

SECRET

GR 600
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FM PEKING 230926Z MAR 93
TO IMMEDIATE FCO
TELNO 269 OF 23 MARCH
RPTD IMMEDIATE HONG KONG (PERSONAL FOR GOVERNOR).

Read in full
mt

MY TELNO 253: FUTURE OF HONG KONG

1 I CALLED ON VICE FOREIGN-MINISTER YAO GUANG THIS AFTERNOON, HANDED OVER THE LETTER FOR TRANSMISSION TM ZHAO ZIYANG AND READ TO HIM THE CONTENT OF THE MESSAGE SLOWLY FROM MY COPY, CHECKING THAT THE INTERPRETER WAS GETTING IT RIGHT. I ADDED THAT THE PRIME MINISTER HAD ASKED ME TO SAY THAT SHE HAD MADE STRENUOUS EFFORTS TO GO AS FAR AS SHE COULD IN ORDER THAT THE TALKS, AGREED IN SEPTEMBER AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL, MIGHT GET UNDER WAY. SHE HAD GIVEN A GREAT DEAL OF THOUGHT TO THE SITUATION AND WOULD BE GRATEFUL IF PREMIER ZHAO WOULD CONSIDER HER MESSAGE VERY CAREFULLY.

2. I SAID I SHOULD LIKE TO ADD AS A PERSONAL COMMENT THAT THE ASSURANCE IN THE MESSAGE REPRESENTED THE LIMIT OF WHAT THE PRIME MINISTER WAS EMPOWERED UNDER THE BRITISH CONSTITUTION TO AGREE TO ON HER OWN AUTHORITY. WE THEREFORE SAW IT AS A MOST IMPORTANT MESSAGE. WE HOPED THE CHINESE WOULD ALSO SEE IT AS SUCH AND AS A SIGN OF OUR SINCERITY IN SEEKING TO RESOLVE THE QUESTION OF THE FUTURE OF HONG KONG THROUGH FRIENDLY DISCUSSIONS WITH THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT.

3. I ASKED THAT IN VIEW OF ZHAO'S IMPENDING VISIT TO AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND, THE MESSAGE BE TRANSMITTED TO HIM AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE AND SHOULD RECEIVE THE MOST URGENT ATTENTION OF THE CHINESE AUTHORITIES. I ASKED FOR AN EARLY REPLY BEFORE ZHAO LEFT ON HIS TRAVELS.

4. FINALLY, I STRESSED THAT THE CONTENT OF THE MESSAGE AND ITS EXISTENCE SHOULD BE KEPT STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL BY BOTH SIDES.

5. IN REPLY, YAO GUANG WELCOMED ME BACK AND SAID HE LOOKED FORWARD TO OUR WORKING TOGETHER. ZHAO ZIYANG KNEW OF MY WISH TO DELIVER THE MESSAGE PERSONALLY AND "ATTACHED IMPORTANCE TO THIS QUESTION". HOWEVER, HE WAS BUSY PREPARING FOR HIS JOURNEY ABROAD AND ALSO ON DOMESTIC MATTERS AND HAD ENTRUSTED YAO GUANG TO RECEIVE IT ON HIS BEHALF. YAO GUANG THANKED ME FOR READING THE MESSAGE AND FOR MY PERSONAL COMMENTS. HE SAID "WE UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU SAID". HE WAS CONFIDENT THAT ZHAO ZIYANG WOULD STUDY IT QUICKLY AND REPLY BEFORE LONG. HE THOUGHT HE AND I WOULD VERY SOON MEET AGAIN TO CONTINUE OUR WORK.

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/s/ B. Y. YAO

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YM YAO CONTINUED THAT CHINA HAD ALL ALONG SEEN THE SINO-BRITISH RELATIONSHIP AS A FRIENDLY ONE. RELATIONS BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES HAD DEVELOPED FAIRLY WELL. CHINA WAS READY TO COOPERATE WITH US IN REACHING A GOOD SETTLEMENT OF THE HONG KONG ISSUE WHICH HAD BEEN LEFT OVER FROM HISTORY. LIKE US, CHINA ATTACHED IMPORTANCE TO DEVELOPING GOOD BILATERAL RELATIONS. OF COURSE, SPEAKING FRANKLY, THERE WERE DIFFERENCES, EVEN SERIOUS DIFFERENCES, ON THE HONG KONG ISSUE. BUT HE BELIEVED THAT THROUGH OUR RECENT CONTACTS WE HAD ENHANCED OUR UNDERSTANDING OF EACH OTHERS POSITIONS. THE QUESTION WAS A DIFFICULT ONE BUT HE WAS CONFIDENT THAT THROUGH CONCERTED EFFORTS DIFFERENCES COULD BE NARROWED AND A SATISFACTORY SOLUTION ATTAINED.

7. I THANKED YAO AND SAID THAT WE TOO SHARED HIS CONFIDENCE THAT BY WORKING TOGETHER WE COULD OVERCOME OUR PROBLEMS. I HOPED THAT IN THAT SPIRIT WE COULD EXPECT AN EARLY AND POSITIVE REPLY TO THE PRIME MINISTER'S MESSAGE. YAO SAID "YOU WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED".

8.

COMMENT

I HAVE NO DOUBT THE MESSAGE GOT ACROSS AND WAS UNDERSTOOD. THERE WAS SOME DISCUSSION OF THE PRECISE CHINESE TRANSLATION OF THE KEY SENTENCE WHICH ALLOWED US TO STRESS ITS POSITIVE SIGNIFICANCE. YAO GUANG WAS ALSO SURPRISINGLY POSITIVE IN HIS RESPONSE, THOUGH I WOULD HESITATE TO ATTACH MUCH IMPORTANCE TO THAT.

CRADOCK

FUTURE OF HONG KONG

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