

A.J.C. 12/7

cc John Biles

BBC 2 NEWSNIGHT PROGRAMME - 11 JULY 1983:

INTERVIEW WITH ROBERT ADLEY.

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9/12/7

Q. Mr Adley: what do you think has happened to Mrs Thatcher's position over the past year? Has she now, do you think, in fact conceded sovereignty to China?

A. I think there has been a conflict between reality and legality, the pursuit of legality over the Opium Wars Treaty has, I think become more realistic and the acceptance of the reality on this situation is, I am sure, what has happened over the last year.

Q. So what do you think she has told Deng Xiao Ping already?

A. Well I don't want to speculate what she has told him but there has got to be an agreement. People in Hong Kong know and they have got to accept that there has got to be a change in their lifestyle but the Government in Peking have made what most people regard as a very substantial concession already by changing their own constitution to enable Hong Kong to continue its own capitalist lifestyle, the maintenance of a border between the future Hong Kong and the Peoples Republic itself. Now all these things ultimately will be seen by the people of Hong Kong as acceptable or not acceptable. In the end they are going to have to rely on the good faith of the people in Peking. Because one thing is certain, we in Britain are not going to war over Hong Kong with the Peoples Republic.

Q. What are we going to do for Hong Kong in these negotiations?

A. We are going to try to reach an acceptable solution, by negotiation, by discussion, bearing in mind that a special zone in Hong Kong under the flag of the Peoples Republic is actually far more likely to produce the stability that the people in Hong Kong need than some sort of fortress Hong Kong under a Union Jack.

Q. You heard Mr Cheng there, expressing deep concern and worry among the people in Hong Kong about what might happen, now how can you

possibly be sure that the special economic zone the Chinese are talking about, the Chinese flag and perhaps some kind of relic of British administration for a short transition period or something... How can this possibly maintain the lifestyle that Mr Cheng wants and the economic interest going on?

A. Well, nothing can be sure in this uncertain world, that is why in the end one is dependent upon Peking because if they had wanted to abolish Hong Kong they could have removed their own border guards anytime over the last 25 years and that would have effectively been the end of Hong Kong. The point some of us are trying to make to the people of Hong Kong is to stop abusing the People's Republic and recognise that you are going to have to learn to live with them, accept the need for change and we believe that the advantages to China and Hong Kong are self-evident. The advantages of the stability Mr Cheng was talking about are self-evident and therefore to carry on talking about sovereignty and flags is not only ^{un}realistic, it is actually in the medium and long term very damaging indeed to the people of Hong Kong if they want to achieve a 'modus vivendi' with the Government in Peking.

Q. But you can't surely say that it is unreasonable for the people of Hong Kong to ask the British Government to do its best for them in the negotiations and are they not perhaps concerned that the British may sell them down the river?

A. I don't think we have got anything to sell; quite frankly I think it is a matter of reaching an agreement. We want to do the best for the people of Hong Kong; the Government ^{of} China does not want to destroy the economy of Hong Kong. Basically ^{we} want the same end, but the Chinese understandably want sovereignty of the whole of Hong Kong; after all, they have a lease on most of it; the use of the word lease implies it does not belong to us, so most of the territories belongs to China anyway.

Q. Supposing the people of Hong Kong say that this is not acceptable to them. Do you think they should have a veto over the deal?

A. I think if they tried to do that they would destroy their own future.

Q. What do you mean by that?

A. I think if they tried to insist on something that was unobtainable which the British Government could not deliver, they would put themselves at odds so much with the Government of Peking that they would destroy their own opportunities of preserving their own lifestyles.

Hong Kong Department
12 July 1983

cc: Mr Clift
Mr Donald
PS/Mr Luce
Mr Ian Kidd, No 10 Downing St ✓
Private Secretary