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FM HONG KONG 111205Z JUL 83

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 988 OF 11 JULY

INFO IMMEDIATE PEKING ROUTINE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES  
WASHINGTON CG NEW YORK BRUSSELS UKMIS GENEVA HONG KONG GOVERNMENT  
OFFICE LONDON

FUTURE OF HONG KONG : PRESS COVERAGE

1. THE SECOND PHASE OF THE TALKS, THE REFUSAL OF A VISA TO THE DIRECTOR OF INFORMATION SERVICES, PETER TSAO, AND THE POSSIBILITY THAT THIS MAY BE LINKED WITH THE GOVERNOR'S REMARKS AT HIS 7 JULY PRESS CONFERENCE, CONTINUE TO ATTRACT CONSIDERABLE ATTENTION IN THE LOCAL PRESS. A NUMBER OF NEWSPAPERS, AS WELL AS THE TWO MAIN T.V. CHANNELS HAVE ALREADY CARRIED REPORTS FROM CORRESPONDENTS SENT TO PEKING TO COVER THE TALKS. THE ARRIVAL IN PEKING OF LI JUSHENG (SECOND DIRECTOR OF NCNA HONG KONG) WAS WIDELY REPORTED. LI REFUSED TO BE DRAWN ON WHETHER HE WOULD BE TAKING PART IN THE TALKS, BUT MOST PAPERS ASSUME THAT HE WILL. SOME PAPERS SPECULATE THAT THE TALKS WOULD BE HELD EITHER AT THE GREAT HALL OF THE PEOPLE, OR AT THE DIAO YU TAI GUEST HOUSE.

2. THE REFUSAL OF A VISA TO PETER TSAO WAS WIDELY REPORTED, TOGETHER WITH THE LINE BEING TAKEN BY NCNA WHICH WAS THAT AS MR TSAO'S NAME WAS NOT ON THE LIST OF DELEGATES SUBMITTED BY LONDON, HE SHOULD NOT BE INVOLVED IN THE TALKS. HIS ABSENCE WOULD NOT AFFECT THE NEGOTIATIONS.

3. THERE HAS BEEN EXTENSIVE EDITORIAL COMMENT ON THIS INCIDENT. THE HONG KONG ECONOMIC JOURNAL (INDEPENDENT) SAID THAT IT WOULD HAVE BEEN IN ORDER FOR MR TSAO TO ACCOMPANY THE GOVERNOR TO PEKING AND SUGGESTED THAT THE VISA WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN REFUSED WERE IT NOT FOR THE REMARKS MADE DURING THE GOVERNOR'S PRESS CONFERENCE ABOUT REPRESENTING HONG KONG. THE ECONOMIC JOURNAL ALSO SUGGESTED THAT THE GOVERNOR'S REMARKS ABOUT REPRESENTING HONG KONG WERE UNWISE AND MIGHT HAVE CAUSED SOME MISUNDERSTANDING. THIS INCIDENT HAD, HOWEVER, HELPED HONG KONG PEOPLE TO UNDERSTAND WHAT THE TALKS WERE ALL ABOUT AND THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT'S DETERMINATION TO FIGHT FOR HONG KONG PEOPLES' INTERESTS. THE FINANCIAL DAILY (INDEPENDENT) SUGGESTED THAT THE IDEA OF INCLUDING MR TSAO IN THE PARTY WAS A DELIBERATE AND CALCULATED MOVE BY THE BRITISH SIDE TO TEST CHINA'S INTENTIONS. THE PRO-KMT PRESS PUBLISHED SHRILL CONDEMNATION OF THE CHINESE REFUSAL TO GIVE TSAO A VISA. THE EXPRESS (RIGHT WING) AND THE WAH KIU YAT PO (INDEPENDENT) SAID THAT THESE INCIDENTS MIGHT GIVE RISE TO FEELINGS AMONG THE PEOPLE THAT THE TALKS WOULD BE DIFFICULT. ON THE OTHER HAND, THEY SHOWED THAT BOTH SIDES WERE VERY SERIOUS ABOUT THE TALKS.

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4. THE COMMUNIST PRESS HAVE MADE SOME ATTEMPT TO CALM THE ATMOSPHERE AFTER THE HOSTILE AND SARCASTIC EDITORIAL IN THE NEW EVENING POST (MY TELNO 930 - NOT TO ALL). ON 9 JULY, THE NEW EVENING POST SAID THAT THE GOVERNOR HAD MADE A MISTAKE BY SAYING HE REPRESENTED HONG KONG PEOPLE, AND THIS HAD LED TO THE CHINESE FOREIGN MINISTRY'S STATEMENT. THE RIPPLES CAUSED BY THESE REMARKS HAD NOW DIED AWAY. IN AN EDITORIAL ON 11 JULY THE TAKUNG PAO SAID THAT THE CHINESE POSITION ON HONG KONG WAS FIRM AND GENEROUS, AND RESPECTED HISTORY AND REALITY. CHINA CONSIDERED THAT THE RECOVERY OF SOVEREIGNTY AND PRESERVATION OF HONG KONG'S PROSPERITY WERE A SINGLE OBJECTIVE. CHINA'S SELF RULE PROPOSITION WAS NOT AN INTERIM MEASURE BUT A WELL THOUGHT OUT PLAN FORMULATED AFTER HEARING VIEWS EXPRESSED BY ALL PARTIES CONCERNED. CHINA HAD ADOPTED A POSITIVE ATTITUDE, BRITAIN SHOULD RESPOND SO THAT A SETTLEMENT COULD BE REACHED WHICH WOULD BRING HONOUR TO BOTH SIDES. MRS THATCHER HAD EXPERIENCE AND UNDERSTANDING OF CHINESE AFFAIRS AND WOULD SURELY MAKE A WISE DECISION WHICH WOULD CONTRIBUTE TO THE LONG TERM DEVELOPMENT OF SINO/BRITISH FRIENDSHIP.

5. SOME ATTENTION HAS BEEN PAID TO AN ARTICLE IN A LEFT WING MONTHLY MAGAZINE, QUOTE THE MIRROR UNQUOTE, SUGGESTING THAT DENG XIAOPING HAD TOLD THE HONG KONG AND MACAU DELEGATES TO THE CPPCC/NPC THAT THERE WOULD BE NO CHANGE IN HONG KONG'S ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM FOR 50 YEARS AFTER 1997. THE COVERAGE OF THIS STORY IN SOME PAPERS GIVES THE IMPRESSION THAT DENG MIGHT HAVE BEEN CONTEMPLATING A CONTINUATION OF BRITISH ADMINISTRATION FOR THAT TIME. THE ARTICLE IN THE MIRROR CONTAINS NO (NO) JUSTIFICATION FOR SUCH A CONCLUSION; IT REPORTS THE DELEGATES AS HAVING ASKED FOR GUARANTEES THAT THERE WOULD BE NO CHANGE TO THE QUOTE SYSTEMS UNQUOTE IN HONG KONG FOR AT LEAST 50 YEARS AND AS SURMISING THAT THIS WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE TO THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT.

HADDON-CAVE

FUTURE OF HONG KONG

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