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TO IMMEDIATE FCO
TELEGRAM NUMBER 1090 OF 20 APRIL
AND TO IMMEDIATE COI
INFO IMMEDIATE PEKING, WASHINGTON

FOLLOWING IS TRANSCRIPT OF QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION AT SECRETARY
OF STATE'S PRESS CONFERENCE.

BEGINS.

TRANSCRIPT OF THE QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS
AT THE PRESS CONFERENCE HELD BY THE FOREIGN SECRETARY,
SIR GEOFFREY HOWE, IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
HONG KONG, APRIL 20, 1984

- Q1. RADIO TELEVISION HONG KONG - STEVE JOHNSON
CAN THE FOREIGN SECRETARY GIVE ANY KIND OF GUARANTEE
THAT WHATEVER IS EVENTUALLY WORKED OUT, AT PEKING,
WILL ACTUALLY STICK, THAT IT WILL NOT BE
RE-NEGOTIATED, AMENDED OR OVERTURNED, IF THERE IS A
CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT, EITHER IN PEKING OR IN
WESTMINSTER?
- A. THE OBJECT OF THE NEGOTIATIONS AS I HAVE SAID, IS TO
SECURE AGREEMENT OF A FRAMEWORK OF ARRANGEMENTS THAT
WILL PROVIDE FOR WHAT WE WANT, THE MAINTENANCE OF
HONG KONG AS FLOURISHING AND DYNAMIC SOCIETY, AND
FOR THOSE ARRANGEMENTS TO BE INCORPORATED IN AN
AGREEMENT THAT IS FORMALLY RECORDED, AN INTERNATIONAL
AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE TWO GOVERNMENTS OF CHINA AND
THE UNITED KINGDOM, WHICH WOULD THEREAFTER BE BINDING
MUTUALLY UPON BOTH SIDES.
- Q2. FAR EAST ECONOMIC REVIEW - PHILIP BOWRING
DURING YOUR DISCUSSINGS IN PEKING, DID CHINA GIVE
ANY INDICATION AT ALL THAT IT IS WILLING TO AGREE
TO FORMAL DETAILED RECORDING OF THE ITEMS YOU
MENTIONED IN PARAGRAPH 8, OF YOUR TEXT HERE, OR TO
AGREE TO ANY COMMITMENT TO LINK THESE, OR THE
ACHIEVEMENT OF THESE, TO THE CONTINUATION OF THESE
TO HONG KONG'S CONTINUED PARTICIPATION IN INTERNATIONAL
ECONOMIC INSTITUTIONS?

/A. 1 AM

A. I AM NOT READY TO DISCLOSE THE CONTENT OF OUR DISCUSSIONS IN THE COURSE OF NEGOTIATIONS IN PEKING, BUT I HAVE, IN MY STATEMENT, SET OUT THE OBJECTIVES WHICH WE BELIEVE COULD, AND WE WANT TO, ACHIEVE UNDER THE ARRANGEMENTS THAT WE HAVE IN MIND, AND THOSE DO, OF COURSE, INCLUDE CONTINUED PARTICIPATION OF HONG KONG IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS OF THE KIND YOU HAVE IN MIND.

Q3. DIANA LIN, ATV

IN RECENT YEARS THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT HAS TAKEN IN MANY THOUSANDS OF VIETNAMESE REFUGEES. BRITAIN AND OTHER COUNTRIES FELT A MORAL OBLIGATION TO PROVIDE PERMANENT HOMES FOR THESE PEOPLE WHO WERE FLEEING FROM COMMUNISM. WILL YOUR GOVERNMENT FEEL A SIMILAR OBLIGATION TO PROVIDE RE-SETTLEMENT FOR PEOPLE FROM HONG KONG, IF THEY DECIDE THAT THEY CANNOT STAY ON HERE UNDER A COMMUNIST GOVERNMENT?

A. OUR OBJECTIVES ARE TO SECURE AGREEMENT FOR ALL THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG, WHICH TAKES ACCOUNT OF ALL THE OBJECTIVES THAT WE HAVE IN MIND- CONTINUED STABILITY AND PROSPERITY FOR THE WHOLE OF HONG KONG, AT LEAST FOR THE PERIOD THAT I HAVE IN MIND, AND, IN SEEKING THOSE OBJECTIVES, OUR PURPOSE IS TO GET AGREEMENT ON THE WAY OF ACHIEVING THAT. I THINK THAT IS THE RIGHT THING TO HAVE IN MIND THROUGHOUT THESE NEGOTIATIONS BECAUSE IF WE ACHIEVE THAT THEN WE ACHIEVE THE CONCLUSIONS THAT WE WANT, A CONTINUATION OF HONG KONG'S WAY OF LIFE, A CONTINUATION OF THE LEGAL, ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES THAT HELP MAKE UP THAT WAY OF LIFE, IN THAT WAY WE BELIEVE WE SHOULD DO THE BEST WE POSSIBLY CAN TO ACHIEVE THE RESULTS THAT EVERYONE WOULD LIKE IN THOSE CIRCUMSTANCES.

Q4. DIANA LEE - INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE, WASHINGTON POST AND ECONOMIST
SHOULD THE HONG-KONG PEOPLE EXPRESS THE VIEW THAT THE AGREEMENT WAS PARTIALLY OR TOTALLY UNACCEPTABLE, WHAT WILL THE FOREIGN OFFICE DO THEN?

A. ONE OF THE REASONS WHY WE ARE SO ANXIOUS TO CONTINUE AND EXTEND THE PROCESS OF CONSULTATION WHICH HAS ALREADY BEEN TAKING PLACE THROUGH THE METHODS I HAVE DESCRIBED, ONE OF THE REASONS WHY WE WANT TO ENSURE THAT THAT IS FULL AND EFFECTIVE, IS TO ENSURE THAT, AS WE APPROACH THE FINAL STAGES OF THESE NEGOTIATIONS, WE DO SO HAVING FULLY IN MIND THE VIEWS OF PEOPLE IN HONG KONG, THE LIKELY VIEWS OF PARLIAMENT,

SO THAT WE SHALL REACH AN AGREEMENT, IF WE ARE ABLE TO DO SO, THAT WE CAN CONFIDENTLY COMMEND TO THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG, AND TO PARLIAMENT. THAT MUST BE OUR OBJECTIVE. WE WANT TO REACH A CONCLUSION THAT WE CAN COMMEND AND THAT THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG, AND PARLIAMENT, WILL REGARD AS ACCEPTABLE.

Q5. TA KUNG PAO, LEE WAI HING

DURING YOUR VISIT IN BEIJING YOU HAD A CHANCE TO TALK WITH CHINESE LEADERS INCLUDING THE CHAIRMAN DENG, PREMIER ZHAO, WOULD YOU GIVE YOUR IMPRESSIONS OF THOSE CHINESE LEADERS YOU HAVE MET, AND IN WHAT WAY YOU FEEL THE CHINESE LEADERS ARE SINCERE TO SOLVE THE 1997 ISSUE, WITH THE AIM OF MAINTAIN THE STABILITY AND PROSPERITY FOR HONG KONG?

A. AGAIN, IT WOULD NOT BE RIGHT FOR ME TO GIVE IMPRESSIONS OF PERSONALITIES, ANY MORE THAN IT WOULD BE RIGHT FOR ME TO GIVE IMPRESSIONS OR DESCRIPTIONS OF THE SUBSTANCE OF THE NEGOTIATIONS, BUT ALL MY MEETINGS IN PEKING WERE VERY BUSINESS-LIKE, CONDUCTED IN A FRIENDLY ATMOSPHERE DIRECTED TO TRYING TO SECURE AGREEMENT OF THE KIND WE BOTH WANT AND THE THING THAT IMPRESSED ME MOST WAS THE JOINT DETERMINATION TO TRY TO REACH THE RIGHT ANSWER TO THIS VERY IMPORTANT QUESTION.

Q6. RADIO HONG KONG, NICK BEACROFT

IT IS A TWO SIDED QUESTION. ONE IS: HOW EXACTLY ARE YOU GOING TO TEST THE OPINION OF HONG KONG PEOPLE? AND, IF THE HONG KONG PEOPLE REJECT YOUR AGREEMENT, WHAT WILL YOU DO THEN?

A. WELL, WE ARE STILL CONSIDERING WHAT ARE THE BEST WAYS IN THE FINAL STAGE AFTER THE AGREEMENT IS PRESENTED TO THE REST OF THE WORLD, INCLUDING OF COURSE HONG KONG, WHAT WILL BE THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY OF TAKING THE OPINION OF THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG, AT THAT STAGE. I EMPHASISE, OF COURSE, AS I HAVE SAID ALREADY, THE IMPORTANCE IN THIS CONTEXT OF THE CONTINUING CONSULTATIONS THAT ARE TAKING PLACE, WELL AHEAD OF THE AGREEMENT, BECAUSE THE OBJECTIVE THAT WE MUST HAVE IN MIND IS TO KNOW THE ASPIRATIONS AND THE ANXIETIES AND THE DESIRES OF THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG NOL. THAT IS ONE OF THE REASONS I AM HERE NOW, THAT IS ONE OF THE REASONS WHY MY MEETING WITH EXCO YESTERDAY, WHICH WAS NOT THE FIRST BUT THE FIFTH, IN ORDER THAT WE CAN TAKE FULL ACCOUNT OF WHAT THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG WANT IN THE NEGOTIATIONS AND BEFORE WE COME TO THE AGREEMENT. THAT IS THE BASIS ON WHICH WE WILL THEN PRESENT THE AGREEMENT, BELIEVING BY THEN WE HAVE GOT OUT OF THE NEGOTIATIONS THAT WHICH THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG HAVE INDICATED THAT THEY WANT.

Q7. LUK HON TAK, WEN WEI PO,
BRITAIN ALWAYS STRESSED THERE IS NO TIME TABLE FOR
THE TALKS, BUT YOU AGREE THAT IT IS HELPFUL FOR KEEPING
HONG KONG'S PEOPLE'S CONFIDENCE IF AN AGREEMENT CAN
BE MADE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AND DO YOU THINK THERE IS
A POSSIBILITY TO HAVE A PRELIMINARY AGREEMENT BEFORE
SEPTEMBER OF THIS YEAR?

A. AS I HAVE SAID, WE ARE WORKING TO A PROGRAMME WHICH
TAKES ACCOUNT BOTH OF CHINESE WISHES AND OF ALL OF OUR
OWN REQUIREMENTS, AND I BELIEVE THAT ONE OF THOSE
REQUIREMENTS, IS ONE OF THE THINGS YOU HAVE MENTIONED,
NAMELY THE NEED TO REACH AN AGREEMENT AS SOON AS WE
POSSIBLY CAN. THAT DOESN'T MEAN THAT WE HAVE TO RUSH
THE NEGOTIATIONS, THAT WOULD BE WRONG. IT MEANS WE
HAVE TO MAKE SURE WE ARE GETTING THE RIGHT AGREEMENT,
IT HAS GOT TO HAVE SUFFICIENT CONTENT, AND THE RIGHT
CONTENT AND THAT ON THAT BASIS, I AM QUITE CERTAIN THAT
IN ORDER TO REMOVE UNCERTAINTY TO ESTABLISH CONFIDENCE
ON THE BEST BASIS, WE SHOULD STRIVE TO REACH AN
AGREEMENT AS SOON AS WE SENSIBLY CAN.

Q8. JILL HARTLEY - SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST
A POINT OF CLARIFICATION, AT THE BOTTOM OF PAGE
FOUR OF YOUR STATEMENT YOU SAY THE CHINESE
GOVERNMENT HAVE MADE IT CLEAR THEY INTEND
ARRANGEMENTS TO LAST FOR AT LEAST 50 YEARS FROM
1997, THEN YOU SAY WE ARE WORKING FOR AN AGREEMENT
WHICH WILL ENSHRINE THAT PRINCIPLE. DOES THAT MEAN
THAT YOU ARE LOOKING FOR A 50 YEAR AGREEMENT?

A. INDEED THE PRINCIPLE OF CONTINUITY IS THE MOST
IMPORTANT THING THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG WANT.
CONTINUITY IS THE NECESSARY FOUNDATION OF
CONFIDENCE AND I REFER THERE TO THE CHINESE PUBLIC
INDICATION OF THE PROSPECT OF 50 YEARS CONTINUATION
OF PRESENT SYSTEMS AND SO ON, FROM 1997. CLEARLY,
THAT IS ONE OF THE THINGS THAT WE SHOULD WANT TO SEE EMBODIED
IN ANY INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENT.

Q9. NICK GOWING - ITN LONDON
IS THERE ANY DOUBT IN YOUR MIND, FOREIGN SECRETARY,
THAT WHAT YOU NEGOTIATE IN THE COMING MONTHS WILL
SIMPLY BE IRRELEVANT TO WHATEVER THE POLITICAL
SITUATION MIGHT BE, BOTH IN BRITAIN AND CHINA 13
YEARS FROM NOW.

A. WHAT WE NEGOTIATE DURING THE COMING MONTHS, WHAT WE HAVE NEGOTIATED IN THE MONTHS PASSED, IS ABOUT THE POINTS THAT NEED TO BE INCLUDED IN THE ARRANGEMENTS OF WHICH I SPOKE, WHICH NEEDS TO BE SPELT OUT IN THE AGREEMENT, OF WHICH I SPOKE. THAT IS WHY IT IS SO IMPORTANT TO SECURE AN AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE TWO NATIONS, ENTERED INTO AS AN INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENT THAT IS INTENDED TO BE BINDING. THAT IS THE BEST ASSURANCE OF THE CONTINUITY AND RELIABILITY OF THE MATTERS WE ARE DISCUSSING AND SEEKING TO AGREE.

Q10. JAMES STERNGOLD, AP DOW-JONES
IN THE FORM OF THE AGREEMENT WHICH YOU HAVE DESCRIBED HERE, WHICH WOULD BE AN AUTONOMOUSLY ADMINISTERED HONG KONG, UNDER CHINESE SOVEREIGNTY, CAN YOU FORESEE - MY QUESTION REFERS TO THE MAINTENANCE OF EXISTING LINKS INTERNATIONALLY WITH HONG KONG - DO YOU THINK THAT INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS WOULD RECOGNISE A SOMEWHAT AUTONOMOUS HONG KONG, INDEPENDENT OF CHINA, IN TERMS OF MONETARY FACTORS, SUCH AS TEXTILE QUOTAS AND THAT SORT OF THING?

A. THAT IS ONE OF THE VERY IMPORTANT FEATURES THAT WE DO NEED TO ACHIEVE. I BELIEVE THAT UNDER THE ARRANGEMENTS WE HAVE IN MIND IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE, AND CERTAINLY DESIRABLE, TO SECURE AGREEMENT ON THE CONTINUATION OF HONG KONG'S CONTINUED PARTICIPATION IN THE WIDE NETWORK OF INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS IN WHICH IT ALREADY PLAYS A PART, AND ITS MEMBERSHIP OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS OF THE KIND YOU HAVE IN MIND IS IMPORTANT IN THE SAME CONTEXT TO ENSURE THAT THE HONG KONG DOLLAR WILL CONTINUE TO CIRCULATE FREELY AND AS AN INDEPENDENT CONVERTIBLE CURRENCY. I BELIEVE THAT ALL THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE PART OF THE ESSENTIAL ECONOMIC FRAMEWORK OF HONG KONG WOULD BE ACHIEVABLE IN THE FRAMEWORK THAT WE HAVE IN MIND.

Q11. REPORTER, NEW EVENING POST
WOULD YOU TELL US WHAT THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT WILL DO IN THE 13 YEARS BEFORE 1997 TO MAINTAIN THE PROSPERITY AND STABILITY OF HONG KONG?

A. IN THE 13 YEARS UP TO 1997, IT WOULD CERTAINLY BE THE INTENTION OF THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT TO MAINTAIN RESPONSIBILITY FOR ADMINISTRATION OF HONG KONG IN EXACTLY THE PRESENT WAY. WE ARE CONCERNED, AS I AM SURE THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG ARE CONCERNED, TO MAINTAIN CONTINUING PROSPERITY AND STABILITY ON EXACTLY THE PRESENT LINES. WHAT WE WANT TO ACHIEVE IS A CHANGE IN 1997 WITH THE LEAST POSSIBLE DISTURBANCE. FROM NOW ON UP TO 1997, THE MAINTENANCE OF ALL THOSE

THINGS WHICH ARE THE FOUNDATION OF HONG KONG'S PRESENT PROSPERITY, AND AFTER 1997, THE LEAST POSSIBLE CHANGE SO PEOPLE CAN HAVE CONFIDENCE THAT THE WAY OF LIFE WHICH THEY KNOW TO BE THE FOUNDATION OF THEIR SUCCESS WILL CONTINUE.

Q12. HARVEY STOCKWIN, TIMES OF INDIA

SIR, REGARDING YOUR STATEMENT THAT: +IT IS RIGHT FOR ME TO TELL YOU NOW THAT IT WOULD NOT BE REALISTIC TO THINK OF AN AGREEMENT THAT PROVIDES FOR CONTINUED BRITISH ADMINISTRATION IN HONG KONG AFTER 1997.+ THE STATEMENT DOES NOT RECORD ON WHAT GROUNDS IT WOULD BE CONSIDERED REALISTIC. WAS IT REALISTIC BECAUSE BRITAIN DID NOT SEEK SUCH AN ARRANGEMENT, OR BECAUSE CHINA REJECTED IT? HOW FAR DID THE BRITISH SIDE PUSH FOR AN ARRANGEMENT UNDER WHICH CHINA WOULD HAVE HAD SOVEREIGNTY RESTORED, MIXED WITH SOME CONTINUING DEGREE OF BRITISH ADMINISTRATION? A SOLUTION WHICH MANY PEOPLE IN HONG KONG FEEL IS THE BEST GUARANTEE OF CONTINUITY OF WHICH YOU SPEAK.

A. WHAT WE ARE DOING IS CONDUCTING NEGOTIATIONS ON A REALISTIC BASIS WITH THE INTENTION OF SECURING THE BEST POSSIBLE OUTCOME ON THE MOST ASSURED BASIS FOR THE FUTURE, IN THE INTERESTS OF THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG. AND IN DOING THAT, OF COURSE, AT EACH STAGE AND IN EACH WAY, WE PRESS ALL THE POINTS WHICH ARE REGARDED AS IMPORTANT, BUT WE ALSO HAVE TO CONSIDER HOW THE AGREEMENT COMES TOGETHER AS A WHOLE. WE HAVE TO CONSIDER, THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG WILL HAVE TO CONSIDER, PARLIAMENT WILL HAVE TO CONSIDER, AT THE END OF THE NEGOTIATIONS HOW ALL THE ELEMENTS OF THE NEGOTIATIONS COME TOGETHER, AND WE BELIEVE THAT IT HAS BEEN RIGHT TO EXPLORE HOW IT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE TO ARRIVE AT ARRANGEMENTS THAT WOULD SECURE FOR HONG KONG AFTER 1997 A HIGH DEGREE OF AUTONOMY UNDER CHINESE SOVEREIGNTY THAT WILL PRESERVE THE WAY OF LIFE IN HONG KONG, TOGETHER WITH THE ESSENTIALS OF THE PRESENT SYSTEM. WHAT WE ARE DOING IS TO EXPLORE ALL THE WAYS IN WHICH THAT IS BEST LIKELY TO BE ASSURED AND IT IS IN THAT CONTEXT WE HAVE COME TO THE CONCLUSION TO WHICH YOU REFER.

Q13. MICHAEL EVANS, DAILY EXPRESS

TWO YEARS AGO THE PRIME MINISTER, IN PEKING, SEEMED UNWILLING TO TOTALLY RELINQUISH ALL BRITISH RIGHT TO SOVEREIGNTY OVER HONG KONG. ARE YOU NOW TODAY SAYING THAT THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT DOES JUST THAT?

- A. AT THE END OF THE DAY, ONLY PARLIAMENT CAN CONCEDE SOVEREIGNTY, AND WHEN PARLIAMENT CONSIDERS THIS MATTER IT WILL HAVE TO SEE THE AGREEMENT AS A WHOLE AND SEE HOW FAR ALL THE ELEMENTS I HAVE BEEN TALKING ABOUT, HOW FAR ALL THE COMPONENTS WE DESIRE CAN BE JUDGED TOGETHER AT THE END OF THE NEGOTIATION, IT IS IN THAT CONTEXT WE SHALL REACH THAT CONCLUSION.

Q14. KAYSER SUNG, TEXTILE ASIA

SIR GEOFFREY, HONG KONG HAS BEEN ENJOYING A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF AUTONOMY IN INTERNATIONAL TRADE THROUGH GATT ORGANISATIONS AND THROUGH MEMBERSHIP OF THE U.K., HOW THIS WILL CONTINUE AFTER 1997 BECAUSE CHINA IS NOT A GATT MEMBER YET?

- A. NO, AND OF COURSE HONG KONG HAS BEEN ENJOYING A SUBSTANTIAL DEGREE OF AUTONOMY IN THAT RESPECT, NOT ALWAYS THROUGH BRITISH PARTICIPATION BUT FROM HONG KONG'S DIRECT PARTICIPATION IN A NUMBER OF SUCH ORGANISATIONS. NOW IT IS CLEARLY RECOGNISED IN THESE NEGOTIATIONS ALL THOSE INTERNATIONAL LINKS, INCLUDING PARTICIPATION IN GATT AND ARRANGEMENTS ASSOCIATED WITH IT, WILL CONTINUE, AND THAT IS ONE OF THE MATTERS WHICH WE SHALL BE WANTING TO SOLVE AND CARRY THROUGH INTO EFFECTIVE CONTINUITY BEYOND 1997. IT IS A POINT WELL UNDERSTOOD. IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT HONG KONG SHOULD BE ABLE TO MAINTAIN ITS PARTICIPATION IN THE WHOLE RANGE OF INTERNATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS, INCLUDING THE ONE YOU HAVE IN MIND.

Q. WILL HONG KONG BECOME A MEMBER OF GATT?

- A. WE CAN'T YET WORK OUT THE PRECISE MECHANICS. THE OBJECTIVE FOR THE PARTICIPATION OF HONG KONG WITH A HIGH DEGREE OF AUTONOMY IN GATT ARRANGEMENTS AND OTHER ARRANGEMENTS OF THAT KIND IS CLEAR. WE BELIEVE IT WILL BE POSSIBLE TO ACHIEVE THAT OBJECTIVE UNDER THE ARRANGEMENTS WE HAVE IN MIND.

Q15. JOHN DICKIE, DAILY MAIL

MANY PEOPLE HAVE EXPRESSED TO US FEARS THAT DESPITE YOUR SINCERITY AND DESPITE THE GOOD INTENTIONS TO ACHIEVE YOUR OBJECTIVES SUCH AS YOU HAVE SET OUT TODAY, IN SPITE ALL OF THAT, THEY MIGHT IN THE END BE FACED WITH A SELL OUT. WHAT CAN YOU SAY TO THEM, TO ASSURE THEM THAT THAT WON'T HAPPEN, AND THAT YOU WILL NOT IN THE END BE OBLIGED TO ACCEPT SOMETHING WHICH IS JUST THE BEST THAT CAN BE NEGOTIATED?

/A. THE FACT

A. THE FACT IS THAT THE CONCEPT OF A SELL OUT, THE IDEA OF A SELL OUT, IS QUITE UNTRUE, IT IS NOT AN OBJECTIVE WE HAVE IN MIND, OR COULD POSSIBLY HAVE IN MIND. OUR COMMITMENT TO HONG KONG IS TO DO OUR UTMOST TO SECURE THROUGH THESE NEGOTIATIONS THE FOUNDATIONS THAT I HAVE DESCRIBED AND THERE IS NO QUESTION OF HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT COMMENDING TO OUR PARIAMENT OR TO HONG KONG, AN AGREEMENT THAT WOULD NOT OFFER PROSPECTS, ASSURED PROSPECTS, OF PRESERVING THAT WAY OF LIFE.

Q16. THERESA MA, FAR EASTERN ECONOMIC REVIEW
WOULD YOU PLEASE TELL WHY THE TERMS OF REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT, AS OPPOSED TO DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT WHICH HAS BEEN CALLED FOR BY VARIOUS GROUPS IN HONG KONG?

A. THE DEVELOPMENT OF INCREASINGLY REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT IN HONG KONG, IS OF COURSE, CURRENTLY DIRECTLY THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT. STEPS HAVE RECENTLY BEEN TAKEN IN THAT DIRECTION. FURTHER PROGRESS IN THAT DIRECTION IS, AS I SAID IN MY STATEMENT, CLEARLY IN MIND, AND PROGRESS OF THAT KIND WHICH MAY TAKE DIFFERENT FORMS IS NOT FOR THE U.K. GOVERNMENT TO DECIDE, IS SOMETHING WHICH THE U.K. GOVERNMENT WOULD CERTAINLY COMMEND BUT IT WILL BE FOR THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT TO DECIDE PRECISELY THE TIME SCALE AND WAY IN WHICH PROGRESS TOWARDS INCREASINGLY REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT WILL BE MADE.

Q17. MARK BAKER, THE MELBOURNE AGE
SIR GEOFFREY, DO YOU ACCEPT CHINA'S STATED DEADLINE OF SEPTEMBER, AND DO YOU REGARD THAT AS BEING A REALISTIC TIME FRAME FOR AN AGREEMENT.

A. WELL, AS I SAID IN THE STATEMENT, WE ARE WORKING TO A PROGRAMME WHICH TAKES ACCOUNT OF CHINESE WISHES ON THE ONE HAND AND ALL OF OUR OWN REQUIREMENTS ON THE OTHER HAND. BEYOND THAT, AS I SAID IN ANSWER TO AN EARLIER QUESTION, WE BELIEVE THAT IT IS CLEARLY IN THE INTERESTS OF HONG KONG FOR US TO REACH A GOOD AGREEMENT AS SOON AS WE POSSIBLY CAN. THERE IS A MANIFEST INTEREST IN CONCLUDING THE NEGOTIATIONS SOONER RATHER THAN LATER, IN ORDER TO LAY A FOUNDATION FOR CONFIDENCE AT THE EARLIEST POSSIBLE STAGE BUT THE PROGRAMME TO WHICH WE ARE WORKING TAKES ACCOUNT OF THE CHINESE WISHES AND OF ALL OUR OWN REQUIREMENTS.

Q18. ROBERT COTTRELL, FINANCIAL TIMES

SIR GEOFFREY, YOU DWELL IN YOUR STATEMENT ON THE IMPORTANCE OF CERTAIN SPECIFIC FREEDOMS FOR HONG KONG. NOW THE TYPES OF FREEDOMS THAT YOU DESCRIBED ARE ALREADY PROMISED TO THE CHINESE PEOPLE, IN THE CHINESE CONSTITUTION. ARE YOU GOING TO ENSURE THAT FREEDOMS PROMISED TO HONG KONG IN THE FUTURE WILL MEAN MORE IN PRACTICE THAN THOSE WHICH HAVE BEEN PROMISED IN CHINA IN THE PAST.

- A. ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT FEATURES, WHICH IS ALSO REFERRED TO IN MY STATEMENT, IS THE NEED TO SECURE CONTINUATION OF THE PRESENT LEGAL SYSTEM, THE PRESENT FAMILIAR PATTERN OF JUSTICE, THE FAMILIAR SYSTEM FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE AND THE PRESENT FRAMEWORK OF LAW OF HONG KONG BASED UPON PRESENT SYSTEMS. AND IT IS ALL THOSE THINGS, THE LAWS THAT ARE ENFORCED, THE WAY IN WHICH THEY ARE ADMINISTERED, AND THE COURTS BY WHICH THEY ARE ADMINISTERED, WHICH OF COURSE IN HONG KONG, PROVIDE THE ASSURANCE OF THOSE FREEDOMS, AND IT IS IN ORDER TO SECURE THE CONTINUATION OF THE FRAMEWORK WHICH WILL UPHOLD THOSE FREEDOMS IN THE WAY THAT IS FAMILIAR TO PEOPLE IN HONG KONG. BUT WE DO WANT TO SECURE ASSURANCE ON THOSE OTHER THINGS AS WELL.

Q19. C.B. LAU, RADIO HONG KONG

SIR, WILL THE PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN HONG KONG WAIT UNTIL A FINAL AGREEMENT BEFORE WE CAN KNOW MORE ABOUT THE DETAILS OF THE NEGOTIATIONS.

- A. WHAT I HAVE BEEN TRYING TO DO, WHAT WE HAVE BEEN TRYING TO DO THROUGHOUT THE NEGOTIATIONS, IS TO CONSULT AS FULLY AS WE CAN CONSISTENT WITH CONFIDENTIALITY SURROUNDING THE NEGOTIATIONS THEMSELVES. I AM QUITE CERTAIN CONFIDENTIALITY ABOUT THE NEGOTIATIONS IS IMPORTANT FOR THE SUCCESS OF THOSE NEGOTIATIONS. IT IS MY EXPERIENCE WITH OTHER INTERNATIONAL NEGOTIATIONS THAT THE ACTUAL NEGOTIATING PROCESS HAS TO BE CONDUCTED IN CONFIDENCE. BUT ALONGSIDE THAT, WE SHALL CONTINUE TO CONSULT, IN THE WAY THAT I HAVE DESCRIBED. THIS PRESS CONFERENCE TODAY IS A FURTHER STEP IN THAT PROCESS IN WHICH I HAVE TOLD QUITE A CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT ABOUT WHAT OUR OBJECTIVES ARE IN THESE NEGOTIATIONS. WE SHALL CONTINUE TO PERFORM IN THIS FASHION. AND OF COURSE, AT THE END OF THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS THEN THE AGREEMENT WILL BE PUBLISHED. IT WILL BE PUBLISHED FOR THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG TO CONSIDER, FOR PARLIAMENT TO CONSIDER, FOR OTHER PEOPLE TO CONSIDER. AS I SAID, TIME WILL BE ALLOWED FOR THAT CONSIDERATION, FOR PARLIAMENT TO TAKE ACCOUNT OF THE VIEWS OF THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG.

Q20. BETTY LIU - TVB

WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF AGREEMENT IS REACHED AND ONE SIDE DOES NOT LIVE UP TO ITS PROMISES.

- A. THAT IS THE QUESTION THAT COULD BE ASKED ABOUT EVERY AGREEMENT. THIS AGREEMENT IS GOING TO HAVE PARTICULAR IMPORTANCE - NAMELY IT IS A FORMULATION AND EMBODIMENT IN AN INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENT BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES THAT HAVE GOT GOOD BILATERAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH EACH OTHER, BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES EACH OF WHICH WILL HAVE AN INTEREST IN UPHOLDING ITS OWN SIDE OF THE AGREEMENT - INTEREST ARISING FROM WHAT IT ACTUALLY WANTS TO SECURE, ARISING FROM ITS CONCERN FOR ITS OWN REPUTATION BEFORE THE WORLD, AND INTERNATIONAL OPINION. THOSE ARE THE CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH ARE THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE ASSURANCE THAT INTERNATIONALLY BINDING AGREEMENTS IS THE RIGHT WAY OF CONCLUDING THIS MATTER.

Q21. BETTY LIU, TVB

IF ONE SIDE FAILS TO KEEP ITS PROMISES, OR TO LIVE UP TO THE EXPECTATIONS, IS IT POSSIBLE FOR ANOTHER SIDE TO TAKE ACTION?

- A. IN ANY AGREEMENT, IF EITHER SIDE IS FAILING TO FULFIL ITS OBLIGATIONS, OBVIOUSLY THE OTHER PARTY WOULD WANT TO RAISE COMPLAINTS ABOUT THAT. THAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO PARTIES TO AN INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENT, AND THAT IS WHY, AS I SAID IN MY STATEMENT, IT IS IMPORTANT NOT JUST TO SECURE AGREEMENT ON THE FRAMEWORK OF ARRANGEMENTS THAT IS NECESSARY, BUT ALSO TO HAVE THE COMPONENTS OF THAT FRAMEWORK SPELT OUT CLEARLY IN AN AGREEMENT THAT WOULD BE INTERNATIONALLY BINDING BETWEEN TWO STATES.

Q22. ANDY IP, KUNG SHEUNG DAILY NEWS

SIR, DO YOU THINK THERE SHOULD BE SOME FORM OF GUARANTEE SO THAT THE AGREEMENT WOULD NOT BE CHANGED IN THE FUTURE?

- A. THE GUARANTEES THAT WE ARE SEEKING, THE BEST ASSURANCE FOR ALL THOSE MATTERS IN THE FUTURE, IS THAT THE AGREEMENT, BEFORE WE CONSIDER IT IS SATISFACTORY, SHOULD DESCRIBE AS CLEARLY AND AS FULLY AS POSSIBLE ALL THE COMPONENTS THAT ARE NECESSARY TO IDENTIFY THE FOUNDATIONS OF HONG KONG'S FUTURE. THAT IS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT PURPOSES OF THE NEGOTIATIONS - TO SECURE AS FULL AS POSSIBLE, AND AS CLEAR AS POSSIBLE, A SPECIFICATION OF THE COMPONENTS THAT WILL ASSURE THAT FUTURE.

Q23. NIGEL HAWKS, OBSERVER

SIR GEOFFREY, IN YOUR STATEMENT YOU SEEMED TO BE SUGGESTING THAT UNDER CHINESE SOVEREIGNTY, HONG KONG WILL ENJOY GREATER AUTONOMY, MORE DEMOCRACY, MORE RESPONSIBILITY FOR ITS OWN FUTURE, THAN IT HAS DONE FOR 100 YEARS UNDER BRITISH SOVEREIGNTY. IS THIS A REALISTIC POSITION, AND WHY SHOULD THE CHINESE ACCEPT IT?

- A. I THINK ONE OF THE IMPORTANT FEATURES FOR PEOPLE TO UNDERSTAND, ALL THOSE CONSIDERING THIS MATTER, IS THE EXTENT TO WHICH HONG KONG AT PRESENT DOES ENJOY A VERY HIGH DEGREE OF AUTONOMY IN THE MANAGEMENT AND CONDUCT OF ITS OWN AFFAIRS. IT IS A VERY CRUCIAL COMPONENT FOR IN THE SUCCESS OF HONG KONG. THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT IS NOT MANAGING HONG KONG, THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT IS NOT GOVERNING HONG KONG, THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT IS NOT INTERFERING IN HONG KONG. ALL THE MATTERS PEOPLE HAVE BEEN TALKING ABOUT INCLUDING THE MANAGEMENT OF HONG KONG CURRENCY AND ECONOMY ARE GOVERNED BY DECISIONS TAKEN WITHIN HONG KONG ITSELF. AND IF THERE IS THE PROSPECT OF FURTHER ADVANCES TOWARDS MORE REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT NOW, THAT IS A PROSPECT WHICH BECOMES INCREASINGLY LIKELY AND DESIRABLE IN PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES. AND THAT IS WHY I HAVE SAID IN MY STATEMENT, I DO LOOK FORWARD TO AN INCREASINGLY REPRESENTATIVE FRAMEWORK OF GOVERNMENT.

Q24. ROSALIND MAK, SING TAO EVENING POST

IS THERE ANY POSSIBLE WAY FOR THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ACTUAL NEGOTIATION?

- A. I THINK THAT WOULD BE RATHER A CROWDED NEGOTIATION. THE NEGOTIATION DOES HAVE TO BE UNDERTAKEN BY THOSE WHO HAVE RESPONSIBILITY FOR IT, AND I AM VERY DEEPLY CONSCIOUS OF THE BREADTH AND DEPTH OF MY RESPONSIBILITY IN THESE NEGOTIATIONS. THE WAY IN WHICH THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG CAN PARTICIPATE IS BY EXPRESSING THEIR VIEWS. I HAVE NOT FOUND THEM UNWILLING TO EXPRESS THEIR VIEWS, I HAVE MET VERY MANY HONG KONG PEOPLE IN THE LAST COUPLE OF DAYS, THEY CAN EXPRESS THEM DIRECTLY, THEY CAN EXPRESS THEM THROUGH THE REPRESENTATIVE ORGANISATIONS, THROUGH EXCO, THROUGH LEGCO, THROUGH THE DISTRICT BOARDS, THE REGIONAL COUNCILS, THEY CAN EXPRESS THEM THROUGH BRITISH MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT. I AM VERY ANXIOUS THAT THIS PROCESS OF CONSULTATION, WHEREBY I KNOW WHAT THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG WANT, SHOULD CONTINUE AND OF COURSE WHEN WE COME TO THE CONCLUSION OF THE AGREEMENT, IF WE DO, THEN THERE WILL BE PUBLICATION OF THAT, AND THEY WILL HAVE A FRESH OPPORTUNITY OF MAKING THEIR VIEWS KNOWN.

Q25. KEVIN TOOLIS, IRISH NEWS

HOW MUCH CONTROL WILL CHINA HAVE OF HONG KONG'S FOREIGN AFFAIRS IN THE FUTURE, HOW WILL IT AFFECT HONG KONG'S ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER COUNTRIES?

A. WELL, THE TWO PARTS IN YOUR QUESTION ARE OF COURSE, DISTINCT AND IMPORTANTLY DISTINCT. BECAUSE PLAINLY, THE SOVEREIGN COUNTRY DOES HAVE RESPONSIBILITY FOR FOREIGN AND EXTERNAL AFFAIRS IN THE BROADEST SENSE. ONE OF THE IMPORTANT COMPONENTS OF THE HIGH DEGREE OF AUTONOMY THAT WE ARE SEEKING, IS AUTONOMY IN RELATION TO THE MANAGEMENT OF ECONOMIC AFFAIRS, SUCH AS THE ONES WE HAVE BEEN TALKING ABOUT, MEMBERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION IN INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC ORGANISATIONS, LIKE GATT, LIKE THE ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK AND SO ON, AND MANAGEMENT OF AN INDEPENDENT, CONVERTIBLE CURRENCY CONTINUING TO CIRCULATE FREELY THE HONG KONG DOLLAR.

Q26. STEVEN JESSEL, BBC

IN ASSESSING THE OPINION OF THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG, WOULD YOU EXCLUDE THE POSSIBILITY OF A REFERENDUM?

A. WE HAVE NOT COME TO A CONCLUSION ABOUT THE BEST OF SEVERAL ALTERNATIVE WAYS OF ASSESSING THE OPINION OF THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG. AND IT MUST BE STATED THERE ARE SOME VERY REAL DRAWBACKS TO THE IDEA OF A REFERENDUM.

Q27. IRENE SUNG, SING TAO JIH PAO

YOU HAVE MENTIONED IN YOUR SPEECH ABOUT THE ADMINISTRATION OF HONG KONG AFTER 1997 AS BEING IN THE HANDS OF HONG KONG PEOPLE THEMSELVES AND THERE WILL FOLLOW A PROCESS OF DEVELOPMENT WHICH IS ALREADY UNDER WAY. UNDER THE DEVELOPMENT, WILL THERE BE A HONG KONG PERSON APPOINTED AS A VICE-GOVERNOR LEARNING HOW TO ADMINISTER THE FUTURE OF HONG KONG DURING THE NEXT FEW YEARS?

A. IT IS NOT FOR ME TO ANSWER SPECIFIC QUESTIONS OF THAT KIND, AT THIS STAGE. I SEE SOME OF THE PAPERS TODAY SAY THAT I WAS EXPRESSING AN OPINION ABOUT THAT, IN FACT I WASN'T DOING THAT, ALTHOUGH ONE LADY I THINK EXPRESSED AN OPINION TO ME ABOUT THAT. OF COURSE I

TAKE MOST OPINIONS OFFERED BY MOST LADIES. BUT IN ANSWER TO YOUR SPECIFIC QUESTION, IT WILL BE FOR THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT TO DETERMINE IN WHAT WAY THERE WILL BE FURTHER MOVEMENT TOWARDS MORE REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT, AND ON WHAT TIME SCALE.

+++ END +++

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