

Iran

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FM BRIT INT SECT TERHAN 061014Z AUG  
TO IMMEDIATE FCO  
TELEGRAM NUMBER 327 OF 6 AUGUST 81  
INFO IMMEDIATE PARIS  
INFO PRIORITY WASHINGTON  
INFO ROUTINE STOCKHOLM

*ms*

MY TELNO 323: IRAN / FRANCE.

1. MATTERS HAVE NOW ESCALATED SERIOUSLY. DEPIS, THE POLITICAL DIRECTOR FOR THE MIDDLE EAST AT THE QUAI, ARRIVED IN TEHRAN YESTERDAY AS REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PRESIDENT TO RECALL THE AMBASSADOR AND ALMOST ALL OF HIS STAFF. AMBASSADOR GEORGY INFORMED THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS YESTERDAY AFTERNOON THAT HE WOULD BE LEAVING WITH ALL HIS STAFF AND THEIR WIVES, EXCEPT FOR A FIRST SECRETARY AND CONSUL, BY THE AIR FRANCE PLANE LEAVING EARLY THE NEXT DAY, IE TODAY.
2. THE FRENCH PARTY DULY EMBARKED THIS MORNING BUT WHEN THE AIRCRAFT WAS ABOUT TO TAKE OFF IT WAS DIVERTED INTO THE MILITARY SECTION OF THE AIRPORT AND HELD. GEORGY AND DEPIS SUCCEEDED IN DRIVING BACK INTO TEHRAN WHERE THEY HAVE NOW SPENT MORE THAN THREE HOURS IN THE OFFICE OF THE YOUNG DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER, SHAIKHOLESLAM. MEANWHILE, THE AIR FRANCE AIRCRAFT HAS BEEN ALLOWED TO DEPART FOR ISTANBUL AND PARIS, LEAVING THE SIXTY ODD FRENCH NATIONALS AT THE AIRPORT. ALL FRENCH NATIONALS HAVE BEEN FORBIDDEN TO LEAVE IRAN.
3. GUINHUT, WHO IS THE MAN LEFT IN CHARGE, TOLD ME THAT ANOTHER AIRCRAFT IS BEING SENT FROM PARIS TO TRANSPORT HIS COLLEAGUES BUT HE HAS NO IDEA HOW THE DISCUSSIONS AT THE MFA WILL BE RESOLVED.

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/4. IT LOOKS

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4. IT LOOKS AS IF A FRENCH ATTEMPT TO BE TOUGH HAS MISFIRED. AS FAR AS WE KNOW THERE WAS NO REASON FOR GEORGY TO PULL OUT ALMOST ALL HIS STAFF WITH SUCH PRECIPITATE HASTE, EXCEPT TO FORESTALL AN IRANIAN REQUEST THAT HE SHOULD BE WITHDRAWN, WHICH REQUEST WAS DULY MADE LAST NIGHT AND GIVEN PUBLICITY HERE. THE IRANIANS, SURPRISED BY THE FRENCH REACTION WHICH THEY REGARDED AS PROVOCATIVE, PROBABLY DECIDED TO REGAIN THE INITIATIVE BY PREVENTING THE EMBASSY STAFF FROM LEAVING. GEORGY IS AN EXCITABLE MARSEILLAIS AND IT MAY BE DIFFICULT FOR EITHER SIDE TO BACK DOWN.
5. I HAVE TOLD GUINHUT THAT ALTHOUGH OUR STATUS MAKES IT DIFFICULT TO HELP OFFICIALLY, WE ARE OF COURSE READY TO DO ANYTHING WE CAN TO HELP ON A PERSONAL LEVEL.

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