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DESKBY SINGAPORE 300030Z

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FM FCO 292019Z MAY

TO IMMEDIATE SINGAPORE

TELEGRAM NUMBER 119 OF 29 MAY 1979

INFO IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON HONG KONG THE HAGUE (FOR S OF S)

PRIME MINISTER'S
PERSONAL MESSAGE
SERIAL No. T174/79T
Butler na
4/5

MIPT: INDO-CHINESE REFUGEES

1. FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF PRIME MINISTER'S MESSAGE TO MR LEE KUAN YEW

BEGINS

DEAR PRIME MINISTER

MY COLLEAGUES AND I ARE DEEPLY WORRIED AT THE HUGE BURDEN THE VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT ARE THROWING ON THE REST OF THE WORLD BY EXPORTING THEIR UNWANTED POPULATION IN CONDITIONS OF TOTAL MISERY AND SOMETIMES DEATH. THE FIGURES OF BOAT PEOPLE - NOW MOSTLY OF CHINESE RACE - WHO HAVE SOUGHT HAVENS IN NEARBY COUNTRIES ARE APPALLING. I AM PARTICULARLY CONCERNED FOR HONG KONG WHERE THE PRESSURE OF NEW ARRIVALS HAS AGGRAVATED THE SERIOUS SITUATION CAUSED BY LEGAL AND ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION FROM CHINA.

I HAVE LITTLE DOUBT THAT THE FLOOD OF REFUGEES FROM VIETNAM WILL CONTINUE, IF ONLY BECAUSE THE VIETNAMESE SEEM DETERMINED TO PUSH OUT ALL THEIR CHINESE. MANY OF THESE WILL TRY TO REACH HONG KONG. IN ADDITION WE CAN EXPECT BRITISH SHIPS TO RESCUE MORE OF THESE UNHAPPY PEOPLE AT SEA AND WE SHALL WISH TO HONOUR OUR OBLIGATIONS TO SAVE LIVES IN PERIL. SOME COUNTRIES HAVE ALREADY TAKEN MANY REFUGEES. WE FOR OUR PART HAVE ACCEPTED RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE 984. NEVERTHELESS THERE ARE COUNTRIES LIKE TAIWAN WHO HAVE ADAMANTLY REFUSED TO ADMIT THEM, ALTHOUGH THESE COUNTRIES HAVE PLENTY OF SPACE.

I BELIEVE YOU WILL AGREE WITH MY VIEW THAT TAIWAN SHOULD SHARE THE WORLD BURDEN BY OPENING ITS DOORS TO AT LEAST SOME OF THOSE OF CHINESE RACE WHO ARE BEING FORCED TO LEAVE A REPRESSIVE COMMUNIST COUNTRY LIKE VIETNAM. THERE IS A BRITISH SHIP NOW STANDING OFF A TAIWANESE PORT, WITH NEARLY 300 REFUGESSES ABOARD.

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/ MOST OF THEM

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MOST OF THEM CHILDREN. AS YOU KNOW, WE HAVE NO OFFICIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE AUTHORITIES THERE. IN THIS SITUATION, WHICH GETS WORSE, EACH DAY WITH THE EXODUS FROM VIETNAM, I WOULD GREATLY VALUE YOUR ADVICE AND HELP.

WE ARE APPEALING PUBLICLY FOR TAIWAN TO SHOW THE HUMANITY ALREADY EXTENDED BY MANY ASIAN NATIONS AND ACCEPT A FAIR PROPORTION OF REFUGEES. IT WOULD HELP TO KNOW IF YOU HAVE AN OPENING FOR REINFORCEING THIS WITH A PRIVATE APPEAL TO THE TAIWAN AUTHORITIES TO RESPOND TO WORLD CONCERN.

I WOULD WELCOME YOUR URGENT VIEWS AND ANY REPRESENTATIONS TO TAIWAN YOU ARE ABLE TO MAKE.

YOURS SINCERELY

MARGARET THATCHER

ENDS

CARRINGTON

FILES

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