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TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 275 OF 5 JULY 81.

IRAN/UK : PRESS CORRESPONDENTS.

1. FOLLOWING THE EXPLOSION AT THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLICAN PARTY (IRP) ON 29 JUNE, A CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE FOREIGN PRESS HAS DEVELOPED. THE SPEED WITH WHICH REUTERS AND OTHER AGENCIES, AND ALSO THE BBC, WERE ON TO THE NEWS IS BEING PORTRAYED AS SUSPICIOUS. ON 2 JULY, ISLAMIC REPUBLIC, THE IRP'S DAILY PAPER, CARRIED AN ARTICLE ACCUSING FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS OF BEING "INTELLIGENCE AGENTS AT THE SERVICE OF THE 'POWERFULS'" AND ENGAGING IN ESPIONAGE ACTIVITIES FOR RADIO ISRAEL AND RADIO IRAQ. THE MINIMUM GOAL OF THE CAMPAIGN IS

ISRAEL AND RADIO IRAQ. THE MINIMUM GOAL OF THE CAMPAIGN IS CLEARLY TO ENGINEER THE REMOVAL FROM IRAN OF CORRESPONDENTS DISLIKED BY THE AUTHORITIES. BUT IT MAY HERALD A GENERAL EXPULSION OF THE WESTERN PRESS.

2. WE SUBSEQUENTLY HEARD THAT ONE REUTERS CORRESPONDENT, PHILPS, AND HIRST OF THE GUARDIAN HAD BEEN TOLD TO LEAVE AND THAT ALL APPLICATIONS BY FOREIGN JOURNALISTS TO IRAN WERE BEING REFUSED. WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE WESTERN CORRESPONDENTS ARE TRYING TO SEE THE SPEAKER OF THE MAJLES TO OBTAIN CLARIFICATION OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC ARTICLE OF 2 JULY.

3. ON 5 JULY ISLAMIC REPUBLIC CARRIED AN ARTICLE ATTACKING HIRST FOR AN ARTICLE BY HIM IN THE GUARDIAN CONCERNING THE IRANIAN ALLEGATIONS. THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC ARTICLE OF 5 JULY SAYS IN PART: "DAVID HIRST IS A WELL-KNOWN REPORTER WHOSE ARRIVAL IN IRAN LAST WEEK SURPRISED EVERYBODY. ACCORDING TO OBSERVERS ON IRAN'S ISSUES, IF THERE ARE TWO REPORTERS IN THE WORLD WHO POSE THREATS TO THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTION, HE IS THE FIRST. ISLAMIC REPUBLIC ONCE AGAIN DRAWS THE ATTENTION OF APPROPRIATE OFFICIALS AT THE MINISTRY OF NATIONAL GUIDANCE TO THE SUSPICIOUS AND QUESTION-RAISING PRESENCE OF THIS FAMOUS SPY, ESPECIALLY CONSIDERING THE FACT THAT, AS SHOWN BY REPORTS REACHING IRAN, HIS ARRIVAL IN IRAN HAS EVEN SURPRISED WESTERN CIRCLES."

4. WE THINK HIRST HAS GONE INTO HIDING. BUT AS HIS VISA OR PRESS CARD EXPIRES TOMORROW (6 JULY) HE LOOKS LIKE BEING IN A SPOT. HE HAS NOT BEEN IN CONTACT WITH THE INTERESTS SECTION SINCE A CALL ON 2 JULY.

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