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DESKBY 201030Z
FM HONG KONG 200935Z APR 84
TO IMMEDIATE FCO
TELEGRAM NUMBER 1089 OF 20 APRIL
INFO IMMEDIATE PEKING

FOLLOWING FROM PRIVATE SECRETARY
MIPT: FUTURE OF HONG KONG: NATIONALITY

1. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE NATIONALITY ISSUE CAME OVER VERY CLEARLY DURING THE SECRETARY OF STATE'S VARIOUS MEETINGS IN HONG KONG. IT WAS RAISED BY SIR S.Y. CHUNG AND T.S. LO AT THE MEETING WITH EXCO (HONG KONG TELNO 1078) AND AT THE PRESS CONFERENCE. BUT THE STRENGTH OF FEELING ON THE ISSUE CAME OVER MOST CLEARLY AT THE UMELCO MEETING.
2. AS THE SUMMARY IN MIPT SHOWS, THERE IS A VERY STRONG FEELING AMONG THE UMELCO MEMBERS THAT BRITAIN HAS A MORAL OBLIGATION TO BDTCS WHICH CANNOT BE COMPLETELY DISCHARGED BY GETTING THE BEST POSSIBLE SETTLEMENT WITH CHINA. THEY TAKE THE VIEW THAT WHILE WE HAVE THE RIGHT TO DISPOSE OF BRITISH (NEXT WORD UNDERLINED) TERRITORY WE CANNOT ABANDON THE BRITISH NATIONALS WHO LIVE THERE TO CHINESE COMMUNIST RULE AGAINST THEIR WILL. THEY ARGUE THAT IF BRITISH ADMINISTRATION CANNOT CONTINUE WE HAVE AN OBLIGATION TO FIND THEM A SAFE HAVEN IN BRITISH TERRITORY ELSEWHERE. THERE WAS SOME DISPOSITION TO ACCEPT THE CONSTRAINTS ON IMMIGRATION TO THE UK, AND A CONSEQUENT TENDENCY TO SUGGEST IN PRIVATE DISCUSSION THAT HMG SHOULD EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITIES FOR ARRANGING SETTLEMENT ELSEWHERE E.G. CANADA, AUSTRALIA AND THE U.S.
3. IN ALL THESE MEETINGS THE SECRETARY OF STATE MADE CLEAR THAT THIS WAS A VERY IMPORTANT ISSUE AND THAT HE AND OTHER MINISTERS CONCERNED FULLY RECOGNISED THE ANXIETIES FELT BY PEOPLE IN HONG KONG. BUT HE WAS VERY CAREFUL TO AVOID SAYING ANYTHING WHICH COULD HAVE BEEN TAKEN AS OFFERING ANY PROSPECT OF A CHANGE IN THE PRESENT POSITION REGARDING SETTLEMENT IN THE UK OR ELSEWHERE FOR BDTCS.

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4. WE SHALL CLEARLY FACE CONTINUING AND INDEED INCREASING PRESSURE FROM HONG KONG ON THIS ISSUE. IN PRIVATE CONVERSATION MR T.S.LO MADE CLEAR THAT HE WAS DETERMINED TO PURSUE THIS ISSUE AND THAT HE WOULD WELCOME THE CHANCE TO PUT HIS VIEWS DIRECT TO THE HOME SECRETARY WHEN NEXT IN LONDON. THE HOME SECRETARY WILL WISH TO CONSIDER WHETHER TO RECEIVE HIM. MR LO WILL BE DIFFICULT TO DEFLECT, AND THERE MIGHT IN ANY CASE BE ADVANTAGE IN HEARING HIS VIEWS ON THIS ISSUE DIRECT.

YOUDE

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