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FM HONG KONG 070850Z MAR 83

TO IMMEDIATE F C O

TELEGRAM NUMBER 311 OF 7 MARCH

INFO PRIORITY PEKING

INFO ROUTINE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT OFFICE LONDON

MT

FUTURE OF HONG KONG : PRESS COVERAGE

THE FINANCIAL DAILY (INDEPENDENT) CARRIED AS ITS FRONT PAGE LEAD ON 7 MARCH A STORY QUOTING "NORMALLY RELIABLE SOURCES IN PEKING" WHICH SUGGEST THAT DETAILED MEASURES FOR APPLYING ARTICLE 31 OF THE CONSTITUTION TO HONG KONG, MACAU AND TAIWAN WERE UNDER CONSIDERATION IN PEKING AND WOULD BE TABLED FOR DISCUSSION AT THE FORTHCOMING 6TH NATIONAL PEOPLE'S CONGRESS, PROBABLY IN APRIL OR MAY. THE STORY GAVE FEW DETAILS OF THE SUPPOSED MEASURES, BUT SUGGESTED THAT THEY WOULD PROVIDE FOR THE ABOLITION OF APPEALS TO THE PRIVY COUNCIL FROM HONG KONG.

2. PRO-KMT ORGANISATIONS IN HONG KONG PETITIONED THE GOVERNOR JUST BEFORE HIS DEPARTURE URGING THAT HONG KONG'S STATUS QUO BE MAINTAINED UNTIL CHINA COULD BE UNIFIED UNDER A DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM. THE PRO-KMT PRESS PUBLISHED EDITORIALS ON THE SAME LINES. THE COMMUNIST PRESS HAS ATTACKED THESE ACTIVITIES AS REPRESENTING ONLY THE OPINION OF AN UNREPRESENTATIVE FACTION SEEKING TO CREATE "TWO CHINAS". IN AN EDITORIAL ON 6 MARCH THE WEN WEI PO SAID THAT THE PETITION AND THE DISPLAY OF ANTI-COMMUNIST SLOGANS WAS A HUMILIATION TO CHINA AND ITS SOCIALIST SYSTEM. ALTHOUGH SUCH EVENTS WERE DETRIMENTAL TO SINO-BRITISH RELATIONS THE BRITISH AUTHORITIES IN HONG KONG HAD NOT SOUGHT TO STOP THEM. THE SOLE PURPOSE OF THE KMT WAS TO MAKE TROUBLE. "IF THE GOVERNOR ATTACHED IMPORTANCE TO SINO-BRITISH RELATIONS, HE SHOULD DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT".

(COMMENT: THERE HAS SO FAR BEEN NO COMPLAINT ON THESE LINES FROM NCNA).

3. THERE HAVE BEEN ONE OR TWO OTHER ARTICLES IN THE COMMUNIST PRESS IN THE PAST FEW DAYS IN RATHER MORE HOSTILE TONE, AND SLIGHTLY OUT OF KEEPING WITH THE MAIN THRUST OF THE PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN. THE TA KUNG PAO ON 3 MARCH PUBLISHED A SHORT ARTICLE ENTITLED "SELF RULE TO ELIMINATE INEQUALITY". IT SUGGESTED THAT CHINESE PEOPLE IN HONG KONG AND THE CHINESE LANGUAGE WERE GIVEN SECOND CLASS TREATMENT AND THAT THE BRITISH ALWAYS DECIDED IMPORTANT MATTERS.

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THE WEN WEI PO ON 3 MARCH PUBLISHED A RATHER LONG ARTICLE REPRODUCING A REPORT BY A PRESSURE GROUP, THE NEW HONG KONG INSTITUTE, ABOUT WHAT IT DESCRIBED AS A HIGHLY UNEVEN DISTRIBUTION OF POLITICAL POWER IN HONG KONG. THE REPORT FOCUSED ON THE SMALL NUMBER OF PEOPLE HOLDING IMPORTANT POSTS IN PUBLIC AND BUSINESS LIFE, BUT DID NOT (NOT) DWELL ON THE RACIAL FACTOR. IT CONCLUDED BY CALLING ON THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT TO INTRODUCE MORE DEMOCRACY IN HONG KONG, SINCE THE 1997 QUESTION WOULD BE A CATALYST FOR CHANGE IN THIS DIRECTION.

HADDON-CAVE

FUTURE OF HONG KONG

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