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TO DESKBY 231500Z FCO
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M. Thomas
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YOUR TELNO 206: AWARDS FOR SOVIET JEWS

1. THE CEREMONY AND LUNCH WERE HELD AS PLANNED TODAY 23 FEBRUARY AND TOOK PLACE IN A VERY EASY ATMOSPHERE. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF JOSEPH BEGUN AND HIS WIFE ALL THE GUESTS, AND THREE OF THEIR SPOUSES, ATTENDED. BEGUN HAD ONLY ARRIVED IN MOSCOW AT 11.00AM TO A HERO'S WELCOME AT THE STATION AND HE AND HIS WIFE WERE UNDERSTANDABLY RESTING AT HOME. THE MILITIA GUARD ON THE EMBASSY WAS SLIGHTLY REINFORCED DURING THE MORNING BUT ALL THE VISITORS WERE ADMITTED TO THE EMBASSY WITHOUT QUESTION ON PRODUCTION OF THEIR IDENTITY DOCUMENTS.

2. I MADE A SHORT SPEECH ABOUT THE AWARDS, INCLUDING THE REGRETS OF THE ALL-PARTY COMMITTEE THAT THEY WERE UNABLE TO BE REPRESENTED. I ALSO SAID THAT ALTHOUGH THE AWARDS WERE SYMBOLS FIRSTLY OF THE CONCERN OF BRITISH PEOPLE OF JEWISH FAITH FOR THE CONDITIONS OF JEWS IN THE SOVIET UNION THEY REFLECTED THE WIDER SYMPATHIES OF THE BRITISH PEOPLE FOR THOSE, BOTH JEWS AND NON-JEWS, WHO WERE PREVENTED FROM ENJOYING THE FREEDOMS WHICH WERE GUARANTEED IN A NUMBER OF INTERNATIONAL DOCUMENTS TO WHICH THE SOVIET UNION WAS A PARTY. THE RECIPIENTS WERE ALL MOST APPRECIATIVE OF THE OCCASION AND ASKED FOR THEIR THANKS TO BE CONVEYED TO THE COMMITTEE.

3. THE PRESS, PERHAPS BECAUSE OF PREOCCUPATION WITH BEGUN, LARGELY LEFT US ALONE. THE OCCASION THEREFORE PASSED OFF, IN ACCORDANCE WITH MY INTENTIONS CONVEYED TO USPENSKY ON 20 FEBRUARY, AS A PRIVATE OCCASION. IN RESPONSE TO PRESS ENQUIRIES WE ARE SIMPLY CONFIRMING THAT IT TOOK PLACE AND WHO THE PARTICIPANTS WERE.

4. SO FAR SO GOOD. IT MAY BE THAT THE HOSTILE REACTION OF SECOND EUROPEAN DEPARTMENT ON 20 FEBRUARY, WAS AS I SUGGESTED IN MY TELNO 231 ONLY AN EXPRESSION OF PIQUE BY THE SOVIET AUTHORITIES AND THAT NO MORE WILL BE HEARD ABOUT IT FROM THEM. DESPITE THE SPEED WITH WHICH ATTITUDES ARE EVOLVING HERE, HOWEVER, I RESERVE JUDGEMENT ON THIS. MEANWHILE I THINK THE EVENT CAN BE ACCOUNTED A SUCCESSFUL BRITISH GESTURE TOWARDS THOSE SEEKING GREATER FREEDOM IN THE SOVIET UNION.

5. PLEASE PASS THE GIST OF PARAS 1 AND 2 ABOVE TO THE ALL-PARTY COMMITTEE AND INFORM THEM THAT I INTEND TO PRESENT BEGUN WITH HIS AWARD, MORE INFORMALLY, IN THE NEAR FUTURE. I HOPE THAT THE COMMITTEE WILL BE RESTRAINED AND SPARING WITH FURTHER PUBLICITY FOR THE EPISODE, PREFERABLY ESCHEWING IT ALTOGETHER. SMOOTH WORKING RELATIONS WITH THE MFA ARE AN IMPORTANT INGREDIENT IN OUR PREPARATION FOR THE PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT.



CARTLEDGE