

Turning now to the "Roachbank", I understand that the Taiwanese Government have said they will not take the refugees. The ship is bound for Hong Kong as her next port of call after Taiwan, and therefore we are faced with the "Sibonga" all over again, though in this case with 293 refugees compared with 982. Once again there will be the challenging problem of food and drink for these unfortunate people, and the awesome task for our officers and crew of trying to maintain hygiene and order.

There is the further commercial consideration that this ship has also now been off hire since the 25th May, and until the situation is resolved she cannot continue on her current Charter. The longer delay there is for us in the landing of the refugees the greater my anxiety becomes over the wider question of whether charterers will be inclined to take up British ships for voyages in the Far East which are due to pass through or near Vietnamese waters - an area which we have traditionally served for many years.

I do realise the agonising decisions which confront the Government in this matter, but I can assure you that I and my Company are doing everything we can to help. However I do feel that I must let you and your colleagues know the details of the position so far as it affects my ships and the consequent practical and commercial implications.

I earnestly beg that an early decision be taken to relieve us of this predicament.

I am sending a copy of this letter to the Home Secretary, the Foreign & Commonwealth Secretary and the Secretary of State for Trade.

Yours sincerely
Inverforth

The Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher, PC, MP,
The Prime Minister,
10 Downing Street,
London, S.W.1.