

From REC PRENTICE.



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & SOCIAL SECURITY
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Telephone 01-407 5522
From the Minister of State

Prime Minister

Do you wish to
reply (perhaps
by a phone call)?

4th July 1979. 4/7

Dear Margaret,

I promise not to make a habit of writing ^{to you} letters to you on matters outside my department. However, the "boat people" issue is unique and I feel compelled to put on record my agreement with ^{the} view of today's Telegraph.

Of course I accept that this is a world problem and that it was absolutely right to call for a U.N. Conference. I can appreciate that there may be tactical reasons for not committing ourselves to a large intake in advance of that conference, although this means that some (not all) of our Western allies are now doing much more than we are.

My plea is that we should call for an adequate global response at the conference and make a substantial offer to do more ourselves. I feel we should do this now, but if the tactical argument still prevails, we should surely do it at the outset of the conference - otherwise we cannot appeal to others with any credibility.

PTA

Three issues are surely at stake:

- A. The sheer inhumanity of abandoning these people.
- B. Britain's reputation.
- C. The factual necessity for the West to underwrite our condemnation of Communist inhumanity by a practical demonstration of our own values.

Yours,

Reag.

P.S.

I am copying this to Willie Whitelew, Pete Bonington and Patrick Jenkin. Otherwise I am keeping this approach entirely confidential - hence the handwriting, for which I apologise. I do not ask for a reply. I just had to get this off my chest.

OUT OF THE WATER

FACED WITH A HARSH AND difficult problem, Mrs THATCHER announces her inability to make a commitment on the taking in of the boat people. Nevertheless she should respond. Once in a generation something occurs which stinks to history. The Somme informed our grandparents in this way. (County regiments and Pals' brigades went to extinction by dereliction of intellect in high places). STALIN's archipelago of camps and the monstrous Jew-killing undertaking of HITLER came next. We should not pretend that what now happens in the South China Sea is anything better.

The German word for a place such as Sobibor, Treblinka or Auschwitz was *Vernichtungslager*. Is not the South China Sea upon which little overcrowded boats bob and sink, a *vernichtungslager*, a sea of extermination? Is it not the intention of the Vietnamese régime (with Russia's guilty knowledge and involvement) to send the ethnic Chinese and the Vietnamese middle class to the bottom of the sea? There are at least a million people involved. Not less than half a million are expected to drown—with less record of a great crime than the finger scratchings on the cemented ceiling of the Auschwitz gas chamber.

The Vietnamese rulers and their Soviet partners have told us what sort of people they are, promiscuous killers. But what sort of people are we and what are we going to do? Quite simply we must take—take refugees until it hurts! Scores of thousands of German and Austrian refugees were taken into Britain and we are the richer for it. Let us not insult our ingenuity and humanity by supposing that 50,000 Chinese and Vietnamese cannot be drawn into this country as good citizens. Don't raise abstract moral questions. Trust the morality of a turning stomach, and ask, if we could have reached into the other places of death, would not we have done so? Shall we then not take people out of the sea?