

SECRET

GR 400

SECRET  
FM HONG KONG 200825Z MAR 84  
TO IMMEDIATE FCO  
TELEGRAM NUMBER 740 OF 20 MARCH  
INFO IMMEDIATE PEKING

*MW Gales*  
*2013*  
*Mar 21/3*

YOUR TELNO 499: FUTURE OF HONG KONG: WORKING PAPER ON NATIONALITY.

1 CONVEYED MINISTER' VIEWS TO EXCO THIS MORNING.

2. MEMBERS WERE NOT, REPEAT NOT, CONVINCED BY THE ARGUMENTS SET OUT IN YOUR TEL UNDER REF. THEY REMAINED OF THE VIEW, REPORTED IN MY TELNOS 676 AND 687, THAT THE CHINESE WERE NOT IN PRACTICE AS SENSITIVE AS YOUR TEL UNDER REF SUGGESTED. THE CHINESE WOULD DECIDE ON THE MERITS OF THE CASE WHETHER OR NOT THERE SHOULD BE A SEPARATE CITIZENSHIP FOR HONG KONG; AND THEY WOULD NOT FIND THE TITLE ''BRITISH NATIONAL: HONG KONG CITIZEN'' NECESSARILY AS OFFENSIVE AS YOUR TEL UNDER REF SUGGESTED. NOR DID MEMBERS ACCEPT THAT THE TITLE ''BRITISH NATIONAL: HONG KONG (CHINA) CITIZEN'' WOULD NOT CAUSE PROBLEMS WITH IMMIGRATIONS OFFICERS IN THIRD COUNTRIES. THEY POINTED OUT, FOR INSTANCE, THAT DIFFICULTIES WOULD BE BOUND TO ARISE IN THE UNITED STATES WHERE TRAVELLERS ARE REQUIRED TO STATE THEIR CITIZENSHIP: THE MOMENT THEY SAW THE WORD ''CHINA'' IN A PASSPORT, U.S. IMMIGRATION OFFICIALS WOULD IMMEDIATELY IDENTIFY THE BEARER WITH CHINA, PARTICULARLY IF HE WERE OF CHINESE RACE. GIVEN THE OVERWHELMING IMPORTANCE OF THE U.S. AS A MARKET FOR HONG KONG, AND THE FREQUENCY WITH WHICH HONG KONG BUSINESSMEN VISIT THE COUNTRY, SUCH DIFFICULTIES WOULD HAVE SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES FOR HONG KONG'S PROSPERITY.

3. IN CONCLUSION, MEMBERS REITERATED THEIR STRONG VIEW THAT IT SHOULD NOT BE ASSUMED THAT CHINA WOULD OBJECT TO THE TITLE ''BRITISH NATIONAL: HONG KONG CITIZEN'' EVEN BEFORE IT HAD BEEN TESTED ON THEM; AND, IF THE CHINESE DID OBJECT TO IT, THERE WOULD BE NOTHING INCONGRUOUS IN HAVING A FALLBACK.

SECRET

/COMMENT.



# SECRET

## COMMENT

4. EXCO'S VIEWS WERE EXPRESSED IN STRONG AND UNEQUIVOCAL TERMS AND THERE SHOULD BE NO DOUBT ABOUT THE STRENGTH OF THEIR FEELINGS ON THIS ISSUE. IN MY VIEW, HMG HAS LITTLE TO LOSE BY FOLLOWING EXCO'S ADVICE. IT WAS EVIDENT FROM THIS MORNING'S DISCUSSION THAT THEY ARE TO SOME EXTENT TAKING THIS QUESTION AS A TEST OF HOW FAR HMG IS PREPARED TO PRESS THE CHINESE ON ISSUES WHICH THEY SEE AS OF GREAT IMPORTANCE TO THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG. I THEREFORE STRONGLY URGE THAT THE MOST SERIOUS RECONSIDERATION SHOULD BE GIVEN TO EXCO'S ADVICE.

YOUDE

(REPEATED AS REQUESTED)

## FUTURE OF HONG KONG

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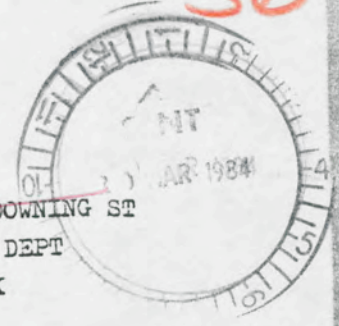
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*MS*

Prime Minute.

GR 700

SECRET

DESKBY 201200Z

FM HONG KONG 201100Z MAR 84  
TO IMMEDIATE FCO  
TELEGRAM NUMBER 747 OF 20 MARCH  
INFO IMMEDIATE PEKING

*You have agreed that  
EXCO should visit  
London again - but I  
think you should read  
the telegram.*

FUTURE OF HONG KONG

*MS*

*A.S.C 24/3*

1. I REPORTED TO THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL THIS MORNING ON THE LAST ROUND OF TALKS AND ON WHAT ZHOU NAN HAD SAID TO THE AMBASSADOR AT THE DINNER (PEKING TELNO 514). WE ALSO DISCUSSED THE DRAFT AGREEMENT (YOUR TELNOS 490 AND 498). MEMBERS ASKED SPONTANEOUSLY WHAT DECISION YOU HAD REACHED ON COMING THROUGH HONG KONG ON YOUR WAY TO PEKING. I TOLD THEM OF YOUR DECISION TO FLY DIRECT TO PEKING BUT SAID THAT I WOULD BE TALKING TO THEM TOMORROW ON POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVE WAYS OF MAKING THEIR VIEWS KNOWN TO YOU BEFORE YOU LEFT (I HAD PROPOSED TO DO THIS IN THE LIGHT OF COMMENTS FROM THE AMBASSADOR IN PEKING (YOUR TELNO 494 PARA 4)). A NUMBER OF MEMBERS EXPRESSED THE STRONG HOPE, AT THAT STAGE THAT, GIVEN THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ISSUES, YOU WOULD STILL FIND IT POSSIBLE TO COME HERE FIRST.

2. THIS AFTERNOON, HOWEVER, SIR S.Y. CHUNG ASKED TO SEE ME URGENTLY. HE TOLD ME THAT THE UNOFFICIAL MEMBERS HAD MET THEMSELVES AND NOW WISHED TO EXPRESS THEIR VERY SERIOUS CONCERN AT THE TURN WHICH EVENTS WERE TAKING. IN THE LIGHT OF ZHOU NAN'S STATEMENTS AND A NUMBER OF OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT THE S OF S'S VISIT WOULD BE CRUCIAL AND ANY COMMITMENTS MADE DURING THAT VISIT WOULD DETERMINE THE WHOLE FUTURE OF HONG KONG.

3. IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL UNOFFICIALS WERE UNANIMOUS IN THEIR WISH TO VISIT LONDON AGAIN BEFORE THE S OF S LEAVES FOR PEKING TO MAKE THEIR POSITION KNOWN TO MINISTERS, INCLUDING THE PRIME MINISTER. I TOLD HIM THAT I HAD INTENDED TO PUT TO THEM TOMORROW THE IDEA OF A SMALLER JOINT EXCO/LEGCO DELEGATION. HE SAID THAT THAT WOULD NOT DO.



DELEGATION. HE SAID THAT THAT WOULD NOT DO.

4. I ASKED HIM WHAT COURSE OF ACTION MEMBERS WERE PROPOSING TO URGE ON MINISTERS WHICH WAS DIFFERENT FROM THE STRATEGY ON WHICH WE WERE ALREADY ENGAGED. HE WAS NOT SPECIFIC BUT EXPRESSED THE INCREASING CONCERN OF UNOFFICIAL MEMBERS THAT HMG WOULD BOW IN THE FACE OF INTENSIFIED CHINESE PRESSURE. THEY WOULD BE MEETING AGAIN BEFORE THE LONDON VISIT TO SET OUT THEIR POSITION MORE PRECISELY.

5. MY READING OF THE COMMENTS WHICH UNOFFICIAL MEMBERS HAVE MADE IN A VARIETY OF CONTEXTS OVER THE LAST FEW DAYS LEADS ME TO BELIEVE THAT THERE ARE A NUMBER OF STRANDS WHICH HAVE LED TO THIS DEVELOPMENT. ONE IS ZHOU NAN'S COMMENT ON THE FORM OF AN AGREEMENT AND CHINA'S UNWILLINGNESS TO ACCEPT THAT THE GOVERNMENTAL STRUCTURE IN HONG KONG, AS AT 1 JULY 1997, SHOULD BE PRESERVED IN THE AGREEMENT. ANOTHER IS THE CONCERN OF SOME MEMBERS, WHO BELIEVE THAT TO TIE THE CHINESE DOWN ON DETAIL IS ESSENTIAL, THAT HMG MAY WELL DECIDE NOT EVEN TO TRY TO DO THIS (PARA 3 OF YOUR TELNO 498). THE THIRD, REFLECTED IN THE DISCUSSION ON THE CITIZENSHIP TITLE (MY TELNO 740) THAT HMG ARE OVER-SENSITIVE TO THE RISKS OF OFFENDING THE CHINESE: IN THE VIEWS OF EXCO MEMBERS THIS SIMPLY PREJUDICES THE HONG KONG INTEREST WITHOUT RUNNING ANY REAL RISK OF PREJUDICE TO THE FINAL OUTCOME. ANOTHER IS THE DECISION NOT TO ACCEDE TO THEIR REQUEST THAT THE S OF STATE SHOULD PASS THROUGH HONG KONG ON HIS WAY TO PEKING, A REQUEST THEY REGARDED AS ENTIRELY REASONABLE GIVEN THE LIFE AND DEATH NATURE OF THE ISSUES INVOLVED FOR PEOPLE HERE.

6. IT IS EVIDENT THEREFORE THAT THE PROPOSAL FOR A SMALL JOINT EXCO/LEGCO DELEGATION WILL NOT RUN AND, UNJUSTIFIABLE THOUGH IT MAY BE, I THINK THAT A REFUSAL OF THE REQUEST OF THE EXCO UNOFFICIALS TO COME TO LONDON WOULD BE TAKEN AS INDICATIVE OF AN INTENTION NO LONGER TO GIVE FULL WEIGHT TO THEIR CONCERNS.

7. I HOPE THEREFORE THAT YOU CAN AUTHORISE ME TO TELL THEM AT TOMORROW'S MEETING THAT THE INVITATION WHICH IT WAS PROPOSED TO EXTEND FOR THE SMALLER DELEGATION FOR APRIL 4 TO 6 CAN BE TRANSLATED INTO AN INVITATION FOR ALL EXCO UNOFFICIALS TO VISIT LONDON AGAIN ON THESE DATES FOR A FURTHER DISCUSSION WITH MINISTERS BEFORE THE VISIT TO PEKING. I SEE NO REASON WHY THE CHINESE SHOULD CONSIDER ANOTHER VISIT BY EXCO UNOFFICIALS AS MORE INDICATIVE OF 'THE THREE LEGGED STOOL' THAN THE COMBINED EXCO/LEGCO DELEGATION. INDEED, THEY WOULD PROBABLY BE MORE INCLINED TO SWALLOW IT AS SIMPLY FOLLOWING A WELL ESTABLISHED PATTERN.

YOUDE

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