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FM HANOI 110140Z JUN 79

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELNO 166 OF 11 UJUNE

INFO PRIORITY UKMIS GENEVA HONG KONG AND WASHINGTON

SAVING TO BANGKOK KUALA LUMPUR MANILA JAKARTA SINGAPORE
AND CANBERRA,

VIETNAMESE REFUGEES

1. I WAS SUMMONED TO MFA TO SEE MAI VAN BO (HEAD OF EUROPE
II DEPARTMENT) ON AFTERNOON OF 8 JUNE. HE PROTESTED
STRONGLY AT RECENT "EVIL-INTENTIONED STATEMENTS
AGAINST VIETNAM" BY MEMBERS OF THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT.
WE HAD A HARD-HITTING DISCUSSION ON THE SUBJECT.

2. BO SAID THAT THE DEPARTURE OF REFUGEES WAS AN AFTER-
MATH OF PAST US AGGRESSION AND THE RESULT OF CHINESE POLICIES.
BY LEAVING IN AN ILLEGAL AND UNORGANISED WAY,
THE REFUGEES CAUSED DIFFICULTIES FOR VIETNAM AND FOR COUN-
TRIES OF DESTINATION. IT WAS DANGEROUS FOR THE REFUGEES
THEMSELVES. IN VIEW OF THIS THE VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT
HAD ANNOUNCED ON 12 JANUARY 1979 ITS DECISION TO ALLOW
THE LEGAL EXIT OF THOSE WHO WISHED TO JOIN THEIR FAMILIES
ABROAD. THIS HAD BEEN WELCOMED BY WORLD OPINION. THE
VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT HAD AGREED TO A 7-POINT PROGRAMME
WITH UNHCR TO FACILITATE DEPARTURE OF THOSE WHO WISHED TO
LEAVE IN AN ORDERLY AND SAFE MANNER. WHILST EVERYTHING
WAS GOING FAVOURABLY, AND DESPITE REPEATED EXPLANATIONS
OF VIETNAMESE POLICY, SEVERAL REPRESENTATIVES OF THE BRITISH
GOVERNMENT HAD CONTINUED TO MAKE EVIL-INTENTIONED STAT-
EMENTS AGAINST VIETNAM. THEY HAD SAID THAT VIETNAM ENCOUR-
AGED AND PROFITED IN THE TRAFFIC OF BOAT REFUGEES AND HAD
ADOPTED A BLATANTLY RACIALIST POLICY AGAINST VIETNAMESE OF
CHINESE DESCENT. THESE WERE PURE FABRICATIONS, ECHOING
WELLKNOWN DISTORTIONS AND SLANDERS OF THE PEKING RULERS.
THE VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT FLATLY REJECTED AND STRONGLY

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PROTESTED AGAINST SLANDEROUS CONTENTIONS OF RESPONSIBLE MEMBERS OF THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT. THEY REQUESTED THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT TO PUT AN END TO SUCH ACTS WHICH WERE HARMFUL TO BILATERAL RELATIONS. BO ASKED ME TO CONVEY THESE VIEWS TO THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT.

3. I REPLIED THAT ALTHOUGH I WOULD DO SO, I WOULD FIRST LIKE TO COMMENT STRAIGHT AWAY ON HIS STATEMENT. I DENIED EMPHATICALLY THAT THE STATEMENTS OF BRITISH MINISTERS AND OFFICIALS WERE "EVIL-INTENTIONED". THEY WERE TRUTHFUL STATEMENTS BASED ON FACTS AND REFLECTED THE DEPTH OF FEELING IN THE UNITED KINGDOM AND HONG KONG ABOUT THE MASS EXODUS OF REFUGEES. I COULD ONLY AGREE WITH ONE POINT IN HIS STATEMENT, NAMELY, THAT THE EXODUS WAS CAUSING DIFFICULTIES FOR RECIPIENT COUNTRIES AND WAS DANGEROUS FOR THE REFUGEES THEMSELVES. I THEN OUTLINED THE SITUATION IN HONG KONG AND SAID THAT FROM TALKING TO EMIGRANTS THERE, HONG KONG OFFICIALS HAD BUILT UP A CLEAR PICTURE OF THE REASONS FOR AND THE METHODS OF EMIGRATION. WE WERE NOT ECHOING SLANDERS OF PEKING RULERS, AS HE HAD SUGGESTED, BUT WERE GIVING THE FACTS AS WE OURSELVES HAD BEEN ABLE TO OBTAIN THEM FROM THE REFUGEES. BO COULD STATE THAT WHAT EMIGRANTS SAID WERE LIES, ALTHOUGH IT WOULD INDEED BE REMARKABLE IF SO MANY PEOPLE FROM SO MANY PLACES IN VIETNAM HAD AGREED TO TELL THE SAME LIES: BUT HE WAS STILL LEFT WITH THE QUESTION, WHY DID TENS OF THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE LEAVE VIETNAM? WOULD HE, IF HE WERE AN ETHNIC CHINESE, TAKE THE RISK OF LESS THAN A 50/50 CHANCE OF SURVIVAL, LEAVE HOME AND SET OFF IN AN INADEQUATE BOAT ON DANGEROUS SEAS SIMPLY BECAUSE PEKING, AS HE SUGGESTED, WISHED TO WEAKEN VIETNAM? HE HAD EMPHASIZED VIETNAM'S COOPERATION WITH UNHCR BUT IT SEEMED TO ME THAT THE FAMILY REUNION SCHEME, NOW AGREED BETWEEN VIETNAM AND UNHCR, ALTHOUGH GOOD IN ITSELF, COULD ONLY SCRATCH THE SURFACE OF THE IMMEDIATE AND HUGE PROBLEM. THERE WERE TWO THINGS IN ALL THIS WHICH CAUSED GRAVE CONCERN TO HMG. FIRST, BOTH HMG AND OTHER GOVERNMENTS WERE BEING FACED WITH APPALLING POLITICAL AND MORAL DILEMMAS ABOUT WHAT SHOULD BE DONE ABOUT REFUGEES: THESE DILEMMAS WERE CAUSED NOT BY THE U S WAR NOR THE POLICIES OF CHINA, BUT WERE THE RESULT OF VIETNAM'S POLICIES. SECONDLY, VIETNAM WAS MAKING A FINANCIAL PROFIT FROM HUMAN MISERY.

BO DENIED STRONGLY THAT VIETNAM WAS PURSUING A POLICY TO GET RID OF ETHNIC CHINESE AND THAT VIETNAM WAS ACCEPTING LARGE SUMS OF MONEY. THERE MIGHT BE SOME CORRUPTION (THAT HAPPENED IN MANY COUNTRIES, FOR EXAMPLE, THE LOCKHEED AFFAIR) BUT THAT DID NOT REPRESENT THE POLICY OF VIETNAM. HE AGREED THAT THE ILLEGAL EMIGRATION MUST BE STOPPED. VIETNAM WAS TRYING TO DO THIS, HENCE THE AGREEMENT WITH UNHCR ON A 7-POINT PROGRAMME. THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT AND THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR SHOULD NOT BELIEVE ALLEGATIONS AGAINST VIETNAM AND SHOULD THINK ABOUT THE CORRECT STATEMENTS OF THE VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT.

5. THE MAJOR VIETNAMESE NEWSPAPER, NHAN DAN AND VIETNAM NEWS AGENCY PUBLICATION OF 9 JUNE BOTH RECORD THAT I WAS SUMMONED TO THE MFA TO RECEIVE A PROTEST ABOUT SLANDEROUS ALLEGATIONS BY THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT ON THE SUBJECT OF REFUGEES.

6. N.B. THE REFERENCE TO A 7-POINT PROGRAMME WITH UNHCR IS TO THE DOCUMENT THAT EMERGED AFTER HDE HAAN'S RECENT VISIT (MY TELNO 160) COPIES OF WHICH HAVE BEEN SENT BY BAG TO THE DEPARTMENT AND UKMIS GENEVA.

FCC PASS SAVING ALL ADDRESSEES

MARGETSON

[PASSED AS REQUESTED]
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