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30084

PREM 19/2894

Vietnamese Refugees.

PART 4

VIETNAM

Part 1: May 1979

Part 4: March 1981.

PREM 19/2894

Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date
~~31.3.81~~		~~8.4.87~~					
~~5.5.81~~		~~8.5.87~~					
~~14.5.87~~		~~1.6.87~~					
~~20.5.87~~		~~6.10.87~~					
~~6.7.81~~		~~21.10.87~~					
~~15.7.87~~		~~18.5.88~~					
~~3.8.81~~		~~2.6.88~~					
~~1.9.81~~		~~5.9.88~~					
~~21.1.83~~		~~17.10.88~~					
~~20.2.83~~		~~5.12.88~~					
~~6.5.88~~		~~21.12.88~~					
~~25.9.85~~		~~29.12.88~~					
~~13.2.87~~		~~30.12.88~~					
~~20.2.87~~		~~9.1.89~~					
~~1.4.87~~		~~22.2.89~~					
~~6.4.87~~		~~9.5.89~~					
~~9.10.87~~		~~6.6.89~~					
~~24.4.87~~		~~9.6.89~~					
~~22.4.87~~		29.6.89					
~~23.4.87~~		A4					
~~8.5.87~~		ends					

PART 4 ends:-

GST to FCS 29.6.89

PART 5 begins:-

J. GREENSTOCK to CDP. 13.7.89

cst.ps/2jm29.6/drft

CONFIDENTIAL

Treasury Chambers, Parliament Street, SW1P 3AG

The Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey Howe QC MP
Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs
Foreign & Commonwealth Office
King Charles Street
London
SW1A 2AH

29 June 1989

Dear Foreign Secretary,

VIETNAMESE BOAT PEOPLE IN HONG KONG

Thank you for your minute of 25 June in which you explain the need for a bilateral scheme for repatriating non-volunteers to Vietnam.

I recognise that the costs of such a scheme are likely to have to fall on the UK, though I am glad that you expect the Hong Kong Government to agree to share the burden with us in equal parts. But I am not clear what assurance we have that news of repatriation payments will not encourage still more Vietnamese to attempt flight in the hope of being repatriated. It might not be a reasonable reaction on their part but their choices may not be much influenced by reason. I take it that this will be an aspect of the proposals which you will be exploring very fully with Nguyen Co Thach and that you will also be impressing upon him the importance of the measures set out in the Comprehensive Plan of Action for the Vietnamese authorities to take for deterring clandestine departures. You will also, no doubt, be arranging to monitor the working of the scheme and verify that it is not having perverse effects.

On that understanding I am ready to agree in principle to provide, if necessary, from the 1989-90 Reserve, up to around £4 million for the current-year costs of the scheme. But after a year there must be a full Review to establish the cost-effectiveness of the scheme before I would be prepared to offer any further expenditure on this.

I am copying this letter to all Members of OD(K) and to Sir Percy Cradock and Sir Robin Butler.

Yours sincerely,

P. Wales

pp JOHN MAJOR

[Approved by the Chief Secretary and signed in his absence.]

VIETNAM : Refugees PT4

(2)

PRIME MINISTER

VIETNAMESE BOAT PEOPLE

You will wish to see the Foreign Secretary's Memorandum on the outcome of the International Conference on Indo-Chinese Refugees.

The main points are:

- so far as genuine refugees are concerned, the Conference was a success. Resettlement pledges totalled 57,600. The Philippines agreed to set up a Regional Processing Centre. The priority now is to get it working quickly, in order to reduce the burden on Hong Kong;

- but the outcome was much less satisfactory on economic migrants. The Americans blocked forcible repatriation, and seem to believe that holding existing economic migrants in camps indefinitely will deter others from coming (which it plainly does not);

- but an arrangement has been stitched up with the Vietnamese themselves for a sort of mandatory repatriation, although without any compulsion(!) It is hard to have much confidence in it; but the Foreign Secretary wants to give it a try;

- the costs of repatriation itself and repatriation assistance (i.e. aid) are about $1000 a head. The Foreign Secretary proposes that the UK and Hong Kong split this. He is looking to the Treasury for help;

- much now depends whether the rate of new arrivals falls away for a sustained period (it has actually declined recently);

- meanwhile the option of terminating first asylum remains, but is unlikely to be invoked for several months at least.

C D.P

(C.D. POWELL)

24 June 1989

FCS/89/134

CHIEF SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY

Vietnamese Boat People in Hong Kong

1. I was most grateful for your letter of 12 June and the conditional offer of £5 million from the 1989/90 Reserve towards the proposed Regional Processing Centre. As my memorandum (OD(K)89)(3)) on the outcome of the Conference explains, this played an important part in getting that particular objective off the ground.

2. I am now writing about reintegration assistance to non-voluntary returnees from Hong Kong, which we will need to offer if the Vietnamese Government are to be persuaded to cooperate in a mandatory repatriation scheme. As you know, the Vietnamese Foreign Minister is visiting London on 28/29 June and I would like to be in a position to explain to him what we have in mind.

3. You will recall that OD on 8 June laid down the objective of securing compulsory repatriation to Vietnam of those identified as non-refugees, backed by appropriate international funding. Given the bilateral nature of our present negotiations with the Vietnamese (and the opposition of the Americans, UNHCR and others to mandatory repatriation), I do not hold out any hope of acquiring international funding at this stage, however desirable this may be. I believe that we have no alternative but to source integration assistance for a

/bilateral

bilateral repatriation programme from HMG and Hong Kong Government funds. The Governor has told us that if we would be willing to provide 50% of any repatriation costs, he judges that an approach to the Finance Committee in Hong Kong for a matching 50% would be successful.

4. There is already a scheme for those who volunteer to return to Vietnam, administered by the UNHCR, which provides roughly US$1,000 per person for travel costs, clothing and essential equipment. This is being funded by a UNHCR appeal to which a number of countries, notably Japan, responded. I would like to propose to the Vietnamese that as far as possible we use this scheme as a model.

5. The total cost of such a programme is difficult to estimate because it depends on how many Vietnamese volunteer (and become a charge on the international community through UNHCR) and how many are returned under our scheme. The worst case would be to assume that all returnees were non-voluntary in which case the total figure would be in the region of US$30 million, at US$1,000 per person for the roughly 30,000 arrivals in Hong Kong since screening was introduced last June, the majority of which are likely to be screened out. Split with the Government of Hong Kong, this would involve a UK contribution of US$15 million for the duration of the repatriation programme. The rate of disbursement would depend on the rate at which people were screened out and sent home. This could rise to 400 per week by September. On this basis and assuming that 12,000 people are repatriated by the end fo the financial year, the UK commitment for reintegration assistance would be US$6 million in 1989/90. However, the actual figure for returnees over this period is likely to be much less

/than

than that, and the cost correspondingly less. A key point is that this would be an investment in the final solution of this problem; repatriation is critical to deterring the exodus to Hong Kong.

6. I hope you are content that I should make an offer to Thach on 28 June along these lines, and above all that this should be funded, as appropriate, from the Reserve.

7. I am copying this minute to all Members of OD(K), and to Sir Percy Cradock and Sir Robin Butler.

(GEOFFREY HOWE)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office
25 June 1989

VIGTNAM: Utrages PT4.

No10.

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INFO PRIORITY WASHINGTON, CANBERRA, OTTAWA, PARIS, UKMIS NEW YORK
INFO PRIORITY JAKARTA, SINGAPORE, BANGKOK, MANILA
INFO PRIORITY BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, KUALA LUMPUR

FROM PRIVATE SECRETARY

VIETNAMESE BOAT PEOPLE: ICIR: SECRETARY OF STATE'S MEETING WITH VIETNAMESE FOREIGN MINISTER

1. THE SECRETARY OF STATE HAD A 20-MINUTE MEETING WITH THACH ON 13 JUNE JUST BEFORE ADDRESSING THE CONFERENCE.

2. THACH IMMEDIATELY REFERRED TO HIS OWN SPEECH EALIER IN THE DAY EXPRESSING READINESS TO NEGOTIATE. WE HAD TO SHARE THE BURDEN OF THE BOAT PEOPLE. THE QUESTION WAS HOW TO DO THIS WITHOUT VIOLATING THE PRINCIPLE THAT PEOPLE SHOULD BE FREE TO CHOOSE THE COUNTRY IN WHICH THEY WISHED TO LIVE. THE SECRETARY OF STATE SAID THAT THIS WAS A HELPFUL START. BUT THE FREEDOM TO CHOOSE WHERE TO LIVE HAD TO BE BALANCED WITH THE RIGHT OF COUNTRIES TO DETERMINE THEIR OWN IMMIGRATION POLICY. IF PEOPLE DID NOT QUALIFY AS REFUGEES, COUNTRIES SHOULD BE ABLE TO RETURN THEM TO THEIR PLACE OF ORIGIN. HE EXPLAINED THE PRESSURES ON HONG KONG. IT WAS IMPORTANT NOW TO RESETTLE THE REFUGEES AND TO ESTABLISH FIRMLY THAT NON-REFUGEES SHOULD RETURN TO VIETNAM AND VIETNAM SHOULD ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR ITS OWN PEOPLE.

3. THACH SAID HE HAD BEEN CONSIDERING HOW TO TAKE THEM BACK. HE WAS NOT AGAINST REPATRIATION BUT IT SHOULD BE DONE WITHOUT FORCE. A VERY PRAGMATIC APPROACH WAS NEEDED. IF FORCE WAS USED, PEOPLE WOULD LEAVE AGAIN, BECOME RECIDIVISTS AND THUS NEED TO BE SEVERELY PUNISHED.

4. THE SECRETARY OF STATE AND THE GOVERNOR EXPLAINED THAT EXPERIENCE SHOWED THAT VERY FEW BOAT PEOPLE WOULD VOLUNTEER TO GO BACK. IT WOULD NOT SOLVE THE PROBLEM. THACH SAID HE UNDERSTOOD. THE GOVERNOR ADDED THAT ALTHOUGH MOST BOAT PEOPLE DID NOT WANT TO GO

BACK, IF THEY KNEW THERE WAS NO ALTERNATIVE AND NO MALTREATMENT THEY WOULD AGREE TO GO BACK. THIS WAS HONG KONG'S EXPERIENCE IN RETURNING 40 TO 50 PEOPLE TO CHINA EACH DAY. HE SUGGESTED THAT WE MIGHT START WITH A SIMILARLY SMALL NUMBER. BIG PROBLEMS COULD OFTEN BE SOLVED IF YOU STARTED IN A SMALL WAY.

5. THACH AGREED THAT WE SHOULD START WITH A SMALL NUMBER OF PEOPLE. THEY WOULD HAVE TO BE TREATED VERY WELL AND PERSUADED THAT THERE WAS NO OTHER CHOICE. THEY SHOULD BE CAREFULLLY SELECTED, AVOIDING QUOTE YOUNG, HARD-CORE UNQUOTE TYPES WHO WOULD BE HOSTILE. THE GROUP MIGHT CONSIST OF THE OLD, WOMEN AND CHILDREN. THACH SAID THAT HE ACCEPTED THIS IDEA BUT OBSERVED THAT THE RETURNEES WOULD NEED FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO OFFER THEM A BETTER LIFE THAN IN A CAMP. THE SECRETARY OF STATE SAID THAT WE WOULD BE READY TO LOOK AT A SCHEME SIMILAR TO THAT FOR THE REPATRIATION OF VOLUNTARY RETURNEES THROUGH UNHCR. IF UNHCR WOULD NOT HELP, ICM MIGHT. IF VIETNAM COULD RESPOND IN THIS WAY, IT WOULD HELP RAISE THE INTERNATIONAL STANDING OF VIETNAM. IT WAS AGREED THAT EXPERTS ON BOTH SIDES WOULD DISCUSS FURTHER TOMORROW AND THAT MINISTERS (THACH AND LORD GLENARTHUR) WOULD REVIEW THEIR WORK.

6. THACH SAID THAT HE HAD WANTED TO GO TO LONDON FOR TALKS WITH THE SECRETARY OF STATE BUT WONDERED WHETHER THEY WOULD BE NECESSARY IF THEY NOW REACHED AGREEMENT. THE SECRETARY OF STATE SAID THAT THACH WOULD BE WELCOME IN LONDON AT THE END OF THE MONTH IF IT WAS THOUGHT TO BE USEFUL. IT WAS AGREED TO REVIEW THE POSITION IN THE LIGHT OF PROGRESS OVER THE NEXT DAY OR SO.

7. SEE MIFT FOR DISCUSSION OF CAMBODIA.

SANKEY

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PS/LORD GLENARTHUR
PS/MR PATTEN ODA

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cc PC

OD

Treasury Chambers, Parliament Street, SW1P 3AG

CDP 13/6

The Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey Howe QC MP
Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs
Foreign & Commonwealth Office
King Charles Street
London
SW1A 2AH

12th June 1989

Dear Geoffrey,

VIETNAMESE BOAT PEOPLE IN HONG KONG

This is to confirm my agreement to your proposal that the UK should be ready if necessary to make a conditional offer, at the conference in Geneva on 13/14 June of up to £5 million as a UK contribution towards the proposed Regional Processing Centre, the required amount to be found from the 1989-90 Reserve. I accepted that it might be necessary for us to make such an offer in order to get agreement to the Centre being set up; and I agreed that we should make the offer only on the condition that other countries came up with the rest of the cost of the Centre. There should also be clear movement towards agreement of the full package of proposals that we are seeking to secure at the conference. However, as we agreed in OD on Thursday, it would not be sensible to commit ourselves to any further public expenditure until we see whether the conference leads towards an internationally agreed workable solution. If, therefore the package of proposals falls our offer should fall too.

I hope this will help to achieve a successful outcome to the conference.

I am copying this letter to members of OD, to Chris Patten and to Sir Robin Butler.

Yours Ever, John

JOHN MAJOR

file

SECRET

10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

11 June 1989

Dear President Clerk,

I enclose the Prime Minister's message to President Bush on the Vietnamese boat people in the form which it issued. As you will see, we made some fairly minor amendments.

Yours sincerely,

Charles Powell

T.M. Dowse, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

SECRET

The National Archives

DEPARTMENT/SERIES PREM 19 PIECE/ITEM 2896 (one piece/item number)	Date and sign
Extract details: Message (T110B/89) - and two drafts - from Prime Minister to President Bush dated 11 June 1989	
CLOSED UNDER FOI EXEMPTION	
RETAINED UNDER SECTION 3(4) OF THE PUBLIC RECORDS ACT 1958	
TEMPORARILY RETAINED	12 November 2016
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Faxed to Chequers. 10/6

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

10 June 1989

C D Powell Esq
10 Downing Street

12/6

Dear Charles.

Vietnamese Boat People

The Foreign Secretary is sending messages in advance of next week's Geneva Conference to the Japanese Prime Minister, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and the Foreign Minsiters of Australia, Canada, France and the six ASEAN countries and Vietnam.

It will be vital to our prospects of securing our objectives to obtain US support. The Foreign Secretary recommends a message from the Prime Minister ... to President Bush. I enclose a draft.

Yours ever,

T M Dowse
Resident Clerk

CONFIDENTIAL

DSR 11 (Revised)

CONFIDENTIAL

DRAFT: minute/letter/teleletter/despatch/note

TYPE: Draft/Final 1+

FROM:
Prime Minister

DEPARTMENT: TEL. NO:

Reference

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

Top Secret
Secret
Confidential
Restricted
Unclassified

TO:
President Bush

Your Reference

Copies to:

PRIVACY MARKING

.....In Confidence

CAVEAT.....

SUBJECT:

During your recent visit to London I spoke to you about the difficulties for Hong Kong caused by the massive influx of new arrivals of Vietnamese boat people. I said that we simply could not let this continue. Unless the Geneva Conference on Indo-Chinese Refugees came up with a solution involving repatriation, we might simply have to prevent any further boat people from landing.

Since we met, the appalling events in China have added to the political, psychological and emotional pressures on Hong Kong. And, far from slackening, the rate of Vietnamese boat people arrivals has continued to increase dramatically. I have to tell you that the ability of the Hong Kong authorities to cope is now seriously in doubt.

Enclosures—flag(s).....

Against this sombre background, we have decided that we have no alternative but to put the International Conference on notice that unless it reaches agreement on specific measures to deal with the problem of Vietnamese migrants, Hong Kong will simply be unable to go on honouring

the policy of first asylum, as it has done faithfully for many years.

Let me explain what I mean by specific measures. Our understanding of the Comprehensive Plan of Action and associated documentation is that it provides for the permanent resettlement by the international community of all those with refugee status within three years; and that if the programme of voluntary return to Vietnam of all those without refugee status has not proved effective by October 1989, additional measures (ie mandatory repatriation) will be adopted soon afterwards. We will be prepared to endorse the Comprehensive Plan of Action on that basis but on the clear understanding that we must improve on this substantially if we are to cope with the situation in Hong Kong. We therefore look for accelerated follow-up action, starting at the first meeting of the Steering Committee on 15 June. It will be crucially important to obtain from the Vietnamese an unequivocal statement of their immediate readiness to accept the return of the non-refugees and an undertaking that they would not be punished. The other specific measure on which we seek agreement is the establishment of a Regional Processing Centre for refugees in order to relieve the pressure on resources in Hong Kong.

I have written to you in advance of the Conference in this way in order to make absolutely clear the basis on which we will be attending. I very much hope that we will be able to look to the United States Delegation for understanding and support in securing general agreement to the specific measures that I have outlined above. I fear that unless we can count on your support in this way, the success of the Conference cannot be guaranteed.

/It

It will, in my view, be particularly important to do nothing which would enable Vietnam once more to postpone the day on which she faces up to her international responsibilities. If the United States continues to have reservations about mandatory repatriation, I would hope at the very least that you could avoid giving that any prominence at the Conference and thus avoid giving Vietnam the opportunity to procrastinate further.

CONFIDENTIAL

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

10 June 1989

C D Powell Esq
10 Downing Street

Dear Charles.

Vietnamese Boat People

The Foreign Secretary is sending messages in advance of next week's Geneva Conference to the Japanese Prime Minister, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and the Foreign Minsiters of Australia, Canada, France and the six ASEAN countries and Vietnam.

It will be vital to our prospects of securing our objectives to obtain US support. The Foreign Secretary recommends a message from the Prime Minister to President Bush. I enclose a draft.

Yours ever,

T M Dowse
Resident Clerk

Rir Minister

I think it is right to send a message: but I have suggested amendments to strengthen it & leave no doubt where we stand.

Agree to send?

CDP.
10/6

Yes

CHAGO

CONFIDENTIAL

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

10 June 1989

C D Powell Esq
10 Downing Street

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CDP.
10/6

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The National Archives

DEPARTMENT/SERIES PREM 19 PIECE/ITEM 2894 (one piece/item number)	Date and sign
Extract details: Draft message from Prime Minister to President Bush, enclosed with letter from Powell to Powell dated 10 June 1989.	
CLOSED UNDER FOI EXEMPTION	
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(2)

Prime Minister
CDP
7/6.

Treasury Chambers, Parliament Street, SW1P 3AG

The Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey Howe QC MP
Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs
Foreign & Commonwealth Office
King Charles Street
London
SW1A 2AH

6 June 1989

Dear Foreign Secretary,

VIETNAMESE BOAT PEOPLE IN HONG KONG

Thank you for your minute of 2 June seeking my urgent agreement to a discretionary claim of up to £4.25 million from this year's Reserve to provide for emergency temporary accommodation for Vietnamese boat people in Hong Kong. We settled this matter, last night via our private offices and I am writing now to confirm the agreement reached.

I agreed that the costs of providing 100 marquee tents and of converting a barracks should both be found from the 1989-90 Reserve. I suggest our officials agree the final figures for the conversion of the barracks when they become clearer but accept that up to £4 million may be necessary for this.

Your minute of 22 May and the OD paper for discussion this Thursday suggest that further expenditure may be necessary if the problem of the boat people is to be finally resolved. We will of course be discussing the wider picture with colleagues on Thursday 8 June.

I am copying this letter to members of OD, to Chris Patten and to Sir Robin Butler.

Yours sincerely,

P Wanless

pp JOHN MAJOR

[Approved by the Chief Secretary and signed in his absence.]

RESTRICTED

Treasury Chambers, Parliament Street, SW1P 3AG

The Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey Howe QC MP
Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs
Foreign & Commonwealth Office
King Charles Street
London
SW1A 2AH

6 June 1989

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Yours sincerely,

P Walker

pp JOHN MAJOR

[Approved by the Chief Secretary and signed in his absence.]

The National Archives

DEPARTMENT/SERIES PREM 19 PIECE/ITEM 2894 (one piece/item number)	Date and sign
Extract details: Minute from Cradock to Prime Minister dated 7 June 1989	X
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DEPARTMENT/SERIES PREM 19 PIECE/ITEM 2894 (one piece/item number)	Date and sign
Extract details: Minute from Powell to Prime Minister dated 6 June 1989	X
CLOSED UNDER FOI EXEMPTION	
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PRIME MINISTER

VIETNAMESE BOAT PEOPLE

The Treasury have agreed to come up with £4.5 million for refurbishing the barracks in Hong Kong. The Acting Governor's statement to EXCO tomorrow will therefore be significantly stronger.

C.D.P.

Good - it is the least we can do.

CHARLES POWELL

5 June 1989

The National Archives

DEPARTMENT/SERIES PREM 19 PIECE/ITEM 2896 (one piece/item number)	Date and sign
Extract details: Minute from Weston to Prime Minister dated 5 June 1989	X
CLOSED UNDER FOI EXEMPTION	
RETAINED UNDER SECTION 3(4) OF THE PUBLIC RECORDS ACT 1958	
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bc: PC

10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

5 June 1989

VIETNAMESE BOAT PEOPLE IN HONG KONG

Thank you for your letter of 3 June, signed off by the Resident Clerk, about the response to the appeal to the Prime Minister by the Executive Council in Hong Kong for assistance over the serious problems created by the arrival of large numbers of Vietnamese boat people.

The Prime Minister has queried whether our proposed response is adequate and suggested that we ought to offer more financial assistance. You will need to consider urgently with the Treasury whether this can be agreed in the course of today so that the proposed statement by the Acting Governor to EXCO tomorrow can be amended. I should be grateful if you could keep me informed.

I am copying this letter to Carys Evans (Chief Secretary's Office) and Myles Wickstead (Overseas Development Administration).

C. D. POWELL

R. N. Peirce, Esq.
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

CONFIDENTIAL

*OD(89)(9)

10 DOWNING STREET

Prime Minister

You may like
*
to see this OD
paper on Vietnamese
Boat People. This
will be taken by
OD on Thursday.
It predicts that we
shall have to take
a further 1000 boat
people here. CDP. 4/6

cc (1)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

It really isn't enough. We must provide them with a reasonable amount of financial assistance. Are more tents needed? no

3 June 1989

Prime Minister
Agree to the proposed statement?
CDP.

C D Powell Esq
No 10 Downing Street
LONDON SW1

Dear Powell,

VIETNAMESE BOAT PEOPLE IN HONG KONG

The Executive Council in Hong Kong have asked the Governor to pass an urgent appeal to the Prime Minister for assistance over the serious boat people crisis which Hong Kong is now facing. As you know, the situation in the Territory is now desperate. The arrival figures have reached appalling levels and there is no sign of the flow abating.

The Executive Council have pointed out that one measure which could be taken to relieve the pressure on Hong Kong would be to establish very quickly a holding centre for the 14,300 Vietnamese in Hong Kong classified as refugees. This would provide space for the large number of people now arriving. The Executive Council have further asked that, should it become clear that no such holding centre could be set up quickly in the region, the Government should consider establishing such a centre in the UK.

An appeal to the Prime Minister in this form is, we believe, unprecedented. It is a reflection of the extreme gravity of the present crisis in Hong Kong. There can of course be no question of us agreeing to establish a holding centre here: apart from the practicalities, it would send quite the wrong message to people in Vietnam and could encourage more people to try their luck. The Governor nevertheless recommends very strongly that a reply to ExCo's appeal should issue as soon as possible; the arrivals continue at a very high rate.

The Foreign Secretary agrees: it would provide an opportunity to outline to ExCo what we are doing to help Hong Kong, in particular the action that the Prime Minister

/has

has just taken with President Bush. He proposes to authorise the Acting Governor to read out the attached message to ExCo at their meeting on 6 June. It would be helpful to know by 5 June that the Prime Minister is content.

Francis Gordon

for R Peirce

Private Secretary

TEXT OF STATEMENT TO BE MADE BY THE ACTING GOVERNOR TO EXCO ON TUESDAY 6 JUNE 1989

The Foreign Secretary has asked me to let you know that the Governor has passed on to him your urgent appeal for assistance from the UK to help cope with the Boat People crisis and has drawn it to the attention of the Prime Minister.

He and the Prime Minister are acutely conscious of the very grave situation which Hong Kong is facing. They are well aware that this is imposing an intolerable burden on Hong Kong. They have asked me to assure you that the British Government are doing everything they possibly can to relieve the pressure on the territory.

As you will know from the press, the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary have personally urged President Bush and Secretary Baker to support our efforts to stop the outflow and to secure the early return of all non-refugees. They have also impressed upon them the need for the early establishment of a regional holding centre for refugees. The British Government are doing everything possible to get agreement to such a centre.

In response to the Executive Council's appeal the British Government are providing Hong Kong with immediate assistance in the form of 100 tents to accommodate 2,000 boat people. The British Government are also considering how they could help to provide more permanent accommodation.

The Foreign Secretary has drawn the attention of the Chinese Foreign Minister to the seriousness of the situation facing Hong Kong and has urged China to take effective measures to cut off the flow of boat people arriving in the Territory.

The British Government are also maintaining pressure on the Vietnamese authorities to stop the outflow and will continue to take every opportunity to get this message across to the Vietnamese

at the highest level. They will work to secure the best possible results from the International Conference on Indo Chinese Refugees.

The Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary do not under-estimate the gravity of the crisis facing Hong Kong. They will continue to do all they can to show solidarity with the Territory at this very difficult time. The Foreign Secretary will be discussing further action with the Governor during his visit to London, and then with his Cabinet colleagues.

CONFIDENTIAL

(2)

PCS/89/110

CHIEF SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY

Prime Minister
You will want to be aware of this.
CDS 2/6

Vietnamese Boat People in Hong Kong

1. In my minute of 22 May I warned that the serious crisis in Hong Kong caused by the rapid increase in the numbers of Vietnamese boat people arriving there would almost certainly mean that the Government would be faced with additional funding requirements; and that it would be necessary for me to come to you for extra resources from the Reserve.

2. That situation has now arisen. Since I minuted to you the crisis in Hong Kong has deteriorated dramatically. The population of boat people there has risen to well over 38,000. 9,400 people arrived in May, and almost 3,000 of them in the past week. There are no signs of the flood abating. The accommodation situation is now desperate. The Hong Kong authorities have exhausted all available accommodation options.

3. At the same time, the political climate in Hong Kong has worsened. Local feelings against the boat people and criticism of the policy of first asylum have intensified. On 30 May the Executive Council asked the Governor to pass a message to the Government calling for urgent assistance from the UK. The full background to the present crisis, and our proposals for dealing with it, are set out in a paper which I will be circulating shortly for OD to consider on 8 June. Your officials have seen this paper in draft.

CONFIDENTIAL

4. Against this extremely worrying background, the Governor has now appealed to us to provide immediate assistance as follows:

(a) 100 marquee tents, capable of accommodating up to 2,000 people. These tents are not available locally and would need to be air freighted from the UK. We estimate that the full cost would be £250,000.

(b) Costs involved in adapting a barracks at Lei Yue Mun which would provide accommodation for 7,000 people. The Hong Kong authorities estimate that the cost of this might be up to £4 million.

5. The Governor has advised that if, in the period immediately before the International Conference, he were to seek the authority of the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council for this additional expenditure, such a request would be sharply rebuffed. It would serve only to stimulate demands that the principle of first asylum should be abandoned. It would make it more difficult for him to obtain the approval of the Finance Committee for further expenditure on boat people in the future.

6. I am convinced that we must take the Governor's advice very seriously. I am equally convinced that we must now respond swiftly and positively to his request. I regret that it would be impossible for a requirement of this magnitude to be met from my Department's existing vote. In my minute of 22 May I pointed out that the ODA's refugee funds were already overstretched and that the aid programme in the year contingency reserve was under very considerable strain. There are no Diplomatic Wing funds to meet this requirements.

7. I would be grateful if you could consider urgently and sympathetically the provision of additional funds from the Reserve to enable us to respond to the Governor's request.

8. I am copying this minute to members of OD, to Chris Patten and to Sir Robin Butler.

(GEOFFREY HOWE)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office
2 June 1989

VIETNAM : Refugees

PT 4

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CCPC

CONFIDENTIAL

CF
Please let me see
Chief Secretary's reply.
[illegible]

FCS/89/097

CHIEF SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY

Vietnamese Boat People in Hong Kong

1. I am writing to inform you of the serious crisis in Hong Kong as a result of the rapid increase in the numbers of Vietnamese boat people arriving there. The situation is without precedent, for reasons which I describe below, and is likely to get a lot worse before it gets better. This will almost certainly mean that the Government will be faced with additional and inescapable funding requirements and it will be necessary for me to come to you, possibly at short notice, for extra resources from the Reserve.

2. The present position (on 19 May) is that there are now over 35,000 boat people in Hong Kong and more are arriving at an average rate of 300 per day. Of those, some 14,000 have refugee status and are awaiting resettlement. The vast majority of people in this category arrived in Hong Kong before 16 June 1988, when, in an effort to deter the influx, a policy of screening all new arrivals was introduced to distinguish genuine refugees from the rest. Arrivals since then have not been automatically given refugee status: they are detained to await screening. If they fail to meet the necessary refugee criteria they must remain in detention until arrangements can be made for their return to Vietnam.

/3.

CONFIDENTIAL

3. The screening policy has not stopped the flow. Since last June, over 19,000 boat people have arrived in Hong Kong. So far this year (to 19 May) there have been just under 10,000 arrivals (over double the rate in 1988). But the real explosion in numbers has taken place very recently: 5,600 arrivals since the beginning of May and over 1,000 on 18 and 19 May alone. We must assume that this level of arrivals will continue throughout the summer, when weather conditions are generally favourable. If this happens, many thousands more will reach Hong Kong in the next few months.

4. Hong Kong's capacity to accommodate new arrivals is already stretched to the limit. All the existing centres for boat people are full (indeed some would say seriously overcrowded). The Foreign Affairs Committee saw this for themselves earlier this month, and are seriously concerned. The Hong Kong authorities have been using ferries as emergency accommodation. These too are now full. And ferries have to be evacuated when (as on 19 May) a typhoon is in the area.

5. In purely numerical terms, the crisis has not yet reached the scale of the problem Hong Kong faced in 1979, when some 70,000 had to be taken in at short notice. But the nature of the problem now is very different.

6. First, there is no longer the reasonable expectation that most of the arrivals seeking temporary asylum in Hong Kong will leave quickly. From 1979-1982, some 80,000 boat people were resettled from Hong Kong. Now only a small percentage of the arrivals are likely to be eligible for resettlement. For the rest, Hong Kong is the end of the road.

7. Secondly, the financial burden on Hong Kong is now formidable. The new screening policy means that all arrivals need to be detained in closed centres requiring a high degree of security and qualified staff to maintain discipline and order. This involves considerable capital and recurring expenditure. The Hong Kong Government have already committed £60 million in the current financial year (having spent £48 million last year). If arrivals continue at the present rate, substantially more will be needed.

8. Thirdly, and for reasons closely related to the previous two, local attitudes to the problem have changed for the worse. In 1979 there was a degree of local sympathy for the boat people, many of whom were ethnic Chinese escaping persecution in Vietnam. Now there is enormous resentment of the new arrivals, almost all of whom are ethnic Vietnamese motivated not by a fear of persecution but by a desire for a better standard of living. Hong Kong Chinese ask why the boat people are not promptly repatriated to Vietnam and compare their treatment with that accorded to ethnic Chinese entering Hong Kong illegally from China (some 20,000 per year) who are sent back within 48 hours. There is a widespread feeling that the first asylum policy and the problems which that entails have been imposed on Hong Kong by HMG and that Hong Kong has been left to pick up the bill. There are increasingly strident calls for the policy of first asylum to be abandoned or for HMG to face the financial consequences.

9. Fourthly, and potentially most serious of all, the political situation in Hong Kong has changed significantly. Since the signing of the Sino-British Joint Declaration on the future of Hong Kong, and following the introduction in

1985 of indirectly elected members, the Legislative Council (LEGCO) has become much more assertive. LEGCO members, who see themselves as representing the anger and frustration of local people, have the power to block all further expenditure on boat people by voting against the administration's proposals in the Finance Committee. If that happened, the Governor would have no alternative recourse to funds. He cannot override their decision. On 3 May, in an unprecedented vote, 11 members out of 46 voted against a proposal for new expenditure on boat people. Before long the votes against could be in a majority.

10. We have been doing all we can to try to contain the problem and to help Hong Kong cope with it. We have been pressing the Vietnamese to take effective measures to stop the departures; we have been urging the Chinese to dissuade boat people who call at Chinese ports en route from Hong Kong from continuing their journey; and we are working for a successful outcome to the International Conference on Indo-Chinese Refugees in June, which we hope will lay the basis for a comprehensive long term solution, including the repatriation to Vietnam of all those who do not qualify as refugees. But it will take time before results become apparent. We are working for agreement to early mandatory repatriation as the only effective means of tackling the problem of non-refugees and deterring further departures. But other governments (including the United States and Vietnam) as well as UNHCR are insisting that only volunteers should be sent back at this stage. There is therefore a real danger that the outcome of the Conference will be seen in Hong Kong as failing to match up to the seriousness of the problem. That will serve only to aggravate the situation in the territory.

/11.

11. Against this extremely worrying background I have asked my officials to consider what the financial implications for the Government are likely to be. Given all the uncertainties, it is impossible to give a precise indication at this stage. But I believe that it may be necessary for us to contribute in one or more of the following ways:

(a) immediate emergency relief: we can expect requests for direct assistance to Hong Kong (either direct or channelled through UNHCR) to provide additional emergency accommodation (tents, conversion of barracks and other buildings into temporary accommodation for new arrivals). In the very short term, the Hong Kong Government may be able to squeeze the required funds out of the money that has already been voted. But in due course they will need to revert to Finance Committee, with unpredictable results. In any case, there will be strong humanitarian and political arguments for HMG to respond quickly and sympathetically to appeals for emergency relief, should the need arise.

(b) additional permanent accommodation: in the slightly longer term, it will be necessary to build additional permanent accommodation (ie purpose-built detention centres). One such centre (the Whitehead project) is under construction at a cost of £13 million and will come on stream in September. That will, however, be insufficient if the arrival trend continues at its present level. There is now a distinct possibility that, if further detention centres are required, HMG will have to meet part, if not all, the costs. There will also be a need to find and train additional staff to man such centres.

/(c)

(c) additional staff resources to speed up the screening and appeals procedure: all post 16 June 1988 arrivals must be screened in accordance with UNHCR approved criteria. Those screened out have recourse to an appeals procedure. Partly because of staff shortages, the procedures are now very slow. At the current rate, it would take many years before everyone is screened. If the screening and repatriation policy is to be credible, procedures will have to be speeded up and additional qualified staff will have to be found. UNHCR may launch an international appeal for funds for this purpose, to which we should be ready to respond positively.

(d) further expenditure in connection with the Refugee Conference: the Conference may agree to new measures to alleviate the problem, which would require substantial additional expenditure. One possibility would be a Regional Holding Centre somewhere in the region to accommodate those screened out as non-refugees, pending their eventual return to Vietnam. Another possibility is the establishment of an Overspill Centre in the region for new arrivals or refugees awaiting resettlement, to alleviate the pressure on Hong Kong. Major financial inducements would, however, be necessary to persuade any government to agree to the establishment of such a centre on its territory.

12. Some of these costs, should they arise, would properly fall to the ODA, since they would involve emergency assistance of a humanitarian nature or would be channelled through the UNHCR to help with matters that fall within the UNHCR's mandate. This would mean a further call on the ODA's already overstretched refugee funds. So far, we have been able to use aid funds to respond to UNHCR appeals to solve the immediate problem (most recently £6 million) but

/that

that has already put the aid programme's in-year Contingency Reserve under very considerable strain. I see no scope for further contributions from this source to what could become a large operation. We should also need to respond to refugee situations in Africa and Afghanistan and retain some flexibility within the aid programme to meet other genuine contingencies which may arise during the remainder of the year. Other costs (such as the construction of detention centres in Hong Kong or a Regional Holding Centre for non-refugees) would clearly not fall to the ODA, and could only be met from an enhanced Diplomatic Wing vote.

13. I hope you will be prepared to consider urgently and sympathetically any bids that may be necessary in the coming months. I will of course keep you informed of further developments.

14. I am copying this minute to members of OD and to Chris Patten.

(GEOFFREY HOWE)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office
22 May 1989

CONFIDENTIAL

2 MARSHAM STREET
LONDON SW1P 3EB
01-276 3000

My ref:

Your ref: CDP 10/3

Charles Powell Esq
Private Secretary to
The Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
LONDON
SW1A 2AA

9 March 1989

Dear Charles,

Thank you for copying to me your letter of 20 February to Bob Peirce reporting the Prime Minister's approval to the announcement of our commitment to resettle a further 1,000 Vietnamese refugees in this country.

My Secretary of State has asked officials here to devise detailed proposals for the resettlement of these refugees in consultation with FCO and Home Office officials. It will be important to ensure that the rate of reception and resettlement is tailored to the pace at which suitable housing can be found for the newcomers; and that the individuals selected to come to this country are as far as possible matched to the housing and other amenities that can be made available.

At the end of the day, my Secretary of State considers there are bound to be increasd pressures and costs, in some areas of housing stress. We may not be able to absorb the resource implications, in particular if the refugees make their own way to the existing communties in London. My Secretary of State has registered this concern with the Chief Secretary.

I am copying this letter to the recipients of yours and to the Chief Secretary's office.

Yours,
Deborah

DEBORAH LAMB
Private Secretary

10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

22 February 1989

RESETTLEMENT OF VIETNAMESE REFUGEES IN HONG KONG

Thank you for your letter of 22 February covering a draft answer to an inspired PQ on resettlement of Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong. This seems consistent with the decision reached and may issue.

I am copying this letter to Philip Mawer (Home Office) and Roger Bright (Department of the Environment).

(CHARLES POWELL)

R.N. Peirce, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

CONFIDENTIAL

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

22 February 1989

Dear Charles

Resettlement of Vietnamese Refugees in Hong Kong

Thank you for your letter of 20 February recording the Prime Minister's agreement that we should now confirm our offer to take 1,000 Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong over the next two to three years.

I enclose a draft answer to an inspired PQ for written reply on 23 February.

I am copying this letter to Philip Mawer (Home Office) and to Roger Bright (Department of the Environment).

Yours ever

(R N Peirce)
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq
10 Downing Street

CONFIDENTIAL

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QUESTION

To ask the Secretary of State to make a statement about the resettlement of refugees from Hong Kong.

ANSWER

On 22 December 1988, [Mr Eggar] [I] announced that the Government were prepared in principle to contribute to a major international effort to tackle the problem of Vietnamese boat people in Hong Kong by taking a further 1,000 Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong over 2/3 years, provided that others were prepared to contribute commensurately. The Government have conducted a vigorous diplomatic campaign to urge other resettlement countries to match what we intend to do by accepting substantial additional numbers of Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong. The response to our call has been very good and amounts to a significantly increased international effort.

Accordingly, the Government have decided to proceed with their new resettlement plans. The refugees will be resettled in ways which minimise the pressure on housing resources in certain urban areas of the country.

VIETNAM: Refugees pt 4

8

(1)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

CONFIDENTIAL

20 February 1989

Dear Charles

Agreed as. Prime Minister Agree that we can now confirm our offer of 1,000 over 2/3 years? CDP 20/2

Vietnamese Boat People in Hong Kong: Resettlement

In your letter of 21 December 1988 you confirmed that the Prime Minister was willing in principle to agree to the proposal that the UK should take a further 1,000 Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong over two to three years, provided that other resettlement countries were prepared to contribute commensurately; that the housing problems could be resolved satisfactorily and that the necessary financial resources could be found. The decision was announced to Parliament by Mr Eggar on 22 December.

We have conducted a major diplomatic campaign to urge all the resettlement countries to play their full part in a new international resettlement initiative. The response to our representations has been very good: the United States have told us that they will take about 1,000 refugees from Hong Kong in 1989 alone (at a time when their annual allocation for the region as a whole has been cut); the Australians have undertaken to double their intake to 700 in 1989; the New Zealanders will take over 100 this year (compared with only 31 in 1988); the French have pledged 100 places (compared with only 4 in 1988); the Danes will take 50 (12 in 1988). This is in addition to a new commitment of up to 1,800 places for 1989 which the Canadians announced at the end of last year. In total we have secured global commitments for 1989 of up to 4,200 resettlement places, compared with 2,500 in 1988 and 2,000 in 1987.

Our decision to attach conditions to our own resettlement offer has not gone down well in Hong Kong. In her letter of 26 January to the Prime Minister, Dame Lydia Dunn expressed extreme disappointment with this conditionality. Many people in the territory have

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interpreted it as a pretext for ducking our responsibilities towards Hong Kong. But if we can confirm our own offer soon, we should be able to take maximum credit for it and for the increased international effort which it has helped to generate. Those countries who have announced increased offtakes in 1989 will now look to us to confirm our offer promptly.

In parallel with our efforts on the international front, we have been pursuing with the Department of the Environment and the Home Office how best these refugees could be accommodated in the UK so as to minimise pressure on housing. About half the Vietnamese in this country are already concentrated in London and many of the family reunion cases under our new commitment will wish to join their relatives in the capital. For the rest, which constitute the large majority of the new commitment, officials are identifying urban areas in other parts of the country where there is a sufficient nucleus of Vietnamese and well established refugee voluntary organisations to ensure effective communal support for the newcomers and where pressure on housing should be manageable. Local authorities such as Manchester, Liverpool and Birmingham have very large housing stocks. The availability of family accommodation is limited, but they may be able to accommodate single adults, or couples without children, without too much difficulty. Our intention is to match as far as possible the individuals coming here to the housing that can be made available. The Department of Employment will provide opportunities on YTS and Employment Training for all new arrivals in the relevant age groups.

Officials have carefully considered whether the additional costs involved in the reception, housing and training of the new arrivals can be absorbed within existing programmes. The Home Office will incur additional costs for reception and other related support arrangements (£500,000 per annum, disbursed through the relevant voluntary agencies). These costs can be met from existing provisions in 1989/90. In the light of their discussions with the relevant local authorities, the Department of the Environment will identify what additional resources they might require. Where suitable accommodation is available, these requirements should be manageable. The necessary funds for employment training are available within existing resources.

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CONFIDENTIAL

The Foreign Secretary believes that satisfactory progress has been made on each of the conditions referred to in your letter of 21 December and that it would now be right to confirm our resettlement offer. We will achieve maximum impact in Hong Kong if this could be done immediately after the Governor's call on the Prime Minister on 22 February. The Foreign Secretary very much hopes that the Prime Minister can agree to appropriate announcement at that time.

Copies of this letter go to the Private Secretaries of the Home Secretary, the Environment Secretary, the Employment Secretary, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and to Sir Robin Butler.

Yours ever

(R N Peirce)
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq
10 Downing Street

CONFIDENTIAL

From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY

CONFIDENTIAL

HOME OFFICE
QUEEN ANNE'S GATE
LONDON SWIH 9AT

20 February 1989

Dear Charles

VIETNAMESE REFUGEES FROM HONG KONG

Following the Home Secretary's joint minute with Geoffrey Howe of 1 December, and the subsequent exchanges and announcement on 22 December by Tim Eggar, Stephen Wall has now written to you to outline the progress made in respect of the conditional elements of the acceptance in principle of a further 1,000 Vietnamese refugees. The Home Secretary has asked me to confirm that there are no Home Office objections to that acceptance of a further 1,000 Vietnamese refugees from camps in Hong Kong being confirmed.

Copies of this letter go to the recipients of Stephen's letter.

Yours

Catherine Bannister

MISS C J BANNISTER

C D Powell, Esq.

CONFIDENTIAL

VIETNAM : Refugees PTA.

CONFIDENTIAL

10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

20 February 1989

Dear Rob,

Re-settlement of Vietnamese Refugees

I have discussed with the Prime Minister your letter of 20 February suggesting that we should now confirm our offer to take 1,000 Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong over the next two to three years. The Prime Minister agrees to this, although she wishes every effort to be made to re-settle them away from London.

The way is therefore clear to make an announcement following the Prime Minister's meeting with the Governor of Hong Kong on 22 February. I should be grateful if you could let me see a text.

I am copying this letter to Philip Mawer (Home Office) and to Roger Bright (Department of the Environment).

Yours sincerely,

CHARLES POWELL

R. N. Peirce, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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CONFIDENTIAL

PRIME MINISTER

VIETNAMESE BOAT PEOPLE: RESETTLEMENT

In the light of Nicholas Ridley's minute to you of 20 December about extra resources for housing, I think I should mention that there will be some resource implications for education also. We have recognised in the Education Reform Act 1988 the additional needs associated with an influx of refugees into reception areas and I now have the power to make specific payments to local education authorities to cover the cost of those needs. It would be difficult to resist the case for putting this power into effect in respect of the Vietnamese boat people. The cost will of course depend upon the number of children involved.

I am sending copies of this minute to Douglas Hurd, Geoffrey Howe, Nigel Lawson, Nicholas Ridley, Norman Fowler, Chris Patten, other members of H Committee and Sir Robin Butler.

K.B.

KB
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

9 JANUARY 1989

CONFIDENTIAL

VIETNAM: Refugees
pt 4

2 MARSHAM STREET
LONDON SW1P 3EB
01-276 3000

My ref:

Your ref:

CONFIDENTIAL

C D Powell Esq
PS/Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London

30 December 1988

Dear Charles

RESETTLEMENT OF VIETNAMESE BOAT PEOPLE

Thank you for a copy of your letter of 21 December, on the above, to Stephen Wall in the FCO. My Secretary of State was content with the changes proposed to Mr Eggar's speech, in particular those relating to the concerns he has expressed about housing resources. Mr Ridley considers that it will be necessary for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Home Office and the voluntary agencies to take account of briefing from this Department on housing needs and shortages - in particular, on areas of homelessness pressures - in allocating the refugees to specific locations. However, we must recognise that they may choose to settle elsewhere (sooner, or later) and there is an obvious danger that some will go to areas of London where there is already a large Vietnamese community but also a shortage of suitable and available accommodation. Extra resources, specifically targetted, may then be needed.

I am copying this letter to the recipients of yours.

Yours sincerely
Roger Bright

Roger Bright
Private Secretary

VIETNAM: Refugees Pt 4

FILE MEM.

cc: FCO ✓
HO ✓
PC ✓

10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

28 December 1988

Dear Bob,

VIETNAMESE BOAT PEOPLE

The Prime Minister has signed the enclosed letter to Miss Dunn. I should be grateful if you could arrange for its delivery as soon as possible.

I am copying this letter and enclosure to Philip Mawer in the Home Office.

Yours sincerely,

Charles Powell

CHARLES D. POWELL

R. N. Peirce, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

MRM

10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

THE PRIME MINISTER

28 December 1988

Dear Miss Dunn,

You wrote to me, and to some of my colleagues, on 17 November about Vietnamese boat people in Hong Kong.

I am very conscious of the burden that this problem has imposed on Hong Kong for more than a decade. Hong Kong has responded most generously in offering temporary refuge to over 130,000 boat people from Vietnam. None has ever been turned away. This is an exemplary record, of which Hong Kong can be proud.

The British Government too have played their full part. It was our initiative which led to the Geneva Conference in 1979, when there were nearly 70,000 arrivals in Hong Kong from Vietnam. The arrangements which were agreed at that Conference have served Hong Kong well. Nearly 110,000 boat people have been resettled from Hong Kong since 1979, and 13,000 of these have come to the United Kingdom. Our record on resettlement certainly bears comparison with that of other countries which, unlike Britain, have continuing programmes of large-scale immigration.

We all recognise that the position in Hong Kong has changed dramatically in the last twelve months. We gave our full support to the change of policy put into effect by the Hong Kong Government on 16 June. We have since been most active in pursuing the international aspects of that new policy in bilateral discussions with the Vietnamese

Government and in international fora. These efforts are already bearing fruit. We should soon see the return to Vietnam, under arrangements made by UNHCR, of a first group of volunteers. We shall continue our efforts to secure the return to Vietnam of those not qualified to be considered as refugees.

Where resettlement is concerned, we have reviewed our commitment in the light of recent developments. As you will know, the British Government announced on 22 December that we are prepared in principle to take a further 1,000 Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong over 2-3 years, provided that others are prepared to contribute commensurately. I enclose the text of Mr. Eggar's statement to the House of Commons, setting out our intentions. Once the necessary conditions are met, our new resettlement programme could be introduced with immediate effect and the rate of resettlement increased from 20 to 40 per month.

You refer in your letter to our acceptance of people from Vietnam under the Orderly Departure Programme. Those who came here under this programme are entitled to do so under the normal family reunion criteria in the Immigration Rules. These are precisely the people who might otherwise resort to clandestine departures from Vietnam to join their families, thereby exacerbating the problem of boat people arrivals in Hong Kong and elsewhere in the region.

There are no easy solutions to this problem. It will take time and patience. But I hope this letter will reassure you that we will continue in the future, as we have in the past, to give Hong Kong effective support in tackling it.

Best wishes for the New Year

Yours sincerely

Margaret Thatcher

The Hon. Lydia Dunn, C.B.E.

COZAGX

STATEMENT BY MR EGGAR IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS ON 22 DECEMBER

I now turn to the problem of the resettlement of those boat people in Hong Kong who enjoy refugee status. It is important that they find homes in the major resettlement countries as soon as possible. In the meantime, as I have already indicated, the camps in which they are accommodated are being opened up and a new camp is being built.

There are now something over 15,000 Vietnamese in Hong Kong who are recognised as refugees. Following the change of policy introduced on 16 June, they represent what is essentially a residual problem. Of the more recent arrivals few seem likely to meet the established international criteria to be considered as refugees and I have already given the House the screening figures.

We have played a major part over the years in resettling Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong despite the heavy immigration pressures which we face from many other sources. We are deeply grateful to those other Governments who are continuing to make their own contribution by resettling substantial numbers from Hong Kong.

We believe that the time has now come for a major international effort to tackle this residual problem. We are prepared in principle to contribute to that effort by taking a further 1,000 Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong over two to three years, provided that others are prepared to contribute commensurately.

The 1,000 would include relatives of Vietnamese already here and others with the potential quickly to become self-sufficient in the United Kingdom, together with some who have been in the camps for a long time and have not yet been accepted elsewhere.

We shall do everything possible to ensure that additional refugees are resettled in a way that does not add to the very considerable pressure on housing resources in certain urban areas. My rt hon and learned Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary will be considering with his rt hon Friend the Secretary of State

for the Environment and others how the problems in this area can be avoided.

We shall now enter into immediate consultations with the other resettlement Governments and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. We shall make clear that there must be a genuine international effort. We shall look to other governments to state clearly their readiness to match what we intend to do by accepting substantial additional numbers of Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong. We hope that they will respond generously as they have done in the past. Depending on the response that we receive, and a solution to the problem of pressure on housing resources in certain areas of the United Kingdom, we shall be ready to go ahead with our new plans.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

23 December 1988

Dear Charles,

Resettlement of Vietnamese Boat People

Thank you for your letter of 21 December about Mr Eggar's speech in the adjournment debate on Vietnamese boat people.

Mr Eggar duly made the statement yesterday in the terms you suggested. We are thus now in a position to let you have a draft reply to the letter which Miss Lydia Dunn wrote to the Prime Minister and to other Members of Parliament on 17 November on behalf of all the members of the Executive and Legislative Councils in Hong Kong.

The enclosed draft is largely self-explanatory. On the central issue of resettlement, it follows the line of Mr Eggar's statement, and encloses the full text of the relevant passage.

Yours,

Stephen Wall

(J S Wall)
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq
10 Downing Street

DSR 11 (Revised)

DRAFT: minute/letter/teleletter/despatch/note

TYPE: Draft/Final 1+

FROM:

The Prime Minister

Reference

DEPARTMENT: **TEL. NO:**

TELACL

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

Top Secret
Secret
Confidential
Restricted
Unclassified

PRIVACY MARKING

.....In Confidence

CAVEAT.....

Enclosures—flag(s).....

TO:

Miss Lydia Dunn

Office of Members of the Executive

and Legislative Councils

Legislature Council Building

Your Reference

Copies to:

To issue

MEMABZ

SUBJECT:

8 Jackson Road

Central

HONG KONG

VIETNAMESE BOAT PEOPLE IN HONG KONG

You wrote to me, and to some of my ~~ministerial~~ colleagues, on 17 November about Vietnamese boat people in Hong Kong.

I am very conscious of the burden that this problem has imposed on Hong Kong for more than a decade. Hong Kong has responded most generously in offering temporary refuge to over 130,000 boat people from Vietnam. None has ever been turned away. This is an exemplary record, of which Hong Kong can be proud.

I believe that the British Government too have played their full part. It was our initiative which led to the Geneva Conference in 1979, when there were nearly 70,000 arrivals in Hong Kong from Vietnam. The arrangements which were agreed at that Conference have served Hong Kong well. Nearly 110,000 boat people have been resettled from Hong Kong since 1979, and 13,000 of these have come to the United Kingdom. Our record on resettlement [redacted] with that of other countries which, unlike Britain, have continuing programmes of large-scale immigration.

We all recognise that the position in Hong Kong has changed dramatically in the last twelve months. We gave our full support to the change of policy put into effect by the Hong Kong Government on 16 June. We have since been most active in pursuing the international aspects of that new policy in bilateral discussions with the Vietnamese Government and in international fora. These are already bearing fruit. We should soon see the return to Vietnam, under arrangements made by UNHCR, of a first group of volunteers. We shall continue our efforts to [redacted] the return to Vietnam of those not qualified to be considered as refugees.

Where resettlement is concerned, we have reviewed our commitment in the light of recent developments. As you will know, the British Government announced on 22 December that we are prepared in principle to take a further 1,000 Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong over

DSR 11C
(Revised 5/87)

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

Top Secret
Secret
Confidential
Restricted
Unclassified

PRIVACY MARKING

In Confidence

2-3 years, provided that others are prepared to contribute commensurately. I enclose the text of Mr Eggar's statement to the House of Commons, setting out our intentions. Provided that the necessary conditions can be met, our new resettlement programme could be introduced with immediate effect and the rate of resettlement increased from 20 to 40 per month. I hope that in this way we shall stimulate international action on the widest possible front in a concerted effort to tackle Hong Kong's refugee problem.

You refer in your letter to our acceptance of people from Vietnam under the Orderly Departure Programme. Those who came here under this programme are entitled to do so under the normal family reunion criteria in the Immigration Rules. These are precisely the people who might otherwise resort to clandestine departures from Vietnam to join their families, thereby exacerbating the problem of boat people arrivals in Hong Kong and elsewhere in the region. There is no question of our accepting them at the expense of resettlement of refugees from Hong Kong.

There are no easy solutions to the problem of Vietnamese boat people. It will take time and patience before it can be fully resolved. But I hope this letter will reassure you that we will continue in the future, as we have in the past, to give Hong Kong our full support in tackling it.

VIETNAM: Refugees P.4.:

COZAGX

STATEMENT BY MR EGGAR IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS ON 22 DECEMBER

I now turn to the problem of the resettlement of those boat people in Hong Kong who enjoy refugee status. It is important that they find homes in the major resettlement countries as soon as possible. In the meantime, as I have already indicated, the camps in which they are accommodated are being opened up and a new camp is being built.

There are now something over 15,000 Vietnamese in Hong Kong who are recognised as refugees. Following the change of policy introduced on 16 June, they represent what is essentially a residual problem. Of the more recent arrivals few seem likely to meet the established international criteria to be considered as refugees and I have already given the House the screening figures.

We have played a major part over the years in resettling Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong despite the heavy immigration pressures which we face from many other sources. We are deeply grateful to those other Governments who are continuing to make their own contribution by resettling substantial numbers from Hong Kong.

We believe that the time has now come for a major international effort to tackle this residual problem. We are prepared in principle to contribute to that effort by taking a further 1,000 Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong over two to three years, provided that others are prepared to contribute commensurately.

The 1,000 would include relatives of Vietnamese already here and others with the potential quickly to become self-sufficient in the United Kingdom, together with some who have been in the camps for a long time and have not yet been accepted elsewhere.

We shall do everything possible to ensure that additional refugees are resettled in a way that does not add to the very considerable pressure on housing resources in certain urban areas. My rt hon and learned Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary will be considering with his rt hon Friend the Secretary of State

for the Environment and others how the problems in this area can be avoided.

We shall now enter into immediate consultations with the other resettlement Governments and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. We shall make clear that there must be a genuine international effort. We shall look to other governments to state clearly their readiness to match what we intend to do by accepting substantial additional numbers of Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong. We hope that they will respond generously as they have done in the past. Depending on the response that we receive, and a solution to the problem of pressure on housing resources in certain areas of the United Kingdom, we shall be ready to go ahead with our new plans.

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file JR
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cc H.O.
DoE
DTI
ODA
DIEMP
CO

10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

21 December 1988

Dear Stephen,

RESETTLEMENT OF VIETNAMESE BOAT PEOPLE

Thank you for your letter of 21 December covering the text of a proposed speech by Mr. Eggar in the adjournment debate tomorrow on Vietnamese boat people.

The Prime Minister is not prepared to see us go as far as proposed in the text, at least until we know:

- that other governments <u>are</u> in practice prepared to take substantial additional numbers of Vietnamese refugees;

- <u>how</u> we propose to ensure that the Vietnamese refugees who come to this country do not become an additional burden on housing in the London boroughs and other cities mentioned in the Secretary of State for the Environment's minute;

- <u>what</u> additional resources may be necessary to provide for the refugees who come here, and who will find them.

Unless these points can be very rapidly resolved, this means that Mr. Eggar's remarks will have to be more conditional than in your draft. For example:

- paragraph 3 should read:
"We believe that the time has now come for a major international effort to tackle this residual problem. We are prepared in principle to contribute to that effort, by taking a further 1,000 Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong over two to three years, provided that others are prepared to contribute commensurately. The 1,000 would include ....."

- paragraph 4 should read:
"We shall do everything possible to ensure that additional refugees are resettled in a way that does not add to the very considerable pressure on housing resources in certain urban areas. My right hon. Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary will be

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considering with his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and others how the problems in this area can be avoided."

- paragraph 5 should read:
"We shall now ..... for refugees. We shall make clear that there must be a genuine international effort, in which other governments state clearly their readiness to match what we intend to do by accepting substantial additional numbers of Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong in their own countries. We hope that they will respond generously as they have done in the past. Depending on the response that we receive, and a solution to the problem of pressure on housing resources in certain areas, we shall be ready to go ahead with our new plans."

I am copying this letter to the recipients of yours.

yours sincerely,

(C.D. POWELL)

J.S. Wall, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

CONFIDENTIAL

CC/C

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

21 December 1988

Dear Charles,

TSP ENCL

Resettlement of Vietnamese Boat People

Thank you for your letter of 20 December about the proposed resettlement of a further 1,000 Vietnamese boat people from Hong Kong.

Where the Prime Minister's two conditions are concerned, the first will be taken up through urgent diplomatic consultations with other resettlement governments. We shall be discussing the second with the Department of the Environment and the Home Office.

As you know, an adjournment debate on Vietnamese boat people is to be held in the House of Commons tomorrow morning. Sir Geoffrey Howe believes that it would be highly desirable if we could use that occasion to make public our readiness, under certain conditions, to accept a further 1,000 boat people. I attach the draft of a passage which he proposes should be included in Mr Eggar's speech in replying to the debate. It makes clear that our own further involvement will be part of a wider international effort, and that we shall be approaching other governments to seek matching commitments before we are prepared to go ahead with our own plans. It also makes plain that any new refugees must not add to the heavy pressures in urban areas where there are already considerable pressures on housing resources.

We shall arrange for an advance text of Mr Eggar's statement to be given in confidence to Miss Lydia Dunn, who has written to the Prime Minister on behalf of all Executive and Legislative Councillors to seek an additional UK resettlement commitment. We shall submit very quickly the draft of a letter for the Prime Minister to send to Miss Dunn. We shall also instruct our posts in the main resettlement countries to bring Mr Eggar's statement to the attention of their host governments, and to explain that they will receive instructions to make a formal approach on the issue very soon after Christmas. Preparation and coordination with the Hong Kong Government will be necessary if these representations are to have the maximum impact.

I am copying this letter to Philip Mawer (Home Office), Roger Bright (Department of the Environment), Neil Thornton (DTI), Myles Wickstead (ODA), Clive Norris (Department of Employment) and Trevor Woolley (Cabinet Office).

Yours,

Stephen Wall

(J S Wall)
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq
10 Downing Street

CONFIDENTIAL

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RESETTLEMENT OF VIETNAMESE BOAT PEOPLE

PASSAGE FOR USE BY MR EGGAR IN PARLIAMENT ON 22 DECEMBER

There are now something over 15,000 Vietnamese in Hong Kong who are recognised as refugees. Following the change of policy introduced on 16 June, they represent what is essentially a residual problem. Of the more recent arrivals few seem likely to meet the established international criteria to be considered as refugees.

We have played a major part over the years in resettling Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong despite the heavy immigration pressures which we face from many other sources. We are deeply grateful to those other governments who are continuing to make their own contribution by resettling substantial numbers from Hong Kong.

We believe that the time has now come for a major international effort to tackle this residual problem, and that we should take a lead in this. We shall continue our existing resettlement programme until it is completed. In addition the Government are ready in principle to take a further 1,000 Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong. This would involve doubling the rate of resettlement to 40 a month: taken together the existing programme and the new programme would extend over some

/2-3 years

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2-3 years. The 1,000 would include relatives of Vietnamese already here and others with the potential quickly to become self-sufficient in the United Kingdom, together with some who have been in the camps for a long time and have not yet been accepted elsewhere.

Our intention is to ensure that additional refugees are resettled in a way that does not add to the heavy pressures on urban areas where there are already considerable pressures on housing resources.

We shall now enter into immediate consultations with the other resettlement governments and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. We shall emphasise our view that this new resettlement commitment must be part of a wider international effort, and that we look to other governments to match what we intend to do by taking substantial additional numbers of Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong in their own countries. We have no doubt that they will respond generously, as they have done in the past. In the light of the response that we receive we hope to be in a position soon to go ahead with our new plans.

Hung Vung P120

Robkes

CONFIDENTIAL

10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

20 December 1988

Dear Stephen,

RESETTLEMENT OF VIETNAMESE BOAT PEOPLE

The Prime Minister has further considered the Foreign Secretary's proposal that we should resettle 1,000 boat people from Hong Kong in the United Kingdom over two-and-a-half years. She has also seen the Secretary of State for the Environment's minute of 20 December.

The Prime Minister remains very concerned about the difficulty of absorbing Vietnamese refugees in this country and, in particular, the pressure they put on housing in certain London boroughs and in a small number of other cities. So while she would be prepared to agree to the Foreign Secretary's proposal, she would wish to see two conditions met:

i) Our offer to take 1,000 refugees over two-and-a-half years should be conditional on other countries agreeing to take substantial additional numbers of Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong. She would like to see firm evidence of such commitment on the part of other countries before we confirm our decision to take 1,000.

ii) Arrangements should be made to ensure that additional Vietnamese refugees reaching this country do not add to existing heavy pressure on housing in the London boroughs and other cities mentioned in the Environment Secretary's minute. Instead, housing should be found for them in other areas. The Prime Minister would like to have a clear statement of the measures envisaged to achieve this before giving final approval to admission of the refugees.

I am copying this letter to Philip Mawer (Home Office), Roger Bright (Department of the Environment), Neil Thornton (Department of Trade and Industry), Myles Wickstead (Overseas Development Administration), Clive Norris (Department of Employment) and to Sir Robin Butler.

Yours sincerely,

C. D. POWELL

Stephen Wall, Esq.
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

CONFIDENTIAL

Prime Minister

VIETNAMESE BOAT PEOPLE: RESETTLEMENT

I have seen Douglas Hurd's and Geoffrey Howe's joint minute of 1 December proposing the resettlement of a further 1,000 Vietnamese refugees in this country over the next 2½ years.

As you yourself have pointed out, the refugees already in this country have experienced difficulties in settling in. The majority have settled themselves in London, mostly concentrated in Lambeth, Southwark, Lewisham and Greenwich and almost all of the remainder are living in other urban areas where there is considerable pressure on housing resources such as Manchester, Birmingham, and Leeds. The 200 family reunion cases will add immediately to the housing pressure in our major cities, and although the other Vietnamese will be accommodated initially in reception areas in different parts of the country, there is little doubt that they too will gravitate to those parts of London and the other cities where the Vietnamese have already established themselves.

These problems should not be insuperable and it would not be appropriate to argue against the further influx of refugees on housing grounds. But housing providers are already under very considerable pressure, especially in the South East, as our review of the homelessness legislation has demonstrated. Even these small numbers could bring criticism from local authorities with many families in bed and breakfast. It seems inevitable that extra resources will be needed to cope with this fresh demand.

Copies of this minute go to Douglas Hurd, Geoffrey Howe, Nigel Lawson, Norman Fowler, Chris Patten, other members of H Committee and Sir Robin Butler.

N R

20 December 1988

VIETNAM : REFUGEES PT4

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dc PC

10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

5 December 1988

VIETNAMESE BOAT PEOPLE IN HONG KONG: RESETTLEMENT

The Prime Minister has considered the joint minute from the Foreign Secretary and the Home Secretary dated 1 December proposing that we should accept the resettlement in this country of a further 1,000 Vietnamese boat people over the next two-and-a-half years, as part of a wider effort to resettle remaining boat people in Hong Kong.

The Prime Minister points out the great difficulty which Vietnamese boat people find in settling in this country and adapting to our way of life, with the result that they tend to become a burden on the social services. At the same time, we still refuse to make special arrangements to allow business people from Hong Kong, who want to come here and who would actually help to create jobs, to acquire British citizenship. In her view, we should help to alleviate the problem which taking the Vietnamese boat people will create by facilitating citizenship for Hong Kong business people. Otherwise we just end up with the short end of the stick.

The Prime Minister has already asked the Home Secretary to produce a paper on this latter point. She would like to consider the two issues in parallel and reach decisions on both at the same time.

I am copying this letter to Philip Mawer (Home Office), Alex Allan (HM Treasury), Roger Bright (Department of the Environment), Clive Norris (Department of Employment), Myles Wickstead (Overseas Development Administration) and to Sir Robin Butler.

C. D. POWELL

R. N. Peirce, Esq.
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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PM/88/063

PRIME MINISTER

Vietnamese Boat People in Hong Kong: Resettlement

1. There are now some 25,000 Vietnamese boat people in Hong Kong. 9,500 of these arrived after the introduction of screening on 16 June. But there have been very few arrivals since mid-September; the deterrent message of our new policy now seems to be getting through.

2. The first results of screening indicate that very few indeed of the 9,500 new arrivals qualify as refugees. Our aim is that all these non-refugees should be repatriated to Vietnam; as you know, we have made a reasonably encouraging start in our talks with the Vietnamese government.

3. But those who do qualify as refugees - ie, essentially, the 15,500 who reached Hong Kong before screening started - cannot be repatriated to Vietnam (unless they volunteer, which few are likely to do). They must be resettled elsewhere. The current rate of resettlement is now only 2,500 per 12 months. Even if the present rate of resettlement could be sustained it would take more than six years to resettle all those now in Hong Kong. That would be bad enough. But it is by no means certain that even this slow rate of resettlement can be sustained.

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4. The principal resettlement countries are letting Hong Kong slip down their list of priorities even though it has the largest population of boat people in the region. In our contacts with them these countries - in particular the US, Canada and Australia (who between them have taken some 90,000 refugees from Hong Kong over the years) - have made it clear that they look to us, as the country with direct responsibility for Hong Kong, to take a lead. Without going as far as to give us guarantees as to how they would respond to an initiative from us (and we could not expect this), representatives of these countries has given us reason to believe that their own resettlement programmes from Hong Kong might nonetheless be increased if we were to make a move that they considered to be commensurate with the scale of the problem and with our special responsibility for Hong Kong.

5. We also face substantial pressure from public opinion in Hong Kong, where the burden of this 13 year old problem is considerable (we have recently received a letter from Lydia Dunn on behalf of all Executive and Legislative Councillors which has gone to all members of both Houses of Parliament, a great many of whom have now written to the Foreign Office asking what we are doing to deal with the matter). We have been reluctant to make a further commitment until now, principally because of the continuing flow of refugees into Hong Kong and the possible pull-factor of such a move. Now, however, following the introduction of screening and the consequent delimitation of the scope of the problem, we judge that the time is right.

6. We have considered carefully how large a commitment we should make, taking into account the capacity of our reception facilities and statutory services, and the numbers needed to stimulate the right response from the major reception countries. In May 1987 (when the number of boat people in Hong Kong was a third of what it is now) we gave a commitment to resettle 468 named refugees from Hong Kong over two years, at a rate of about 20 a month. The voluntary agencies argue that they could cope with 60 a month. We are more cautious; the agencies have no recent experience of this rate of reception. We therefore recommend 40 a month, over a period of 2½ years - amounting to an additional commitment of 1,000. Details of a possible package on these lines are set out in an annex to this minute.

7. We have in the past had problems with resettling boat people in this country and such problems are not going to disappear entirely. Some housing agencies will not welcome the additional demand. But we believe that with the selection measures proposed, an expansion of language training in Hong Kong, and use of the Employment Training programme, old problems can be reduced.

8. We estimate that the Home Office will need up to £0.5 million in each year for grant aid to voluntary organisations working with these refugees. They will of course use existing statutory services on the basis of need. The burden falling on any one service from 480 arrivals a year will not be great. Moreover the proposed

/package

package aims to promote self-sufficiency and enable the refugees to start contributing to the economy as soon as possible.

9. There is still a fund of goodwill towards these people and the need for an additional resettlement effort would be well understood in this country. We believe that a package of this kind is an appropriate response which should trigger significant new commitments from other countries. We should be grateful for confirmation that you would be content for us to proceed on these lines. We would aim to announce the decision early in the session.

10. Copies of this minute go to Nigel Lawson, Nicholas Ridley, Norman Fowler, Chris Patten, other members of H Committee and Sir Robin Butler.

(DOUGLAS HURD) (GEOFFREY HOWE)

1 December 1988

PROPOSED ADDITIONAL RESETTLEMENT COMMITMENT FOR VIETNAMESE BOAT PEOPLE IN HONG KONG

1. An additional commitment of 1,000 is proposed, to run from now on the following basis:

a) an extension of the present family reunion scheme to about another 200 who meet the same family reunion criteria;

b) an additional quota of around 800 selected from those in Hong Kong who wish to come to the UK giving particular weight to:

i) family groups

ii) refugees with the potential more quickly to become self sufficient in the UK;

iii) refugees with links with the UK through contacts with organisations or individuals here;

iv) those who did not take up earlier UK offers, thereby inadvertently making themselves ineligible for resettlement elsewhere;

v) long stayers.

2. Under this proposal resettlment of the 1000 would begin as soon as practicable with 20 per month until the present family reunion scheme expires in May or June next year and continue with 40 per month thereafter. It would stretch over about 2½ years.

(cd16/fd)

VIETNAM

Refugees p 4

CONFIDENTIAL

Prime Minister (2)
CDP 17/X cc PC

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

17 October 1988

Dear Charles

Vietnamese Boat People in Hong Kong: Talks with Vietnam

Your letter of 5 September recorded the Prime Minister's agreement that we should contribute to UNHCR funding of modest reintegration assistance for boat people returning to Vietnam from Hong Kong.

FCO, Hong Kong Government and Vietnamese officials held a second round of talks in London on 11-12 October. The main elements to emerge from the meeting were the following:

(a) the Vietnamese assured us that they were determined to stop departures from Vietnam by boat;

(b) the two sides agreed on the need for comprehensive arrangements for all arrivals who, under Hong Kong's new policy, do not qualify as refugees for resettlement;

(c) the two sides agreed to make an early start with the return of those (now over 350) who have already asked to go back to Vietnam;

(d) the two sides agreed that UNHCR was the appropriate agency to arrange a humanitarian repatriation programme, which would include modest reintegration assistance;

(e) we confirmed that we were ready in principle to contribute to such a programme through UNHCR.

This result marks a step forward towards an overall agreement. The key position is Vietnam's acceptance of the need for comprehensive arrangements. We made it clear to the Vietnamese that all those who did not qualify for resettlement elsewhere would have to go back. The Vietnamese understood this. While they are still prepared to take back only volunteers at this stage, they accepted that this problem wil have to be dealt with step by step.

/It was

It was clear that the Vietnamese would not accept any returns without some form of reintegration assistance. They were frank about the political difficulties they face, including the reluctance of communities to take back people who had left illegally; the lack of facilities; and the general poverty of the country. A properly organised repatriation programme could encourage more to ask to return. Their ideas on reintegration assistance were on a modest scale, in line with UNHCR precedents elsewhere. UNHCR have discussed a package on these lines with the Vietnamese and will put proposals to them shortly. The Vietnamese agreed that returnees should be humanely treated and subject to monitoring on return. UNHCR's proposals will cover these aspects.

The Foreign Secretary said in his minute of 2 September to the Prime Minister that we could face criticism when the time came to implement a policy of returning boat people to Vietnam. The Daily Mail has taken up the cudgels and the Foreign Secretary has therefore sent an article to them for publication. In Hong Kong the outcome has been widely welcomed. But we could face further criticism here.

Your letter of 5 September raised the question of a possible endowment scheme to encourage other countries to take economic migrants from Hong Kong. The Foreign Secretary thinks that, if Vietnam can be persuaded to take its own economic migrants back in accordance with normal international practice - and we are now making some headway in this - this must be preferable to creating yet another displaced community in a third country. Financial considerations are not a major factor for the developed resettlement countries. They see the boat people problem primarily as a refugee/humanitarian issue, and would not respond to financial incentives to take economic migrants. Governments in less developed countries, in the unlikely event that they were interested, could be expected to exact a very high price for participating in any such scheme. The Foreign Secretary therefore believes we should continue to concentrate our efforts on establishing suitable arrangements for the return to Vietnam of all its economic migrants.

I am copying this letter to Philip Mawer (Home Office).

Yours ever

Bob

(R N Peirce)
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq
10 Downing Street

VIETNAM: Lettuce #14

CONFIDENTIAL

FILE KKIADJ

bc PC

10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

5 September 1988

VIETNAMESE BOAT PEOPLE IN HONG KONG

The Prime Minister has considered the Foreign Secretary's minute of 2 September proposing that we should discuss with the Vietnamese Government a comprehensive scheme for the return of economic migrants from Hong Kong to Vietnam, and at the same time be prepared to contribute to a UNHCR programme to provide modest assistance in kind to returnees and their immediate communities.

The Prime Minister agrees to these proposals, although with some reluctance given that the Vietnamese are in effect going to profit from having made conditions so miserable for their own people. She has commented that if we and other industrial countries are in practice prepared to give some sort of endowment to these economic migrants, there might be countries other than Vietnam which would be prepared to accept them. You will wish to consider this.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries to the Lord President, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Defence Secretary, the Home Secretary, the Trade and Industry Secretary, the Lord Privy Seal and the Attorney General.

(C. D. POWELL)

J. S. Wall, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

CONFIDENTIAL

(1)

CCPC

Prime Minister

This proposes a comprehensive scheme for the return of economic migrants to Vietnam. It might in some cases involve forcible ~~repatriation~~ repatriation; & a financial contribution to a UNHCR programme of assistance to returning Vietnamese. Neither is palatable, Rapid Hong Kong cannot just go on taking them. Agree to FCS' proposals?

CDP 2/9

Yes

If we were prepared, together with other countries to make a substantial contribution in kind - there may be other countries who would accept them.

CONFIDENTIAL

PM/88/045

PRIME MINISTER

Vietnamese Boat People in Hong Kong

1. Charles Powell's letter of 7 June recorded your agreement that the Hong Kong Government should introduce a new policy to deal with boat people from Vietnam. From 16 June new arrivals have been screened to distinguish between those who are genuine refugees and those who are in effect economic migrants.

2. The new policy has now been in operation for almost three months. The influx of boat people in Hong Kong has however continued at a disappointingly high level. Many new arrivals had set out in order to anticipate a rumoured change in policy. Others were simply unaware that a new policy had been introduced, despite all our efforts to publicise this. There is now a slight fall in the rate of arrivals, but it remains difficult to detect any clear trend.

/3.

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3. There are now in Hong Kong almost 16,000 boat people who arrived before the new policy came into effect, and a further 9,000 who have arrived since. Housing and feeding such numbers is putting a considerable strain on the Hong Kong Government's resources.

4. The change in policy has however secured an important advance on another front. In July the Vietnamese Government told us that they wanted to hold talks on the return of boat people from Hong Kong. A first round took place in Hanoi in early August. This produced agreement that the Vietnamese would take effective measures to limit the outflow of boat people; and also agreement in principle that some boat people in Hong Kong should be returned to Vietnam. But the Vietnamese are saying at present that they will take only those who volunteer to go back. And they have made it clear that they are looking for some form of limited financial assistance to reintegrate returnees into their communities.

5. We judge that the present Vietnamese focus on voluntary returnees is essentially tactical. The Vietnamese must privately recognise that a repatriation programme will have to go far wider. We shall press them hard to act quickly on the hundred or so who have asked to go back, since this would be a powerful deterrent to other would-be emigrants. But sooner or later the question of reintegration assistance is likely to be a sticking point.

/6.

6. We are keeping up our pressure on the Vietnamese to live up to their undertaking to reduce departures, but as yet there is no evidence that they are taking effective action to that end. I am convinced that the only way of lightening the heavy burden which Hong Kong already bears is through agreement on a comprehensive scheme for the return of economic migrants to Vietnam. This means treating them no differently from the illegal immigrants trying to enter Hong Kong from China - or indeed illegal immigrants the world over - who are simply sent back to their country of origin. There has been a very general acceptance, both in Parliament and in the media, that the Hong Kong Government have no feasible alternative. We have made it clear that we would need assurances that those returned would be treated humanely. But we have to recognise that many boat people could physically resist being returned to Vietnam against their will. There is a strong likelihood that we shall face criticism of an emotive nature - for example analogies, however far fetched, with the treatment of the Cossacks after World War II - when the time comes to enforce the policy of involuntary repatriation in the full glare of publicity.

7. The request of the Vietnamese for financial assistance to resettle their own people is a distasteful one. But I see no prospect of resolving this intractable problem in Hong Kong unless we go a little way to meet them. Those who leave Vietnam usually sell all they

/possess

possess. The bankrupt Vietnamese Government claims it has no funds to help them. There could be no question of providing development aid, or of making money directly available to the Vietnamese Government. But I believe we should be prepared to indicate that if a comprehensive repatriation programme can be drawn up for the return of substantial numbers of boat people we may in principle be ready to contribute to a UNHCR programme providing modest assistance, probably largely in kind rather than cash, to returnees and their immediate communities. This would be in line with the way minds are moving in UNHCR, in other Western governments and in other countries such as Malaysia with populations of boat people. We would urge our partners to make a contribution. The Hong Kong government would also be ready to seek authority to make matching contributions of their own.

8. In any event the sums involved would be small. Planning for an evential repatriation operation is at a very preliminary stage: but UNHCR's initial ideas would involve expenditure of a few hundred dollars per family, up to a total of no more than US$ 5 million in the first year for a programme which would not be limited to Hong Kong. UNHCR would approach a number of governments to seek contributions. We do not need to decide at this stage what size our own contribution should be.

/9.

9. If you are content that we should proceed on that basis, we shall tell the Vietnamese that we are ready for a second round of talks. By convention this should be in the other capital, London (or in Hong Kong). The Hong Kong Government are understandably concerned that the holding of the talks in the territory could give rise to unrest among those Vietnamese detained pending repatriation. I therefore believe we should be ready to offer London as the venue, recognising that this offers the Vietnamese a modest diplomatic gain and seeking to exert the maximum leverage in return. This would offer an opportunity for us to put across very forcefully our views on broader Vietnamese policies.

10. I am copying this minute to John Wakeham, Nigel Lawson, George Younger, Douglas Hurd, David Young, John Belstead and Patrick Mayhew.

(GEOFFREY HOWE)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

2 September 1988

VIETNAM : Refugees PTQ.

CONFIDENTIAL

10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

7 June 1988

Dear Bob,

VIETNAMESE BOAT PEOPLE AND HONG KONG

The Prime Minister has considered the Foreign Secretary's minute of 6 June recommending that we agree to the Hong Kong Government introducing immediately a new policy to deal with Vietnamese boat people, namely screening new arrivals to distinguish between those who are genuine refugees and those who are in effect economic migrants. The Prime Minister accepts the recommendation and agrees that the Foreign Secretary should speak to the Chinese and Vietnamese Foreign Ministers in New York on the lines which he proposes.

I am copying this letter to Philip Mawer (Home Office) and to Sir Robin Butler.

Yours ever,

Charles Powell

Bob Peirce, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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PM/88/022

PRIME MINISTER

Vietnamese Boat People in Hong Kong

1. I minuted to you on 17 May about the problem of Vietnamese boat people in Hong Kong. Since then I have visited Hong Kong and seen it for myself. The influx continues at seven times the rate of last year, while resettlement has sharply declined. There are now over 15,000 boat people, where last year there were 8,000. More than 1,100 have arrived over the last three days. The strain on Hong Kong Government's resources is considerable and the pressure on them to do something is intense. The issue dominated press coverage of my visit. I am quite convinced that things cannot go on as they are, and that Hong Kong must introduce quickly the new policy that they have been considering. In essence, this would involve screening new arrivals in accordance with UNHCR criteria so as to preserve access to first asylum and resettlement for genuine refugees, while detaining those screened out pending eventual repatriation to Vietnam.

2. The new policy would have to be widely publicised (including within Vietnam, for example through BBC broadcasts). We would also press the Chinese to stop their own people on the South China coast from

/victualling

CONFIDENTIAL

victualling and refuelling boat people on the way to Hong Kong. I shall be seeing the new Chinese Foreign Minister in New York tomorrow. The aim must to be to maximise the deterrent effect of the new policy, and thus sharply reduce the rate of arrival.

3. Even if the policy works, there will nevertheless be some build-up in Hong Kong of Vietnamese detainees with no prospect but eventual return to Vietnam. If the deterrent proves less effective the build-up will correspondingly be greater. I see no alternative to accepting that risk: in practice many of those already in Hong Kong are in that position, and we should therefore be no worse off than we are now. I am under no illusion about the difficulty of getting the Vietnamese to take people back. But we must step up the pressure on them; I shall be seeing the Vietnamese Foreign Minister as well in New York tomorrow.

4. We have told both UNHCR and the US government informally that we have been considering screening. UNHCR would like us to delay until the autumn; in the hope that the Vietnamese position will have softened by then. I regard this as unlikely, and in any case do not think we can afford the delay. The US reaction has been non-committal. I would expect the other main resettlement countries to show understanding.

5. I have considered the international legal implications of the proposed policy, and I believe that it is defensible. We shall be criticised in some quarters, as we are now over the closed camps. But I was encouraged when Lord Chitnis and a delegation from the British Refugee Council told me two weeks ago that they would understand the introduction of screening.

6. The long term effect of the new policy would be to shift the focus of future action from resettlement to eventual repatriation. But as part of the new arrangements it will be necessary to resettle those Vietnamese already in Hong Kong as quickly as possible. This will only be possible if we can persuade the main resettlement countries to make a major effort to help. I entirely share your reluctance to bring further Vietnamese refugees to this country, but do not in practice think there is any prospect of securing help from our friends unless we are prepared also to do something ourselves. I propose to discuss this aspect with Douglas Hurd.

7. This should not however affect the adoption of the new policy on screening - as the only possibly effective early action to check the inflow. In his letter of 18 May, Charles Powell said that you were disposed to agree that Hong Kong should change their policy as proposed. I should be grateful for your agreement that they should now be authorised to do so. It is intended that the new policy should come into effect in mid-June.

8. I am copying this minute to the Home Secretary and to Sir Robin Butler.

(GEOFFREY HOWE)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

6 June 1988

VIETNAM. Refugees Pt 4

CONFIDENTIAL

File no. 71

bo. P.C.

10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

18 May, 1988.

VIETNAMESE BOAT PEOPLE IN HONG KONG

The Prime Minister has seen the Foreign Secretary's minute of 17 May about the worsening problem of Vietnamese boat people in Hong Kong. She notes that no decisions are required until the Foreign Secretary reports back following his visit to Hong Kong. But she agrees that it is hard not to sympathise with the Hong Kong Government's view, and is in principle disposed to agree that they should change their position in the way proposed. She is, however, very resistant to the idea that the United Kingdom should make any new commitment on resettlement.

I am sending copies of this letter to Philip Mawer (Home Office) and Trevor Woolley (Cabinet Office).

(C.D. Powell)

A.C. Galsworthy, Esq., CMG,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

CONFIDENTIAL

887

(1)

Prime Minister

No formal decision is yet required. But it is best not to sympathise with the Hong Kong Govt's views. I think they are entitled to change their position.

The Foreign Secretary will report on his return. But you may like to warn him now that you will be very resistant to the idea that we should take any additional refugees.

CDP 17/5

PM/88/020

PRIME MINISTER

Vietnamese Boat People in Hong Kong

1. There has been a sharp deterioration in the problem of Vietnamese boat people in Hong Kong. So far this year nearly 3,500 people have arrived in Hong Kong by boat from Vietnam, seven times as many as in the same period in 1987. On average there have been some 120 arrivals each day in May. The total refugee population in Hong Kong is now over 12,300, a 60% increase on this time last year. And there are strong indications that the rate of arrivals will continue to increase. The camps in Hong Kong are already over-full and barely able to cope.

2. By contrast, resettlement departures this year (just 840) have dropped dramatically. Most of the people now arriving in Hong Kong from Vietnam are regarded as economic migrants who fail to meet standard resettlement criteria. Resettlement alone clearly cannot even contain the problem, let alone resolve it.

3. There are strong political pressures on the Hong Kong Government from Unofficials and the public to take steps to deal with the crisis. They are now considering a new policy designed to deter the flow of economic migrants while ensuring continued access to first asylum for genuine refugees. It would contain the following elements:

/- people

- people arriving by boat from Vietnam would no longer be automatically deemed to have refugee status;
- a system of screening on arrival, based on standard UNHCR criteria (and along lines used by the Home Office), would be introduced to distinguish genuine refugees from economic migrants;
- those arrivals who failed to satisfy the criteria (ie were screened out) would not be eligible for resettlement. They would be detained indefinitely in closed camps, pending eventual return to Vietnam when this can be agreed with the Vietnamese authorities on the basis of acceptable assurances about their treatment;
- the deterrent effects of the new policy would need to be complemented by further pressure on the Vietnamese authorities to cooperate in controlling the flow of illegal departures from Vietnam.

4. The long-term effect of the new policy would be to shift the focus of future action from resettlement to eventual repatriation. But there would remain those boat people who had arrived before the introduction of the new policy, together with those new arrivals screened in as genuine refugees. There would no doubt be an expectation in Hong Kong that a concerted effort would be made by the resettlement countries to help tackle this problem. But in practice the Hong Kong Government may be prepared to absorb locally a significant part of this residual population. The net effect over time should be a reduction of pressure on the resettlement countries, compared with the position if present policies are maintained.

/5.

5. An obvious objection to the proposed change is that, until the Vietnamese can be induced to accept repatriation (and there is no sign of this at the moment), those screened out, who will have no access to resettlement opportunities, will form a permanent prison population in Hong Kong. The Governor of Hong Kong is aware of this risk. This is, however, in effect already the position. Most of the 10,000 "refugees" now in closed camps in Hong Kong are not real refugees and have no hope of resettlement; the only difference under the new policy would be that they would be so defined. The gain expected is that the new screening policy would have at least a deterrent effect, and that the rate of arrivals would be reduced.

6. I expect the issue of boat people to dominate my visit to Hong Kong from 29 to 31 May. I will have discussions with the Governor and members of ExCo and LegCo about the crisis and will have an opportunity to assess the problem at first hand. It raises a number of difficult issues, legal, political and practical, which will need to be very carefully considered. However I am inclined to think that the present policy is intolerable for Hong Kong and has to change.

7. On my return I will need to consult you and our colleagues urgently about whether we should authorise the Hong Kong Government to introduce a new policy along the lines I have described. We would need to consider the diplomatic action necessary to give the policy the best chance of succeeding. We shall also undoubtedly face strong pressure for the United Kingdom to make a new resettlement commitment, to take the lead in a campaign encouraging the major resettlement countries to make a once and for all effort to reduce Hong Kong's problem to manageable proportions.

/8.

8. While I am in Hong Kong I will come under strong pressure from the media and from members of ExCo and LegCo to explain how Britain intends to respond to the present crisis. I attach in an annex to this minute the line which I would propose to take in response to the key questions. The line on resettlement does not amount to any explicit new commitment ~~above and~~ beyond the 468 which we are currently taking. I am sure it is the least that I could say in Hong Kong under the present circumstances.

9. I am copying this minute to Douglas Hurd and to Sir Robin Butler.

(GEOFFREY HOWE)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office
17 May 1988

ANNEX

Vietnamese Boat People: Line to Take in Hong Kong

Q: What are HMG's views on the possible abandonment by Hong Kong of the first asylum policy and the introduction of scrrening on arrival?

A: I understand why OMELCO and the Hong Kong Government feel they need to review the existing policy and to consider whether it is still appropriate to treat all arrivals from Vietnam automatically as refugees. This is one of the matters I have been discussing with the Hong Kong Government during my visit. I will obviously need to report to colleagues on my return to London.

Q: Will HMG make a new resettlement commitment in response to the influx of arrivals?

A: My visit has brought home to me personally the severity of the situation following the greatly increased numbers of refugees arriving here in the last few months. As I have said, I shall be speaking to my colleagues in London on my return. We shall want to look at all aspects of the problem. You will understand that, until we have done this, I cannot say more.

Q: Will HMG make an increased financial contribution to help Hong Kong with its increased refugee burden?

A: The UK already makes a substantial contribution to UNHCR funds. We will be discussing with UNHCR the allocation of resources to Hong Kong in order to deal with the scale of the problem.

file

DS
cc FCO
HO

10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

THE PRIME MINISTER

21 October 1987

Dear Mr Fan,

Thank you for your letter of 30 September about Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong.

The British Government are well aware of the strength of public feeling in Hong Kong about the problem, and we are sympathetic to the plight of the refugees themselves. It was for these reasons that we decided in May to accept a further 468 Vietnamese refugees from camps in Hong Kong for resettlement in the United Kingdom, and launched a renewed diplomatic campaign to press other resettlement countries to follow our example.

I note what you say about the increase in the number of refugees in Hong Kong and the disappointing rate of resettlement over the past year. This is a matter of considerable concern to us, as it is to you. We have therefore stepped up our efforts to find a durable solution to the problem in parallel with our resettlement efforts. As you know, both the British and the Hong Kong Governments are actively discussing these issues with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the main resettlement countries. I believe that these contacts are helping to increase international awareness of the need to tackle the problem of arrivals in Hong Kong and elsewhere of people whose departure from Vietnam is essentially motivated by economic considerations. In addition, our Ambassador in

QA

Hanoi has formally raised with the Vietnamese authorities the question of the return of refugees from Hong Kong under acceptable conditions.

You ask whether Britain could increase its intake of refugees from Hong Kong by accepting refugees who have no family ties with this country or who turned down earlier offers of resettlement here. While I deeply sympathise with those refugees who have been in camps for a considerable time, I have to say that our resettlement commitments have been extended as far as possible at present. We must take into full account our capacity to absorb new arrivals and to assist their integration into British society. Given the difficulties which Vietnamese arrivals have experienced in settling in the United Kingdom, even when they have come to join family members, I do not believe that it would be sensible at this stage to widen our criteria for acceptance.

I know that this will disappoint some people in Hong Kong. But I can assure you that the British Government will continue to do all that is feasible to help Hong Kong cope with its problem.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Thatcher

Ms. Rita Fan

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

19 October 1987

Dear Charles

Vietnamese Refugees in Hong Kong:
Letter to the Prime Minister from Mrs Rita Fan

Thank you for your letter of 6 October, enclosing a letter from Mrs Rita Fan about Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong.

I enclose a draft reply which the Prime Minister might send to Mrs Fan. Its terms have been agreed at official level with the Home Office.

Mrs Fan's letter reflects a growing sense of public disquiet in Hong Kong over the worsening refugee situation in the territory. From January to October 1987 there have been more than 2,800 new arrivals in Hong Kong, and about 1,800 departures for resettlement. This represents an increase in arrivals and a decrease in departures of about 50% over the same period in 1986. The refugee population is now over 9,000 compared with 7,630 in May this year. Many resettlement countries consider that most of those arriving in Hong Kong camps are not genuine refugees, but rather are leaving Vietnam for purely economic reasons. Some 80% of those now arriving in Hong Kong are from North Vietnam. Public pressure is growing in Hong Kong for more severe measures to be taken to prevent Vietnamese arriving in Hong Kong; certain members of Hong Kong's Legislative Council have called for Hong Kong to cease to grant asylum to any of those arriving from Vietnam.

The draft reply responds in terms agreed with the Home Office to Mrs Fan's suggestion that further refugees should be accepted for resettlement in Britain above the 468 which we are committed to taking over the next two years. We have conducted a vigorous diplomatic campaign to persuade other countries to follow our lead and accept more refugees from Hong Kong, but this has so far met with disappointing results. Some resettlement countries have indicated that our recent commitment is insufficient to justify a further effort on their own behalf.

/During

During Lord Glenarthur's recent visit to Hong Kong the issue of Vietnamese refugees was raised frequently with him. In particular he was asked about our contacts with the Vietnamese authorities over the question of the continuing outflow of refugees from Vietnam. Lord Glenarthur indicated that we had intensified our contacts with the Vietnamese authorities over this issue and directly explored with them the question of returning refugees from Hong Kong on acceptable conditions. He explained that there had so far been no sign of Vietnamese willingness to take people back except on a case by case basis.

Yours ever

Robin

(R N Culshaw)
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq
10 Downing Street

SHIADY

DSR 11 (Revised Sept 85)

DRAFT: minute/letter/teleletter/despatch/note

TYPE: Draft/Final 1 +

FROM:
Prime Minister

DEPARTMENT: TEL. NO:

BUILDING: ROOM NO:

Reference

Your Reference

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

Top Secret
Secret
Confidential
Restricted
Unclassified

PRIVACY MARKING

..... In Confidence

CAVEAT .....

Enclosures flag(s) .....

TO:

Mrs Rita Fan Convener

Convener

LegCo Ad Hoc Group on Refugees

Legislative Council Building

8 Jackson Road, Central Hong Kong

Copies to:

DSRDW

Thank you for your letter of 30 September about Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong.

The British Government are well aware of the strength of public feeling in Hong Kong about this problem, and we are sympathetic to the plight of the refugees themselves. It was for these reasons that we decided in May to accept a further 468 Vietnamese refugees from camps in Hong Kong for resettlement in the UK, and launched a renewed diplomatic campaign to press other resettlement countries to follow our example.

I note what you say about the increase in the number of refugees in Hong Kong and the disappointing rate of resettlement over the past year. This is a matter of considerable concern to us, as it is to you. We have therefore stepped up our efforts to find a durable

solution to the problem in parallel with our resettlement efforts. You are already aware that both the British and the Hong Kong Governments are actively discussing these issues with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the main resettlement countries. I believe that these contacts are helping to increase international awareness of the need to tackle the problem of arrivals in Hong Kong and elsewhere of people whose departure from Vietnam is essentially motivated by economic considerations. In addition our Ambassador in Hanoi has formally raised with the Vietnamese authorities the question of the return of refugees from Hong Kong under acceptable conditions.

You ask whether Britain could increase its intake of refugees from Hong Kong by accepting refugees who have no family ties with this country or who turned down earlier offers of resettlement here. While I deeply sympathise with those refugees who have been in camps for a considerable time, I have to say that our resettlement commitments have been extended as far as possible at present. We must take into full account our capacity to absorb new arrivals and to assist their integration into British society. Given the difficulties which Vietnamese arrivals have experienced in settling in the UK, even when they have come to join family members, I do not believe that it would be sensible at this stage to widen our criteria for acceptance.

I know that this will disappoint some people in Hong

DSR 11C
(Revised 5/87)

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

Top Secret

Secret

Confidential

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Unclassified

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In Confidence

Kong. But I can assure you that the British Government will continue to do all that is feasible to help Hong Kong cope with its problem

VIETNAM

REFUGEES

PT 4

brochures sent requesting its return.

6 October 1987

I enclose a copy of a letter which the Prime Minister has received from Ms. Rita Fan of the Office of Members of the Executive and Legislative Councils.

I should be grateful if you would provide a draft reply which the Prime Minister might send to Ms. Fan by Tuesday 20 October.

I am sending a copy of this letter and enclosure to Philip Mawer (Home Office).

(C. D. POWELL)

Robert Culshaw, Esq., M.V.O.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

6 October 1987

I am writing to say that we have received your letter of 30 September to the Prime Minister. Mrs. Thatcher is away from London at present, first at the Party Conference and then at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting. But I shall ensure that she sees your letter as soon as possible.

Charles Powell

Ms. Rita Fan

OMELCO

Office of Members of the Executive and Legislative Councils
行 政 立 法 兩 局 議 員 辦 事 處

Ref: MA/7

30 September 1987

Rt Hon Margaret Thatcher MP
House of Commons
LONDON SW1A OAA
UK

Dear Mrs Thatcher,

Vietnamese Refugees

The Senior Member of the Legislative Council of Hong Kong, the Hon Lydia Dunn, wrote to you on 14 January 1987 requesting you to do what you could to urge HMG to renew its initiative to take in Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong for resettlement and to begin negotiations with the Vietnamese Government with a view to repatriating boat people arriving in Hong Kong who are not genuine refugees. I am now writing as Convener of the Legislative Council's Ad Hoc Group on Vietnamese Refugees to express our appreciation for the help that MPs have given us in approaching HMG on this subject. We note from the Home Secretary's statement on 8 May that the UK will now accept 468 refugees from Hong Kong over the coming two years, and, while we had hoped that this figure might have been higher and still hope that it will not mark the limit of the UK's future commitment, we are certain that without the assistance of so many MPs we might not even have seen this contribution towards relieving our problems. We are also pleased to note that HMG is seeking to put to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees and the main resettlement countries a case for a common approach towards a durable solution to the refugee problem, and that the British Ambassador to Hanoi will discuss repatriation with Vietnamese officials.

Meanwhile, our difficulties remain and seem to be getting worse: there are at present 9166 refugees in our camps, compared with 8376 at the same time last year; and only 1729 refugees have been resettled overseas so far this year, compared with 3258 in the same period last

Legislative Council Building, 8 Jackson Road, Central, Hong Kong. 香港中區昃臣道八號立法局 Tel: 5-8440700

year. We believe that the UK has a responsibility to take the initiative in relieving Hong Kong's burdens, and we hope that HMG can be persuaded to increase its commitment to taking refugees from Hong Kong. In particular, we should like HMG to consider relaxing the strict family-reunion criteria for accepting refugees so that refugees from Hong Kong with no families in the UK might be given the opportunity to settle in the UK. We should also like HMG to reconsider the 160 or so refugees from Hong Kong who turned down earlier offers of resettlement in the UK hoping to receive offers from other countries but who still remain in our refugee camps. We should be most grateful if you could help us in impressing our requests on HMG: I am enclosing a folder of information on Vietnamese Refugees in Hong Kong produced recently by the Hong Kong Government, and if there is any further information we can send you please let me know.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

(Rita FAN)
Convener
LegCo Ad Hoc Group on
Vietnamese Refugees

Encl.

VIETNAM

REFUGEES

PT 4

10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

1 June 1987

VIETNAMESE BOAT PEOPLE

I enclose a copy of Miss Lydia Dunn's reply to the Prime Minister's message about our willingness to take in a further 468 Vietnamese Boat people.

I am copying this letter and enclosure to William Fittall (Home Office).

(C. D. POWELL)

Robert Culshaw, Esq., M.V.O.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

CPL

MEMBERS OF LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

立 法 局 議 員

20th May, 1987.

The Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher, MP,
Prime Minister,
10 Downing Street,
London SW1A 2AA,
United Kingdom.

Dear Prime Minister,

Thank you for informing me of the British Government's decision to accept for resettlement a further 468 Vietnamese boat people from Hong Kong over the next two years.

We are grateful to the British Government for this response. However, you will not be surprised to learn that Members of the Legislative Council had hoped that the resettlement number to be taken by the UK would be greater.

We are very glad to hear that the British Government intends with other Western Governments to search for a common approach to the Vietnamese Government for a lasting solution. I do appreciate that results cannot be quickly achieved but it would be helpful to us if we could be informed of the progress made from time to time.

May I personally take this opportunity of wishing you every success in the coming election. Your many supporters here believe that your return to office is necessary to provide Hong Kong with the basis for its confident progress during the important years of transition.

Yours sincerely,

Lydia Dunn

Legislative Council Building, 8 Jackson Road, Central, Hong Kong. 香港中區昃臣道八號立法局 Tel : 5-8440700

VIETNAM: Angels pt 4

10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

THE PRIME MINISTER

8 May 1987

Dear Miss Dunn,

In my letter of 13 February I promised to let you know what we decided to do to help Hong Kong over the problem of Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong.

In response to the first request in your letter I am pleased to tell you that the British Government will accept a further number of Vietnamese refugees from the camps in Hong Kong. We plan to receive them at a rate of about 20 a month over the months ahead. The group to be resettled under this programme will comprise some 468 refugees who qualify under the relaxed "family reunion" criteria announced in September 1985.

I am sure you will appreciate that this is a substantial commitment, given the difficulties involved in resettling refugees and the heavy pressures we face from many quarters for special treatment to be given to various groups of people wishing to come here. We shall also press other governments - both directly and through the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees - to take similar action. We shall do all we can to ensure that the diplomatic campaign we shall undertake will be effective in producing offers of assistance for Hong Kong from other countries.

You also asked that we should initiate negotiations with the Vietnamese Government with a view to repatriating those boat people who are not eligible to be treated as refugees. As I am sure you will understand the question of any approach of this sort raises very difficult humanitarian and foreign policy issues for us. Despite these difficulties, we intend to explore with other Western governments whether any basis can be established for a common approach on the problem of Vietnamese refugees. We believe that a joint approach of this sort offers a better chance of progress than anything we might do alone; but I think we have to accept that results will not be easily or quickly achieved.

We shall continue to take full account of the views expressed in Hong Kong on these matters, and to keep Hong Kong's interests very much in mind as we work for a solution to this sad problem.

With best wishes,

Kind regards.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Thatcher

The Hon. Lydia Dunn, C.B.E., J.P.

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CONFIDENTIAL
FM FCO
TO DESKBY 060100Z HONG KONG
TELNO 1239
OF 051430Z MAY 87

PERSONAL FOR GOVERNOR FROM HUM,
MY SECOND IPT: VIETNAMESE REFUGEES

1. THE FOLLOWING IS THE TEXT OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S REPLY TO LYDIA DUNN.

BEGINS
DEAR MISS DUNN
IN MY LETTER OF 13 FEBRUARY I PROMISED TO LET YOU KNOW WHAT WE DECIDED TO DO TO HELP HONG KONG OVER THE PROBLEM OF VIETNAMESE REFUGEES IN HONG KONG.

IN RESPONSE TO THE FIRST REQUEST IN YOUR LETTER I AM PLEASED TO TELL YOU THAT THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT WILL ACCEPT A FURTHER NUMBER OF VIETNAMESE REFUGEES FROM THE CAMPS IN HONG KONG. WE PLAN TO RECEIVE THEM AT A RATE OF ABOUT 20 A MONTH OVER THE MONTHS AHEAD. THE GROUP TO BE RESETTLED UNDER THIS PROGRAMME WILL COMPRISE SOME 460 REFUGEES WHO QUALIFY UNDER THE RELAXED 'FAMILY REUNION' CRITERIA ANNOUNCED IN SEPTEMBER 1985.
I AM SURE YOU WILL APPRECIATE THAT THIS IS A SUBSTANTIAL COMMITMENT, GIVEN THE DIFFICULTIES INVOLVED IN RESETTLING REFUGEES AND THE HEAVY PRESSURES WE FACE FROM MANY QUARTERS FOR

SPECIAL TREATMENT TO BE GIVEN TO VARIOUS GROUPS OF PEOPLE WISHING TO COME HERE. WE SHALL ALSO PRESS OTHER GOVERNMENTS - BOTH DIRECTLY AND THROUGH THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES - TO TAKE SIMILAR ACTION. WE SHALL DO ALL WE CAN TO ENSURE THAT THE DIPLOMATIC CAMPAIGN WE SHALL UNDERTAKE WILL BE EFFECTIVE IN PRODUCING OFFERS OF ASSISTANCE FOR HONG KONG FROM OTHER COUNTRIES.

YOU ALSO ASKED THAT WE SHOULD INITIATE NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT WITH A VIEW TO REPATRIATING THOSE BOAT PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT ELIGIBLE TO BE TREATED AS REFUGEES. AS I AM SURE YOU WILL UNDERSTAND THE QUESTION OF ANY APPROACH OF THIS SORT RAISES VERY DIFFICULT HUMANITARIAN AND FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES FOR US. DESPITE THESE DIFFICULTIES, WE INTEND TO EXPLORE WITH OTHER WESTERN GOVERNMENTS WHETHER ANY BASIS CAN BE ESTABLISHED FOR A COMMON APPROACH ON THE PROBLEM OF VIETNAMESE REFUGEES. WE BELIEVE THAT A JOINT APPROACH OF THIS SORT OFFERS A BETTER CHANCE OF PROGRESS THAN ANYTHING WE MIGHT BE ALONE: BUT I THINK WE HAVE TO ACCEPT THAT RESULTS WILL NOT BE EASILY OR QUICKLY ACHIEVED.

WE SHALL CONTINUE TO TAKE FULL ACCOUNT OF THE VIEWS EXPRESSED IN HONG KONG ON THESE MATTERS, AND TO KEEP HONG KONG'S INTERESTS VERY MUCH IN MIND AS WE WORK FOR A SOLUTION TO THIS SAD PROBLEM.

WITH BEST WISHES, KIND REGARDS, YOURS SINCERELY,
MARGARET THATCHER
ENDS

HOWE

OCMIAN 2281

LIMITED
HKO
PS
PS/LADY YOUNG
PS/MR BENTON
MR MCLAREN

10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

4 May 1987

From the Private Secretary

Dear Robert,

VIETNAMESE REFUGEES FROM HONG KONG

The Prime Minister has signed the letter to Miss Dunn and we have dated it 8 May. I enclose the original. You may like to telegraph the text to Hong Kong with instructions that it should be delivered as soon as the parliamentary answer has been given on 8 May.

I am copying this letter and enclosure to William Fittall (Home Office).

Yours sincerely,

Charles Powell

Robert Culshaw Esq
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

1 May 1987

Thank you for your letter of 30 April about Vietnamese refugees and the proposed Parliamentary Answer. The Prime Minister is content with this but thinks it should be given on Friday 8 May.

I am copying this letter to Robert Culshaw (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), Andrew Lansley (Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster's Office), Alison Smith (Lord Privy Seal's Office) and to Murdo Maclean (Chief Whip's Office).

(Charles Powell)

William Fittall, Esq.,
Home Office.

FROM: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY

RESTRICTED

HOME OFFICE
QUEEN ANNE'S GATE
LONDON SWIH 9AT

30 April 1987

Dear Charles

Thank you for your letter of 22 April conveying the Prime Minister's agreement to our acceptance over two years of 468 Vietnamese refugees with close ties to Vietnamese already here. I can confirm that colleagues on H Committee are content with what is proposed and I attach a draft Parliamentary reply which has been revised along the lines proposed.

As far as the point raised by the Prime Minister about press coverage is concerned, I understand the Foreign Secretary was as angry as the Prime Minister about some of the reports on this issue, which he also regarded as unhelpful. The FCO have established that the John Dickie article in the Daily Mail on 21 April was not based on briefing received either from the Secretary of State's party in Bangkok or from the FCO News Department. On the flight from London to Bangkok Dickie asked, separately, the Head of the FCO News Department, who was with Sir Geoffrey Howe on his recent tour, and Sir Geoffrey himself, whether a decision had been taken on further resettlement of refugees from Hong Kong. Both told him that no decision had yet been taken on further resettlement of refugees from Hong Kong. He then said that he had had good information in London before he left that a decision had in fact been taken, and proceeded to file his story. He presumably date-lined it from Bangkok to give it additional credence. On 21 April the Secretary of State arranged a question at a press conference in Thailand about the Dickie story and formally denied it in the presence of Dickie himself. The story was also formally denied by the FCO News Department the same day, and this was reflected in a number of articles, notably in the Daily Telegraph, on 22 April. We understand that reports which appeared subsequently of a ministerial meeting to consider the issue were the result of comments made by the No 10 Press Office to the Press Association Lobby Correspondent, Chris Moncrieff.

The House of Lords Committee Stage of the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Bill is set for Thursday 7 May and we would therefore like to answer arranged questions in both Houses on Tuesday or at the latest Wednesday. The Prime Minister's

/letter to

C D Powell, Esq

RESTRICTED

letter to the Hon Lydia Dunn of the Hong Kong Legislative Council will need to be despatched at the right moment. Subject to any views from you, Robert Culshaw, Andrew Lansley, Alison Smith or Murdo Maclean, we suggest that the questions are tabled tomorrow and answered on Tuesday.

I am copying this letter to Robert Culshaw, to the Private Secretaries to Members of H Committee, Murdo Maclean (Chief Whip's Office) and Trevor Woolley (Cabinet Office).

Yours ever

W R FITTALL

DRAFT PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further steps he is proposing to alleviate the problems caused by the continuing flow of Vietnamese refugees to Hong Kong.

ANSWER

This Government has an excellent record of participation in international efforts to relieve the problems caused by the outflow of Vietnamese to Hong Kong and elsewhere in South East Asia.

Between 1979 and 1981 we accepted for settlement here, following the initial surge of departures from Vietnam, nearly 20,000 Indo-Chinese refugees of whom over 12,000 were Vietnamese from Hong Kong. Subsequently we continued to accept Vietnamese but applied the normal Immigration Rules governing family reunion. In 1985, however, following a recommendation by the Home Affairs Committees Sub-Committee on Race Relations and Immigration, we agreed to accept around 500 Vietnamese (60 of whom were not from Hong Kong) whose family relationship with those already here did not meet the normal criteria. Following that agreement, some 1200 further offers of individual resettlement from Hong Kong were made by other countries.

We have now considered what further steps might be taken against a background of the need on the one hand to maintain tight immigration controls and, on the other, to do everything possible to help Hong Kong. We have concluded that we should take a further number of Vietnamese from Hong Kong both as a contribution to reducing the population in the camps in Hong Kong and to give a signal to other resettlement countries of our continuing commitment to Hong Kong. We have decided therefore to accept for settlement here 468 named individuals who have been identified by the Hong Kong Government as close relatives of those already here. They will be re-settled at a rate of about 20 a month spread over almost two years to ensure

that our reception facilities are not overstretched. We believe that as in the past, other countries are likely to follow suit and offer a substantial number of further resettlement places for Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong. We shall be making every effort to persuade them to do so. We do not, however, consider that resettlement alone is a sufficient answer to Hong Kong's refugee problem. Concerted international action aimed at a durable solution to the problem is required and, to this end, we shall be seeking to put to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the main resettlement countries the case for a common approach. In doing so we shall stress our own continuing commitment to Hong Kong of which the resettlement commitment announced to-day is clear evidence.

VIETNAM

REFUGEES

1974

CONFIDENTIAL

CABINET OFFICE,
WHITEHALL, LONDON SW1A 2AS

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster

Tel No: 270 0020
270 0296

23 April 1987

William Fittall Esq
Private Secretary to the Secretary
of State for the Home Department
Home Office
Queen Anne's Gate
LONDON
SW1H 9AT

CBP
23/4

Dear William,

VIETNAMESE REFUGEES IN HONG KONG

The Chancellor of the Duchy has seen Charles Powell's letter to you, dated yesterday. In the light of this, while maintaining his reservations as described in his letter of 8 April, the Chancellor will not stand in the way of an announcement as proposed, if other colleagues agree.

The Chancellor would be grateful to be consulted about the timing and terms of an announcement.

I am copying this letter to Charles Powell (No. 10), Tony Galsworthy (FCO), the private secretaries to members of H Committee, Murdo Maclean (Chief Whip's Office) and to Trevor Woolley (Cabinet Office).

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Lansley

ANDREW LANSLEY
Private Secretary

VIETNAM : Refugees PTH

CONFIDENTIAL

hle

SLH

bc PC

10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

22 April 1987

From the Private Secretary

Dear William,

VIETNAMESE REFUGEES IN HONG KONG

The Prime Minister was vexed to read a number of tendentious and inaccurate press reports - notably an article date-lined Bangkok in the Daily Mail of 21 April - about the Government's consideration of the decision to accept a further batch of Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong. These reports complicate the handling of this issue quite unnecessarily, and are likely to mislead opinion in Hong Kong in a way which can only be damaging. She would like to know the origin of these reports. You will no doubt let me know what can be established about this, in consultation with the FCO.

On the substance, the Prime Minister takes the point in the Home Secretary's minute of 15 April about the link between a decision on the Vietnamese refugees and ensuring the passage through remaining Lords stages of the Immigration (Carrier's Liability) Bill. Despite the reservations which I have expressed in earlier correspondence, she would be ready to agree to our accepting the 468 additional refugees with close ties to Vietnamese already here, spread over two years. But her agreement is given in the expectation that other countries will follow suit and that maximum efforts will be made to persuade them to do so. This point will need to be brought out more clearly in the draft Parliamentary Answer enclosed with your letter of 3 April. The Prime Minister would also wish to be assured that all members of H Committee would support a decision on the lines proposed.

I should be grateful if you would keep me informed about the timing of any announcement.

I am copying this letter to Tony Galsworthy (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), to the Private Secretaries to Members of H Committee, Murdo Maclean (Chief Whip's Office) and Trevor Woolley (Cabinet Office).

Yours sincerely

Charles Powell

C. D. POWELL

William Fittall, Esq.,
Home Office

CONFIDENTIAL

(1)

PRIME MINISTER

VIETNAMESE REFUGEES

So far as I know, the Sunday Times did not print a story. But today's Daily Mail has a story that we have agreed to accept 1,000 refugees. The story is date-lined Bangkok and written by someone who is accompanying the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary on his Far East visit. I have had words with the FCO who are investigating.

The problem with these leaks is that it will make the problem unnecessarily difficult to manage politically. In the case of the Daily Mail story, it will raise unrealistic and damaging expectations in Hong Kong about the number of refugees we shall be willing to take.

I honestly wonder whether it is worth a meeting particularly given the urgency in relation to the Immigration (Carrier's Liability) Bill in the Lords. Would it not now be best to say:

- you agree to the 468 additional refugees with close ties with Vietnamese already here, spread over two years;

- this agreement is based on the expectation that other countries will follow suit, and maximum efforts will be made to persuade them to do so;

- the Home Secretary and Foreign Secretary must secure the support of other members of H Committee, by whatever means the Lord President judges appropriate.

Agree? Yes MT

CDT

21 April 1987

CDP

PRIME MINISTER

Not surprisingly I suppose no-one admits to knowing how the information got out. The matter has not, however, been considered by H Committee, and given your involvement I suspect that the Lord President would prefer you to chair a meeting of Ministers rather than take it himself.

Shall we arrange this?

Yes pls

AB

CDP

Who would you like to invite to the meeting?

How soon should it be?

ANDY BEARPARK

16 April 1987

AB 21/4

PRIME MINISTER

The attached minute from the Home Secretary explains that there is little detailed information on the question of Vietnamese refugees/supplementary benefit. He does, however, ask for your agreement to an early announcement on taking a further small batch of refugees. Apparently the Sunday Times are going to run a story this weekend to the effect that you are blocking the decision.

Did the Sunday Times get their information from the H.O. or the F.C.O.? Has the matter been before H committee? If they all agree - I will not object.

PAB

P. A. BEARPARK

15 April 1987

cc PC.

Prime Minister

VIETNAMESE REFUGEES IN HONG KONG

Geoffrey Howe's minute to you of 9 April sets out the foreign policy arguments for announcing an early decision that we are willing to take a further small batch of refugees from Hong Kong.

2. There are also important considerations of timing here at home. It will be important to ensure that we are able to take the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Bill through its remaining Lords stages without having to concede unpalatable amendments, eg a statutory right of appeal. There is clearly much cross-Party concern about this country's reputation over asylum. (I am talking of Parliamentary rather than public opinion.) Committee Stage will take place in the week beginning 3 May, and it would be very useful if we had by then announced acceptance of the further group under exactly the sort of arranged programme which we have been emphasising will be in no way affected by the Bill. Further delay may be unhelpful. There is continuing speculation about what decision the Government is to make and, if it is allowed to run on, it will reinforce opposition to a Bill which we need badly for both operational and political reasons. Accordingly, I would hope - with Geoffrey Howe - that we might announce a decision soon on the lines of the arranged answer enclosed with my Private Secretary's letter of 3 April to Charles Powell.

3. I do not under-estimate the difficulties of timing and presentation. But the numbers are small and similar announcements in past years have passed off without problem. We do not have figures for the proportion of the 20,000 who have arrived since 1979 who are receiving supplementary benefit. It

/is true that

is true that the Vietnamese have, of all the groups who have come to this country in recent decades, had the greatest problems in adjusting to our way of life. But in the end they do. We have tried to learn from past experience, and the proposed group will all be closely connected with people already here, and this should help reduce the difficulties over their reception and assimilation.

4. I am copying this minute to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, to members of H Committee, to John Wakeham and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

Douglas Hurd.

15 April 1987

VIETNAM - Refugees Pt 4

CONFIDENTIAL

PM/87/019

PRIME MINISTER

Vietnamese Refugees in Hong Kong

1. I have seen Charles Powell's letter of 6 April to William Fittall in the Home Office asking for further information about Vietnamese refugees already in this country. This was in the context of Douglas Hurd's proposal, agreed with me, that we should accept for resettlement here a further 468 refugees currently in Hong Kong, at the rate of 20 a month. I understand that the Home Office are working urgently on a reply.

2. I am concerned that if there is much further delay in reaching a decision on this we shall seriously prejudice the longer term strategy set out in Douglas Hurd's minute of 26 March and, more immediately, the chances of getting other countries to offer additional resettlement places to refugees from Hong Kong. Time is not on our side. The main resettlement countries are faced with strong competing claims for places in their annual refugee quotas, which are rapidly filled by refugees from elsewhere than Hong Kong. If we are to persuade them to take additional people from Hong Kong, we need to act soon.

3. I have to say that I do not think we would get far with the countries we have particularly in mind - the US, Canada and Australia - by using the argument in Charles Powell's letter that "if others had met their responsibilities, Hong Kong would not have so many Vietnamese refugees". In fact, Since January 1980, the

/US

CONFIDENTIAL

US has resettled 46,667 Vietnamese from Hong Kong, Canada has taken 13,669 and Australia 4,542. The UK has taken 8,804. Rightly or wrongly, other countries - and people in Hong Kong - take the view that HMG, as the government with general responsibility for Hong Kong, has a particular responsibility to help Hong Kong solve this very serious problem.

4. Last year, following our decision to accept a further 500 or so Vietnamese refugees, other countries responded by offering a total of 1,200 places for Hong Kong over and above their existing quotas. We have had clear indications from a number of them, including specifically the US and Australia, that unless the UK takes more refugees from Hong Kong this year, they will find it difficult to justify making further efforts on behalf of Hong Kong themselves. It seems to me that the proposal to take 468 at the rate of 20 per month is the minimum we can reasonably do in all the circumstances. We are of course pursuing a wider solution - we attended, as an observer, a meeting of the main settlement countries in Washington last week. But progress will be slow; and our seat at the table depends on our continuing to play our part in the resettlement.

5. I am also concerned about the effects of further delay in Hong Kong, and on confidence in the territory. As you know from Lydia Dunn's letter, feelings are running high on the issue in Hong Kong where there are always those on the lookout for signs that the UK is seeking to evade its responsibilities towards them. 1987 will be a difficult year for Hong Kong: we are already in the run-up to the publication of the Hong Kong Government's White Paper on the further development of representative government; we are in disagreement with the Hong Kong Government over air services agreements; and we are about to start negotiations over the

/renewal

renewal of the Defence Costs Agreement under which Hong Kong at present pays 75% of the costs of the garrison. If we are perceived as having failed to do what we can to help Hong Kong over the difficult and longstanding problem of Vietnamese refugees, the handling of all these issues will be made more difficult.

6. More generally, I believe that if we do not decide soon on this question, we shall risk wider damage to Hong Kong people's belief that they can rely on the UK to stand by them when they need help. This belief is, as you know, a vital component in their confidence in the future. Confidence has held up very well so far but remains fragile. It must be sustained if we are to secure a stable and prosperous future for the territory.

7. I hope, therefore, that you will feel able to agree soon to the dual strategy set out in Douglas Hurd's minute.

8. I am copying this minute to members of H Committee, to John Wakeham, and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

(GEOFFREY HOWE)

Foreign & Commonwealth Office
9 April 1987

VIETNAM:
Refugees A4

CONFIDENTIAL

CABINET OFFICE,
WHITEHALL, LONDON SW1A 2AS

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster

Tel No: 270 0020
270 0296

8th April 1987

The Rt Hon Douglas Hurd CBE MP
Secretary of State for the Home
Department
Home Office
Queen Anne's Gate
LONDON
SW1H 9AT

Dear Douglas

VIETNAMESE REFUGEES IN HONG KONG

Thank you for the copy of your minute of 26 March. I have seen also the subsequent correspondence with No. 10 and your private secretary's letter to mine of 6 April.

I have to say that I am not reassured that there will not be an unacceptable political response here to what you propose. We are not free, as you know, from very considerable public unease about immigration, although the regime is now very much more carefully controlled. I accept fully that the case of the Vietnamese refugees hitherto has very much taken the form of a special case. While the proposed new commitment is not large in absolute terms, it will be suggestive of a continuing flow of immigration to a community which has had difficulties in establishing itself here.

I agree that we need to look for a durable solution; the persistent flow of what appears to be economic migrants from Vietnam will not be stemmed if they continue to be subsequently resettled here or in the United States, Australia or Canada.

I share the Prime Minister's view that these matters are much more easily handled if we can be seen to be acting in parallel with others. I think they are further assisted if we could demonstrate action also to stem the flow into the camps in Hong Kong. Generally, I should also say that I find the timing of this proposal unhelpful. I would regard it as most desirable if, for the present, we could carry the Hong Kong Legislative Council with us by examining the way forward in more detail, in concert with others.

I am sending a copy of this letter to the Prime Minister, Geoffrey Howe, other members of H Committee, John Wakeham, and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

Yours ever

NORMAN TEBBIT

Vietnam: Refugees PT4

From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY

ccpc

HOME OFFICE
QUEEN ANNE'S GATE
LONDON SW1H 9AT

6 April 1987

CDP
6/4

Dear Andrew

VIETNAMESE REFUGEES IN HONG KONG

You wrote to Stephen Boys Smith on 1 April to say that Mr Tebbit has seen the Home Secretary's minute of 26 March to the Prime Minister about a further quota of Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong and has asked for background information on the experience of those already in the United Kingdom.

There are now about 20,000 Vietnamese refugees in this country and since 1979 the Home Office has funded and overseen a special Vietnamese Programme to assist in their reception and resettlement. The Vietnamese came from a very different environment and initially found particular difficulty in adapting to a new life in the United Kingdom.

The special programme has, in fact, enabled significant numbers of refugees to adapt successfully to life here. They have shown a considerable capacity to help themselves and a number of local community groups have been set up to this end. Also two umbrella organisations provide the opportunity for Vietnamese throughout the United Kingdom to co-ordinate their activities and express their views at national level.

There are still difficulties. Many members of the Vietnamese community experience a number of problems, such as unemployment and poor housing, though here, too, there have been encouraging developments.

The proposal now under consideration is to take refugees from Hong Kong with close relatives in this country. The fact that family members are already settled here should help to reduce the difficulties for the new arrivals. This, together with experience so far, was taken into account when drawing up our proposals for a new commitment as part of a wider international initiative.

I am copying this letter to Charles Powell (No 10), Robert Culshaw (FCO), the Private Secretaries to members of H Committee, to Murdo Maclean (Chief Whip's Office) and to Trevor Woolley (Cabinet Office).

Yours ever

W R FITTALL

Andrew Lansley, Esq.,

VIETNAM – Refugees Pt 4

File

dg 28VM

bc: PC
cc: CDL (agreed with CDP)
CST

10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

6 April 1987

Dear William,

VIETNAMESE REFUGEES IN HONG KONG

Thank you for your further letter of 3 April about the question of taking an additional 468 refugees from Hong Kong.

The Prime Minister does not accept the line of argument in your letter about the likely views of other countries. They cannot reasonably argue that the Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong are our responsibility. Indeed if others had met their responsibilities, Hong Kong would not have so many Vietnamese refugees.

The Prime Minister has now in addition asked how many of the previous refugees from Vietnam whom we have received in the United Kingdom are still on supplementary benefit or other forms of public support; and to what extent the additional 468 are likely to become an immediate charge on the taxpayer rather than be supported by family members already here and who are self-supporting. She would wish detailed information on this point before agreeing to consider the matter any further.

BF

Subject to the answer to this point, I think she may - and it is only my view - agree that we can take the 468 on the understanding that others will follow suit.

I am copying this letter to Robert Culshaw (Foreign and Commonwealth Office).

Yours sincerely,

Charles Powell

Charles Powell

William Fittall, Esq.,
Home Office.

LCCPC

(1)

From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY

Prime Minister
The Foreign Secretary & Home Secretary do not want to make our offer conditional.
At the least, we might say that our offer is made in the expectation that others will follow suit: and their readiness to do so will condition our future views. Agree? CDP 3/4

HOME OFFICE
QUEEN ANNE'S GATE
LONDON SW1H 9AT

3 April 1987

Dear Charles

VIETNAMESE REFUGEES IN HONG KONG

Thank you for your letter of 27 March. The Prime Minister asked if our offer to take 468 Vietnamese refugees should be made conditional on the other countries also taking an agreed number.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Home Secretary agree entirely that any resettlement commitment by this country must be placed firmly in its international context and, in this respect, it is relevant that some 1,200 places were offered by other countries following our own 1985 offer of some 500 places. We can bring this aspect out more clearly in our presentation of the decision and in the Parliamentary Answer, a revised version of which is attached.

Both Secretaries of State, however, take the view that to make our offer specifically conditional on the response of other countries would be counter-productive in terms not only of Hong Kong sentiment but also of the reaction of the countries concerned. They regard this country as having a particular responsibility, and a number have indicated that they will accept further numbers of Vietnamese from Hong Kong only in effect if we do so. If we seek now to reverse the conditionality, they are likely to take a different view and concentrate their resettlement commitment elsewhere than Hong Kong. There is growing talk among them of "compassion fatigue" and an evident reluctance to play what they see as our part could well be used by them to diminish or terminate help that they do not regard themselves as obliged to give.

This is not the point. The Vietnamese are no more our responsibility than that of other nations if they had met their responsibilities – Hong Kong would not have so many

Moreover, such a course would impair our ability to persuade the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the other main resettlement countries of the need for a common approach to the problem of Vietnamese refugees as a whole and for a regional solution. This is, as you will recall from the Home Secretary's minute of 26 March, an aspect of the issue to which both the Home Secretary and the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary attach great importance if we are not to be left with a virtually open-ended resettlement commitment. It seems imperative to do all we can to make this long term aim attainable.

The Home Secretary and the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary therefore hope that the Prime Minister will agree that on this occasion the resettlement commitment should be made without strings but that the presentation and the Parliamentary announcement should clearly bring out the linkage to the resettlement offers of other countries.

Copies as before.

How many of our previous refugees from Vietnam are still on supplementary benefit?

Yours ever,

W R FITTALL

Charles Powell, Esq.,

DRAFT PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further steps he is proposing to alleviate the problems caused by the continuing flow of Vietnamese refugees to Hong Kong.

ANSWER

This Government has an excellent record of participation in international efforts to relieve the problems caused by the outflow of Vietnamese to Hong Kong and elsewhere in South East Asia.

Between 1979 and 1981 we accepted for settlement here, following the initial surge of departures from Vietnam, nearly 20,000 Indo-Chinese refugees of whom over 12,000 were Vietnamese from Hong Kong. Later we continued to accept Vietnamese but applied the normal Immigration Rules governing family reunion. In 1985, however, following a recommendation by the Home Affairs Committees Sub-Committee on Race Relations and Immigration, we agreed to accept around 500 Vietnamese (60 of whom were not from Hong Kong) whose family relationship with those already here did not meet the normal criteria. Following that agreement, some 1200 further offers of individual resettlement from Hong Kong were made by other countries.

We have now considered what further steps might be taken against a background of the need on the one hand to maintain tight immigration controls and, on the other, to do everything possible to help Hong Kong. We have concluded that we should take a further number of Vietnamese from Hong Kong both as a contribution to reducing the population in the camps in Hong Kong and to give a signal to other resettlement countries of our continuing commitment to Hong Kong. We have decided therefore to accept for settlement here 468 named individuals who have been identified by the Hong Kong Government as close relatives of those already here. They will be re-settled at a rate of about 20 a month spread over almost two years to ensure

that our reception facilities are not overstretched. We very much hope that, as in the past, other countries will feel able to follow our lead in offering further resettlement places for Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong. We do not, however, consider that resettlement alone is a sufficient answer to Hong Kong's refugee problem. Concerted international action aimed at a durable solution to the problem is required and to this end, we shall be seeking to put to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the main resettlement countries the case for a common approach. In doing so we shall stress our own continuing commitment to Hong Kong of which the resettlement commitment announced to-day is clear evidence. - I hope this does not mean more Vietnam refugees?

VIETNAM. Refugees Pt. 4

CONFIDENTIAL

CCPR.

CABINET OFFICE,
WHITEHALL, LONDON SW1A 2AS

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster

Tel No: 270 0020
270 0296

1 April 1987

Stephen Boys-Smith Esq
Principal Private Secretary to the
Secretary of State for the
Home Department
Home Office
Queen Anne's Gate
LONDON
SW1H 9AT

CDP

CDP1/4

Dear Stephen.

VIETNAMESE REFUGEES IN HONG KONG

The Chancellor of the Duchy has seen your Secretary of State's minute of 26 March to the Prime Minister.

The Chancellor has noted, in particular, that this may give rise to political difficulty. He has not yet seen the letter from Charles Powell; this may ease the difficulty as he perceives it. Mr Tebbit has asked, however, what has been the experience of those Vietnamese refugees who have already come to this country. I should be most grateful if you could comment further about this.

I am copying this letter to Charles Powell (No. 10), Robert Culshaw (FCO), the private secretaries to members of H Committee, to Murdo Maclean (PS/Chief Whip) and to Trevor Woolley (PS/Sir Robert Armstrong).

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Lansley

ANDREW LANSLEY
Private Secretary

VIETNAM

File

OA 37

CaPC

10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

27 March 1987

Dear Stephen,

VIETNAMESE REFUGEES IN HONG KONG

The Prime Minister has considered the Home Secretary's minute of 26 March on how we should take forward Government policy on the problem of Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong.

While the Prime Minister is in general disposed to accept the conclusions of the minute, she has commented that it would be better to concert our actions with those of other Governments, that is to say that we would offer to take some 500 Vietnamese refugees if each of the other countries principally concerned (those listed in paragraph 9 of the minute) were also to take an agreed number.

The Prime Minister would be grateful if the Home Secretary and Foreign Secretary will consider whether this concept could be included in their approach.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretary to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, to Private Secretaries to members of H Committee, and to the Private Secretaries to the Chief Whip and Sir Robert Armstrong.

Yours ever,

(Charles Powell)

Stephen Boys Smith, Esq.,
Home Office.

JA

010

It would be better to concert our action with that of other nations e.g. US will take 500 if each of them will do the same? MT.

Prime Minister ①

This minute proposes a dual strategy: (i) a diplomatic initiative with UNHCR & other interested countries, for a longer-term settlement (which might involve repatriation); (ii) accepting 468 named Vietnamese with close family connections here, over a period of two years. Agree? CDP 26/3

PRIME MINISTER

VIETNAMESE REFUGEES IN HONG KONG

The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and I have been considering how we should take forward Government policy on the continuing problem of Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong. This minute records our agreed conclusions on the basis of which we recommend that you reply to the letter which you (and all our Ministerial and Parliamentary colleagues) have received from Miss Lydia Dunn, Senior Member of the Hong Kong Legislative Council.

Background

2. The problem of the outflow of Vietnamese refugees to Hong Kong has, of course, been with us for nearly eight years and shows signs of diminishing only slowly. Despite the operation by the Hong Kong Government since 1982 of a system of closed camps as a deterrent, there were over 2,000 arrivals in Hong Kong last year, almost double the 1985 figure, after a steady decline between 1982 and 1985. There is, however, one important new development. A significant number of those arriving in Hong Kong now are more akin to economic migrants than to refugees, (although the formal understanding reached by the international community in 1979 is that all those fleeing from Vietnam should be treated as refugees). Many are from north Vietnam rather than the south. The fact is that for many Vietnamese even the hazards of a dangerous sea crossing and the restrictive conditions of the closed camps are preferable to life in Vietnam, especially when there is the prospect, no matter how distant, of resettlement in the West. While we hope that the root causes for these departures (which lie in Vietnam) will disappear, there is clearly no prospect of early change.

/3.

3. As a result, the Hong Kong Government are faced with an almost intractable problem. Not only are they maintaining a population in the camps (at present at around 8,000) for whom no permanent solution is in prospect, they are also faced with mounting resentment from their own population who see Vietnamese with no connections with Hong Kong being admitted to the territory while Chinese immigrants from the People's Republic, many with relatives in Hong Kong, are being turned back at the frontier. These concerns were forcefully expressed in the debate in the Legislative Council on 7 January which prompted Miss Dunn's letter to you on behalf of the Council. As you will have seen, the Council have asked us both to accept a further number of Vietnamese for settlement here, in order to encourage other countries to follow suit; and to approach the Vietnamese Government about the possibility of repatriation.

4. This Government has a good record of generosity towards Indo-Chinese refugees. Since 1979 we have admitted some 20,000 in all, of which nearly 12,800 have been Vietnamese boat people from Hong Kong. Most of these were, of course, concentrated in 1979-81 following the initial surge of departures from Vietnam. Between 1981 and 1985, numbers fell considerably when we began to apply to Vietnamese seeking to come here the normal Immigration Rules criteria governing family reunion. In 1985, however, following a recommendation by the Home Affairs Committee's Sub-Committee on Race Relations and Immigration, we agreed to accept around 500 Vietnamese (60 of whom were not from Hong Kong) whose family relationship with those already here did not meet the normal criteria. That commitment has now been fulfilled.

<u>The UK's response: aims</u>

5. The question is how best to secure a durable solution to this problem. It is not simply a matter of trying to empty Hong Kong's existing camp population. Rather, the object must be to secure a lasting regional solution which can avoid the danger of the camps filling up again. This means coupling initiatives directed to the longer term goal with any immediate relief to Hong Kong.

/6.

Response: longer term

6. Resettlement alone is not a sufficient answer. We need to take concerted action with the main resettlement countries to achieve a lasting solution. Such a solution would have to involve the co-operation of the Vietnamese Government and might well require the repatriation of some of those future arrivals in Hong Kong deemed not to be refugees.

7. This would undoubtedly be very sensitive in political terms, and very difficult to achieve. The price the Vietnamese Government might ask for co-operation, for example a resumption of Western aid, might well be too high. Any demand for the resumption of aid would have to be considered in the light of your statement in the House on 3 July 1979 that "There will be no more aid to Vietnam so long as the present circumstances continue". Those circumstances - Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia and the extensive use of detention without trial - remain unchanged.

8 Moreover, any repatriation scheme would need to be subject to the most stringent safeguards to avert public criticism that we were returning people to harsh conditions and possible punishment in Vietnam. These safeguards would have to include arrangements for monitoring which the Vietnamese Government might reject as an unacceptable intrusion into their internal affairs.

9. Nevertheless the effective alternative, to accept a virtually open-ended responsibility to resettle large numbers of Vietnamese at a time when the need for strict immigration control remains undiminished, cannot be contemplated. Accordingly we propose to make a fresh attempt to bring together the United Nations High Commission Representative (UNHCR) and the main resettlement countries (Australia, Canada and the United States and possibly France as our only EC partner with a direct interest in the problem). We shall put to them the case for a common approach to the problem and in particular the need for a regional solution which involves the Government of Vietnam and the countries of first asylum in the region.

/10.

Response: resettlement

10. In approaching the UNHCR and the resettlement countries for the longer term, it is essential that we should be able to point to a new UK resettlement undertaking as evidence of our own commitment to Hong Kong and to achieving a durable solution to the regional problem. The question is of what should our under-taking consist.

11. We have been under considerable pressure not only from Hong Kong but also from the international refugee agencies such as UNHCR who have asked us to take as many as 1,000 Vietnamese over the next year. While we could not accept a commitment as large as that envisaged by UNHCR, we have to be mindful that any further number of Victnamese we take from Hong Kong will both make a contribution to reducing the population in the camps and give a lead to the main other resettlement countries. These governments were prompted by our 1985/86 commitment to offer in total an additional 1,200 places over and above their existing quotas. Certain of them have clearly indicated to us that the size of their take-off this year will be influenced by our own actions.

12. Of course, their reactions are not the only ones to be weighed. Nearer home we have to consider how far the timing of an initiative is affected by recent events involving asylum applications and the introduction of the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Bill. We believe that our willingness to participate in a well ordered and humanitarian programme in which we take the decisions on whom we admit is very different from a refusal to allow refugee procedures being overwhelmed by the rapid increase in numbers of abusive asylum applications and that this point can be made forcefully in our presentation. Nevertheless an announcement of a resettlement commitment will require careful handling and, if you agree on the proposals in the minute, we shall decide on timing and presentation in the light of events. In doing so we shall seek to draw the distinction between orderly programmes of assistance and evasion of immigration control to which I have referred.

/13.

13. Considering all these factors, we do not believe that a commitment of much less than about 500 would be credible. Accordingly, we propose to accept 468 named individuals who have been identified by the Hong Kong Government as close relatives of those already here. The new arrivals would benefit from the support of their families already established here, so reducing the difficulty in settling to which you referred in your letter of 13 February to Miss Dunn. Such support should also reduce any call on local official or voluntary resources. We would receive the Vietnamese at a rate of about 20 a month spread over almost two years to ensure that our reception facilities were not overstretched and to achieve the kind of steady flow (albeit at a reduced rate) which the Hong Kong Government wish to see. We would use this initiative to seek to persuade other countries also to provide more resettlement places for Hong Kong.

Conclusion

14. You are therefore invited to agree to our dual strategy - on the one hand undertaking a new diplomatic initiative on the lines described above and on the other accepting a further 468 Vietnamese from Hong Kong over a period of two years. If you agree, we would propose to announce our conclusions by way of an arranged Parliamentary Question, the text of which is attached. This would be timed to coincide with the transmission of a letter from yourself to Miss Dunn along the lines of the draft attached. Perhaps your office would be in touch with mine on timing.

15. I am copying this minute to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, to colleagues on H Committee, the Chief Whip and Sir Robert Armstrong.

Douglas Hurd.

26 March 1987

IN BOX

HOME SECRETARY

We regret that the enclosure to the Minute from the Home Secretary to the Prime Minister on Vietnamese Refugees of to-day's date was omitted and regret any inconvenience caused.

WITH

THE COMPLIMENTS OF THE PRIVATE SECRETARY

HOME OFFICE
50 QUEEN ANNE'S GATE
LONDON SW1H 9AT

DRAFT PARLIAMENTARY ANSWER

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further steps he is proposing to alleviate the problems caused by the continuing flow of Vietnamese refugees to Hong Kong.

This Government has an excellent record of participation in international efforts to relieve the problems caused by the outflow of Vietnamese to Hong Kong and elsewhere in South East Asia.

Between 1979 and 1981 we accepted for settlement here, following the initial surge of departures from Vietnam, nearly 20,000 Indo-Chinese refugees of whom over 12,000 were Vietnamese from Hong Kong. Subsequently we continued to accept Vietnamese but applied the normal Immigration Rules governing family reunion. In 1985, however, following a recommendation by the Home Affairs Committees Sub-Committee on Race Relations and Immigration, we agreed to accept around 500 Vietnamese (60 of whom were not from Hong Kong) whose family relationship with those already here did not meet the normal criteria.

We have now considered what further steps might be taken against a background of the need on the one hand to maintain tight immigration controls and, on the other, to do everything possible to help Hong Kong. We have concluded that we should take a further number of Vietnamese from Hong Kong both as a contribution to reducing the population in the camps in Hong Kong and to give a signal to other resettlement countries of our continuing commitment to Hong Kong. We have decided therefore to accept for settlement here 468 named individuals who have been identified by the Hong Kong Government as close relatives of those already here. They will be re-settled at a rate of about 20 a month spread over almost two years to ensure that

our reception facilities are not overstretched. We do not, however, consider that resettlement alone is a sufficient answer to Hong Kong's refugee problem. Concerted international action aimed at a durable solution to the problem is required and to this end, we shall be seeking to put to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the main resettlement countries the case for a common approach. In doing so we shall stress our own continuing commitment to Hong Kong of which the resettlement commitment announced to-day is clear evidence.

(1)

SL (Revised Sept 85)

DRAFT: minute/letter/telcletter/despatch/note

TYPE: Draft/Final 1 +

FROM: Prime Minister

DEPARTMENT:

TEL. NO:

Reference ME2AQX

Your Reference

BUILDING:

ROOM NO:

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

Top Secret
Secret
Confidential
Restricted
Unclassified

PRIVACY MARKING

..... In Confidence

CAVEAT .....

TO: The Hon Lydia Dunn, CBE,JP

Copies to:

SUBJECT:

In my letter of 13 February I promised to let you know what we decided to do to help Hong Kong over the problem of Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong.

In response to the first request in your letter I am pleased to tell you that the British Government will accept a further number of Vietnamese refugees from the camps in Hong Kong. We plan to receive them at a rate of about 20 a month over the months ahead. The group to be resettled under this programme will comprise some 468 refugees who qualify under the relaxed "family reunion" criteria announced in September 1985.

I am sure you will appreciate that this is a substantial commitment, given the difficulties involved in resettling refugees and the heavy pressures we face from many quarters for special treatment to be given to various groups of people wishing to come here. We shall also press other governments - both directly and through the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees - to

Enclosures flag(s) .....

ake similar action. We shall do all we can to ensure hat the diplomatic campaign we shall undertake will be ffective in producing offers of assistance for Hong Kong rom other countries.

You also asked that we should initiate negotiations ith the Vietnamese Government with a view to patriating those boat people who are not eligible to e treated as refugees. As I am sure you will understand he question of any approach of this sort raises very ifficult humanitarian and foreign policy issues for us. espite these difficulties, we intend to explore with ther Western governments whether any basis can be stablished for a common approach to the Vietnamese on the roblem of Vietnamese refugees. We believe that a joint pproach of this sort offers a better chance of progress han anything we might do alone; but I think we have to ccept that results will not be easily or quickly chieved.

You may rest assured that we shall continue to take ull account of the views expressed in Hong Kong on these atters, and to keep Hong Kong's interests very much in ind as we work for a solution to this sad problem.

File

ECL

cc: HO
FCO
PC
cc Welsh office

10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

THE PRIME MINISTER

13 February 1987

Dear Miss Dunn,

Thank you for your letter of 14 January about Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong.

We are very conscious of the heavy burden which Hong Kong has borne since 1975. Hong Kong's record in accepting Vietnamese refugees is one for which the world has cause to be grateful.

We are also aware of the concern in the territory at the increase in arrivals from Vietnam and the slow progress of overseas resettlement. As you know we have ourselves taken 12,750 Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong since 1975 although they have experienced great difficulty in settling here. Our initiative in taking a quota of 500 from 1985 has had some success in securing matching additional offers from other resettlement countries.

The Government are now considering very carefully what more can be done to help Hong Kong. I shall let you know as soon as I can what decision we have taken.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Thatcher

The Hon. Lydia Dunn, C.B.E., J.P.

CONFIDENTIAL

Miss Lydia DUNN 27/2

(29) ECL

bc PC

10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

13 February 1987

C/F I think this is for you now. I have not chased. JR 27/2

LETTER FROM MISS LYDIA DUNN

Thank you for your letter of 9 February enclosing a draft reply from the Prime Minister to Miss Lydia Dunn's recent letter about Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong.

The Prime Minister would like to be consulted very soon about the questions of policy raised by a further limited programme for the resettlement of Vietnamese refugees in Britain. She would be reluctant to accept any further settlement, in the light of the difficulties which those who have already come here have experienced in adapting to life in Britain. At the most she might be prepared to consider a very limited number only. She hopes that the Home Secretary and Foreign Secretary will take this into account in making their recommendation. Meanwhile I have slightly amended the letter to Miss Lydia Dunn. I enclose a copy.

BF

I am copying this letter to Stephen Boys Smith (Home Office).

(Charles Powell)

Reminder: to me for 'phone chase also. JR 26/2

R.N. Culshaw, Esq., M.V.O.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

CONFIDENTIAL

DS7

Prime Minister.

You will want to read the FCO letter behind before signing. We propose some further concession.

I am very worried about this & not

CDP 9/2

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

9 February 1987

Dear Charles.

Letter from Miss Lydia Dunn

You wrote to me on 19 January, enclosing a copy of a letter about Vietnamese Refugees in Hong Kong sent to the Prime Minister by Miss Lydia Dunn of the Hong Kong Legislative Council.

Miss Dunn's letter raises important questions of policy which are under intensive discussion between Ministers here and in the Home Office. They are agreed in principle to recommend a further limited programme for the resettlement in Britain of Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong, but some details remain to be worked out. At the same time we propose to follow up diplomatic contacts with UNHCR and other resettlement countries: these would be directed at identifying long term solutions to the problem, including possible multilateral approaches to the Vietnamese Government. A formal recommendation on both aspects will be made as soon as possible by the Foreign Secretary and the Home Secretary, copied to H colleagues, together with a draft reply to Miss Dunn communicating our decision.

In the meantime we suggest that the Prime Minister might send Miss Dunn a holding reply on the lines of the enclosed draft. It is in sympathetic terms, but does not commit the Government at this stage.

Yours ever

Adrian Culshaw

(R N Culshaw)
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq
10 Downing Street

DSR 11 (Revised)

DRAFT: minute/letter/teleletter/despatch/note

TYPE: Draft/Final 1+

FROM:

Prime Minister

Reference

DEPARTMENT: **TEL. NO:**

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

Top Secret
Secret
Confidential
Restricted
Unclassified

PRIVACY MARKING

.....In Confidence

CAVEAT.....

TO:

The Hon Lydia Dunn CBE JP
Legislative Council Building
8 Jackson Road Central
HONG KONG

Your Reference

Copies to:

SUBJECT:

Thank you for your letter of 14 January about Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong.

We are very conscious of the heavy burden which Hong Kong has borne since 1975. Hong Kong's record in accepting Vietnamese refugees is one of which the territory can be proud.

We are also aware of the concern in the territory at the increase in arrivals from Vietnam and the slow progress of overseas resettlement. As you know we have ourselves taken 12,750 Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong since 1975. Our initiative in taking a quota of 500 from 1985 ~~up to the present~~ has ~~also~~ had some success in securing matching additional offers from other resettlement countries.

The ~~British~~ Government are now considering very carefully and sympathetically what more can be done to help Hong Kong. I shall let you know as soon as I can what decision we have taken.

CM

Enclosures—flag(s).....

Lydia DUNN
2/2

FILE
DA

cc Ho

(1) 3/2

10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary Noack/19 January 1987

I enclose a copy of a letter which the Prime Minister has received from Lydia Dunn of the Hong Kong Legislative Council.

I should be grateful if you would provide a draft reply for the Prime Minister's signature, to reach this office by 2 February.

(Charles Powell)

R.N. Culshaw, Esq., M.V.O.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Report sent to FD with request that they to return.

FCO for direct reply
CDO

MEMBERS OF LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

立 法 局 議 員

cc Welsh Office

14 January 1987

Rt Hon Margaret Thatcher MP
House of Commons
LONDON SW1A OAA
UK

R19

Dear Mrs Thatcher,

Vietnamese Refugees in Hong Kong

I am writing at the request of all Members of the Legislative Council of Hong Kong to express our concern about the problem of Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong and our deep disappointment at HMG's continuing failure to take the lead in finding a solution to the problem.

We are now accepting legal immigrants from China at a rate of 75 a day (equivalent to an annual population increase of 0.5%): the strain that this puts on our social services is considerable. In addition to this we are continuing to devote valuable resources to feeding, clothing and housing a substantial population of Vietnamese boat people the majority of whom are no longer being seen as genuine refugees by resettlement countries. The Hong Kong Government enforces a strict policy of immediately repatriating every person who illegally enters Hong Kong from any other country, including China, whatever his reasons for wishing to come here: even children with parents in Hong Kong are repatriated under this policy. Yet we accept for first asylum all boat people who enter Hong Kong waters from Vietnam whether they are genuine refugees or merely economic opportunists. This is increasingly being seen in Hong Kong as a double standard which cannot be justified.

Other countries in the region, many of which are taking much harsher measures to deter boat people from Vietnam, are enjoying a much faster resettlement rate for their refugee population. Our consistently humane and undiscriminating policy seems only to have resulted in more arrivals and a diminishing rate of resettlement.

Legislative Council Building, 8 Jackson Road, Central, Hong Kong. 香港中區昃臣道八號立法局 Tel : 5-8440700

I am sending you copies of the speeches of nine Members of the Council who spoke in the adjournment debate on Vietnamese refugees last Wednesday. You may not have time to read every speech, but even from leafing through one or two of them I think you will understand the real sense of frustration in Hong Kong over the problem. The frustration exists because HMG will not give Hong Kong a free hand to devise its own solution yet at the same time refuses to lift a finger to help solve the problem. We are not suggesting that the UK should shoulder the entire problem: no single country could possibly accept such a burden. But we are asking the UK to take the initiative and set an example to other resettlement countries, many of whom are now using the UK's procrastination as an excuse for reducing their resettlement quotas or delaying making a commitment to taking refugees from Hong Kong this year.

We ask you to do what you can to urge HMG:

(a) to renew as a matter of urgency its commitment to resettling Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong; and

(b) to initiate negotiations with the Vietnamese Government with a view to making arrangements to repatriate boat people arriving in Hong Kong who do not meet the United Nations definition of refugees.

We are confident that our requests have the support of the community of Hong Kong.

Yours sincerely,

Lydia DUNN
Senior Member

10, Downing Street,
Whitehall S.W.1

PLEASE RETURN WITH
YOUR DRAFT REPLY

With the Private Secretary's
Compliments

Vietnamese Refugees in Hong Kong

The purpose of this paper is to explain the background to the Vietnamese refugee problem in Hong Kong and the poor prospects of resettling these refugees in 1987.

The Refugee Population

The population of Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong was 8,039 at the end of 1986 : about half of the refugees are confined to closed camps, and about half live in open camps. The Hong Kong Government spends about HK$118 million a year (about £10 million) on the refugee camps. Closed camps were introduced in July 1982 in order to deter refugees from coming to Hong Kong. As a result of the closed-camp policy and changing conditions in Vietnam the number of refugees arriving in Hong Kong gradually declined from 8,470 in 1982 to 1,112 in 1985. With permanent resettlement of refugees in Hong Kong and overseas the population of refugees in Hong Kong declined from 12,960 in 1981 to just over 8,000 at the end of 1986. During 1986, however, the total number of arrivals was 2,084, nearly double that in 1985, yet the number of refugees resettled overseas declined from 3,953 in 1985 to 3,816 in 1986.

The 99% increase in arrivals in Hong Kong in 1986 compares with an overall decrease in arrivals in other countries in the region of about 9%. The number of refugees resettled from Hong Kong as a proportion of the total refugee population in the territory is also lower than that of other major places of first asylum by as much as 10% or 20%.

Prospects for Resettlement in 1987

The three main resettlement countries (Australia, Canada, and the USA) intend this year to take in only about half the number of refugees they accepted in 1986 (1,600 compared with 3,150). The present estimate is that less than 2,000 refugees will be resettled in 1987, which is about half the number resettled in 1986.

It is not known why there has been such a sudden increase in the number of refugees arriving in Hong Kong, though it may have more to do with conditions in Vietnam than with any prospect of permanent resettlement. But it is known why the rate of resettlement of refugees from Hong Kong is declining. One reason for the decline is that most of the refugees now arriving in Hong Kong are economic migrants from North Vietnam rather than genuine refugees fleeing from persecution: while Hong Kong has no choice but to grant these people first asylum whatever their motives for leaving Vietnam,

potential resettlement countries are unwilling subsequently to take them in. Some resettlement countries - Australia, for example - will even have difficulty filling their reduced quotas for 1987 because fewer refugees are meeting their resettlement criteria.

The main reason for the decline, however, apears to be the UK's unwillingness to take the lead in resettling refugees in the short term and in finding a lasting solution to the problem in the long term. During the past five years the United Kingdom has accepted only 946 refugees from Hong Kong: Australia, Canada, and the USA took about 3,000, 4,900, and 13,000 of Hong Kong's refugees respectively in the same period. About half of the refugees accepted by the UK in this period were admitted in 1986, when, in response to recommendations made by the Sub-committee on Race Relations and Immigration (SCORRI), HMG decided to relax its family reunion criteria for Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong. This initiative by the UK, small though it may have been in comparison with the efforts made by other countries, enabled HMG and the Hong Kong Government to persuade a number of countries to increase their intake, with the result that 3,816 refugees departed from Hong Kong in 1986 instead of the much smaller number of departures that would have taken place had the UK not taken the initiative.

In September last year the UK stopped its intake in order to review the situation, and since then there has been no initiative either to take in more refugees for settlement or to devise a lasting solution to the problem. The United Nations High Commission on Refugees has advised that HMG's failure to take refugees from Hong Kong is severely hindering its efforts to secure resettlement places on Hong Kong's behalf. The halving of quotas by the major resettlement countries and the reluctance of other countries to commit themselves until the UK takes a lead, together with the increasing number of arrivals of refugees, mean that Hong Kong will make little progress in its efforts to alleviate its Vietnamese refugee problem in 1987.

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DRAFT SPEECH BY HON MRS RITA FAN, JP
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL - 7 JANUARY 1987

Adjournment Debate on Vietnamese Refugees

Sir,

Hong Kong is a place of first asylum for Vietnamese refugees, and all boat people that come into our waters have been accommodated since May 1975. These refugees are supposed to stay here temproarily while awaiting resettlement in third countries. Over the years, the resettlement countries have already taken about 100,000 Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong. However, most of the countries now will only accept refugees that satisfy their criteria for resettlement. Furthermore, virtually all countries have annual quotas. As a result, there are at present still some 8,000 refugees stranded in Hong Kong. Well over half of them have been here for more than three years, and about 17% are "long-stayers" of over six years. To make things worse, most of those arriving from Vietnam in boats recently appear to be economic migrants rather than genuine refugees who fear persecution because of their race, religion or political beliefs. In 1986, more than half of those arriving are from North Vietnam. They are particularly difficult to resettle as some major resettlement countries would not consider them. While a large number of Vietnamese "refugees" are stranded here, the taxpayers of Hong Kong are footing the bill to the extent of $117 million in 1985/86 alone. Against this background, there is also the sensitive comparison of the tough stand adopted by the Government against illegal immigrants from other countries, and the exceptionally high population density of the territory.

2. During the past 5 years, major resettlement countries like Australia, Canada and United States took about 3,000 4,900, and 13,000 refugees from Hong Kong respectively. In comparison, Britain accepted only 946 during the same period, of which nearly half were admmitted in 1986. The latter group

OMELCO

of intake was due to Britain's commitment to allow approximately 500 family reunion cases from Hong Kong. This commitment by the British Government was in response to the recommendations made by the Sub-committee on Race Relations and Immigration (SCORRI) and the views expressed by Members of this Council during the adjournment debate on 15 May 1985. This initiative by Britain has enabled the Government to persuade other countries to increase their intake, with the result that 3,734 refugees departed from Hong Kong during January to November 1986 for resettlement in third countries. But in September 1986, the British Government halted their intake to review the situation. No decision has been forthcoming although Hong Kong repeatedly requested for a continuous commitment from Britain. In mid-December 1986, major resettlement countries indicated that their intake of Vietnames refugees from Hong Kong would be reduced pending a lead form Britain. Resettlement of refugees in 1987 is expected to drop below 2,000 if Britain does not renew its commitment. Many countries expect Britain to set an example in accepting refugees from Hong Kong. This is not unreasonable as Hong Kong is a British-administered territory and therefore the responsibility of Britain. A lack of commitment by the British Government could therefore be viewed as a reluctance to shoulder this responsibility, thus increasing the social pressure and heavy financial burden on Hong Kong. The British Government must surely realize the impact and the effect of its action, and how it will be interpreted by other countries and the people of Hong Kong. Under these circumstances, the most logical and honourable thing to do is for the British Government to make a definite commitment on the number of Vietnamese refugees it will take from Hong Kong, thereby showing the people of Hong Kong and the international community its willingness to fulfill its responsbility towards Hong Kong and to contribute to an international problem.

3. Continuous resettlement is only a short term solution to the problem of Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong. The long term solution is to repatriate economic migrants to Vietnam on

the understanding that they will not be treated inhumanely. This requires agreement by the Vietnamese authorities and can only be achieved through diplomatic channels. As this is a matter of foreign policy, Hong Kong has no right to tackle it directly. Instead, we have to rely on British Government to take this matter up with the Vietnamese authorities. Again there have been repeated requests from Hong Kong urging the British Government to approach the Vietnamese authorities, but no initiative along this line appears to be forthcoming. It is appreciated that the task may be difficult, and quick results are therefore not expected. But this would definitely be a step in the right direction which would give at least some hopes that the problem of Vietnamese refugees will be resolved at a future date. It should be emphasized that this problem has been with Hong Kong for over 11 years now, and shows every sign of dragging on indefinitely if Britain chooses not to take any initiative. The time has come for the British Government to make this move.

4. Sir, we strongly believe that Britain must take the lead in solving the problem of Vietnamese refugees here in the short term and in the long term. We believe most strongly that Britain has a duty to take up this role. This is an opportunity for it to show the people of Hong Kong that it is genuinely concerned about the interests of Hong Kong through positive and decisive action.

5. We request the Government to urge the British Government most vigorously to take up the initiative in resettlment and in negotiating with the Vietnamese authorities for repatriation. Hong Kong has more than honouored its moral obligations by providing a place of first asylum as well as accepting refugees for permanent resettlement. Hong Kong can only be expected to continue to carry this burden if we are assured that Britain will do its part to seek a permanent solution to the problem.

6. We in this Council and the community at large have been urging for more positive measures for some years. We are deeply disappointed at the lack of positive action and sense of urgency on the part of the British Government. It is for this reason that we now request the Government to provide this Council, within 6 months, a report on the progress of the search of a definite solution to the Vietnamese refugee problem.

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OMELCO

DRAFT SPEECH BY DR HON HO KAM FAI, OBE, JP
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL - 7.1.87

Adjournment Debate on Vietnamese Refugees

Sir

For whatever reasons, Hong Kong apparently is extremely attractive to Vietnamese refugees. In 1986 boat people arriving in the South-east Asian region decreased by 9% as compared with the same period in the previous year. However, the number of arrivals in Hong Kong in the same year increased by almost 100%. Nevertheless, Hong Kong has tried its best to resettle these boat people overseas. But by the end of October 1986, Hong Kong resettled only 30% of its total refugees, whereas Indonesia resettled 55%, Malaysia 41% and the Philippines 39%. It is clear that our 30% is much below the regional average. As a result of the combined effects of more arrivals against a rapidly dwindling resettlement rate over the years, Hong Kong has now ended up with 26% of the total boat refugee population.

The resettlement propspects of the Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong for 1987 are not promising. After having accepted 457 refugees from Hong Kong last year, Her Majesty's Government discontinued its family reunion programme. This negative policy decision on the part of Her Majesty's Government is detrimental to our resettlement plans, and has made the other countries reconsider their resettlement offers. The three main resettlement countries have made it loud and clear that they would look to the United Kingdom to take the lead and would not take it upon themselves to solve the refugee problem for Hong Kong. Canada slashed the quota from 1,050 last year to 500 this year, Australia from 600 to 400, and USA from 1,500 to 700. It will be quite an achievement for the Hong Kong Government to resettle even 2,000 boat refugees this year.

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In addition, Hong Kong is facing the problem of stricter resettlement criteria. Many resettlement countries have laid down a set of conditions with which the refugees must comply in order to meet resettlement requirements. Some countries discriminate against economic opportunists in favour of genuine refugees. USA, for example, has defined refugees as people forced to leave their countries due to a well-founded fear of persectuion on religious, political and ethnic grounds. As a result of these restrictive screening criteria, fewer and fewer refugees from Hong Kong are eligible to fill the quotas, however shrunken they might have become.

Under these circumstances, Hong Kong must seek effective ways and means to decant the refugees now residing in our camps here and to curb the inflow of boat people. To achieve this, I propose that the following courses of action must be seriously considered :

First and foremost, Her Majesty's Government must be urged to accept from Hong Kong a realistic number of Vietnamese refugees with the following characteristics :

(i) those having relatives (in the oriental sense of the term) in United Kingdom;

(ii) those having been earlier selected by United Kingdom for resettlement but rejected the offers; and

(iii) the "hard-to-resettle" refugees, notably those from North Vietnam or economic migrants.

This gesture from the HMG will certainly be catalytic in encouraging other resettlement countries to take in more generously refugees from Hong Kong.

Secondly, as a long-term solution, Her Majesty's Government must be urged to initiate diplomatic negotiations with the Vietnamese Government regarding repatriation of refugees. To be effective in this diplomatic endeavour, Her Majesty's Government might be well advised to persuade other countries and the UNHCR to join in the negotiations.

Thirdly, it is time for our Government to rethink whether or not Hong Kong should still adhere rigidly to the original concept of the place for first asylum for Hong Kong. The original agreement underlying this concept is as follows : The first asylum countries, mainly Hong Kong, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines, would accept all refugees landing on their shores; they would not tow their boats to the sea and they would not refuse them sanctuary. These refugees would be accommodated in camps administered and financed by the UNHCR. Then the main resettlement countries would process these refugees in an orderly fashion and find them permanent homes. Hong Kong is included as one of the first asylum countries by virtue of its status as a dependent territory of the United Kingom, which is signatory to the agreement.

However, the agreement is breaking down and is not fully honoured. Resettlement countries have been trying to circumvent the agreement by unilaterally imposing more and more restrictive resettlement criteria. Consequently, many Vietnamese refugees in our camps are found not qualified for resettlement due to their inability to meet these stringent requirements. USA, in adopting strict resettlement criteria, did not fill up its quota last year with refugees from Hong Kong.

Furthermore, most of the first asylum countries have breached the agreement conditions by blatantly refusing boat people sanctuary and towing their boats out to sea. However, Hong Kong has faithfully abided by the agreement and has all

the time been allowing boat refugees to land on our shores. Ironically, as stated in the beginning of my speech, the resettlement rates for refugees from Hong Kong are much lower than those from other first asylum countries. It appears therefore that we have been exploited and penalized for our humanitarian approach to the boat refugees!

Sir, it is difficult for us to understand how the United Kingdom can suspend its offtake of refugees from Hong Kong and at the same time, thrust upon us the obligation of observing the first asylum concept by virtue of its sovereignty authority. Sir, United Kingdom, because of its relationship with Hong Kong, has a special responsibilty for, and a commitment to us. Therefore, may I ask Her Majesty's Government to permit Hong Kong to make its own decision for this issue which is of vital interest to its people?

If we want to effectively contain or alleviate our refugee problem, we must convince Her Majesty's Government to at least allow us to implement the first asylum concept in a flexible manner. I suggest that our Government set up a screening unit under the Immigration Department. Boat people arriving in Hong Kong waters will be intercepted and interrogated to establish their status as political refugees. Those arrivals, who can satisfy the Immigration Officers of their status as genuine refugees, will be given sanctuary and be accommodated in closed camps, pending subsequent permanent resettlement overseas. Those arrivals who fail to prove their refugee status will be detained in our close camps to wait for eventual repatriation. I reckon that this measure is in the best interest of our community. If Her Majesty's Government does not heed our requests and does not do something positive towards the final solution of the boat refugees in the next 6 months, we will have no alternative but to pressure our Government here to take a much harder line of action unilaterally.

S5S3:HO VR

OMELCO

DRAFT SPEECH BY HON CHAN CHAI-KEUNG
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL - 7 JANUARY 1987

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON VIETNAMESE REFUGEES

Sir,

For 11 years now, Vietnamese refugees have presented a distressing problem to Hong Kong. Initially, the government's intention in receiving these refugees was to offer temporary asylum for those who fled Vietnam because of war and political persecution and to provide assistance for their early resettlement overseas. This policy was endorsed by the public at the time because it was assumed that their stay in Hong Kong would only be temporary. No one had ever thought that it would have become an onerous, long-standing burden on our backs.

2. In the past 6 years, Hong Kong has spent close to $700 million on Vietnamese refugees. More than 8,000 of them are still living in Hong Kong, many of whom have been here for over 5 years. We need to ask the following questions. How much more Hong Kong taxpayers have to spend on the refugees? For how many more years do we have to look after them? How shall we deal with the continual influx of Vietnamese year after year?

3. Due to budgetary deficits, we have been unable to meet the need to expand education facilities, sorely-needed medical facilties, build old people's homes to care for our lonely and helpless, and provide care for the unfortunate ones suffering from disabilities. Notwithstanding these commitments, we are obliged to spend over $100 million each year to look after a multitude of Vietnamese who do not contribute to Hong Kong and feel no sense of belonging towards Hong Kong. This is grossly unfair to the needy people in Hong Kong.

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4. The war in Vietnam has already passed into histroy. It is highly doubtful whether those who arrived from Vietnam in recent years are genuine refugees. As the United Nations and other developed countries have agreed to arrange for the resettlement of the refugees, Hong Kong has tried its best to offer these refugees temporary asylum on humanitarian grounds. However, it looks as if Hong Kong has now become the only country to translate humanitarian considerations into action. There is no telling when the refugees now stranded in Hong Kong will be resettled in other countries. Relying on third countries to help solve our Vietnamese refugees problem clearly does not give grounds for optimism. The outlook is grim indeed.

5. We have pinned our hope on the British Government that it would take the lead in resettling an increasing number of Vietnamese refugees. However, this seems to be too much of wishful thinking. As things now stand, we have to depend upon ourselves to resolve our own problem.

6. By way of this adjournment debate, I call upon the British Government to clarify its position on the issue. What is its policy towards Vietnamese refugees staying in Hong Kong? What measures will be taken by the British Government to prevent further influx of Vietnamese refugees into Hong Kong?

7. After being dogged by the problem for over 10 years, the public have developed antipathy towards the issue. The time has now come for a complete solution to the problem. We still hope that the British Government would conduct informal negotiations with the Vietnamese authorities and seek a diplomatic solution. We also request the United Nations to revise the definition of "Vietnamese refugees".

8. Sir, the last point I must make is, Hong Kong has now been placed on the horns of a dilemma in respect of Vietnamese refugees. If the British Government is unwilling or unable to

come up with a policy to resolve the problem on the behalf of Hong Kong, then I hope the British Government would allow Hong Kong to exercise its right in devising its own solution to its own problem.

0564S

DRAFT SPEECH BY HON HILTON CHEONG-LEEN, CBE, JP
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL - 7 JANUARY 1987

Adjournment Debate on Vietnamese Refugees

Sir,

I do not intend to speak on all the key issues of the Vietnamese refugee problem in Hong Kong, as a number of Councillors are speaking on different aspects of the situation.

But I would like to take this opportunity to emphasize in the strongest possible terms that Hong Kong has virtually come to the end of its tether in accepting any more Vietnamese refugees.

Since 1975, about 112,500 Vietnamese refugees have been accepted into Hong Kong - in fact all who arrived on our shores were allowed to land and not a single refugee was turned away.

Of this number, about 110,700 have been resettled in other countries, leaving about 8,000, out of whom about 5,500 have been here for more than 3 years and about 1,600 have been here for more than 5 years.

Of the 1,943 refugees who arrived in the first 10 months of 1986, (compared to only 968 for the same period in 1985), over half are from North Vietnam as compared to just 27% for the previous year.

It is now becoming increasingly difficult to resettle North Vietnamese refugees as most of them are considered to be in the category of economic migrants and not genuine refugees fleeing from persecution.

I therefore think the time has come for parallel action to be taken by both the British Government and the Hong Kong Government along the following lines :-

Firstly, the British Government should more positively explore all possible avenues to urge the Vietnamese Government - which incidentally has recently had a change of leadership at the top - to accept repatriation from Hong Kong of all economic migrants who come from Vietnam, north and south.

The British Foreign Office should not only seek to put forward its views direct to the Vietnamese Government, but should also enlist the good offices of other countries which have an ongoing dialogue with Vietnam, such as Australia, the United States, and Japan, to negotiate with Vietnam.

Furthermore, the British Prime Minister is expected to visit Russia in the coming months, could she not raise the subject with the Russians who have strong ties with the Vietnamese Government?

Secondly, the closed-camps policy has been a deterrent to some extent in stopping the flow of refugees coming to Hong Kong from getting excessively large. However, this "closed-camp" deterrent is beginning somewhat to run out of steam, and Hong Kong must now consider stronger alternatives, since Britain at this point in time has adopted a defensive and a negative stance in accepting more refugees from Hong Kong.

I would therefore urge the Hong Kong Government to consider adopting a firm stand - once the logistic arrangements can be completed - that all Vietnamese refugees coming to Hong Kong who are not genuine political refugees, will be repatriated to Vietnam just as soon as negotiations are finalized with the Vietnamese Government.

A publicly announced and clear-cut statement of policy by the Hong Kong Government to this effect should help to stem

the increasing tide of Vietnamese refugees who are planning or want to come to Hong Kong.

It may be argued by the Hong Kong Government that such measures could create security risks, and that such measures ought not to be taken until after negotiations with the Vietnamese Government are more or less completed.

But it could be argued with equal force that the current situation is critical enough for the Hong Kong Government to consider taking stronger action in the best interests of our 5.5 million Hong Kong citizens who live in one of the most overcrowded cities in the world.

It is becoming more and more illogical and inconsistent policy-wise for the Hong Kong Government to continue with its present policy of repatriating all Chinese illegal immigrants whereas all Vietnamese refugees are taken in without exception.

Therefore, in addition to the other suggestions put forward by other Councillors speaking today on the subject, I urge Government to pursue with vigour the two points I have just made.

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OMELCO

DRAFT SPEECH BY HON HO SAI-CHU, MBE, JP
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL 7.1.87

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON VIETNAMESE REFUGEES

Sir,

I believe that illegal immigrants from China, especially the young immigrants from Fujian, are not unfamiliar to us. Most of these people who attempted to sneak into Hong Kong longed for reuniting with their families here. Their feelings are understandable and they deserve our sympathy on humanitarian grounds. However, pursuant to the existing policy governing illegal immigrants, they must be repatriated to China. The above policy is formulated by the Hong Kong Government in consultation with the Chinese authorities with the latter's consent and is enforced to sufficiently safeguard the overall interest of the people of Hong Kong. Hong Kong is a small place. She can hardly endure the various pressures caused by the increase of population as a result of the influx of refugees. The acceptance of illegal immigrants will certainly result in a delay in the implementation of our improvement and development plans. It will also have an impact on the improvement of the quality of life of the local people.

Sir, I must point out that it is extremely contradictory for the Government to repatriate the illegal immigratnts from China and at the same time accept the illegal immigrants from Vietnam.

The issue of Vietnamese refugees has been worrying us over the past year. The chance of overseas resettlement in the near future for many refugees who have been stranded here for years is very remote. Meanwhile, the number of Vietnamese

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refugees arriving in Hong Kong has significantly increased. Moreover, there are indications that most of these newcomers are not political refugees but rather economic migrants.

Based on humanitarian grounds, we should give a helping hand to those refugees who had really been living under political persecution. Yet it must be noted that due to our limitations, Hong Kong can only play the role of a place of first asylum and offer limited help to refugees during the interim period when they await resettlement overseas. I must stress that Hong Kong must obtain recognition and moral support from the international community of its role of the place of first asylum. It would be extremely unfair to Hong Kong if Vietnamese refugees were allowed to stay here for a long time and encroach upon our limited resources. On the other hand, by repatriating illegal immigrants from China and accepting illegal immigrants from Vietnam without a good cause, Hong Kong will definitely be accused of favouring the latter and being prejudiced against the former. Sir, I would call on the Government to immediately review the repatriation policy to ensure a fair and uniform standard in its implementation. Moreover, the British Government which is in charge of Hong Kong's foreign affairs must resolve our present problem by adopting a positive and responsible attitude. The British Government should take the lead in increasing its quota for Vietnamese refugees so as to encourage other resettlement countries to follow suit. The British Government should also start a dialogue with the Vietnamese authorities as soon as possible in order to find a way to completely solve the problem of illegal immigrants flooding into Hong Kong from Vietnam.

Sir, before I conclude, I must point out that we may have no other alternative but consider taking tougher measures if there is still no sign of improvement with the Vietnamese refugee problem.

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Translation

DRAFT SPEECH BY HON HUI YIN FAT
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL - 7.1.87

Adjournment Debate on Vietnamese Refugees

Sir

One may recall that during the Sino-British negotiations over the future of Hong Kong and the transition period since the signing of the Sino-British Joint Declaration, the British Government has, through her officials at various levels and on different occasions, repeatedly assured that she would remain fully committed to the responsibility of administering Hong Kong in the run-up to 1997 and would try her best to maintain the territory's prosperity and stability.

The British Government has, however, continued to employ delaying tactics in handling the Vietnamese refugee problem of Hong Kong and has time and again ignored the resentment of Hong Kong people and the two strong requests reflected by this Council through the late Governor, Sir Edward Youde, and the Secretary for Security, the Hon D G Jeaffreson. Such a move inevitably casts doubt upon the British Government's promise 'to look after the interests of Hong Kong people' for it is thought that such a promise has already turned into a beautiful lie. Some people also consider this as another move undermining local people's confidence following Britain's enactment of the new Nationality Act.

In particular, I would like to question the credibility of the British Government's commitments to look after Hong Kong people's interests in the run-up to 1997. What would the Government decide when there is a conflict of interests between Hong Kong people and the British? The problem of accepting Vietnamese refugees is one of the glaring examples. Let's see how the British Government handles this

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problem and how she treats Hong Kong people's interests and whether she honours the promises she has made.

In order to win international prestige and to preserve her traditional image of upholding humanitarianism, the British Government has, since the influx of Vietnamese refugees into Hong Kong in 1975, obliged the Hong Kong Government to act as a 'place of first asylum' whereby all refugees landing on our shores are to be accepted. At that time, the local Government agreed to accept the refugees on the understanding that they would be resettled in other countries as soon as possible.

Unfortunately, over the past few years, the British Government has not only failed to do her best to alleviate the burden on Hong Kong by accepting a realistic number of Vietnamese refugees, but also did something which arouses even greater resentment : while the three main resettlement countries, i.e. USA, Canada and Australia, which follow Britain's lead in accepting Vietnamese refugees, indicated one after another that they would reduce the intake of Vietnamese refugees in 1987, the British Government has, to our surprise, procrastinated in making known her stance on whether she would take the lead in increasing the intake of Vietnamese refugees and how the refugee problem can finally be resolved, much less taking any concrete actions to resolve the issue.

Who would have thought that Britain, which has always been upholding humanitarianism and has time and again pledged to look after the interests of Hong Kong people can be so perfidious? Is this a tragedy or an irony?

The underlying rationale for assuming such an ambiguous attitude on this issue is that the British Government does not wish to see the prestige of the Conservative Party in power from being undermined by an increase in the intake of Vietnamese refugees just before the general election this year

because refugees have always been unwelcome in Britain. In order to win more votes, it is only natural that the Conservative Party declines to increase the intake of refugees stranded in Hong Kong.

To safeguard the interests of one party, the British Government can break her promises and disregard the strong requests raised by Hong Kong people. Such acts of attaching paramount importance to "advantages" clearly reveal the defects of party politics. Thus, it can be said that Hong Kong is harmed by party politics even before receiving any benefit from it!

On the other hand, where can public justice be found when Britain, after taking advantage of the generous refugee policy adopted by Hong Kong to win herself international applause, shut her eyes to Hong Kong people's interests subsequently? What is more annoying is that when the Hong Kong Government was obliged to adopt the 'closed camp' policy in July 1982 in the face of a continuing influx of refugees into Hong Kong and deteriorating prospects for resettlement, some British politicians who had put on their pseudo-humane masks criticised such policy as inhumane and yet they refused to give a helping hand to the refugees. Having taken the glamour, the British Government hit Ho g Kong when she is down, putting the Hong Kong Government in a dilemma in regard to its refugee policy. Where can one see public justice when our Government, after accepting the refugees on humanitarian grounds, is criticised as being inhumane?

Sir, you had made known to the press that the Hong Kong Government was hand-tied in handling the Vietnamese refugee problem, for everything depended very much on the British Government's attitude. Since the latter refuses to take up greater commitment in regard to this issue, and yet this Council cannot stand by with folded arms towards the endless influx of Vietnamese refugees who are being stranded

here, I am of the opinion that there is a need for our Government to initiate some self-saving measures or to compel the British Government to take specific actions within a short period of time to indicate that she is committed to looking after the interests of Hong Kong people; otherwise, people will inevitably be more convinced that ours is a 'lame-duck' government, for we have to consider the attitudes of both the Chinese and British Governments before taking any action.

I strongly demand that the British Government should speedily resume taking the lead in accepting more Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong so as to induce the three main resettlement countries to change their minds by means of practical actions and alleviate the pressure on Hong Kong. Meanwhile, the British Government should also take advantage of the recent political reshuffle in the Vietnamese Government to negotiate with the latter through diplomatic channels, requesting her to guarantee that refugees who return home of their own volition and those being repatriated will not be ill-treated. While entering into negotiations with the Vietnamese Government is by no means an easy job, the British Government has never been seen to be making any efforts in this respect.

If the British Government still declines to express her stance on the above two requests within a short time, I maintain that the Hong Kong Government should, for the sake of self-salvation, establish a stringent 'screening system', similar to the screening centres set up at the American-Mexican border and at the Thai-Laos border, to process future Vietnamese refugees flocking to Hong Kong. Only 'political refugees' will be accepted while other 'economic refugees' will be treated otherwise. I firmly beleive that we will have sufficient capability and manpower to carry out this policy.

Like the 'closed camp' policy, the aforesaid screening system will be criticized. At the present time, our

financial resources are unable to meet our community's demands and there is no sign that the Vietnamese refugee problem will be resolved. If our Government fails to take appropriate and timely action to cope with the situation, how can it fulfil its responsibility to the people of Hong Kong, especially to those residents whose immediate relatives from China are 'repatriated instantly upon arrest' for illegal entry into the territory?

Sir, the above are my remarks.

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DRAFT SPEECH BY HON LEE YU-TAI
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL - 7.1.1987

Adjournment Debate on Vietnamese Refugees

Sir,

It is widely recognised that Hong Kong became a prosperous business centre built up by refugees, who arrived here after World War II. These refugees came from across the Lo Wu Border and were refugees in the true sense of the word. Many of them brought to Hong Kong skill and capital which developed industries and the local economy. They were all Chinese who integrated into the community without difficulty. In spite of the contributions of these people, this Council decided in 1982 that illegal immigrants arriving from mainland China would have to be repatriated. This decision received support from the entire community, because there was no alternative option which would not pose a danger to the prosperity of the territory.

On the other hand, Vietnamese "refugees" arriving in recent years appeared to have come for economic reasons, searching for a place with a better standard of living. The majority (53% in 1986) of these migrants came from North Vietnam, which annexed South Vietnam in 1975 and emerged as the victor in the unification of the country. It is difficult to accept that these Vietnamese have suffered from political persecution. They speak neither English nor Chinese, and there is no way they can integrate with the community of Hong Kong. Some major prospective resettlement countries, such as the United States and Australia, do not recognise them as refugees. For this reason, they are likely to be left behind in Hong Kong for prolonged periods and constitute a heavy burden on our resources, which, in monetary terms, will be in the order of hundred million dollars per year. It is blatant injustice to the people of Hong Kong that Vietnamese have come here with the motivation of a better life, but the enormous burden they impose on our resources may lower our own living standard. In my election constituency, there are people whose family members and

children have been repatriated. How can they accept that Vietnamese should be allowed to stay?

At this point in time, we still have more than 8,000 Vietnamese refugees in open and closed camps awaiting resettlement. Britain has never been helpful in granting resettlement. In the last three years, for example, Britain took a total of 604 Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong, but USA took 4,536; Canada 3,285 and Australia 1,752. Hong Kong has only 1,067 sq. kms of land and a population of 5.4 million. This is equivalent to an overall population density of 5,012 person per sq. km which compares with 230 in the UK. Visitors from Britain have however harshly criticised our Closed Camp Policy, in public documents such as the Refugee Action Report. It is easy to say kind things by word of mouth, and denounce other people but give them no help at all. Nobody wants to accommodate a stranger at home and provide him with board and lodging for years.

Since I joined this Council fifteen months ago, Britain has let down the people of Hong Kong on at least two major issues. The Order in Council went through Parliament last April, which deprived the minority people of Hong Kong of their only hope for a effective nationality. This irresponsible decision of the British Government was taken in spite of a unanimous demand by this Council, and strong representations by the Indians. Now Britain is again trying to back out from a commitment. No answer has yet been given to the request of Hong Kong for the continuation of resettlement for Vietnamese refugees. Having been let down on two important issues, how can the people of Hong Kong have confidence in the British Government which represented them in the negotiation of the future of the territory? How can people believe that the Hong Kong Government is not a lame duck government, if it cannot change the attitude of the British Government? I would therefore propose the following:

(i) that the Hong Kong Government persuade the British Government to continue to take Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong, at an annual quota of not less than that of 1986, i.e. 500;

(ii) that the Hong Kong Government ask the British Government to obtain an assurance from Vietnam that refugees will not be treated inhumanely upon repatriation to the country and, following the assurance, that all future refugees be repatriated to Vietnam.

Sir, may I now conclude my speech and ask for a response from the official side?

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DRAFT SPEECH BY HON LIU LIT-FOR, JP
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL - 7 JANUARY 1987

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON VIETNAMESE REFUGEES

Translation

Sir,

Since the beginning of an influx of Vietnamese refugees, Hong Kong has been adopting a lenient and humane policy to provide shelter for them. Although the U.K, U.S.A., Canada and Australia have already absorbed a number of refugee immigrants who satisfied their respective requirements over the past few years, there are still more than 8000 Vietnamese refugees who are stranded in Hong Kong. Based on the current absorption rate of various countries, the Vietnamese refugee problem cannot be solved within a short time. Recently, the U.K. is reducing its intake of refugees and other countries are also reducing their quotas for refugee immigrants. This has brought about great pressure on Hong Kong. Over the years, Hong Kong has spent a lot of public funds on refugees who are stranded here. At the same time, she has to tackle all kinds of social problems relating to these refugees. Under present circumstances, the Government should take on a tougher stand to urge the U.K. to increase its intake of Vietnamese refugees and expedite the processing of applications for emigration lodged by refugees. Even though the U.K. will hold a general election next year, the Government should proceed positively in the hope that the U.K. will take the lead in urging other countries to increase their quotas for Vietnamese refugees.

The close camps currently run by our Government will not achieve a great effect in deterring refugees from entering Hong Kong. Most of the Vietnamese refugees who have arrived

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recently are economic migrants and not political refugees. Since the political situation in Vietname is becoming more stable and political persecutions are being toned down, it is unlikely that a big exodus of refugees would recur. Hence, even if Hong Kong declares that she will no longer provide any shelter for refugees, I believe she will not be accused of being inhumane by other countries. It is only by so doing that an effective deterrent effect can be achieved. The remaining problem is how to deal with those Vietnamese refugees who are not able or perhaps will never be able to leave Hong Kong. This problem cannot be resolved simply by the passive approach of the establishment of closed camps. The Government should adopt a more positive approach in the long run.

To set up closed camps is not economical. Since the refugees are not allowed to work, naturally they are non-productive and have no income, thus becoming a heavy burden for the Government. The Government already spent more than $100 million on Vietnamese refugees last year. If the refugees are allowed to seek employment under controlled conditions, the Government may save the above expenses while the refugees can earn their own living. In view of the economic recovery and the high employment rate in Hong Kong, I believe the proposal will not affect the employment prospects of the local people.

Moreover, among the refugees are children reaching school age. Other younger ones will also have to receive education soon. If these children are not allowed to attend school, they will become illiterates who will have difficulties in seeking jobs and adjusting to the social environment no matter whether they are to emigrate overseas or stay in Hong Kong.

The longer the refugees live in the closed camps, the more difficult it will be for them to adapt to the outside world. On humanitarian grounds, we cannot let them live in these closed camps forever. In view of the prevailing policy

adopted by the various countries, I think the problem of Vietnamese refugees will not be solved in the near future. The departments concerned should conduct studies now with a view to finding some proper solutions because eventually, Hong Kong has to tackle the problem on its own. It should be the right time to start planning now.

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OMELCO

Translation

DRAFT SPEECH BY HON POON CHI FAI
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL - 7.1.1987

Adjournment Debate on Vietnamese Refugees

Sir,

Hong Kong has no legal obligation to accommodate and take care of Vietnamese refugees. But over the past 11 years, she has been magnanimously and continuously accepting them on humane grounds, and so Hong Kong has become their first asylum.

Hong Kong itself however, is already rather over populated and being such a small place, her economic capability is but limited. Vietnamese refugees have now become a heavy burden which affects, to a certain extent, our social welfare, housing, transport, education, medical services and even our overall stability and prosperity. At present, there are still tens of thousands of Hong Kong people living in adverse and overcrowded squatter and temporary housing areas. Many of them live in huts erected on dangerous slopes. They are desperately longing for the Government to allocate more resources to improve their living conditions and to resettle them in places far away from such dangerous sites. Apart from this, Hong Kong still has plenty of urgent issues waiting to be solved: the long waiting list of public housing applicants, the endless queues at the out-patient departments of hospitals, the numerous canvas beds jamming hospital wards and corridors, as well as the grievances of parents of handicapped and disabled children caused by insufficient special school places. Therefore, how can Hong Kong, in the midst of all these problems, afford to be humane to outsiders and continue to take good care of Vietnamese refugees while other countries slash their quota of immigrants for Vietnamese refugees? This would only be done at the expense of Hong Kong and prevent her from devoting all her resources to tackle or solve her own problems. If it really has to be done like this, then it is contrary to the principles which we always try to uphold: that the

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interests of Hong Kong should be of utmost importance, that better benefits should be enlisted for our people, that the living standard of the middle/lower classes should be improved and that a stable and prosperous society should be maintained.

Since 1975 when Vietnamese refugees first arrived in Hong Kong, the nature of such refugees has been gradually changing; they are now mostly 'economic refugees' rather than the original 'political refugees'. Recent arrivals from Vietnam are mostly 'economic refugees' who want to seek a better life. As a matter of fact, more refugees are from North Vietnam than from the war-torn South Vietnam. Moreover, these refugees are more selective in choosing their resettlement countries; they would prefer to settle in a country with better economic conditions and refuse to settle in those with ordinary economic achievements. This is obviously a characteristic of 'economic refugees'. Under these circumstances, we must review our present policy of accepting all Vietnamese refugees coming into Hong Kong. Actually, some countries have already reduced their intake or refused to increase their intake of Vietnamese refugees at all.

Sir, when I think of the boat brides who were required to leave Hong Kong and thus had to ensure the grief of being separated from their husbands and children, I feel very sorry for them. I also cannot understand and cannot accept why they cannot receive the same treatment as the Vietnamese refugees, even though their husbands and children are in Hong Kong and their livelihood are supported by their husbands. Sir, it is human for parents to take care of their children. It is thus a pity to see those child illegal immigrants, who have risked their lives sneaking into Hong Kong to reunite with their parents, are not allowed to stay here while the Vietnamese refugees could. If the Vietnamese refugees are given the same equal treatment as the boat brides and the child illegal immigrants, then repatriation of the latter to

mainland China would not give rise to dispute. Otherwise, the people of Hong Kong would find it hard to accept such a policy.

Sir, in view of the above reasons, I think the Government should review the policy on Vietnamese refugees and refuse to continue to accommodate 'economic' refugees from Vietnam. If such refusal is alleged as inhumane, I would like to ask whether it is humane to use the existing closed camps and to repatriate the boat brides and child illegal immigrants. The Government has all along hoped that the closed refugee camps will deter Vietnamese refugees from coming to Hong Kong. But on the contrary, Vietnamese refugees keep rushing in. In 1986, a total of 2,063 Vietnamese refugees came to Hong Kong, as compared with 1,112 in 1985. This shows that closed refugee camps have failed to achieve any deterrent effect. During the 11 years since 1975, Hong Kong has already spent hundred millions of dollars and resources to accommodate and take care of Vietnamese refugees. Hence it can be said that we have done our very best and all that we can do.

Sir, I am not against humanity. But in deciding on the policy on Vietnamese refugees, we should also take into consideration the problems faced by Hong Kong at present, the capability which Hong Kong can afford and whether such a policy would be harmful to the improvement of Hong Kong's stability and prosperity. To allege that Hong Kong is inhumane just because she would not continue to accept Vietnamese refugees is unrealistic and unfair. In fact, the most inhumane countries are those which caused the exodus of Vietnamese refugees in the first place, and are thus most worthy of criticism. Second on the list would be those countries with vast expanse of lands and resources, yet which declined to accept more refugees. Sir, I am disappointed and dissatisfied with those countries which emphasize humanity on the one hand while refusing to accept more refugees on the other. I also wish that the Government will, as soon as possible, formulate a more appropriate policy on Vietnamese refugees.

CONFIDENTIAL

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

25 September 1985

HOME AFFAIRS COMMITTEE: REPORT ON REFUGEES AND ASYLUM

The Prime Minister has noted the details of the Government's proposed response to the Home Affairs Committee's Third Report on Refugees and Asylum with special reference to the Vietnamese. She has commented that the decision to accept the Committee's recommendations relating to the admission of further Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong is a damaging one given the background of high unemployment and the Government's declared policy of reducing immigration. She thinks that the matter should certainly have been taken to H Committee.

Since it is presumably too late to rescind the decision, the Prime Minister hopes that the Home Secretary will pay very careful attention to the presentation of it.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries to members of H Committee and to Peter Ricketts (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) and Michael Stark (Cabinet Office).

CHARLES POWELL

William Fittall, Esq.,
Home Office

CONFIDENTIAL

From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY

HOME OFFICE
QUEEN ANNE'S GATE
LONDON SWIH 9AT

24 September 1985

Dear Joan

HOME AFFAIRS COMMITTEE: REPORT ON REFUGEES AND ASYLUM

Members of H Committee may like to know that the Government's response to the Home Affairs Committee's Third Report, on Refugees and Asylum with special reference to the Vietnamese, is due to be published on Thursday (26 September).

The Committee's report was published in April, and was in three parts covering: Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong, the Vietnamese in Britain, and refugee procedures generally.

The Committee's recommendations affect a number of Departments and the response has of course been agreed with them. The recommendations likely to attract most attention are those relating to the admission of further Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong. The response on this issue was agreed between Mr Brittan and the Foreign Secretary and has been endorsed by the present Home Secretary.

The Government reply accepts the Committee's recommendations in this area. It records agreement to relax the family reunion criteria for Vietnamese at present in camps in countries of temporary asylum. About 500 Vietnamese refugees, most of them in Hong Kong, will be eligible to come here as a result of this decision. The precise number admitted will depend on the refugees' willingness to come to the UK (as opposed to another resettlement country), and their relatives' willingness to sponsor them. The reply indicates that we will also be prepared to consider accepting, in addition to the family reunion cases, further limited numbers of Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong. A decision on this will be taken in the light of the willingness shown by other resettlement countries to respond to Hong Kong's needs and of all the circumstances at the time. The Hong Kong Government will also be prepared to consider accepting for re-settlement in Hong Kong a limited number of ethnic Chinese if the resettlement forms part of a package aimed at reducing drastically the size of Hong Kong's Vietnamese refugee population and resettling all those whose stay in camps has been prolonged. The FCO will actively press other resettlement countries to take additional refugees from Hong Kong in the light of these decisions.

The response does not, however, accept in present circumstances the Select Committee's recommendation that the closed camp policy in Hong Kong be ended. It explains that this policy is the most humane means of discouraging further large-scale arrivals of refugees from Vietnam, and has been effective in achieving this aim: if the closed camps were abolished the likely consequence would be that Hong Kong would again become the magnet for people from Vietnam that it was between 1979 to 1981, causing an unacceptable and unmanageable rise in the camp's population in Hong Kong.

/In Part II

Miss J MacNaughton

In Part II of the report the Select Committee analysed the position of the Vietnamese in Britain. It concluded that the Vietnamese have continuing difficulties for which special help is required. The reply accepts that conclusion.

Currently the Government is supporting the three voluntary refugee agencies in a three year Programme, the aim of which is to develop the capacity of the Vietnamese community and of statutory and voluntary services to the point at which the Vietnamese can become self-reliant and integrated. In the light of the Committee's report and our own assessment we have decided to increase funding of the Vietnamese Programme by 50%, from its present level of £260,000 a year, and to extend the Programme for a further full year, that is until March 1988.

The two main problems facing refugees are unemployment and housing. The Government is to respond positively to the recommendation that a Joint Working Group be established of Home Office, MSC and refugee agency representatives. It will establish an informal group with this membership which will be concerned in particular with the need for the other, smaller, refugee groups with special labour market needs to have access to relevant education, training and employment provision. We believe that housing is a problem facing all refugees (not just the Vietnamese) and to help the British Refugee Council tackle this, we shall this year provide extra funding to enable it to appoint a housing development officer.

The third part of the report included a number of recommendations about asylum procedures. The reply recognises the concern expressed by the Committee at the length of time taken to decide initial asylum applications, and outlines a number of measures that are being taken to reduce delays. On many of the matters covered in this part of the report the Committee's recommendations are accepted or other ways of meeting its concern are being sought. The main issue on which we have been unable to accept the Committee's view is its recommendation that a decision in principle should be taken to extend the right of appeal to all asylum applicants. At present most unsuccessful asylum applicants already have a right of appeal in this country to the immigration appellate authorities. The main category where there is no formal right of appeal before removal is those refused entry at the ports. To provide such a right of appeal would in our view result in a substantial increase in unfounded applications from people who simply wished to prolong their stay in this country while an appeal is heard. The response argues that there are already a number of safeguards, including a procedure for referring cases of unsuccessful asylum applicants to the United Kingdom Immigrants Advisory Service, which ensure that they are fully reviewed before removal.

I am copying this letter to Charles Powell, Peter Ricketts, to the Private Secretaries to other members of H Committee and to Michael Stark.

Yours ever

W R FITTALL

FILE CH

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary 6 July, 1983

VIETNAMESE REFUGEES

Thank you for your letter of 6 July about the procedures we should follow in cases in which assurances are given to Vietnamese refugees that they can be resettled in this country. We are content that the Home Secretary should continue to authorise such assurances without reference to this office except, as you say, where significant numbers are involved.

(TIMOTHY FLESHER)

M. Gallagher, Esq.

Home Office

NR.

HOME OFFICE
QUEEN ANNE'S GATE
LONDON SWIH 9AT

- 6 JUL 1983

pps please

Dear Tim,

VIETNAMESE REFUGEES

This is to let you know that the shell tanker MV Ervilia which is registered in the United Kingdom has picked up six male Vietnamese refugees whilst en route from Hong Kong to Singapore. The tanker is due to arrive in Singapore at 7.00 a.m. local time on 7th July which is late evening today BST. Mr. Waddington and the Home Secretary have agreed that assurances should be given that the six will be resettled in the United Kingdom and this has been conveyed to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Quite apart from any international or humanitarian considerations, if this assurance were not given we could expect the Singaporean authorities to refuse to allow the ship to dock and Shell to lodge with us a claim for damages or compensation.

These decisions often have to be made within a very tight timescale, as you are aware, and I should be grateful if you would let me know whether you are content for them to be made with the Home Secretary's approval and yourself to be notified as a matter of course (save where significant numbers are involved) or whether you would wish the Prime Minister's approval to be sought on every occasion before a resettlement assurance is given.

Yours ever,

Michael

M. GALLAGHER
Assistant Private Secretary

T. Flesher Esq.
PS to the Prime Minister

Prime Minister

The Home Secretary is not prepared to make it easier for Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong to come here.

A.J.C. 25/2

Vietnam.

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QUEEN ANNE'S GATE LONDON SW1H 9AT

20 February 1983

I agree

Dear Francis

VIETNAMESE REFUGEES IN HONG KONG

The points raised in your note of 31 January have been discussed at length by officials of our Departments and Treasury and I saw the papers in December. I have now looked at them again in the light of your comments.

I recognise the problems faced by Hong Kong, but any proposal that the United Kingdom might assist by taking further Vietnamese refugees must be viewed against the extent of our existing commitments. As you know, the United Kingdom has now accepted some 16,500 Vietnamese refugees. The Vietnamese refugee programme is estimated to have cost some £21.6 million by the end of 1982/83. These figures of cost ignore those arising from the dependence of the Vietnamese in this country on social security benefits; over 80% of those of working age are still unemployed. Finding housing for the Vietnamese has been a major problem in the programme and has contributed greatly to the length and cost of the reception phase; only now are the last reception centres closing. The long term problems facing the Vietnamese after settlement are such that I have agreed further funding of £600,000 for the refugee organisations during 1983/84 to enable them to continue their supportive work and negotiate for the services which they currently provide to be taken on by local authorities and other normal statutory networks which are, at present, ill-equipped for the job.

Although the quotas as such have been filled, you will also be aware that our commitments to Vietnamese refugees as a whole and to Hong Kong in particular have by no means come to an end. The Final Act of the Conference which adopted the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees recommended that Governments take the necessary measures for the protection of a refugee's family, especially with a view to ensuring that the unity of the refugee's family is maintained particularly in cases where the head of the family has fulfilled the necessary conditions for admission to a particular country. In accordance with this recommendation, we allow entry of the spouse and minor children of refugees already here and look sympathetically at applications from other relatives, particularly when they have formed part of the same household. Until 1980, we applied much wider criteria to applications from Vietnamese because of the small numbers then resident in the United Kingdom. Since 1981, however, we have applied the same criteria to Vietnamese applications as to all other nationalities. Nevertheless some 2,200 have yet to take up the promise of entry to the United Kingdom and applications are still being received. In the circumstances I do not consider that we would be justified in further extending the family reunion criteria generally, even to the extent of limiting any such general concession to those refugees who have succeeded in reaching Hong Kong. Some refugees in Hong Kong may well qualify to come here as a spouse or minor dependant and I will, of course, continue to look at other individual cases with a sympathetic eye.

As regards rescues at sea, we have not so far refused to give the country of first asylum the required guarantee of resettlement in the United Kingdom for those refugees picked up by ships registered in the United Kingdom. This is, in effect, an unquantifiable commitment which brings further family reunion applications in its wake. I am not prepared to add to this existing commitment by including vessels registered outside the United Kingdom. You ask that an exception be made for the 27 still in Hong Kong from the "Po Yang", but the Hong Kong Government had the opportunity to include these refugees in the then unfilled quota and, for reasons still not clear to me, did not do so. Now that the quota has been used up, accepting this 27 would in effect mean an increase in that quota. I do not think this is justified.

You also mention the proposal by Ockenden Venture and Save the Children Fund that each shall receive 20 orphans from Hong Kong. I understand that they are not orphans but are children who have been separated from their parents - by choice, or by circumstances. I have recently written to the British Refugee Council rejecting this proposal; the cost and difficulty of arranging satisfactory care and settlement were factors, and also the fact that, once here, the children could generate yet further family reunion applications.

The continuing commitments to those Vietnamese already here on the admission of close relatives and to future rescues by United Kingdom registered ships are not the only refugee commitments we face. In addition you will be aware of the numbers of Poles, Ghanaians and Iranians already in this country who are seeking asylum here as refugees. Those and other nationals in the United Kingdom who qualify as refugees represent an additional commitment from which we cannot escape. The current climate on immigration is such that while we must meet our international obligations we should avoid taking on additional commitments which increase the numbers granted settlement in this country. I am afraid, therefore, that I cannot agree to any further concessions to Hong Kong or elsewhere which would lead to an increase in the number of Vietnamese coming here.

I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister.

Yours ever,

Willie

Vietnam : Vietnamese Refugees Pt 4.

Prime Minister
You may wish to await the Home Secretary's reaction.

VIETNAM A.J.C. 21/1

FCS/83/16

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE HOME DEPARTMENT

Vietnamese Refugees in Hong Kong

1. Home Office officials and voluntary agencies have done remarkably well to resettle the 16,000 boat people who have come here since 1979, particularly since this is not a country with which the Vietnamese have any great historical links, very few come with any useful training or skills and the high proportion remaining unemployed is proving an additional burden on social security funds. I know that you have had reservations about the idea of taking further Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong.

2. However, there is no doubt that the Hong Kong authorities are facing an increasingly intractable problem. Despite their policy since last summer of keeping new arrivals in closed camps, and despite the increasing awareness in the region that eventual resettlement in the West is now much less likely, refugees continue to set out from Vietnam at the rate of about 4,000 a month; and in the season of the south west monsoon a high proportion head for Hong Kong. They still have nearly 13,000 refugees in camps, and with far stricter criteria being applied by the United States authorities, the numbers leaving for the main resettlement destination have fallen sharply.

3. I do not believe we are in a position to make a serious impression on the numbers Hong Kong is likely to

/have

have to look after over the next couple of years or more and I realise that any additional UK quota would be a very difficult political issue.

4. On the other hand, it seems to me that there are strong arguments for looking for something that we can do for Hong Kong on this issue without requiring us to accept a significant number of additional refugees. John Belstead, who was out in Hong Kong in December, found that officials there, while appreciating that we cannot provide a magic solution to their refugee problem, felt very strongly that they were on their own now in facing their appalling problem. I need hardly say that it is particularly important at the moment to retain the confidence of Hong Kong at this critical time.

5. It is also increasingly clear that some of the countries who would normally expect to take a substantial number of Hong Kong's refugees, such as the USA and Australia, are giving priority to other countries in the region. Hong Kong will find it difficult, as shall we, to press these governments to do more for Hong Kong unless there is continuing visible commitment on our part to help with the refugee burden. One possible step would be some relaxation of the criteria for family reunion. At present, as I understand it, this is now limited to spouses and minor children of those already settled in the United Kingdom. I believe that there are a number of cases of older or more distant relatives in Hong Kong for whom this country would be a natural destination and whose arrival could indeed be helpful to the settling of families already here. It would

/not involve

not involve a commitment to receive a large number of refugees, though it might be useful to press the voluntary agencies to provide details of the number of cases they can identify. There have also been, I gather, proposals from the Ockenden Venture and the Save the Children Fund to receive 20 orphans each from Hong Kong.

6. There are also those rescued by Hong Kong registered shipping. At present we look sympathetically, on a case by case basis, on requests to give guarantees of resettlement for boat people landed by United Kingdom shipping in countries in the region so that they can be quickly disembarked and not involve our shipping in expensive delays. Those rescued by other British shipping, such as Bermuda or Hong Kong-registered ships, have been regarded as the responsibility of those territories; but there have been very few cases so far. In the last two years only one Hong Kong-registered ship has rescued boat people and landed them in Hong Kong. This was the Po Yang in July 1981. There were 42 refugees on board, of whom 27 remain unresettled elsewhere. Hong Kong, for obvious reasons, would hardly wish to set a precedent by settling them in Hong Kong. But so long as they remain in camps it becomes increasingly difficult to press other flag states to take the refugees rescued by their ships. A gesture to Hong Kong to take these 27 on humanitarian grounds (quite without prejudice to our clear policy of dealing with all such rescues, including those by UK-registered shipping, on a purely case by case basis) would again be a help to Hong Kong's refugee administration out of all proportion to the very small numbers of refugees we would be receiving.

7. I know these two ideas have been discussed during the last year by our officials. But I am more than

/ever

ever convinced of the importance of being seen to do something - however modest - to alleviate Hong Kong's position. I would be grateful if you could consider them and let me have your reaction.

BF 11/1/83.

8. I am copying this to the Prime Minister.

(FRANCIS PYM)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office
31 January 1983

Vietnam

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OO BANGKOK
GRS 39

RESTRICTED
FM FCO 061200Z NOV 81
TO IMMEDIATE BANGKOK
TELEGRAM NUMBER 264 OF 6 NOV.
OUR TEL NUMBER 262: M T DONOVANIA
1. SHELL NOW SAY 43 NOT 41 REFUGEES (12 MEN, 14 WOMEN, AND 17 CHILDREN). YOU MAY ISSUE GUARANTEE FOR THIS HIGHER NUMBER.

CARRINGTON

BOAT PEOPLE LIMITED

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PS/MR BLAKER
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SIR E YOUDE
SIR A ACLAND
MR DONALD
LORD N G LENNOX

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P.S. TO. PM.
10. DOWNING STREET

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OO BANGKOK
GRS 102
RESTRICTED
FM FCO 051700Z NOVEMBER 81
TO IMMEDIATE BANGKOK
TELEGRAM NUMBER 262 OF 5 NOVEMBER
YOUR TELNO VISA 50: M.T. DONOVANIA

1. YOU MAY ISSUE RESIDUAL GUARANTEE. BUT YOU SHOULD SEEK MAXIMUM TIME PERIOD: IN PREVIOUS CASES (E.G. YOUR TELNOS 425 OF 26 AUGUST 1980 AND 483 OF 2 OCTOBER 1980) THEY HAVE AGREED TO 45 DAYS, AND YOUR TELNO 217 OF 1981 INDICATED THAT A 'BEST ENDEAVOURS' FORMULA WOULD SUFFICE.

2. FOR YOUR OWN INFORMATION, PROGRESSIVE CLOSURE OF RECEPTION CENTRES SET UP TO HANDLE HONG KONG 10,000 MEANS THAT HANDLING OF EVEN THIS SMALL A GROUP AT SHORT NOTICE CAN CAUSE PROBLEMS OVER SHORT TERM ACCOMMODATION.

CARRINGTON

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PM. WM 5/8

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH Vietnam

3 August 1981

Dear Willie,

Vietnamese Refugees

I last wrote to Michael Alexander on this subject on 18 June, when the total number of guarantees given in 1981 for refugees rescued by British ships stood at 412. Apart from 23 refugees rescued by the MV Texaco Great Britain, for whom we are prepared to give a guarantee should the Japanese require it, no further commitments have been made in the last six weeks.

I am copying this letter to John Halliday (Home Office), and John Rhodes (Department of Trade).

Yours ever

Roderic Lyne

(R M J Lyne)
Private Secretary

William Rickett Esq
10 Downing Street
LONDON
SW1

Vietnam

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

18 June 1981

fa. Rhs

Dear Michael,

Vietnamese Refugees

When we last spoke about rescues of Vietnamese refugees by British ships, you said that you would welcome a periodic round up on our position.

So far this year we have given guarantees for 412 refugees rescued in seven different incidents. This figure, for just over five months, compares with 846 for the whole of 1980.

The number of refugees to whom guarantees are offered is of course significantly larger than the number of those eventually resettled in the United Kingdom. While it is not possible to produce an accurate estimate of the proportion of those guaranteed this year who will eventually settle here, you may be interested to know that over a third of those covered by last year's guarantees have been resettled elsewhere.

I am sending copies of this letter to John Halliday (Home Office) and John Rhodes (Department of Trade).

yours ever

Roderic Lyne

(R M J Lyne)
Private Secretary

M O'D B Alexander Esq
10 Downing Street

Vietnam

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OO SEOUL DESKBY 160130Z
GRS 170
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DESKBY 160130Z
FM FCO 151615Z JULY 81
TO IMMEDIATE SEOUL
TELEGRAM NUMBER 97 OF 15 JULY
INFO PRIORITY HONG KONG ROUTINE UKMIS GENEVA
VIETNAMESE REFUGEES

1. TEXACO HAVE TOLD US IN LONDON THAT THE TEXACO GREAT BRITAIN (BRITISH REGISTERED), PROCEEDING UNDER TUG ESCORT TO KAOHSIUNG (TAIWAN), PICKED UP 23 REFUGEES AT SEA ON 14 JULY. WE UNDERSTAND THE SHIP IS DUE TO REACH KAOHSIUNG ON 18 JULY, WHERE IT IS TO BE BROKEN UP.

2. PLEASE ASK SOUTH KOREAN GOVERNMENT, WHO WERE SO HELPFUL TO US OVER THE ROACHBANK CASE IN MID-1979, IF THEY WOULD APPROACH THE TAIWAN AUTHORITIES URGENTLY TO SEEK AUTHORITY FOR THE REFUGEES TO LAND IN TAIWAN. WE WOULD HOPE THAT THE REFUGEES WOULD BE ALLOWED TO REMAIN IN TAIWAN. ON THE BASIS OF THE ROACHBANK CASE WE JUDGE THIS UNLIKELY, UNLESS THE REFUGEES HAPPENED TO BE CHINESE. IF PRESSED, THEREFORE, YOU MAY SAY THAT HMG WOULD BE PREPARED TO ISSUE A GUARANTEE FOR EVENTUAL RESETTLEMENT OF ALL 23 REFUGEES IN THE UK.

3. GRATEFUL FOR EARLIEST REPORT ON SOUTH KOREAN REACTION.

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MR WADE
PS/HOME SECRETARY
RM 754 Q.A.G.

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FM HONG KONG 060810Z JUL 81
TO IMMEDIATE UKMIS GENEVA
TELEGRAM NUMBER 3 OF 6 JULY
INFO F C O, HONG KONG GOVERNMENT OFFICE LONDON

FOLLOWING FOR MARGOLIS (ON BRIEFING VISIT)
FROM ORR

VIETNAMESE REFUGEES

1. DUE TO NUMBERS AND A TROPICAL STORM WE DO NOT YET HAVE DEFINITIVE ANALYSIS OF JUNE ARRIVALS. FOLLOWING IS LATEST POSITION (JUNE 1980 FIGURES IN BRACKETS)
TOTAL ARRIVALS: 3,015 (2,517), OF WHICH:
RESCUE AT SEA: 156 ON 4 SHIPS (195 ON 4),
DIRECT: 607 ON 19 BOATS (948 ON 40),
UNCLASSIFIED: 347 ON 11 BOATS,
EX-CHINA: 1,905 ON 35 BOATS (1,374).

2. AS OF TODAY, JULY ARRIVALS ARE 66 ON 2 BOATS (NOT YET CLASSIF[redacted])
AND 209 RESCUED AT SEA (207 BY NEDLLOYD DEJIMA).

3. BAD WEATHER IS LIKELY TO HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO LOWER NUMBERS ARRIVING DIRECTLY. LATEST INDICATIONS ARE THAT EX-CHINA CASES ARRIVING IN MACAU HAVE DROPPED SHARPLY.

4. WHEN ACTING GOVERNOR MET AUSTRALIAN IMMIGRATION MINISTER THIS MORNING, MCPHEE SAID HE WAS CONCERNED AT NUMBERS OF ''ECONOMIC REFUGEES'' AMONGST RECENT REGIONAL ARRIVALS AND REPORTED HARDENING ATTITUDE IN MALAYSIA. HE SAID THAT WHILE IN GENEVA HE HAD RAISED WITH UNHCR VARIOUS IDEAS AIMED AT DISCOURAGING THE SMALL BOAT OUTFLOW (EG INCREASED ORDERLY DEPARTURES UNDER RELAXED CRITERIA FOR A SET PERIOD - SAY 3 YEARS - AND SLOWER PROCESSING FROM FIRST ASYLUM CAMPS). GRATEFUL FOR ANYTHING YOU CAN LEARN OF UNHCR'S REACTIONS TO HIS IDEAS.

CATER

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Vietnam

10 DOWNING STREET

Mr Alexander Rhodes

On your behalf, I have authorised the FCO to give a guarantee that we will take 56 further refugees landed in Singapore by a British Tanker (unless of course they can find somewhere else to go). I understand from Roderic Lyne that we have little alternative in such cases.

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Vietnam

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PS/PUS
SIR A ACLAND
SIR E YOUDE
MR DONALD
LORD N G LENNOX
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PS/NO 10, DOWNING STREET
MR WADE
PS/HOME SECRETARY
RM 754 Q.A.G.

HK Govt Office, London

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GRS 650

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FM HONG KONG 181200Z MAY 81
TO IMMEDIATE F C O
TELEGRAM NUMBER 507 OF 18 MAY
INFO IMMEDIATE PEKING LISBON PRIORITY UKMIS GENEVA
ROUTINE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT OFFICE LONDON

VIETNAMESE REFUGEES FROM CHINA.

1. OVER THE PAST FEW DAYS SOME 1,280 VIETNAMESE REFUGEES PREVIOUSLY SETTLED IN CHINA HAVE ARRIVED IN MACAU. THE MACAU GOVERNMENT HAS TOLD US THROUGH THE PORTUGUESE CONSUL-GENERAL, CATARINO: THE BOATS ARE UNSEAWORTHY, THEY HAVE NO INTENTION OF ALLOWING THEM TO PROCEED TO HONG KONG: AND THEY HAVE TOLD LOCAL CHINESE REPRESENTATIVES THAT CHINA MUST ARRANGE TO TAKE THESE PEOPLE BACK QUICKLY. HOWEVER, THE RESPONSE (NOT BASED ON ANY COMMUNICATION WITH GUANGZHOU OR NCNA HERE) WAS UNHELPFUL.

2. THIS IS NOT ONLY A MACAU PROBLEM. SO FAR THIS YEAR 674 SUCH PEOPLE HAVE ARRIVED HERE, ALL BUT A HANDFUL VIA MACAU. ONLY 28 OF THEM HAVE RETURNED TO CHINA. WITH THE BACKLOG, THERE ARE 3,290 HERE.

3. THE ARRIVALS IN MACAU SPEAK OF UP TO 20,000 ON THE SOUTH CHINA COAST PREPARING TO LEAVE: JUST RUMOURS, BUT WORRYING.

4. IDENTIFICATION OF BOATLOADS FROM CHINA IS NO PROBLEM, HERE OR IN MACAU. APART FROM THE BOATS BEING IN NO CONDITION FOR AN OPEN SEA, 98 PER CENT OF DIRECT ARRIVALS FROM VIETNAM IN THE PAST 18 MONTHS HAVE BEEN ETHNIC VIETNAMESE, COMPARED WITH ABOUT

OPEN SEA, 98 PER CENT OF DIRECT ARRIVALS FROM VIETNAM IN THE PAST 18 MONTHS HAVE BEEN ETHNIC VIETNAMESE, COMPARED WITH ABOUT 10 PER CENT ON BOATS FROM CHINA.

5. THE PROBLEM IS IDENTIFYING WHERE REFUGEES FROM VIETNAM WERE SETTLED IN CHINA. THEY LIE AND THE CHINESE TOLD THE POLITICAL ADVISER WHEN HE RECENTLY VISITED GUANGZHOU THAT EVEN IF NAMES AND PLACES ON LISTS WE PROVIDE ARE CORRECT, STATE FARM MANAGERS WHO DO NOT WANT TROUBLE-MAKERS BACK WILL SOMETIMES DENY KNOWLEDGE OF THEM.

6. AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND IT IS INCREASINGLY CLEAR THAT SUCH PEOPLE, WHO HAVE GENERALLY BEEN IN CHINA FOR AT LEAST 2 YEARS, SHOULD BE HANDLED IN THE SAME WAY AS ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS (EXCEPT, WHERE CIRCUMSTANCES WARRANT IT, FOR OPPORUTNITIES OF FURTHER RESETTLEMENT FROM CHINA UNDER UNHCR AUSPICES).

7. CATARINO TOLD ACTING POLITICAL ADVISER THE PORTUGUESE GOVERNMENT WILL NOT BE WILLING TO DISCUSS THIS PROBLEM WITH THE CHINESE OTHER THAN IN MACAU: NOT BECAUSE OF PROBLEMS IN BILATERAL RELATIONS, BUT BECAUSE OF ''THE PROCEDURAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TERRITORY OF MACAU AND PORTUGAL''.

8. IF YOU AGREE, GRATEFUL IF PEKING WOULD SPEAK URGENTLY TO THE MFA ASKING:

A. THAT THE RECENT ARRIVALS IN MACAU BE TAKEN BACK FROM THERE TO CHINA IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS. DESPITE THE DIFFICULTIES, FAILURE TO ACT SPEEDILY RISKS FAR BIGGER PROBLEMS FOR ALL CONCERNED.

B. THAT RAPID ACTION BE TAKEN ON THE BACKLOG HERE: AND THAT NEW ARRIVALS, ONCE IDENTIFIED, BE ACCEPTED BACK THROUGH THE DAILY MOVEMENTS AT THE BORDER FROM MAN KAM TO BY BUS TO WENJINGDU.

MACLEHOSE

NNNN

Vietnam

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HS.

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

14 May 1981

Vietnamese Refugees

The Prime Minister has seen the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's minute to her of 12 May on this subject.

The Prime Minister is not willing to see the quota increased above the present figure of 10,000. She has noted that those picked up at sea were originally to count against the quota. Now that this decision has been relaxed, there can be no question of accepting an increase in the quota itself.

I am sending copies of this letter to John Halliday (Home Office), John Rhodes (Department of Trade) and David Wright (Cabinet Office).

M. O'D. B. ALEXANDER

R.M.J. Lyne, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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(1)

Prime Minister

The Foreign Secretary wants to delay any new decision on the refugees for a few months: we are still 1,000 short of the full 10,000 quota. Meanwhile, the Home Secretary & the Trade Secretary agreeing, refugees picked up at sea would continue to receive resettlement guarantees. The numbers involved are small. Content?

[illegible]

PM/81/26

PRIME MINSTER

No more Over 10,000. Originally those picked up at sea were to go against the 10,000 i.e. having reached that cannot accept any more [illegible].

[illegible]

Vietnamese Refugees

1. In my minute of 4 March, I said that when I had visited Hong Kong I would give you and our other colleagues my views on the need for a commitment, over and above our 1979 Geneva Conference commitment, to accept Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong into the United Kingdom.

2. As regards refugees rescued by British shipping, I agree with John Biffen and Willie Whitelaw (their minutes of 20 and 27 March respectively) that the right course is to continue our present case by case policy. As John Biffen pointed out, British ship-owners would be in a very difficult position if we changed our present policy of issuing re-settlement guarantees as a last resort. And the total number of refugees which we have accepted over the past two years following rescues by British vessels has not been as great as many feared at the outset.

3. Our agreement that the present quota of 10,000 refugees should be met in its entirety from Hong Kong (which was recorded in your Private Secretary's letter of 11 March) has been a great help to Hong Kong. The Governor was in London at the time, and had expressed anxiety about the way in which the outflow of refugees from Hong Kong to receiving countries should be maintained. Nevertheless, there remain in Hong Kong some 17,000 refugees awaiting resettlement. Of our own quota there are only about 1,000 yet to come to the United Kingdom. The receiving countries

/are

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are becoming increasingly reluctant to undertake further commitments. Sir Murray MacLehose reported at the beginning of this month that the Americans in particular were continuing to enquire about the British Government's intentions once our present quota ends: and that they had again referred to the need to maintain an international effort and a steady monthly commitment. The Governor considered that there was a risk that the steady, if slowing decline in the numbers in Hong Kong of refugees awaiting resettlement might before too long go into reverse. He had no doubt that, if this happened, it would trigger grave anxieties in Hong Kong.

4. Against this background, the Governor favours the granting of an additional quota to Hong Kong, perhaps on a monthly basis, on a sufficient scale to ensure that the United States and other recipient countries continue to take off refugees. However, there are clearly strong domestic arguments against taking such a decision at present. I would therefore prefer to keep the situation under close review over the summer months, particularly as there are some indications that the outflow of boat people from Vietnam may be rising over the equivalent period of 1980, and to make a further recommendation before the summer recess. As I have indicated, much will depend on the continuing generosity of the Americans, who have already taken 35,000 refugees and who are certainly influenced by our own efforts.

5. I am copying this minute to Willie Whitelaw and John Biffen, and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

C

(CARRINGTON)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office
12 May 1981

Vietnam

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B/F 13/5

PM/81/24

PRIME MINISTER

Vietnamese Refugees

1. In my minute of 4 March, I said that when I had visited Hong Kong, I would give you and our other colleagues my views on the case for a further commitment to accept Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong into the United Kingdom.

2. The present position in Hong Kong is that some 17,000 refugees are still awaiting settlement: of our own 10,000 quota there are still about 1,000 to come to the United Kingdom. There was a net decline of 4,400 in the total of those awaiting resettlement in Hong Kong in the first quarter of 1981. However, the current outflow of boat people from Vietnam is somewhat up on the equivalent period of 1980. This, coupled with a growing reluctance on the part of receiving countries to undertake further commitments, could lead later in the year to a reversal of the present decline in the numbers in Hong Kong awaiting resettlement. The Governor has no doubt that this would trigger strong reactions in Hong Kong. Much will depend on the continuing generosity of the Americans who have already taken 35,000 refugees and who will in turn be influenced by our own efforts.

3. I conclude that while we need not at this time undertake a further commitment to Hong Kong, it will be important to watch the situation very closely over the summer months. I shall therefore be keeping the position under

/review

review and would propose to make a further recommendation in due course.

4. On the question of refugees rescued by British shipping, I have nothing to add to John Biffen's minute of 20 March, and Willie Whitelaw's of 27 March, with both of which I agree.

5. I am copying this minute to Willie Whitelaw and John Biffen, and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

C

(CARRINGTON)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

8 May 1981

PA

BY BAG
Unclassified
From the Governor Hong Kong
To The Foreign & Commonwealth Office
Telegram Number 156 Saving of 6 MAY 1981
Repeated for information Saving to Hong Kong Government Office London, MODUK(DS 11), Ukmis Geneva, Hanoi, Washington, Ukmis New York, Peking, Manila, Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur, Singapore, Bangkok, Paris

P.S. TO. PM. Vietnam
10. DOWNING STREET

MY SAVING TELEGRAM NO. 147 VIETNAMESE REFUGEES.

1. REFUGEES IN HONG KONG AT 0900 HRS. 5TH MAY 1981:

(PREVIOUS WEEK'S FIGURES IN BRACKETS)

A.	IN UNHCR CAMPS	13,959 (14,289)
B.	GOVERNMENT ACCOMMODATION AND QUARANTINE ANCHORAGE	2,050 (2,804)
C.	UNDER DETENTION	2,765 (2,526)
D.	TOTAL	18,774 (19,619)

THE NUMBER UNDER DETENTION REPRESENTS THE NUMBER OF VIETNAMESE REFUGEES WHO HAVE BEEN SETTLED IN CHINA BEFORE COMING TO HONG KONG ILLEGALLY.

2. 2,816 REFUGEES HAVE ARRIVED SINCE 1 JANUARY 1981. THE INCREASE OF 238 SINCE 28 APRIL 1981 IS DUE TO THE ARRIVAL OF 7 BOATS AND THE USS HEPBURN WHICH PICKED UP 55 REFUGEES IN SOUTH CHINA SEA.

3. UNHCR HAS RESETTLED 8,347 REFUGEES SINCE 1 JANUARY 1981 OF WHICH 1,094 IN THE PAST WEEK.

MACLEHOSE

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BK

Vietnam

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

31 March 1981

BF 15-4-81.

Vietnamese Refugees

The Prime Minister has seen the minutes from the Secretary of State for Trade and the Home Secretary, dated 20 March and 27 March respectively, on this subject. The Prime Minister does not wish to take any definitive decisions on the question of admitting Vietnamese refugees, from whatever source, to this country until the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary has reported on his visit to Hong Kong. As you will know from my letter to Roderic Lyne of 11 March, the Prime Minister is unconvinced that it would be right to enter into a new commitment to admit further Vietnamese refugees to this country.

However, the Prime Minister recognises that further boat people may be picked up at sea before her discussion with the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary. She agrees therefore that a guarantee of resettlement may be given to any refugees rescued at sea in the interim.

I am sending copies of this letter to John Halliday (Home Office), Stuart Hampson (Department of Trade) and David Wright (Cabinet Office).

M. O'D. B. ALEXANDER

Francis Richards, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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PRIME MINISTER

VIETNAMESE REFUGEES

I agree with John Biffen's minute of 20 March about refugees picked up at sea by British vessels.

Since July 1979 some 700 refugees have come to this country as a result of guarantees. The total is much less than we dared hope a couple of years ago and the policy of avoiding any general declaration of principle but yielding to the inevitable in particular cases has proved itself.

I am sure it is right both to continue the existing policy and to avoid any general announcement.

I am sending copies of this minute to Peter Carrington, John Biffen and Sir Robert Armstrong.

27 March 1981

(1)

I thought there were something like 600 or so of the Poles left? no

Prime Minister.

Both the Home Secretary (minute attached) & Lord Carrington agree with the course of action proposed in Mr Biffen's final paragraph (overleaf). Are you content that present practice should continue?

[illegible] 30/3

PRIME MINISTER

VIETNAMESE REFUGEES

No - the residual no. only

Your Private Secretary's minute of 11 March, agreeing to the quota of 10,000 refugees being met in its entirety from Hong Kong, recorded your wish for advice as to what should be done about refugees who may hereafter be picked up at sea by British vessels. This is a matter of particular concern to me given the consequences to merchant shipping of such rescues.

It would obviously be out of the question to discourage our merchant ships from saving life at sea. This is a duty laid down by international Conventions to which we are a party. But the Master is then faced with the practical problem that virtually no Far East port is prepared to allow refugees to leave the ship without a flag state guarantee of ultimate resettlement if necessary. The shipowner can be subject to severe commercial penalties even through a diversion to disembark refugees, and still more so if he has to cruise around South East Asia seeking a country which will take his human cargo. Both the Master and we ourselves would be in a particularly difficult position if the refugees were in poor physical condition.

This situation has caused considerable anxiety in the shipping industry. We have declined to give them an unconditional guarantee of resettlement in all cases, and they are reasonably satisfied with the present case by case consideration. But their concern will be renewed when it is realised that the quota has been filled from Hong Kong, and I expect to be asked for assurances on future Government policy.

We told the House on 12 December that we would continue our obligations in respect of those rescued at sea. I therefore propose that we continue our present case by case consideration for British merchant ships, and that if asked by the shipping industry I say we have no present plans for a change of policy. This would of course be on the understanding that our resettlement guarantee is very much a last resort, and that before it is invoked every effort is made to secure alternative relocation. There have been few cases recently and I would not envisage any adverse public reaction to our continuing our present policy.

I am sending copies of this minute to Willie Whitelaw, Peter Carrington and Sir Robert Armstrong.

WJB

Department of Trade
1 Victoria Street
London, SW1H 0ET

20 March 1981

JB

CONFIDENTIAL

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

11 March 1981

VIETNAMESE REFUGEES

The Prime Minister has seen the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's minute to her of 4 March on this subject. She has also seen the Home Secretary's minute of 28 February. The Prime Minister agrees that the quota of 10,000 refugees may be met in its entirety from Hong Kong. The Prime Minister also agrees that a decision on the acceptance of refugees beyond this total should be delayed until after the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's forthcoming visit to Hong Kong. However, she has commented that she will take a good deal of convincing that it would be right to enter into a new commitment to admit further Vietnamese refugees from the territory into this country.

The Prime Minister looks forward to receiving early advice as to what should be done about refugees who may hereafter be picked up at sea by British vessels. As you are well aware, guarantees given for entry into this country by such refugees in the past have been counted against the quota.

I am sending copies of this letter to John Halliday (Home Office) and David Wright (Cabinet Office).

M. O'D. B. ALEXANDER

R.M.J. Lyne, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

(1)

10 DOWNING STREET

Prime Minister.

This problem was not discussed at Cabinet last week. Am I right in assuming that

(a) you would agree the 10,000 quota can be met in its entirety from Hong Kong (i.e. that the 700 refugees rescued from the sea should be treated separately & further consideration given to those rescued hereafter); but that

(b) while you will await Lord Carrington's report on his return from H. Kong, you will require a good deal of persuading about the desirability of admitting any further refugees from H. Kong?

Yes

MT. [signature]

10.3.81

CONFIDENTIAL

Vietnam

PM/81/8

PRIME MINISTER

Vietnamese Refugees

1. I am grateful to the Home Secretary for his minute of 28 February about the completion of the 1979 Geneva Conference commitment to take 10,000 Vietnamese refugees. I hope that you can agree to the instructions which he suggests sending to his selection team in Hong Kong. If so, it might be mentioned at Thursday's Cabinet.

2. As you know, at the end of March I shall myself be in Hong Kong, where there are still almost 20,000 refugees. While I appreciate the Home Secretary's wish to proceed with the running down of the reception camps, I hope that on my return from Hong Kong we can rapidly decide what residual facilities may need to be retained, whether to allow us to respond to further boat rescues, or to maintain for a further period a continuing but limited intake of refugees from Hong Kong.

3. The Governor of Hong Kong will be in London next week to see the Home Secretary and me, primarily about the increasing uneasiness in the territory over the Nationality Bill. He also wishes, however, to discuss Vietnamese refugees and I hope you can agree to my informing him that the 10,000 quota will be met in its entirety from Hong Kong and that the door is not closed on the possibility of taking further modest numbers from the territory. I know that he attaches enormous importance to this to ensure a continued commitment from the Americans, Canadians and others to go on taking Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong.

4. I am sending a copy of this minute to the Home Secretary and to Robert Armstrong.

C

4 March 1981
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

(CARRINGTON)

CONFIDENTIAL

Ref. A04371

MR ALEXANDER

Vietnamese Refugees

The Home Secretary sent a minute to the Prime Minister on this subject dated 28 February in which he proposed that Cabinet should be invited to agree that a line should be drawn under the British Geneva Conference undertaking to receive 10,000 Vietnamese refugees, and that instructions should be sent to the British selection team in Hong Kong to enable them to bring the total up to 10,000 if in fact sufficient candidates come forward.

2. The Home Secretary is anxious to run down the reception camps for Vietnamese refugees which have been set up in this country. The cost and trouble of finding jobs and permanent homes for their inmates have been burdensome to local authorities. But although the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, to whom the Home Secretary has copied his minute, is likely to welcome the completion of the British quota of 10,000, he is likely to suggest that it would be premature to regard the British commitment as being terminated. He himself is due to visit Hong Kong next month and he is likely to suggest that the position should be held open until he has reviewed the situation on the spot. His officials consider that a likely outcome of such a review is a proposal that Britain should accept a further quota of Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong considerably smaller than the original 10,000 but still amounting to 2,000 or so.

3. The reason why such a proposal might be made is the fact that the relief of the Vietnamese refugee problem in Hong Kong has owed a great deal to the Canadians, West Germans and particularly the Americans as well as ourselves. The US have received about three times as many Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong as the UK. They are due very shortly to review their future policy and their conclusion will be significantly influenced by what this country decides to do. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary is likely therefore to argue that it is strongly in the interests of Hong Kong that the UK's future policy should be of a nature that will keep the Americans continuing to receive Vietnamese refugees on something like their present scale of 1,250 a month.

4. The Prime Minister may therefore like to await the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's comments on the Home Secretary's proposal, in the expectaion that he will recommend that no final decision should be taken until he has visited Hong Kong. Thereafter a judgement may have to be made between the importance of our relations with Hong Kong and the extent of the burden that can reasonably be placed upon local authorities in this country. Both the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and Home Secretary recognise that, if there was a renewed mass exodus of Vietnamese refugees, the whole position would have to be reconsidered.

D J WRIGHT

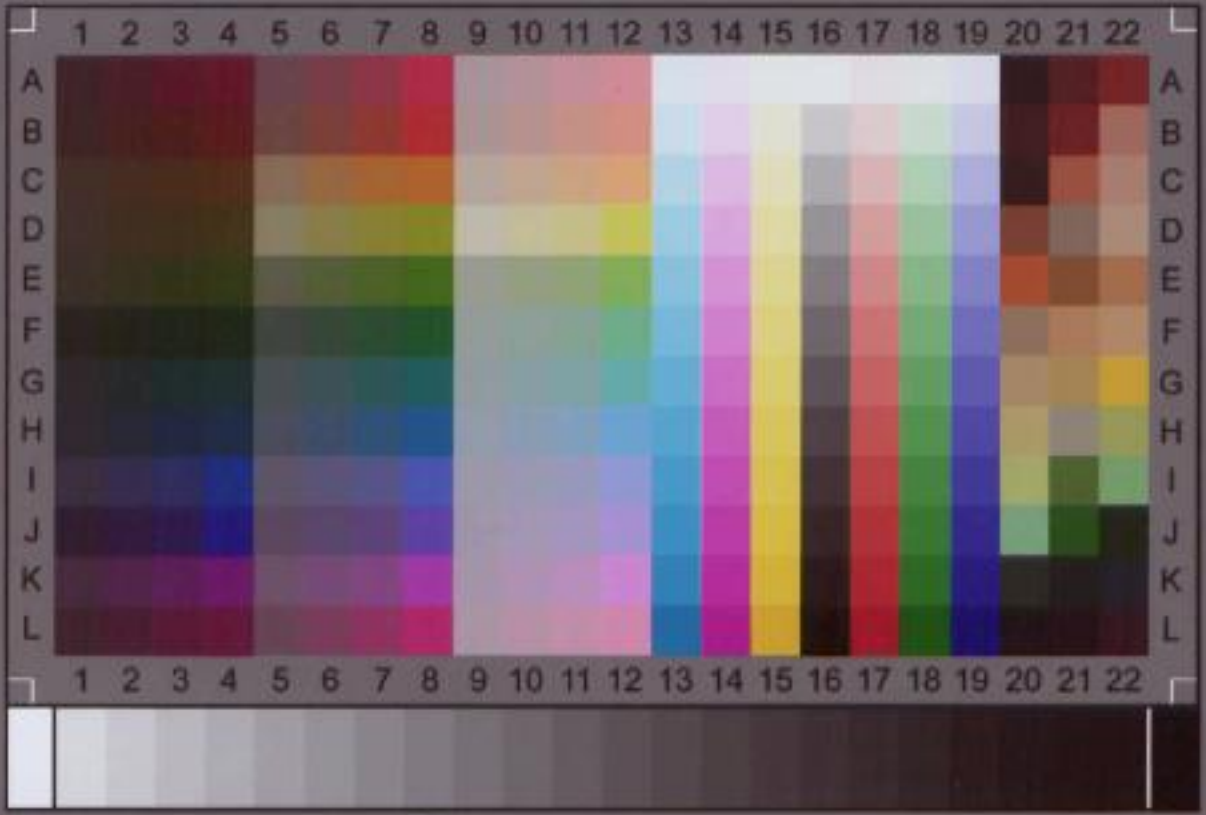
3 March 1981

PART 3 ends:-

Home Sec: to PM of 28/2/87.

PART 4 begins:-

D. Wright to HOBBA (A04371) of 3/3/87.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