

FUTURE OF HONG KONG ADVANCE COPIES

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COPY TO:  
MR COLES, No. 10 DOWNING ST  
Mr. Roberts, News D.

~~RESIDENT CLERK~~

GR 525

SECRET

ADVANCE COPY

FM PEKING 200755Z DEC 83

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

IMMEDIATE

TELEGRAM NUMBER 1379 OF 20TH DEC 83

INFO IMMEDIATE HONG KONG

MIPT : DINNER WITH JI PENGFEI: CHINESE GARRISON

1. DURING DINNER I TOLD JI PENGFEI THAT AWE WERE EXTREMELY CONCERNED AT THE SUGGESTION THAT THE CHINESE MIGHT WISH TO STATION TROOPS IN HONG KONG. WE DID NOT DISPUTE THEIR RIGHT TO STATION TROOPS IN ANY PART OF CHINA THEY THOUGHT FIT. BUT WE THOUGHT THAT TO DO SO IN HONG KONG WOULD HAVE A SERIOUS EFFECT, AND WOULD COMPLETELY UPSET THE GENERAL CHINESE WISH TO GIVE THE APPEARANCE OF AUTONOMY. IT WOULD THEREBY HAVE A BAD ECONOMIC EFFECT. IT WOULD SEEM AS THOUGH THE SETTLEMENT IN HONG KONG HAD NOT BEEN BROUGHT ABOUT BY PEACEFUL AND FRIENDLY NEGOTIATIONS BUT AS A RESULT OF SOME MILITARY DECISION. I ASKED HIM ON A FRANK AND FRIENDLY BASIS TO CONSIDER THIS MOST CAREFULLY. JI ASKED RATHER MILDLY WHETHER WE THOUGHT THAT SUCH A DECISION WOULD REALLY HAVE THIS EFFECT. IF A GOOD AGREEMENT HAD BEEN REACHED AND CHINA THEN STATIONED TROOPS IN HONG KONG WE DID NOT BELIEVE IT WOULD HAVE SUCH A SERIOUS EFFECT. I SAID THAT IT WOULD SEEM TO MANY TO NEGATE THE EFFECTS OF SUCH AN AGREEMENT.

2. JI SAID THAT IT WOULD NOT BE CHINA'S INTENTION TO GIVE PUBLICITY TO HER SENDING TROOPS. THEY WOULD NOT ENTER HONG KONG WITH SLOGANS OF LIBERATION ON THEIR LIPS. BRITISH TROOPS WOULD PRESUMABLY BE WITHDRAWN BY THEN, AND THAT IN ITSELF WOULD ATTRACT PUBLICITY. IT WAS JUST A MATTER OF THE FORM IN WHICH IT WAS DONE. PEOPLE WOULD NOT GAIN THE IMPRESSION THAT THE PLA HAD COME TO CHASE THE BRITISH OUT. IT WAS NOT A QUESTION OF PRINCIPLE, JUST THE METHOD.

3. I SAID THAT IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE TO SEND TROOPS WITHOUT PUBLICITY. I CONFIRMED THAT BRITISH TROOPS WOULD NOT REMAIN AFTER 1997. I SAID THAT I WAS GLAD TO HEAR THAT THIS WAS NOT A QUESTION OF PRINCIPLE: IT SHOULD ON THAT ACCOUNT BE EASIER TO SETTLE. OUR VERY STRONG VIEW, SPEAKING FRANKLY, WAS THAT THE STATIONING OF CHINESE TROOPS WOULD HAVE A BAD EFFECT, AND WOULD NOT BE WORTH IT. I RECALLED THAT THE VICE MINISTER

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AND WOULD NOT BE WORTH IT. I RECALLED THAT THE VICE MINISTER  
HAD SAID THAT HONG KONG WOULD HAVE ITS OWN RESPONSIBILITY FOR  
THE MAINTENANCE OF PUBLIC ORDER. JI OBJECTED THAT THE PLA  
WOULD NOT INTERFERE WITH INTERNAL AFFAIRS: THEY WOULD  
ONLY BE THERE FOR NATIONAL DEFENCE PURPOSES. THE PLA WOULD  
BE MUCH LESS IN NUMBER THAN THE 3000 OR SO BRITISH TROOPS NOW  
IN HONG KONG. HOWEVER HE HAD TAKEN NOTE OF OUR IDEA AND  
WOULD THINK ABOUT IT. HE WISHED TO ASSURE US THAT THERE  
WOULD BE NO IMPRESSION THAT THE PLA WAS LIBERATING HONG KONG:  
IF TROOPS WERE SENT THE REASONS WOULD BE MADE CLEAR TO PEOPLE.

4. I REPEATED THAT THE SENDING OF TROOPS WOULD FATALLY IMPAIR  
THE CREDIBILITY OF A SETTLEMENT. JI SAID THAT IT WOULD BE  
A QUESTION OF NATIONAL DEFENCE, WHICH WOULD REMAIN THE  
RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT. THE SAR WOULD NOT  
BE ASKED TO BEAR ANY EXPENSE. I SAID THIS WAS NOT THE  
PROBLEM. IT WAS THE QUESTION OF THE IMPACT OF SUCH A DECISION  
ON PEOPLE. I HOPED THE CHINESE WOULD THINK VERY CAREFULLY  
ABOUT IT. JI SAID THAT THEY WOULD CONSIDER CAREFULLY WHAT WE  
HAD SAID.

CRADOCK

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