

Britain on reckless course in Hong Kong

by Mary M. Burdman

The decision of Chris Patten, British Colonial Governor of Hong Kong, to suddenly in October promote a more “democratic” government for Hong Kong, launched Britain on a course of brinkmanship with the People’s Republic of China (P.R.C.) which could be dangerous for Asia. Patten announced plans to change Hong Kong’s Basic Law, previously negotiated with Beijing, to allow most citizens an indirect vote for the colony’s governing Legislative Council by 1995.

On Nov. 17, Chinese Vice-Premier Zhu Rongji reacted with predictable rage, threatening to rip up the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration, under which British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher agreed to return Hong Kong to China in 1997. “We cannot but ask whether we still have to stick to the Joint Declaration,” he told the London Royal Institute for International Affairs.

British colonial policy is certainly *not* to promote democracy for Hong Kong. The population—which consider themselves Chinese, not British—are not fooled. “Patten never meant it,” as Taiwanese law professor Hungdah Chiu said in a Washington speech Nov. 18. “The British ruled Hong Kong all this time without democracy, and now they say ‘Let there be democracy!’”

Adding insult to injury, British Hong Kong Finance Secretary Hamish Macleod announced Nov. 19 that he will push ahead contracts for Hong Kong’s new airport, despite Beijing’s objections to the \$22 billion project.

Patten has another game in mind than defending Hong Kong from the communists. Under 150 years of colonial rule, Hong Kong had no real representative government until after the Sino-British Joint Declaration. Now, even British Foreign Office “Mandarin” China experts call Patten’s move a “high-risk strategy” and very “different from past” British-Chinese relations, which were the art of compromise behind closed doors.

Financial assets being pulled out

The British are attempting to make a big propaganda cover for their deal, which surrendered Hong Kong to Beijing. After the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre, there was an international outcry about the 1984 agreement to turn over Hong Kong. British Prime Minister John Major, a personal friend of Patten, needs all the propaganda he can garner to bolster his government at home. The British are also trying to distract everyone with the controversy over politics—while pulling out substantial financial assets.

“There is no question that this is a British provocation of the P.R.C.,” Professor Chiu told *EIR* in Washington Nov. 18, “and it could have very, very ugly consequences for the people of Hong Kong. What Patten has done is just to get Beijing irate—and then the British say, ‘Sorry, old chap, we did our best, goodbye!’ and just leave Hong Kong to its fate. Of course, 70% of the Hong Kong population wants a democratic government, especially those who do not have the money to leave! The danger is that those 70% without passports will stand and fight. If they do, Beijing will use that loophole in the Basic Law,” allowing China to ensure the “security” of Hong Kong, “and things will get very ugly.”

The reactions from Beijing have gone right to the top. Deng Xiaoping, China’s supreme powerbroker, was quoted in the Hong Kong *Ming Pao* news Nov. 14 saying China should not make any concessions. Beijing sources said Deng was firm in his opposition to any democratic shift in Hong Kong before 1997, and that China now must meet the British government head on.

On Nov. 23, Chinese Premier Li Peng told Hong Kong visitors in Beijing that “any counter-proposal or any compromise plan on the basis of the Hong Kong governor’s plan is unacceptable,” the official news agency Xinhua reported. Li accused Patten of breaching the Sino-British Joint Declaration and the Basic Law, Hong Kong’s post-1997 Constitution. The Chinese attitude is “clear, firm, and consistent. . . . This is a matter of principle,” Li said, adding that “the Chinese government will never compromise or make any concession on matters of principle.”

Next day, the Hong Kong Monetary Authority announced that as of next year, the Queen’s effigy will be struck from Hong Kong’s coins, buses, and trams, after “the matter was discussed with the Chinese side.”

Nevertheless, Patten’s spokesman announced Nov. 24 that the plan to extend some kind of voting rights will be submitted to the city’s Legislative Council early next year. “Mr. Li Peng’s statement makes no difference to that process,” he said. One senior official in Hong Kong told the Nov. 19 *International Herald Tribune*, “It is very difficult to foresee where this is going to go.”

Today’s tensions have an interesting background. British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd, fluent in Mandarin and central to shaping Britain’s pro-China policy in the early 1970s with Edward Heath, wrote a “political thriller” in 1969, *The Smile on the Face of the Tiger*. The plot was a British-Chinese showdown over Hong Kong.

Hurd’s book is resolved with the Chinese backing down under the perceived threat of British nuclear weapons, while the British themselves (secretly) were also preparing to back down. But, as *Guardian* commentator Martin Woollacott pointed out on Nov. 21, it is *economic* as much as military confrontation that is dangerous now. The volatile Hong Kong stock market fell precipitously for days after Zhu Rongji’s threats on the Sino-British Joint Declaration. It was the col-

lapse of the Hang Seng which triggered the 1987 global market crash.

As early as Nov. 5, Britain called off scheduled military exercises in Hong Kong, when local newspapers revealed they were to be based on a scenario involving a breakdown in Sino-British ties, and an invasion of the colony by Chinese troops. Beijing has for its part sent patrol boats into Hong Kong waters recently, resulting in at least one armed face-off with British ships.

Beijing has kept up a consistent propaganda campaign, comparing British policy against China to its colonial policies in India and Singapore. The pro-Beijing newspaper *Wen Wei Bao* wrote Nov. 16 that there is a "British conspiracy" to create a pro-British elite in Hong Kong as was done in India and Singapore.

The Chinese, however, are approaching British business and finance in Hong Kong for support against Patten, a method they used successfully 160 years ago. London's Lord Napier was sent as a representative of the Crown to Canton, against the wishes of local British opium merchants. The Chinese, who had no wish to open relations with Britain, played up the merchants' demand to keep trade relations smooth. They isolated Napier, translating his name into the Chinese characters for "laboriously vile." Napier soon succumbed to malaria.

'Nightmare' is not meant as fiction

by Kathy Wolfe

Pacific Nightmare: How Japan Starts World War III, A Future History

by Simon Winchester

Birch Lane Press, New York, 1992

302 pages, hardbound, \$29.95.

Pacific Nightmare is poorly written, but it serves, for it was not meant as fiction. Mr. Winchester is Hong Kong correspondent of Britain's *Manchester Guardian*, and this is no novel, but a policy statement, if crass, from one faction of British Intelligence.

"We British are leaving Hong Kong quite deliberately," is the message, "to provoke Beijing into actions which we intend shall cause the disintegration of China, to British advantage. This is but another move in the Great Game; we warn you, don't get in our way."

Pacific Nightmare is ostensibly about China, and the reversion to Beijing rule of the British Colony of Hong Kong

in 1997. The plot has it that Beijing, retaking the colony in June 1997, breaks all promises to allow Hong Kong its freedom, tyrannizing the place.

In retaliation, Hong Kong Triad gangs, armed by freedom-loving British Intelligence, rebel against Beijing in Canton on the mainland, soon joined by army units across south China. The Chinese patriots of Canton's military leadership liberate Hong Kong, and declare a "Republic" of southern China, and civil war on Beijing.

The only fly in the ointment is Japan, which, taking advantage, invades Manchuria in north China. Beijing, which never dreamt of using nuclear weapons against fellow Chinese, aims its arsenal at Tokyo. Desperate to stop World War III, the U.S. President, advised by an Assistant Secretary of State for Asia whose brother-in-law just happens to be the British ambassador, drops a single A-bomb offshore of Tokyo. The harbor is flattened, but "only" 800 are killed. Japan withdraws her troops.

No laughing matter

That's the point, for as the subtitle states, the book is really about Japan, and Britain's threat to Japan, that if Tokyo insists on economically developing China and Asia, London will get nasty. The writing is humorous, in the sense that this "sophisticated look" at the East is so superficial. The incessant typographical errors seem to flow from the author's infantile frame of mind.

For example: "Those who take the long view will say it has always been so, that what is happening is no more than the latest in an endless process of irruptions of violence that tell us much about the nature of the Oriental mind. . . . There seems invariably to have been some all-consuming fight going on somewhere around China."

Orientalists are naturally violent? To call this "standard racist British pulp" is mild. The writing about Japan makes the barroom talk of those U.S. autoworkers who like to sledgehammer little Toyotas look charitable. In a China saga, Japan is suddenly introduced on page 248, as *Monster Ex Machina*, with an inexplicable drive for "Nipponese expansion and tyranny."

The plot outline is more laughable. The Brits, the world's most rapacious monarchists, have spent the last 200 years trying to crush republicanism from the Earth.

What is *not* a laughing matter, is that all this bears an uncanny resemblance to the actual news we have from Hong Kong this November 1992. As Mary Burdman writes above, British Hong Kong Governor Chris Patten is currently provoking the maniacs in Beijing with actions which are pretty inexplicable under ordinary logic.

Page 164 also describes a 1996 conference at London's Royal Institute for International Affairs (RIIA) at which it is that proposed Britain "favour" a civil war in China between south and north. In a recent interview with the China desk at the actual London RIIA, *EIR* was told precisely that.