



Note - we may
have to take 2
Fulford
10/11/42
not

(2)

QUEEN ANNE'S GATE LONDON SW1H 9AT

Dear Peter

3 April 1942

Prime Minister

To note

M 5/4

POLAND

As you know, a reply is still outstanding to the Austrian appeal to sympathetic States to share her burden of some 40,000 Poles presently accommodated in reception camps there. More recently, the Polish military government has indicated its intention to enforce exile on some, or all, of the estimated 4,000 Poles who have been detained without trial since the declaration of martial law. In addition, there are estimated to be some 2,000 Poles in the United Kingdom on a temporary basis whose departure we have agreed will not be enforced in the absence of a significant improvement in Poland.

Against this background our officials met recently to discuss the Polish situation and to formulate priorities and proposals which might be implemented to deal with these three categories.

Poles in the United Kingdom

It would be prudent to assume that Poles who are already in the United Kingdom are potential settlement cases. Giving them extensions of stay has so far avoided applications for political asylum. If and when we seek to return them to Poland, however, applications for political asylum are likely to follow and we are under the obligations imposed by the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees to protect those who are (or might be) recognised as refugees from return to the country where persecution is feared. About half of the 2,000 might be able to establish a case for refugee recognition. The final settlement figure might be up to three times as great if the Poles subsequently allowed dependents and family members to leave the country to join those who had settled here.

Resources

Poles on our own territory must be our first priority. There is no obligation on us in respect of the other two groups of Poles and our response is a matter for our discretion. I need not rehearse in this letter the general arguments for limiting immigration, though there would not be lacking those who contrasted a generous exercise of discretion in favour of Poles with our restrictions on the entry of United Kingdom Passport Holders in India, but we need to have regard to possible demands on resources if we admit Poles from Poland or Austria as refugees.

Some reception provision would be unavoidable unless sponsorship could underwrite the whole of the cost from landing in Britain onwards (which is unlikely). This would mean Supplementary Estimates. Our

/most

most recent experience is of the Vietnamese programme for the quota of 11,500, 300 boat rescues and family dependants, which is estimated to have cost some £14 million from the Home Office vote since 1979, with a further £1.7 million budgeted for 1982/83. Taking account of social security benefits and other statutory entitlements, the total cost so far to central government of the Vietnamese exercise is likely to approach £30 million.

Furthermore, the availability of housing would be crucial if the need to maintain long-term reception centre accommodation was to be avoided. We should have to rely on the goodwill of local authorities, and the Vietnamese programme - in which housing was a major problem - has already put this under strain. We cannot count on the resident Polish population involving themselves in the long-term settlement of those (together with their dependants) with whom they have no connection other than common nationality.

Detainees in Poland and Poles in Austria

As to those detained in Poland, we must envisage the possibility that the Polish Government will not be influenced by protests from the West at the enforced exile of Polish nationals. The U.S. Government wishes to be prepared for such a circumstance in suggesting the establishment of a single non-Governmental authority for the processing of resettlement cases. We agree with the principle but believe that the I.C.R.C. would be preferable to the Inter-Governmental Committee on Migration (I.C.M.) which is not so universally representative of potential receiving States. We would also feel obliged to participate, in however a small degree, in a resettlement programme for Polish detainees.

Our participation would, however, need to be conditioned by our limited capacity to involve ourselves in a further refugee programme. I previously proposed the following criteria for any participation by us in a resettlement programme for Poles in Austria: (i) any Pole seeking resettlement here should be properly recognised as a refugee in accordance with the definition contained in the 1951 Convention; (ii) we should accept only those recognised refugees for whom, by ties of family, education or language the United Kingdom is the most appropriate country of resettlement; (iii) we should look for private sponsorship for those wishing to come here; and (iv) individual applications should be acceptable from the point of view of national security. If we participate in a resettlement programme for Polish detainees, I propose that we should operate these criteria with two modifications. First, the refugee recognition procedure does not apply to people who are in their own country and could not be applied. Secondly, we should require sponsorship in this country to include accommodation, if necessary for an indefinite period. Such a requirement would, of itself, imply that the tie with this country, which makes it the appropriate country of resettlement, will be substantial.

The Austrian Appeal

Finally it is against the background of all these factors that we need to decide our response to the Austrian appeal. Those who are already outside Poland are safe from persecution, detention and

/the rigours

the rigours of martial law and economic stringency. The Austrian appeal therefore lags far behind our responsibility for Poles already in the United Kingdom and those for whom the price of freedom is exile. Furthermore, the initial response of other countries to the Austrian appeal can best be described as guarded. It would seem that four of our European partners have indicated that they will take about 100 Poles from Austria, while France, Belgium and the F.R.G. have as yet done no more than draw attention to the large number of Poles already in their countries. The response by the U.S., Australia and Canada - countries which, unlike the United Kingdom, are countries of immigration - must be viewed against their annual intake of refugees from Eastern Europe. Nevertheless, I would still be content that we should reply to the Austrians on the basis of the criteria set out in paragraph 8 above provided that these are strictly applied (and sponsorship again includes accommodation).

I think that this is as far as we can reasonably be expected to take this at the present time, though I should be prepared to reconsider the matter again in the light of events and of the response made by other countries.

If you are content, the way is open to our officials to draft a reply to the Austrians along the lines indicated. You may feel that any announcement about Polish detainees would be inappropriate at a time when the efforts of Western nations are directed towards changing Polish policy, but I suggest that our officials draft a text of an arranged Parliamentary Question and Written Answer on our response to the Austrians for our consideration.

I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister, members of H Committee and Sir Robert Armstrong.

*My
letter*

45 APR 1982



1