



10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

26 September 1984

Thank you for your letter of 13 September. I shall confine myself to two general comments.

First, I am afraid your remarks overlook the realities of the situation. Hong Kong is not defensible against China; under the existing treaties 92 per cent of the territory will pass to China in any event in 1997; the remaining 8 per cent would be unviable on its own. The effective choice therefore is transfer without qualification to China in 1997 or transfer under terms ensuring the survival of as much as possible of Hong Kong's freedoms and systems. To have insisted, as you suggest, that certain conditions should be unnegotiable and that every aspect of the present situation must be retained, would have meant only the breakdown of negotiations, confrontation and an unqualified Chinese takeover in 1997 or even earlier. This would be the worst possible service to the people of Hong Kong.

Secondly, Britain is not abandoning the people of Hong Kong. The arrangements achieved, i.e. a binding international agreement, with detailed annexes covering all important aspects of Hong Kong's life, ensure, as far as anything can be ensured, the survival of Hong Kong's essential features. This is the very reverse of abandoning Hong Kong people. The members of EXCO, whose duty it is to advise the Governor on Hong Kong opinion, agree the agreement is the best attainable and are prepared to commend it in good conscience to the people of Hong Kong during the forthcoming test of acceptability.

I therefore reject your allegation that the British Government is acting dishonourably towards the people of Hong Kong.

I have nothing further to add.

Charles Powell

Lieutenant Commander P.J. Murray-Jones.