



PRIME MINISTER'S QUESTION TIME, TUESDAY 5 JULY 1983

FUTURE OF HONG KONG

LINE TO TAKE

Visit to London by the Governor and Unofficials

1. The Governor and the Unofficial Members of the Hong Kong Executive Council are in London for talks with Ministers. I attach great importance to the advice of the Executive Council. This visit was part of the continuing process of regular consultation, here and in Hong Kong. During our meetings yesterday I was able to reaffirm our commitment to Hong Kong and our aim of seeking for the future arrangements of the territory which would be acceptable to Parliament, to China and to the people of Hong Kong.

Current State of Play in UK/China Talks

2. Following my discussions with Chinese leaders in Peking last September and subsequent useful exchanges, it has been agreed that a second phase of the talks on the future of Hong Kong will begin in Peking on 12 July.

Correspondence with Chinese Leaders

3. Our exchanges with the Chinese Government must remain confidential.

Concession on Sovereignty

4. There has been no concession of sovereignty. The position of the Government is well known. Parliament would of course be consulted on any new arrangements.

/Prospects



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Prospects

5. There is no fixed timetable and I cannot predict how long the talks will last. But we are getting on with them as quickly as we can. I am confident that satisfactory arrangements can be agreed.

Hong Kong Department

5 July 1983

Hansard (HL)

23 June 1983

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Baroness Young

I should also like to reaffirm our commitment to Hong Kong. The question of Hong Kong's future is a vital one for the people of that territory. Our commitment to their future well-being is clear, and I should like to remind them, and your Lordships, that our aim is to seek a solution which is acceptable not only to the British and Chinese Governments, but also to the people of Hong Kong. Talks on Hong Kong's future with China are taking place through diplomatic channels in Peking.

I cannot predict how long they will take, but I can assure the House that we are proceeding as quickly as we can. There have been a good many rumours about what is or is not being discussed. Your Lordships will not expect me to comment on these. You will I am sure accept that the talks must remain confidential if they are to be successful. The Government certainly do not regard the outcome of the talks as pre-judged by anything that is said outside them.

They are taking place against a background of co-operation and good relations between China and the United Kingdom. A special impetus was added by the Prime Minister's visit to China last year. Britain will be participating in China's offshore oil programme, and talks are continuing on British participation in China's first nuclear power station project. Similarly, co-operation between China and Hong Kong continues to expand. Given these friendly links between Britain and China and our common interest in Hong Kong's future stability and prosperity, common sense demands that we and the Chinese Government make a success of the talks. I believe that, with good will, a satisfactory negotiated settlement will be reached.

Hansard (Hc)

28 June 1983

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Sir Geoffrey Howe

I shall deal briefly with three topics that are mentioned in the Gracious Speech—the Falklands, Hong Kong and Gibraltar. I should emphasise that they find themselves in the same paragraph as a matter of convenience, not because the Government want to make artificial links between the different subjects or to underestimate the importance of individual circumstances. In each case we have special responsibilities and in each case we shall fulfil in good faith the commitments that we have made.

We are also committed to do everything in our power to ensure the continuing well-being of the people of Hong Kong. As is made clear in the Gracious Speech, we aim to reach a solution on the future of the territory that is acceptable to this Parliament, China, and the people of Hong Kong.

Various rumours have been circulating about what may or may not be under discussion in the talks taking place through diplomatic channels in Peking. I hope that the House will accept that, at this stage, the talks must be confidential if they are to be successful. The Government do not regard anything said outside the talks as in any way prejudicing their outcome.

The background of good relations between the United Kingdom and China, and our common interest in ensuring the future stability and prosperity of the people of Hong Kong, give grounds for confidence that we shall be able to reach a satisfactory negotiated settlement.



M/s/x
Parliamentary Unit

cc: PS
PS/PUS
PS/Mr Luce
Mr Donald
Mr Thomson, FED

PRIME MINISTER'S QUESTION TIME: 5 JULY

1. As requested, I submit a self explanatory draft line to take on the future of Hong Kong. I see no need for a background note. The Prime Minister is fully in the picture.

/ 2. I attach copies of the relevant extracts from the speeches made by Baroness Young and the Secretary of State in the Queen's Speech debate.

5 July 1983

R D Clift
Hong Kong Department