

CONFIDENTIAL

Ref. A09673

PRIME MINISTER

Refugees from Vietnam

(C(79) 15)

You will need to bear in mind that:-

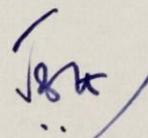
- (i) The Home Secretary's paper was written before your meeting with Ministers yesterday afternoon and therefore takes no account of the decisions reached and work commissioned at that meeting.
 - (ii) The subsequent correspondence from the FCO and Attorney General's office has only been copied to those who were at yesterday afternoon's meeting. (I understand that Mr. Cartledge is summarising this correspondence for you, so I will not do it again here.)
 - (iii) The Cabinet are thus unaware of developments since C(79) 15 was circulated.
2. Given the fact that the Cabinet have not seen all the relevant papers and also given the complexity of some of the legal issues involved, I doubt very much whether the Cabinet can reach detailed decisions tomorrow. If you agree, I think you will need to structure the discussion carefully to avoid unnecessary confusion.
3. I suggest that you might open the discussion yourself by saying that:-
- (a) Over the weekend you reached the conclusion that the Sibonga refugees (at Hong Kong) had to be admitted.
 - (b) You were unwilling to agree that the Roach Bank refugees (off Taiwan) should be admitted unless we could show how a line could be drawn there.
 - (c) A lot of detailed work has since gone on, but the position which emerges is neither clear nor satisfactory. The Cabinet are not therefore in a position to take final decisions. But you would like them to have up-to-date reports of what has been going on in the hope that they will then authorise you, in consultation with the Ministers directly concerned, to take these decisions.
4. You could then ask -
The Home Secretary if he wants to add anything to the paper.

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The Lord Privy Seal to report on the diplomatic action being taken with the Vietnamese, Taiwanese, other potential "host" countries, etc.

The Attorney General to report on the legal position.

5. Subject to any general feeling which the Cabinet may have, I think it will be necessary for you to have a further meeting of the small group of Ministers (but perhaps adding the Secretary of State for Trade in view of his responsibilities for shipping) to go through the outstanding detailed points and to take decisions.



JOHN HUNT

30th May, 1979