



10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

25 June 1979

Mr Nicholas

Thank you for your letter of 15 June enclosing a number of letters you have received about Vietnamese refugees.

I was grateful to you for letting me see these letters, and I can well understand the feelings expressed in them. Although the Government reached the conclusion that it was right to accept the refugees picked up by the Sibonga and the Roachbank, we have been most careful to avoid any kind of open-ended commitment for the future.

This kind of decision is of course extremely difficult. We have to weigh in each case humanitarian considerations against other factors, and in the case of these two groups of people, rescued at sea by British ships and who have nowhere else to go, we thought it right to admit them as refugees. The responsibility for their plight rests squarely with the Vietnamese authorities, and the Government is doing all it can to draw international attention to their conduct. I have taken the initiative by pressing for an international conference, so that the problem may be faced - as it must be - by the international community as a whole.

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Our approach to the problem will take full account of the Government's commitment to strict control on immigration. This commitment is extremely important. I can assure you that we intend to implement it.

Can I emphasize that there are refugees from a Germany.

Yours

Raymond

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Nicholas Winterton, Esq., M.P.