



Vietnam

PRIME MINISTER

We are now in sight of fulfilling the commitment we made to the special programme for Vietnamese refugees at the Geneva Conference in July 1979 called by Dr Waldheim on your initiative. I have sent a small team to Hong Kong to select the final batch from the camps there.

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When the Cabinet agreed on 12 July 1979 that we should take a further 10,000 refugees it was recorded that our help should be concentrated on Hong Kong but that the figure was to include any picked up at sea by our ships. We could not in the nature of the case estimate how many rescues at sea there might be: it has turned out to be about 700.

The presentation of our commitment at the Geneva Conference and since has laid emphasis on the figure of 10,000 and the fact that they will be accepted from Hong Kong. It would hardly be practicable in international circles to keep a running total of deductions for rescues at sea. So Hong Kong, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other countries, notably the U.S. who have regularly and closely watched our performance, are expecting the full 10,000 to come from Hong Kong.

I am anxious to draw a line under our Geneva undertaking. (Rescues at sea will continue to present a problem.) It may be easier to do this if we can avoid a haggle with Hong Kong about the exact numbers we are to take. It may not amount to the full 10,000 anyway because the numbers remaining who would like to come to the U.K. are probably now small and some of those selected are dropping out. If we are prepared not to insist on deducting the boat rescues there would be advantage in my sending instructions to the selection team which will enable them to bring the total up to 10,000 if in fact sufficient candidates come forward. We can then concentrate on running down the reception camps in this country.

DS/E // The matter ought I think to be raised in Cabinet, but you might like to have a word first with the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and me.

I am sending a copy of this minute to him and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

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