

PRIME MINISTER

As usual when I am on duty, there is a refugee issue this weekend.

I understand that a British merchant vessel has picked up 52 boat people, reportedly from a burning wreck. A number of refugees are said to require urgent hospital treatment. The British vessel is about 150 miles from Singapore. We have been asked to give a guarantee that these refugees would ultimately be accepted in the UK, so that the Singapore authorities will be prepared to take them ashore urgently for hospital treatment.

Presumably the 52 would count against the agreed UK quota for refugees. This will mean that this action is at the expense of the same number of refugees from Hong Kong. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary is aware of this, but sees no other solution, given agreed UK policy. I understand that the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Home Secretary have been in touch, and have jointly recommended that you should agree that the British Government should offer the required guarantee. I attach a note from the FCO setting out the background.

Do you agree that Lord Carrington should provide the requested guarantee?

*Yes - at once
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Mike Pattison

6 October 1979

*Informed FCO duty clerk 10pm 6 October
FCO to cable Singapore.*

Mr Alexander to see

Phms

MP 8/x