



PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

8 JULY 1979

ELECTORATE TALK

For more than 40 years Australia has provided a home for the victims of tyranny. Refugees came to Australia from Nazi Germany in the 1930's. After the Second World War, there was a flow of refugees from the Eastern bloc countries.

Today, refugees are again fleeing from totalitarian oppression, and from the economic and social disruption which communism produces when it gains power.

The old refugees were created by the racial and expansionist policies of Nazi Germany. The new refugees have been created by the communist regimes which have been set up with brutal and bloody ruthlessness in Indochina.

The Vietnamese government is methodically driving out people of ethnic Chinese origin, as well as other citizens who do not fit its narrow communist mould, at the rate of about 50,000 a month.

There are now about 350,000 refugees in camps in south-east Asia, primarily in Thailand, Malaysia, Hong Kong and Indonesia. This has created grave problems for these countries. The international community has a clear responsibility to help ease this burden.

For the people of south-east Asia, this exodus is one of the great crises in their history. It is one of the great refugee crises of all time.

The refugees are being resettled in Australia at a rate of almost 1,000 a month. The United States is planning to double its intake to 170,000 a year. France has provided a home for 50,000, and Canada & Hong Kong have each resettled 13,000.

The British journal, *The Economist*, has compared the flood of refugees from Vietnam in 1979 with what happened to the Jews of Germany in the 1930's. The main difference, *The Economist* reports, is that Vietnam's persecution has already claimed more victims than Hitler's had by 1939.

The Vietnamese authorities, like the Nazis, are seizing the assets of those whom they are exporting so that they leave the country destitute.

This barbaric trade, with its heavy toll in life -- on some reports up to 50% of those who leave Vietnam's shores die at sea -- is said to be earning the Vietnamese government more than \$200 million a year.

It was discussed at the Economic Summit Conference in Tokyo and at the meeting of ASEAN Foreign Ministers in Bali. There is to be another international conference in Geneva later this month, attended by representatives of some 60 nations.

The refugee problem was amongst the issues discussed in the talks which I have had in the past few days with the British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, and with the United States Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance.

All nations need compassion and understanding in dealing with this problem.

On purely humanitarian grounds, more countries should make places available to these wretched victims of communism. But that is only one side of the coin.

If we merely provide resettlement for the refugees, the Vietnamese will not be discouraged from continuing to drive out those citizens whom they do not like for reasons of race or because their way of life does not suit official ideology.

The Hanoi government should know it cannot continue its barbarous policy of stripping a section of the Vietnamese people of hundreds of millions of dollars, and then exporting their victims in the belief that countries with humanitarian governments will find room for them.

The long term solution must be for countries throughout the world to bring weight to bear on Vietnam to cease this trade in human life.

The country in the best position to influence Vietnam is clearly the Soviet Union, but there is no sign whatsoever that this is happening.

Mrs Thatcher discussed refugees in the Kremlin when she visited Moscow on her way last month to the Economic Summit in Tokyo. She was told that the Vietnamese refugees were criminals, drug addicts and thieves, and that they were a domestic Vietnamese problem.

It could well be that Russia welcomes this exodus from Vietnam as a policy which, if pursued in its present massive proportions, could de-stabilise south-east Asia and lead to the loss of the economic gains made by these countries over the last seven or eight years.

There are those who say that nations should provide more aid to Vietnam as the best means of persuading them to moderate or change their policies. Up to last year Australia tried just that. We provided aid for peaceful reconstruction.

Instead, Vietnam attacked Kampuchea, where they now have 16 or 17 divisions, and escalated their policy of exporting their unwanted people.

The policy of holding out the hand of friendship was tried and was a failure.

That is why we suspended our aid to Vietnam. At the time there were those who criticised Australia's policy, but other countries have since taken similar action. The European Community has decided to suspend food aid to Vietnam, and to divert it instead to the refugees.

This policy is one that should be followed by other aid donors. Nobody could claim that the need of the refugees is less than that of Vietnam.

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