



PM/79/70

PRIME MINISTERPrime MinisterFor the UK, this has  
all come out very well.Agreed  
20/7Geneva Conference on Refugees in Indo-China

1. The results of the Geneva Conference on Refugees, which took place at the end of last week, have more than vindicated your decision to call for a meeting.
2. The preparations for the meeting focussed attention in a way that has led countries like Sweden and Yugoslavia, who would have preferred to remain neutral, to come into the open before the Conference and criticise Vietnam. These pressures led Vietnam, at Geneva, to take steps to curb what they call illegal emigration "for a reasonable time". This could mean everything or nothing: but since the Vietnamese hold that all the current emigrants leave Vietnam illegally, it offers some hope.
3. Although the Conference was primarily humanitarian, I thought it was vital to make it clear in my speech (enclosed) where the responsibility lay. Although many of the other speakers avoided direct criticism of Vietnam, the Americans, Canadians, Australians and Chinese all spoke forcibly. I believe that our political case was strengthened by our decision to take an additional number of refugees. As a result, the Vietnamese delegation did not succeed in their attempt to portray themselves as the hapless victims of a problem beyond their control. They had to make concessions not only because of the political pressures but also because they are in economic difficulties and are feeling the pinch as a result of the cut-off in aid. I think we can now afford to lower our profile on the whole issue of Vietnamese refugees, leaving it as far as possible to others to maintain the pressure on Vietnam.
4. One way would be, as I suggested in my speech, through an international commission composed of genuinely non-aligned and neutral countries from the region, which would supervise the orderly exodus of the refugees: another could be through a move to the Security Council, even if we were faced there with a Soviet



veto. Western members of the Council and ASEAN countries will need to concert about the next steps, which were summarised by Dr Waldheim in a four point plan of action:-

- (1) To reduce the backlog, both of boat and land people:
- (2) To expand the UNHCR/Vietnamese understanding of orderly departure, but not at the expense of those already in camps:
- (3) The idea of holding centres should be built on:
- (4) Rescue at sea was important and the UN would seek to co-ordinate the activities of special rescue ships.

5. The Geneva Conference has evoked a pledge of resettlement places totalling 260 thousand - double what was available two months ago. The Philippines have offered a transit centre for 50 thousand refugees which should ease the position on Hong Kong. The funds at the disposal of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees were increased by US\$190 million. Vietnam's responsibility for the refugee exodus has been fully exposed and she has lost the sympathy that she once enjoyed.

6. I am copying this minute to the other members of OD and to Sir John Hunt.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized letter 'C' with a horizontal line underneath it.

(CARRINGTON)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

24 July 1979

SPEECH BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS, THE RT HON THE LORD CARRINGTON, AT GENEVA ON FRIDAY 20 JULY 1979

I SHOULD LIKE FIRST TO EXPRESS MY GOVERNMENT'S GRATITUDE TO YOU, MR SECRETARY-GENERAL, FOR INVITING US HERE TODAY FOLLOWING MY PRIME MINISTER'S APPEAL ON 30 (THIRTY) MAY. I PAY TRIBUTE AS WELL TO THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES, WHOSE WORK HAS HELPED US TO FOCUS ON THE STARK REALITIES OF THIS UNPRECEDENTED CRISIS.

NOT IN THIS GENERATION HAVE SUCH VAST NUMBERS OF PEOPLE RISKED DEATH AND DESTITUTION TO LEAVE THEIR COUNTRY IN THE HOPE OF FINDING REFUGE ABROAD. YOU HAVE SEEN THE MISERY OF THOSE WHO ARE WAITING IN THAILAND AFTER CROSSING THE FRONTIERS OF LAOS AND KAMPUCHEA IN THEIR TENS OF THOUSANDS. I HAVE JUST RETURNED FROM HONG KONG, WHERE OVER SIXTY-SIX THOUSAND PEOPLE HAVE FOUND TEMPORARY SANCTUARY IN THAT TINY AND OVER-CROWDED TERRITORY AFTER PERILOUS JOURNEYS IN THEIR UNSEAWORTHY CRAFT.

WE CAN HAVE NO DOUBT ABOUT THE SCALE OF HUMAN SUFFERING INVOLVED. I HAVE SEEN IT FOR MYSELF. OUR AIMS AT THIS CONFERENCE MUST BE TO FIND WAYS TO ALLEVIATE THAT SUFFERING. FIRSTLY BY GETTING THE GOVERNMENT OF VIETNAM TO EXERCISE A HUMANE POLICY IN RESPECT OF ITS OWN PEOPLE AND SECONDLY BY FINDING WAYS OF SHARING THROUGHOUT THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY THE UNFAIR BURDEN WHICH IS NOW BEING BORNE BY HONG KONG AND THE COUNTRIES OF SOUTH EAST ASIA. WE DO NOT THINK THAT THIS PURPOSE CAN BE SERVED BY RAKING OVER PAST HISTORY.

/ IT HAS, HOWEVER,

IT HAS, HOWEVER, BEEN ALLEGED THAT THE REFUGEES ARE BOURGEOIS DROPOUTS WHO CANNOT ADJUST TO THE NEW VIETNAMESE REALITY: THAT THEY DID NOT HAVE TO LEAVE: THAT THEY LEFT ILLEGALLY: THAT IT IS ALL THE CONSEQUENCE OF COLONIALISM OR A PLOT OF THE WESTERN CAPITALISTS AND THE CHINESE.

MR SECRETARY-GENERAL, THESE ARGUMENTS ARE HEARTLESS. MOREOVER, THEY ARE IRRELEVANT. IT IS NOT THE PRACTICE OF BRITISH MINISTERS TO COMMENT ON THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF OTHER COUNTRIES. BUT I AM BOUND TO WONDER WHAT LIES BEHIND THIS EXODUS, AND WHY TENS OF THOUSANDS OF MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN - PERHAPS AS MANY AS THE WHOLE POPULATION OF GENEVA - HAVE DIED IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA BECAUSE THEY COULD NOT, OR WOULD NOT, CONTINUE LIVING IN THEIR OWN COUNTRY. THEY HAVE BEEN DRIVEN OUT BY NO NATURAL DISASTER. ONE CAN ONLY CONCLUDE THAT THEY HAVE LEFT BECAUSE THE POLICIES OF THE VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT MADE IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR THEM TO REMAIN. AND THEIR FATE, CAUSED BY THE POLICIES OF THE VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT, IS NOW THE INTERNATIONAL CONCERN OF US ALL.

THE VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT IS NOW PROPOSING THAT ITS EXTREMELY LIMITED SEVEN-POINT UNDERSTANDING WITH THE UNHCR, TOTALLY INADEQUATE IN SCALE, SHOULD BE IMPLEMENTED WHICH I TAKE TO MEAN FAMILY REUNION SHOULD BE EXPANDED TO PROVIDE FOR ORDERLY DEPARTURE OF ALL THOSE WHO WISH TO LEAVE VIETNAM. THIS IS A SUGGESTION THAT THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY WILL NEED TO STUDY WITH GREAT ATTENTION AND I HAVE AS OF NOW ONLY TWO COMMENTS. FIRST, VIETNAM MUST ACKNOWLEDGE THAT NO COUNTRY HAS THE RIGHT TO FORCE ON OTHER COUNTRIES A SECTOR OF ITS OWN POPULATION WHICH IT NO LONGER WANTS WITHIN ITS BORDERS. ANY LONG-TERM PROGRAMME FOR THE ORDERLY DEPARTURE OF PEOPLE WHO WISH TO LEAVE VIETNAM MUST BE SEEN TO BE JUST AND FAIR. IT MUST BE TRULY VOLUNTARY, WITH NO ELEMENT OF OPEN OR HIDDEN COMPULSION. THOSE WHO WISH TO LEAVE MUST BE ALLOWED TO CONTINUE THEIR NORMAL LIVES IN VIETNAM WHILE THEY AWAIT DEPARTURE. THERE SHOULD BE NO NEED FOR CAMPS IN VIETNAM. IF THEY LEAVE THERE MUST BE ARRANGEMENTS TO ENSURE THAT THEY DO SO IN NUMBERS AND AT TIMES WHICH THE REST OF THE WORLD CAN ABSORB.

SECONDLY, THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY WHICH IS TRYING TO LIFT THE BURDEN OF REFUGEES IN THE COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES OF FIRST ASYLUM MUST NOW EXPECT VIETNAM TO CEASE THE PRESSURES ON THOSE PEOPLE

WHO ARE BEING FORCED TO FLEE SO THAT THEY STOP THEIR FLIGHT. THE WORLD NEEDS SUFFICIENT TIME FOR THOSE REFUGEES ALREADY IN SOUTH-EAST ASIA AND HONG KONG TO BE RESETTLED. THIS IS AN URGENT REQUIREMENT. VIETNAM MUST RESPOND TO IT AND THEREBY SHOW THAT THE WORLD CAN RELY ON ITS ASSURANCES.

MR SECRETARY-GENERAL, WE CANNOT HOPE TO RESOLVE ALL THE ASPECTS OF THIS TRAGEDY BEFORE WE LEAVE THIS CONFERENCE. BUT WE LOOK TO YOU TO GIVE US A CLEAR DIRECTION FOR THE FOLLOWING MONTHS. I SUGGEST THAT WE NEED FIRST TO ENSURE THAT EXISTING PRESSURES ARE EASED. FOR THIS TIME WE NEED COMMITMENTS FROM COUNTRIES OUTSIDE THE AREA TO RECEIVE REFUGEES FOR FINAL SETTLEMENT AND TO CONTRIBUTE GENEROUSLY TO THE EVER-ESCALATING COSTS. SECONDLY, WE NEED TO LOOK AT PROPOSALS TO BRING ORDER INTO THE FLOW OF REFUGEES FROM VIETNAM SO THAT THE PRESENT APPALLING LOSS OF LIFE IS ARRESTED. THIRDLY, WE NEED TO REASSERT THE PRINCIPLES OF FIRST ASYLUM AND THE SAFETY OF LIFE AT SEA WHICH HAVE COME UNDER SUCH STRAIN AS THE PRESENT CRISIS HAS GROWN.

IN THE RESETTLEMENT ARRANGEMENTS THERE MUST BE NO JUMPING OF THE ALREADY OVERLONG QUEUE OF PEOPLE AWAITING RESETTLEMENT IN HONG KONG AND SOUTH-EAST ASIA. INTERNATIONAL PARTICIPATION IS AN ESSENTIAL PART OF ANY SCHEME.

IF OTHERS AGREE, SUCH PARTICIPATION COULD BEST BE CONDUCTED THROUGH A COMMISSION DRAWN FROM A SMALL NUMBER OF NEUTRAL AND NON-ALIGNED COUNTRIES. THIS COMMISSION WOULD WORK CLOSELY WITH THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES AND THE VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT TO SET UP AND MANAGE ACCEPTABLE ARRANGEMENTS FOR HANDLING PEOPLE WHO WISH TO LEAVE VIETNAM.

THE SAME COMMISSION, OR ONE LIKE IT, SHOULD ALSO TACKLE THE PLIGHT OF THOSE WHO WISH TO LEAVE LAOS AND CAMBODIA. THE PRESSURE ON THAILAND IS ALREADY ACUTE. IT COULD BECOME INTOLERABLE IF FIGHTING CONTINUES IN CAMBODIA AND IF THERE IS A SERIOUS FAMINE THERE. THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY MUST DO WHAT IT CAN IMMEDIATELY TO PROVIDE FOOD FOR THE STARVING UNDER EFFECTIVE INTERNATIONAL SUPERVISION. THERE MUST BE AN END TO THE FIGHTING. A POLITICAL SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEMS OF THIS MISERABLE AND WAR-RAVAGED COUNTRY MUST BE FOUND.

IN THE CONTEXT OF ORDERLY DEPARTURE, MY GOVERNMENT SUPPORTS THE PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH LARGE TRANSIT CENTRES TO PROVIDE TEMPORARY HOMES MEANWHILE, AND WE SHALL COOPERATE WITH THE HIGH COMMISSIONER AND THE GOVERNMENTS DIRECTLY INVOLVED.

BUT THESE TEMPORARY HOMES MUST NOT BE ALLOWED TO BECOME PERMANENT. IT IS TOO EASY TO FAIL TO FOLLOW THROUGH, TO LEAVE MASSES OF PEOPLE TO GROW DEMORALISED IN CAMPS AS THE MONTHS GROW INTO YEARS. WE SHOULD TAKE FURTHER STEPS TO REUNITE THOSE FAMILIES WHICH HAVE BEEN SEPARATED.

THE WORLD MUST DO ITS UTMOST TO GIVE PERMANENT HOMES AND A LIVELIHOOD TO THE REFUGEES, AND TO FINANCE THE COSTS. THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, FRANCE, AND THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA HAVE ALREADY DONE A GREAT DEAL. MANY OTHER COUNTRIES HAVE ALSO MADE NOTABLE CONTRIBUTIONS.

MY OWN COUNTRY IS IN A UNIQUE POSITION. WE HAVE A PARTICULAR RESPONSIBILITY FOR HONG KONG, WHICH HAS TAKEN ALL THE REFUGEES WHO HAVE REACHED ITS SHORES. NONE HAS BEEN TURNED AWAY. I HAVE SEEN FOR MYSELF HOW GOOD THE ARRANGEMENTS ARE. WE INTEND TO ACCEPT OUR SHARE OF REFUGEES FOR FINAL SETTLEMENT. WE SHALL TAKE INTO BRITAIN OVER THE COMING MONTHS A FURTHER TEN THOUSAND REFUGEES, AS THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES HAS REQUESTED. SUBJECT TO THE APPROVAL OF THE UNITED KINGDOM PARLIAMENT, WE SHALL ALSO MAKE AVAILABLE A FURTHER FIVE MILLION POUNDS OVER THE NEXT TWELVE MONTHS FOR DEALING WITH THE REFUGEE PROBLEM. BECAUSE HONG KONG'S RESOURCES ARE ALREADY STRETCHED TO THE LIMIT, AND THE NUMBERS OF REFUGEES THERE HAS CONTINUED TO INCREASE, WE SHALL ALLOCATE ALL OUR PLACES TO HONG KONG. I HOPE THAT OTHER COUNTRIES WILL ALSO COMMIT THEMSELVES TO DOING MORE FOR HONG KONG, WHICH NOW HAS NEARLY ONE THIRD OF ALL BOAT REFUGEES IN CAMPS IN SOUTH-EAST ASIA.

WE SHOULD WORK OUT EFFECTIVE PROGRAMMES FOR THE RESETTLEMENT OF REFUGEES IN DEVELOPING AS WELL AS MORE OF THE DEVELOPED COUNTRIES. MANY OF THE REFUGEES COULD MAKE A VALUABLE CONTRIBUTION TO THE PROSPERITY OF THESE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES BUT WE RECOGNISE THAT THESE COUNTRIES WILL REQUIRE FINANCIAL AND OTHER ASSISTANCE IN RESETTLEMENT.

WE MUST REASSERT THE ACCEPTED PRINCIPLES OF INTERNATIONAL BEHAVIOR GOVERNING TEMPORARY ASYLUM FOR PEOPLE WHOSE LIVES ARE IN DANGER, AND THE OBLIGATION TO SAVE LIFE AT SEA. THESE PRINCIPLES WERE NOT DESIGNED TO COPE WITH A MAN-MADE DISASTER OF THE SIZE WE ARE NOW WITNESSING. IT IS NOT SURPRISING IF THEY HAVE BROKEN DOWN HERE AND THERE UNDER THE PRESSURE OF WHAT SEEMS TO BE AN ENDLESS INFLUX OF REFUGEES. BUT WE MUST UPHOLD AND REASSERT THEM AS BEST WE CAN IF WE ARE TO PRESERVE THE FABRIC OF CIVILISED INTERNATIONAL LIFE. THE RESPONSIBILITY FALLS NOT ONLY ON THE COUNTRIES OF THE AREA, AND THE CAPTAINS OF VESSELS IN THE SEAS AROUND VIETNAM. IT FALLS ALSO ON POTENTIAL HOST COUNTRIES BECAUSE THESE RESPONSIBILITIES ARE HARD TO FULFILL UNLESS RESETTLEMENT PROGRAMMES ARE ADEQUATE.

MR SECRETARY-GENERAL, IN COMMON WITH MOST OF THOSE IN THIS ROOM I AM ACUTELY CONSCIOUS OF THE EXPECTATIONS WHICH THIS CONFERENCE HAS AROUSED - AMONG THE PEOPLE OF CHINA, SOUTH-EAST ASIA, AND HONG KONG; AMONG THE REFUGEES; AMONG THE GOVERNMENTS WHICH NOW SUPPORT THEM. WE OWE THESE PEOPLE A CLEAR SIGNAL THAT RELIEF IS ON THE WAY. I CANNOT BELIEVE THAT WE SHALL DISPERSE WITHOUT SUCH A SIGNAL.