summarises the line taken by the Chinese since the Prime Minister's visit. It notes (paragraph 5) that "... we cannot judge whether this position is open to negotiation or irrevocable." What is being said on future administration may be a negotiating tactic rather than a firm position.

However, which provide much of the evidence on which the assessment is based consistently suggest that Chinese officials consider that they are looking and working for a settlement under which China, not Britain, will administer Hong Kong.

3. The Chinese have consistently maintained the position that administrative control cannot be divorced from sovereignty. Prime Minister Suzuki of Japan was told during his visit to Peking in October that China intended to "recover control over the administration". A senior Chinese official in Hong Kong told a Western contact in early November that "... the British administration must be replaced. Chinese sovereignty was impossible as long as the British were running Hong Kong." Members of the staff of the New China News Agency in Hong Kong have taken the same line in speaking to Hong Kong Chinese, and it has also been repeated in a public statement by the Mayor of Guangzhou in Manila in mid-November. There is no doubt a strong element of seeking to apply pressure on Britain in these closely orchestrated comments, but they are tending to establish a firm public position from which withdrawal would not be easy.

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4. Chinese officials in conversations among themselves are also speaking of the demand for Chinese administration as China's final position. The communist Head of the Trade Union Joint Committee in Hong Kong told colleagues in late October that "Hong Kong would be administered by local people appointed by Peking"; and a member of the staff of the Chinese Embassy in London said in discussion with a colleague, again in late October, that the British position (summarised as "you have sovereignty and we'll have administrative authority") was unacceptable. None of these officials is likely to be privy to thinking within the central leadership. They are no doubt following a line laid down in Peking. Nevertheless, the JIC judge that there is no evidence at present that the Chinese leadership have an open mind on the issue.

5. I am sending a copy of this minute to Mr Holmes (Foreign and Commonwealth Office).

RA

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

26 November 1982

Hong Kong, Future of, Pt 4



26 NOV 1992



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8-11

Hong Kong

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

THE FUTURE OF HONG KONG

The Prime Minister has noted the contents
of your minute of 26 November.

A. J. COLES

29 November 1982

CONFIDENTIAL



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

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The Future of Hong Kong

The Prime Minister saw over the weekend the report on the above question in JIC 82 WSI 46.

The second paragraph of the assessment states: "British administration appears to be ruled out". The Prime Minister has asked what the evidence is which provides the basis for this conclusion. Since negotiations with the Chinese have barely begun, and since we would not have expected a substantial modification in China's opening negotiating stance at this stage, the conclusion on the face of it appears to be premature.

A/P

I should be grateful for your comments in due course.

I am copying this minute to John Holmes (Foreign and Commonwealth Office).

A. J. COLES

22 November, 1982

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TO IMMEDIATE FCO
TELEGRAM NUMBER 739 OF 12/11/82
REPEATED FOR INFO TO IMMEDIATE HONG KONG

HONG KONG TEL NO 1302: FUTURE OF HONG KONG

1. I SUSPECT THAT THE MAYOR OF SHANGHAI WAS ASKED TO SPEAK AS HE DID TO THE TDC MORE TO REINFORCE THE GOOD IMPRESSION MADE ON THE DELEGATION BY XI ZHONGXUN THAN TO CORRECT XI'S OMISSION ON SOVEREIGNTY. HIS REMARKS APPEAR TO FOLLOW THE GENERALLY ENCOURAGING LINE TAKEN WITH THE TDC IN PEKING, AND WILL NO DOUBT HAVE SOME FAVOURABLE IMPACT ON CONFIDENCE IN HONG KONG.

THE CHINESE ARE NOW PROBABLY MORE AWARE THAN IN THE PAST OF THE DAMAGE CAUSED BY THEIR EARLIER STATEMENTS. BUT IN ANY EVENT WE MUST EXPECT THEM TO BLOW WARM ON HONG KONG CHINESE AND COLDER ON THE BRITISH.

2. WANG'S STATEMENT THAT QUOTE MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION IS NEGOTIABLE UNQUOTE IS STRIKING.

BUT WE SHOULD NOTE (A) THAT THIS IS THE MAYOR OF SHANGHAI, NOT A CENTRAL LEADER, TALKING AND (B) THAT THIS NEED NOT MEAN THAT BRITISH (UNDERLINED) ADMINISTRATION IS NEGOTIABLE. ON PRESENT EVIDENCE IT IS MORE LIKELY TO MEAN ONLY THAT THE DETAILS OF A NEW CHINESE ADMINISTRATION CAN BE DISCUSSED, A VIEW WHICH WE HAVE SEEN EXPRESSED ELSEWHERE, EG IN SECRET REPORTS.

IT WOULD BE INTERESTING IF WE GOT SOME CORROBORATION, BUT AT PRESENT WE HAVE TO SET AGAINST IT ZHAO'S STATEMENT TO THE PRIME MINISTER THAT FOREIGN ADMINISTRATION AFTER 1997 WAS UNACCEPTABLE. THIS WAS SUBSEQUENTLY REINFORCED BY ZHANG WEMJIN.

(QUOTE IT WAS UNTHINKABLE THAT HONG KONG WOULD BE ADMINISTERED BY ANOTHER COUNTRY AND BY BRITAIN IN PARTICULAR UNQUOTE.) THIS IS THE LAST AUTHORITATIVE WORD WE HAVE HAD. YOU WILL RECALL THAT ZHANG ALSO STATED THAT ADMINISTRATION WAS INSEPARABLE FROM SOVEREIGNTY. IT MAY BE THAT THE POSITION OUTLINED BY ZHAO IS NOT THE CHINESE BOTTOM LINE, BUT WE CANNOT ASSUME WITHOUT MORE EVIDENCE THAT WANG'S REMARK IS A SIGNAL TO THIS EFFECT.

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3. ON QUOTE SHUTTLE DIPLOMACY UNQUOTE I CAN ONLY ASSUME THE MAYOR
WAS ENVISAGING RAPID MINISTERIAL VISITS. WE MAY NEED THESE
BEFORE THE TALKS CONCLUDE BUT AS YET WE HAVE NOT REACHED
SUBSTANTIVE DISCUSSIONS.

CRADOCK

FUTURE OF HONG KONG

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