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DD 200100Z HONG KONG

GRS 450

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DESKBY 200100Z

FM FCO 191905Z MAR 84

TO IMMEDIATE HONG KONG

TELEGRAM NUMBER 499 OF 19 MARCH

INFO IMMEDIATE PEKING

YOUR TELNO 730: FUTURE OF HONG KONG:

WORKING PAPER ON NATIONALITY

1. THE HOME SECRETARY AND THE PRIME MINISTER HAVE NOW BEEN CONSULTED ON THE TITLE FOR THE PROPOSED NEW CATEGORY OF BRITISH NATIONALITY. AFTER CAREFUL CONSIDERATION MINISTERS HAVE CONCLUDED THAT THE ONLY ACCEPTABLE TITLE OF THE THREE SUGGESTED BY EXCO WOULD BE QUOTE BRITISH NATIONAL: HONG KONG (CHINA) CITIZEN UNQUOTE.
2. THERE ARE TWO MAIN REASONS FOR RULING OUT QUOTE BRITISH NATIONAL: HONG KONG CITIZEN, UNQUOTE. AS WE HAVE SO FAR CONSISTENTLY USED THE TERM QUOTE HONG KONG (CHINA) UNQUOTE TO DESCRIBE THE SAR, THE CHINESE WOULD CERTAINLY NOTICE THE OMISSION OF THE WORD CHINA AND BE DEEPLY SUSPICIOUS OF OUR MOTIVES. THE HOME SECRETARY CONSIDERS OPEN QUOTES BRITISH NATIONAL: HONG KONG (CHINA) CITIZEN CLOSE QUOTES TO BE THE ONLY ACCEPTABLE FORMULA. HE ATTACHES GREAT IMPORTANCE TO HAVING A TITLE THAT MAKES IT CLEAR THAT HOLDERS ARE ALSO CITIZENS OF, AND HAVE THE RIGHT OF ABODE IN, THE SAR. IF THE WORD QUOTE CHINA UNQUOTE WAS OMITTED THOSE UNFAMILIAR WITH THE 1997 NEGOTIATIONS MIGHT SUPPOSE THAT THE CITIZENSHIP AROSE FROM THE CREATION OF SOME KIND OF INDEPENDENT HONG KONG WITHIN THE COMMONWEALTH. THIS COULD CAUSE PROBLEMS WITH FOREIGN IMMIGRATION OFFICERS WHO MIGHT DOUBT THE RETURNABILITY OF SUCH PEOPLE TO THE SAR.
3. OUR OBJECTIONS TO QUOTE BRITISH NATIONAL: COMMONWEALTH CITIZEN UNQUOTE ARE OF THE SAME TYPE, BUT EVEN STRONGER. WE HAVE NO DOUBT THAT THIS WOULD DEEPLY OFFEND THE CHINESE. IT

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WOULD ALSO BE UNACCEPTABLE TO THE HOME SECRETARY AS IT IS A GENERAL TERM AND CARRIES NO SUGGESTION OF A RIGHT OF ABODE IN ANY SPECIFIC PLACE.

4. WE DO NOT THINK THAT THERE WOULD BE PROBLEMS ARISING FROM THE CHINESE TRANSLATION OF QUOTE BRITISH NATIONAL: HONG KONG (CHINA) CITIZEN UNQUOTE. ZHONGGUO XIANGGANG IS NOT IMPRECISE ITS USE IS EITHER ADJECTIVAL OR FOLLOWS THE STANDARD CHINESE PRACTICE, IN REFERRING TO PLACE NAMES, OF PLACING THE LARGER AREA BEFORE THE SMALLER. MOREOVER THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF THIS TERM USED BY THE CHINESE THEMSELVES IN THE TALKS IS HONG KONG, CHINA. WE HAVE OURSELVES ADDED THE PARENTHESES FOR CONVENIENCE.

5. GRATEFUL IF YOU WOULD CONVEY THESE VIEWS TO EXCO, MAKING THE POINT THAT THE PROPOSED FORMULA MEETS THEIR CONCERN THAT A SPECIFIC DISTINCTION SHOULD BE DRAWN BETWEEN NATIONALITY AND CITIZENSHIP. GIVEN THAT THESE PASSPORTS WILL BE BRITISH PASSPORTS, WE DO NOT THINK THAT IMMIGRATION OFFICERS WILL IDENTIFY THEIR HOLDERS WITH CHINA RATHER THAN BRITAIN. MINISTERS DO NOT, HOWEVER, FEEL ABLE TO ACCEPT THEIR PROPOSAL TO DROP THE WORD QUOTE CHINA UNQUOTE FOR THE REASONS GIVEN IN PARAGRAPH 2 ABOVE.

HOWE

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D/ED/PUSD
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