

## Foreign and Commonwealth Office London SW1A 2AH

Telephone 01--233 3470

X 20/4

Your reference

Our reference

Date 6 August 1979

C L Booth Esq MVO RANGOON

My deer andameter,

REFUGEES BURMESE STYLE



- 1. I write to acknowledge your despatch dated 3 July (with an amend-ment dated 12 July) on refugees. It has been printed in the Departmental series; I enclose a copy of the distribution list.
- 2. It makes a pleasant change from work on Indo-China refugees to read of Burma's success story in organising with Bangladesh the return of 170,000 refugees. The effectiveness and speed of the UNHCR's action and that of the voluntary organisations were impressive and perhaps offer grounds for confidence in their handling of the more daunting problems posed by Indo-China. Britain's contribution to UNHCR programmes has increased in response to the growing refugee problem and it is encouraging that his efforts were on this occasion so well received.
- 3. It is a measure of the mistrust between the religious groups that an apparently trivial incident could have led to such an exodus. The events of the Bangladesh war had accustomed us to expect animosity and fear between Muslims and Buddhists but the number of refugees who fled in 1978 was still a surprise.
- 4. The non-committal attitude of the Burmese at the beginning of these negotiations seems typical of their attitude to large issues of foreign policy; we too were among those who expected the negotiations to drag on.
- 5. The intervention of Ne Win casts light, not only on a virtually unswapected side of his character, but also on the degree of control he has over his government. This is of course entirely in line with Your other reports about him.
- 6. I am copying this letter to the Chanceries in Dacca, Bangkok, Geneva and New York.

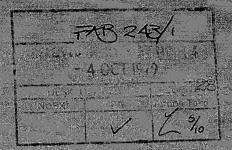
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R P Flower South East Asia

South East Asian Department



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BRITISH EMBASSY, RANGOON.

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REFAIRIATION OF REFUGEAR TO BURGE

1. At the time of a riting, and with the base bont to glose, I have not yet seen any ment of the base such to FCO telegram to them in 1207 of 25 20 Sentencer. The the meantime you have like to have such information as is available to enacer your questions.

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of the Union, or crist Bister, some 10411,000 profites remain in the comps in Bertladesh, of refleces remain in the comps in Bertladesh, of these is times are may be two Drives. Fall with some fixers are "Jacketory "" the they have no residentary vice see to prove their pricing are resident Burns. The lists of their balles are paint checked by the Burns. The Lists of their balles are paint taken in the willares where they claim is revious residence as to mether and in claims ere to write or not.

3. According to Blatter some Burnase reception centres are still open at the frontier but the flow of refusees has falled off now that the mensoon is hindering movement.

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4. Thas regards timing, Blatter Irlnks that the oropler could drag on for some time yet or could be resolved quite quickly, depending on whether further pilateral Burmese/Bangladeso talks are beld. The said that there have been hings that the latter are impending but he has no line information.

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J & Booth

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## MINUTE FOR FILE

BURMESE REFUGEES IN BANGLADESH

1. In a recent private letter to me the Belgian Ambassador in Dacca says that 178,000 refugees have actually returned to Burma so far and that 8,800 are still in Bangladesh.

This information was confirmed by the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs U Tin Ohn, in a conversation I had with him today. He assessed the number of refugees awaiting return as 9,000. He confirmed that they are all category "C". He said that the Burmese and Bangladesh Authorities had exchanged lists of names of this remaining category and that the Burmese Authorities are now diligently checking the claim of each individual in the Bangladesh lists as to their previous residence in Burma. In some cases the Authorities are already discovering that the claims were bogus. U Tin Ohn added that the category includes the hardcore of the trouble makers who led the empligration in the first place and who sought to prevent the other refugees from returning to Burma. He also claimed to have knowledge that the Bangladesh Authorities were actually advertising in the bazaars to encourage people to employate!

about half of the remaining 9.000 to return. The other half he said would never be able to demonstrate a genuine claim to residence in Burma, and would not qualify for return. I commented that I thought that this was a relatively small number which Bangladesh ought to be able to absorb easily enough.

4. U l'in Ohn said that the Bangladesh Minister of the Interior had invited Brigadicr Sein Lwin, Burmese Minister for Home and Heligious Affairs, to Visit Bangladesh in order to "round off the operation successfully.

LAST

John Alexander

ነ L Booth

3 October 1979 F Flower Esq. Janu.

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