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Vietnam



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London S.W.1

18 June 1979

Dear Bryan.

*Memorandum approved by PM,
subject to amendment,
and forwarded. GJM
18/6*

VIETNAMESE REFUGEES

The Prime Minister will have seen reports of a statement by Dr Mahathir, the Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister, that Malaysia will ship more than 70,000 Vietnamese refugees in Malaysia back into international waters and will shoot on sight any 'boat people' entering Malaysian waters. The Malaysian Government has since said that no drastic action will be taken for a reasonable period pending the resettlement of the refugees elsewhere, and Dr Mahathir has retracted his threat to shoot refugees. However it is clear that the Malaysians feel themselves hard-pressed and intend to close their doors firmly. The Indonesians are also refusing to accept more refugees. These actions follow reports that the Thai Government, despite appeals from the International Committee of the Red Cross, are forcibly repatriating refugees into Cambodia and will expel 'boat people'. *p.a.*

These threats and actions have greatly exacerbated the crisis. They will inevitably lead to still greater pressure on Hong Kong. Public opinion in Britain has been aroused and the Government will be pressed to take further action. A PNQ has been put down by Mr Shore for this afternoon.

We shall be replying to your letter of 14 June when we have been able to review the situation in the light of talks which Mr Blaker is having with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Geneva today. In the meantime

/the

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/ the Lord Privy Seal recommends that the Prime Minister should send messages to the Malaysian Prime Minister and the UN Secretary General along the lines of those in the attached draft telegrams to Kuala Lumpur and New York. The Lord Privy Seal has also instructed Mr Cortazzi to summon the Acting Malaysian High Commissioner to express our serious concern about the problems facing the refugees from Vietnam.

We are, in accordance with the Prime Minister's wishes, maintaining our pressure on Dr Waldheim to call an early conference. The Lord Privy Seal thinks that, inevitably, in the light of this and developments in Malaysia and Thailand, that the UK contribution will come under scrutiny. The Hong Kong Government will also have increasing difficulty in maintaining its humane policies unless we can offer them some relief. He would appreciate an early opportunity to have a word on this with the Prime Minister and the Home Secretary.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries to the Home Secretary and Sir John Hunt.

Yours ever
S J Gomersall

S J Gomersall
Private Secretary to the
Lord Privy Seal

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File No.
Department SEAD
Drafted by CORTAZZI
(Block Capitals)
Tel. Extn. 233 5877

OUTWARD
TELEGRAM

Security Classification	
CONFIDENTIAL	
IMMEDIATE	Precedence
DESKBY	Z

FOR
COMMS. DEPT.
USE

(Date)
Despatched (Time) Z

POSTBY Z

PREAMBLE

(Time of Origin) Z (G.M.T.) (Restrictive Prefix)
(Security Class.) CONFIDENTIAL (Caveat/ Privacy Marking)
(Codeword) (Deskby) Z

TO IMMEDIATE KUALA LUMPUR Tel. No. of
(precedence) (post)

AND TO (precedence/post)

AND SAVING TO

REPEATED TO (for info) IMMEDIATE UKMIS GENEVA, UKMIS NEW YORK, WASHINGTON
SINGAPORE, BANGKOK, JAKARTA, MANILLA, HONG KONG, PRIORITY MOSCOW
TOKYO, PARIS, BONN, ROUTINE OTTAWA, CANBERRA, WELLINGTON, BRUSSELS
~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ THE HAGUE, LUXEMBOURG, DUBLIN, ROME, COPENHAGEN, DELHI
SAVING TO (for info)

Distribution:-
'BOAT PEOPLE'

[TEXT]

VIETNAMESE REFUGEES

1. Please pass the following personal message from the Prime Minister to Datuk Hussein Onn as soon as possible. Begins.

I realise the hardships and difficulties Malaysia faces in the current crisis over refugees from Vietnam and ~~share your Government's wish~~ ^{know well the need} to take ~~effective~~ ^{effective} early action to stem the flow and force the callous

Vietnamese regime to recognise its responsibilities and improve the lot of its unfortunate people. To this end I have, as you know, appealed to the UN Secretary General to call an early international conference to

/find

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find immediate measures to deal with this crisis. I am repeating my request in a further message I am sending today. We must do all we can to put maximum pressure on Vietnam and to persuade the international community as a whole to share the burdens which Vietnamese policies are throwing on the region. My Government are doing everything they can to achieve these objectives by diplomatic action and publicity.

We are, of course, directly involved through Hong Kong. There are already over 54,000 boat refugees there and hundreds more are coming in every day. The Government of Hong Kong, with our full support, will continue as long as possible to provide a haven for these miserable people.

I appeal to you as a ~~great~~ Commonwealth statesman whose ~~humanity and~~ experience commands ~~the~~ respect ~~of us all~~ to help meet this crisis in a humane way. I hope we can work together for effective international action and ~~feel sure that~~ ^{we} you ~~will wish to maintain~~ ^{and of} humanitarian policies ~~towards~~ ^{and} refugees.

I look forward to meeting you soon. Lord Carrington, whom you will be seeing on 1 July, very much hopes to discuss all this with you then, but action is needed now if many thousand more lives are not to be lost.

With kindest regards. Margaret Thatcher Ends.

/2.

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NOTHING TO BE WRITTEN IN THIS MARGIN

2. We do not intend to publish the text of this message, but we shall announce that an appeal has been made in a message from the Prime Minister.

File No.

Department SEAD
Drafted by HAH CORTAZZI
(Block Capitals)

OUTWARD
TELEGRAM

Security Classification CONFIDENTIAL
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DESKBYZ

Tel. Extn. 233 5877

FOR COMMS. DEPT. USE	Despatched (Date) (Time)Z	POSTBYZ
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PREAMBLE

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 SAVING TO (for info) THE HAGUE, LUXEMBOURG, DUBLIN, ROME, COPENHAGEN, DELHI

Distribution:-
'BOAT PEOPLE'

[TEXT]

Vietnamese Refugees.

1. Please pass the following further message to
 Dr Waldheim from the Prime Minister as soon as possible.
 Begins.

My dear Secretary General

I was glad to learn that you were taking early soundings about the proposal which I made in my message of 31 May for an early conference about the crisis caused by the inhuman actions of the Vietnamese regime. While I share your view that a conference should be properly prepared I am concerned that there should be no delay.

The actions of the Thai Government in expelling
 /Cambodian

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Cambodian refugees and the ~~reported~~ ^{problems} statement on
14 June by ~~Dr Mahathir, the Malaysian Deputy Prime~~ ^{of Malaysia}
~~Minister, that Malaysia intends to ship back to~~
~~sea Vietnamese refugees in their country and to~~
~~shoot on sight new boat people entering Malaysian~~
~~waters~~ makes ^{the} the problem of the utmost urgency.
Hong Kong with over 54,000 Vietnamese refugees is
in a very serious situation. We shall continue to
maintain humane policies as long as possible but
Thai and ^{reported} Malaysian actions can only make Hong Kong's
position still more desperate.

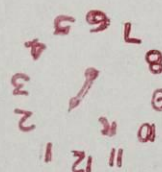
I am appealing to the Malaysian Prime Minister
to cooperate in our efforts to find a humane solution,
but if many thousand more lives are not to be lost
we must have very early action by the international
community. May I urge you to take an initiative
now and call an international conference under
your own auspices? Our aim must be to put maximum
pressure on Vietnam and persuade the rest of the
world to help to reduce the appalling human misery
which Vietnamese policies are causing.

Yours sincerely Margaret Thatcher ends.

2. We do not intend to publish this message but
we shall announce that a further message calling
for a very early conference has been sent.

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NOTHING TO BE WRITTEN IN THIS MARGIN



18 JUN 1979