

## China and Hongkong

### A border with two faces

FROM OUR HONGKONG CORRESPONDENT

China has moved up a whole new army division to Hongkong's border—not to threaten it, but to fulfil Chairman Hua's promise to Mrs Thatcher to stem the flow of Chinese refugees into the desperately overcrowded colony. For the same purpose, China has deployed more gunboats in the adjacent waters. The Gurkhas of the British garrison, who have unprecedently taken to the sea, now have the equally unprecedented (if unofficial) co-operation of the Chinese navy in the task of repelling refugees.

Last month 11,350 illegal entrants were caught and forcibly repatriated by the Hongkong authorities. China has now increased the standard punishment for escape attempts to five years' hard labour, and its border guards shoot to kill; but the attempts go on. The daily average of forcible repatriations has been running at over 100 this month.

In sharp contrast, the border continues to fade away in many other respects. Hongkong's residents can now travel to neighbouring Chinese towns with great ease. In its streets, Chinese-owned service stations sell Chinese petrol. Contracts have been signed with Peking enterprises for the construction and rental

of high-priced apartments sited above stations on Hongkong's new underground railway.

Peking's main capitalist arm in Hongkong, China Resources, recently bought a majority shareholding in a large local corporation, Rostock Enterprises, which has just acquired a 1,200-acre site close to the border for the creation of a new industrial and residential town. A group of Hongkong architects, engineers and lawyers has been asked by the Canton authorities to prepare plans for the industrial development of the region around Shumchun on China's side of the border.

The Peking government's representatives in the colony have welcomed a proposal made by the Hongkong Electric Company for the building of a nuclear power plant which would be jointly operated by China and Hongkong and might be sited on either side of the border. The company's general manager told the legislative council that the plant could attract foreign investment and provide power for both partners. A 1977 proposal to build a nuclear plant to serve Hongkong alone was shelved because its potential capacity would exceed the local demand. But a jointly operated plant could be a more practicable proposition if close co-operation between China and Hongkong continues to develop.