



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

16 March 1984

Dear John,

Future of Hong Kong: Working Paper on Nationality, Citizenship, Right of Abode, Freedom of Travel, Emigration and Immigration

Sir Geoffrey Howe's minute of 9 March sought the Prime Minister's authority to put to the Chinese the draft working paper on these subjects. Sir Geoffrey suggested the title "British: Hong Kong (China) citizen" for the new category of British nationality proposed after 1997 for those who will until then be British Dependent Territories Citizens by virtue of their connection with Hong Kong. Your letter of 12 March conveyed the Prime Minister's agreement to the working paper being put to the Chinese. This is being done in the current round of talks: minor amendments were made to take into account concerns voiced by the Executive Council.

The Governor of Hong Kong has now consulted the Executive Council on the proposed title. Members of the Council considered that the title "British: Hong Kong (China) citizen" did not distinguish clearly enough between the concept of nationality and citizenship. Moreover, they expressed dislike of the term Hong Kong (China). The Council put forward three alternative titles for the new category of British nationality. Their preferred option was "British National: Hong Kong Citizen" and their other suggestions were "British national: Commonwealth citizen" and "British national: Hong Kong (China) citizen".

We consider that not to include the name "China" in the title would be so offensive to the Chinese as to jeopardise our proposals on the whole subject of nationality, including the concept of a separate category of Chinese nationality for the people of Hong Kong. It would be most unwise to press this point to the point where much wider objectives were at risk. We have in other working papers, and more generally in the talks, accepted the use of the name "Hong Kong (China)" for the proposed new Special Autonomous Region after 1997. Any omission of the name "China" at this stage and this context would be immediately noticed by the Chinese who would be deeply suspicious of our motives.

/Nor do





Nor do we believe that the Chinese would accept the title "British national: Commonwealth citizen". This would also cause considerable problems for ourselves, in particular because it is a general term that carries no suggestion of a right of abode in any specific place. The only one of the Executive Council's three proposals that seems to us acceptable to all sides is "British national: Hong Kong (China) citizen".

I understand that the views of the Home Secretary have been sought on all three titles, and that he too has expressed a strong preference for "British national: Hong Kong (China) citizen".

We therefore propose that we should now agree that the title "British national: Hong Kong (China) citizen" should be proposed to the Chinese as a new category of Chinese nationality. I would be grateful to know, if possible by 19 March, if the Prime Minister is content with this. If the Prime Minister agrees, we would need to convey our decision to Hong Kong on 19 March so that the Governor can inform the Executive Council of it at their meeting on 20 March. In the time available, I have not yet been able to show these papers to Sir Geoffrey Howe, but I shall be consulting him in parallel, and will let you have any comments he has.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries of other members of OD(K) and to Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

*Yours,*  
 (P F Ricketts)  
 Private Secretary

*Peter Ricketts*

A J Coles Esq  
 10 Downing Street



10 DOWNING STREET

Prime Minister

Do you agree to  
the proposed change  
of title?

Duty Clerk

17.3.84

Yes - "British national;  
Hong Kong (China)  
citizen"

mb





52

## 10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

18 March 1984

*Dear Peter,*

FUTURE OF HONG KONG: WORKING PAPER ON NATIONALITY, CITIZENSHIP,  
RIGHT OF ABODE, FREEDOM OF TRAVEL, EMIGRATION AND IMMIGRATION

Thank you for your letter of 16 March.

The Prime Minister agrees with the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Home Secretary that we should propose to the Chinese the title "British National: Hong Kong (China) Citizen" as a new category of Chinese nationality.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Private Secretaries of the other members of OD(K) and to Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

*For ever**for love.*

Peter Ricketts, Esq.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

CST.

S E C R E T



54

7/6

cc OD(V)  
CO

JL

10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

19 March 1984

THE FUTURE OF HONG KONG: WORKING PAPER ON NATIONALITY

We had a word on the telephone earlier today about your letter of 16 March to John Coles on the Nationality Working Paper, and John's reply dated 18 March.

You explained that the new category of nationality proposed in the penultimate paragraph of your letter was, of course, a category of British nationality, not Chinese nationality, as incorrectly stated both in your letter and in our reply. Having looked at the papers, I confirm that the correspondence should be read as referring to a new category of British nationality.

I am sending copies of this letter to the recipients of the earlier correspondence.

(DAVID BARCLAY)

Peter Ricketts, Esq.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

S E C R E T