

Hong Kong

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FUTURE OF HONG KONG: PRESS COVERAGE

THE GENERAL RHYTHM OF THE PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN IN THE COMMUNIST PRESS HAS BEEN SUSTAINED OVER THE WEEKEND. KE HUA, CHINESE AMBASSADOR IN LONDON, WAS PROMINENTLY REPORTED IN THE WEN WEI PO ON 6 FEBRUARY AS HAVING REPEATED CHINA'S GENERAL POSITION TO MEMBERS OF THE CHINESE COMMUNITY IN LONDON ATTENDING A LUNAR NEW YEAR RECEPTION AT THE EMBASSY. ACCORDING TO THE REPORT, KE EMPHASISED THAT HONG KONG'S SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC SYSTEM, THE LIFESTYLE OF HONG KONG PEOPLE AND HONG KONG'S ROLE AS A FINANCIAL CENTRE AND FREE PORT WOULD NOT BE CHANGED.

2. THE NEW EVENING POST, THIRD RANKING OF THE COMMUNIST NEWSPAPERS AND WHICH HAS GENERALLY BEEN USED TO CARRY THE MOST HOSTILE ELEMENTS OF THE CAMPAIGN, PUBLISHED AN EDITORIAL ON 4 FEBRUARY WHICH SOUGHT TO MODIFY THE EFFECT OF THE "CONTEMPORARY HISTORY RESEARCH ARTICLE" (MY TELSNOs 163 AND 179 REFER). ACCORDING TO THE NEW EVENING POST, THE ARTICLE WAS INTENDED TO GIVE A CLEAR ACCOUNT OF THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND WAS NOT (NOT) INTENDED TO SETTLE SCORES WITH BRITAIN OR TO SEEK "COMPENSATION". TODAY'S BRITISH PEOPLE WERE NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR AN ACT OF IMPERIALIST AGGRESSION A CENTURY AGO. THE PURPOSE OF REPEATING CHINA'S STANCE ON THE UNEQUAL TREATIES WAS TO GIVE THE BRITISH PEOPLE AND GOVERNMENT A GOOD HISTORY LESSON AND PERSUADE THEM TO AGREE TO ABROGATE THE TREATIES AND RECOGNISE CHINA'S SOVEREIGNTY OVER HONG KONG. THE ARTICLE PICKED UP REMARKS IN A SPEECH MADE BY LORD MACLEHOSE AT THE END OF LAST YEAR TO THE EFFECT THAT PEOPLE SHOULD STOP LOOKING TO THE PAST AND CONCENTRATE ON THE FUTURE, AS WELL AS REMARKS IN A SIMILAR VEIN MADE BY LORD BELSTEAD AT HIS PRESS CONFERENCE IN HONG KONG.

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3. THE ARTICLE CONCLUDED BY SAYING THAT THE BEST WAY TO STOP LOOKING TO THE PAST AND CONCENTRATE ON THE FUTURE WOULD BE FOR BRITIAN TO ABROGATE THE TREATIES AND RECOGNISE CHINA'S SOVEREIGNTY. 'DISCUSSION OF THE HONG KONG PROBLEM CANNOT IGNORE HISTORY. AS VICE CHAIRMAN OF THE NPC PENG ZHEN SAID 'RESPECT HISTORY, RESPECT PRESENT REALITIES AND PIN YOUR HOPES ON THE FUTURE'. IF THESE THREE PHRASES CONSTITUTE THE '3-LEGGED STOOL' THE PROBLEM WILL BE EASILY SOLVED''.

4. COMMENT. THOUGH THE EMPHASIS IS ON THE NEED TO ABROGATE THE TREATIES, THE TONE OF THE NEW EVENING POST EDITORIAL IS MILDER THAN THAT OF OTHER RECENT HISTORICAL COMMENTARIES IN THE COMMUNIST PRESS. IT IS NOT CLEAR WHEN, OR IN WHAT CONTEXT PENG ZHEN MADE THE REMARKS ATTRIBUTED TO HIM.

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[THIS TELEGRAM WAS NOT ADVANCED]

FUTURE OF HONG KONG

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