

September 17, 1975
**Telegram from L.L Mehrotra, Charge d’Affaires in
Beijing**

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Summary:

Report from New Zealand's Ambassador to China on a conversation between New Zealand's Press Delegation and Vice Premier Teng Hsia-ping. They discussed China's policies on opposing nuclear proliferation.

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FROM: L.L. Mehrotra, Charge d'affaires, Peking

TO: Shri Gurbachan Singh, Joint Secretary (N&EA), MEA

□ Bryce Harland, New Zealand's Ambassador in Peking, gave me an account today of the conversation between New Zealand's Press Delegation and Vice Premier Teng Hsia-ping on 5th September. I am giving a brief resume:

□ ...Nuclear Proliferation: Teng Hsiao-ping was very closely questioned by the Delegation on this point. Teng said that as New Zealand was opposed to nuclear proliferation, China was opposed to it too; but China's approach in the matter was more practical than New Zealand's. He recalled what he described as China's three-step formula, namely (a) renunciation of first use; b) international conference for total disarmament; 3) total destruction of all nuclear weapons. Teng said that nuclear proliferation was bad but nuclear monopoly was worse. He stressed that the bulk of nuclear weapons was owned by the two superpowers and the Soviet Union would soon acquire superiority over the Americans. The Soviet Union was afraid of the USA but the USA was far more afraid of the Soviet Union. China had a limited number of nuclear weapons but had no desire to compete with the superpowers in the field. If China decided to compete with the superpowers in the production of nuclear weapons, its people will have no bread, no clothing, no shelter. China could not afford that. Teng went on to say that until last year there were five countries having nuclear weapons but now there were six, including India. (Harland noted that that the Chinese regarded India as a nuclear weapon power). Teng said that the Chinese knew, their three-step formula could not be implemented under today's circumstances; hence the proliferation would continue and the Chinese had no choice but to prepare for the worst.

□ South East Asia as a Nuclear Free Zone: The delegation was surprised to note Teng's reserve on this issue. Because of China's public statement in favor of the emergence of South East Asia as a zone of peace, neutrality and non-alignment, the Delegation had thought that Teng would come out with an open support for the proposal of having South East Asia as a nuclear free zone. When Teng was asked to give China's reaction to the proposal, he merely queried "Do the countries of South East Asia themselves want the zone to be nuclear free?" Teng said that as far as he knew, they were discussing the issue and had not come to any conclusion. He said China would make its attitude clear on the subject only after the countries of South East Asia had made up their mind in the matter.