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DESKBY 171700Z MAY

FROM TEHRAN 171215Z MAY 79
TO IMMEDIATE FCO
TELEGRAM NUMBER 603 OF 17 MAY
INFO IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON, PRIORITY PARIS, HOLY SEE.

*Enter with
6/24
18/1-*

YOUR TEL NO 367: JEWISH COMMUNITY IN IRAN.

1. IT IS EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO ESTABLISH THE FACTS, AND INEVITABLY THE PICTURE MUST BE SOMEWHAT SUBJECTIVE. WE HAVE OF COURSE BEEN COMPARING NOTES WITH OTHER MISSIONS, AND THE GENERAL CONCLUSION IS THAT WHILE INEVITABLY THERE IS MUCH DISQUIET AMONG THE JEWISH COMMUNITY FOLLOWING THE EXECUTION OF ELGHANIAN, THERE IS NO EVIDENCE OF A GENERAL PERSECUTION. SOME JEWS HAVE UNDOUBTEDLY BEEN ARRESTED. THE CHIEF RABBI, SPEAKING TO A MEMBER OF THE US EMBASSY, PUT THE NUMBER AT BETWEEN 20 AND 30, BUT THE US CHARGE, TO WHOM I DID NOT REVEAL THE SUBSTANCE OF YOUR TUR, TELLS ME THAT ON THE BASIS OF OTHER INFORMATION, HE BELIEVES THE TRUE FIGURE IS MORE LIKE 10. THE RABBI, THOUGH HE BROKE INTO TEARS DURING THE CONVERSATION, HAD NO EVIDENCE OF A GENERAL PERSECUTION..
2. THE JEWISH COMMUNITY HAS DWINDLED FROM A PRE-REVOLUTIONARY FIGURE OF 80,000 TO ABOUT 50,000. MANY JEWISH BUSINESSMEN ARE GLOOMY ABOUT THE FUTURE AND SOME AT LEAST WILL WISH TO SELL UP AND LEAVE, AT LEAST UNTIL THEY CAN SEE HOW THINGS ARE GOING TO DEVELOP. WE HAVE NO EVIDENCE OF A PANIC EXODUS.
3. ALL THIS HAS TO BE SEEN AGAINST THE GENERAL BACKGROUND. THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IS NOT ALONE IN BEING WORRIED ABOUT ITS POSITION OR THE FUTURE. THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IS ALSO WORRIED, ESPECIALLY THE PROTESTANTS, WHO ARE IN MANY CASES CONVERTS FROM ISLAM AND WHO WERE PROFOUNDLY SHAKEN BY THE MURDER IN FEBRUARY OF THE IRANIAN PROTESTANT PRIEST IN SHIRAZ BY MOSLEM ZEALOTS, EVEN THOUGH THE CRIME WAS LATER CONDEMNED

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BY THE MOSLEM AUTHORITIES. MUSLIM IRANIANS ARE OF COURSE ALSO UNDER PRESSURE. WE DO NOT KNOW HOW MANY ARE DETAINED THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY, BUT THE NUMBER IS LIKELY TO RUN INTO THOUSANDS, AND MANY MORE ARE LYING LOW. THE POSITION OF THE JEWS IS OF COURSE COMPLICATED BY THE SUSPICION, WHICH IS ESPECIALLY STRONG AT THE PRESENT TIME HERE, THAT ANY LINK, EVEN A SENTIMENTAL ONE, WITH ISRAEL, PUTS THEIR LOYALTY TO IRAN IN DOUBT. KHOMEINI HIMSELF DREW THIS DISTINCTION, BETWEEN THE JEWS AND THE ZIONISTS, WHEN ON 14 MAY HE RECEIVED A DELEGATION OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY WHICH HAD COME TO CONGRATULATE HIM ON THE SUCCESS OF THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTION AND TO DECLARE THEIR LOYALTY TO IT (SEE MIFT FOR A FULLER REPORT). IT IS INEVITABLE THAT ISRAELI SYMPATHIES WILL BE QUOTED AGAINST ANY JEW WHO HAS BEEN PROSECUTED IN THE NAME OF THE REVOLUTION ON MORE GENERAL CHARGES OF CORRUPTION OR SUPPORT OF THE PREVIOUS REGIME (JUST AS GENERAL RABII, SHOT FOR MUCH WIDER REASONS, WAS ALSO ACCUSED OF BUILDING UP RELATIONS BETWEEN THE IRANIAN AIR FORCE AND ITS US COUNTERPART). THE STANDARD CRY OF THE STREETS AND THE DEMAGOGUES IS THAT ALL THE TROUBLES OF IRAN ARE ATTRIBUTABLE TO AMERICAN, BRITISH AND ZIONIST IMPERIALISM, BUT IT HAS YET TO BE SHOWN THAT ANYBODY HAS BEEN ARRESTED OR PROSECUTED ON THE GROUNDS THAT HE IS A JEW OR THAT JEWS AND JEWISH BUSINESS HAVE BEEN SUBJECTED TO MOB VIOLENCE FOR THAT REASON.

4. I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT INTERVENTION BY HMG AT PRESENT WOULD HELP THE IRANIAN JEWS. THE IRANIANS WOULD DISMISS IT AS INTERFERENCE IN THEIR TREATMENT OF THEIR OWN CITIZENS AND, AS I HAVE SAID IN THE CONTEXT OF EXECUTIONS, THEY ARE IN A DEFIANT MOOD ABOUT THEIR PROCEDURES GENERALLY. INTERVENTION BY US MIGHT FEED THE DOUBTS ABOUT THE LOYALTIES OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY HERE AND IN FACT MAKE THEIR POSITION WORSE. ACTION BY THOSE IN BETTER STANDING, E.G. THE HOLY SEE, MIGHT BE A DIFFERENT MATTER.

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5. IF WE DECIDE NEVERTHELESS THAT WE SHOULD MAKE SOME REPRESENTATIONS, I STRONGLY RECOMMEND THAT
(A) WE SHOULD DO SO ON BEHALF OF ALL THE NON-ISLAMIC MINORITIES.,
(B) WE SHOULD NOT ACT IN COMPANY WITH THE US, AND
(C) WE SHOULD IF POSSIBLE DO IT IN COMPANY WITH OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS.

GRAHAM

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