

Reference: FOO 8/960/1

67896

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H.B.M. POLITICAL AGENCY  
TRUCIAL STATES  
DUBAI  
2 NOVEMBER, 1968.

(4/1)

The Tunbs

I was grateful for the prompt instructions in Foreign & Commonwealth Office telegram No.1111 of 30 October to you. I was able to go over to Ras al Khaimah on the morning of 31 October and saw Saqr and Khalid together, with no one else present. The following amplifies my telegram No.499 to you.

2. Khalid said he had one meeting with the Iranian Prime Minister and two with the Deputy Prime Minister, Nasibi(?). The P.M. had spoken in general terms only, about the need for co-operation in the Gulf against communism and about the strength of Iran's armed forces. At the first meeting with Nasibi, Khalid had begun by producing the Ras-al-Khaimah counter-draft (copy and translation enclosed) and explaining that the number of years had been left blank for discussion. When it was translated, Nasibi replied that not a word of this draft was acceptable to Iran, except for the reference to friendship at the beginning. It was quite contrary to what had been agreed with Khalid's father. Had Saqr even seen it? Khalid said yes, of course. Farazian had told Saqr that if the Iranian draft was not acceptable as it stood, he should make counter-suggestions, and this was what Saqr had done. Nasibi said this was not so. The Iranian draft represented what had been agreed with Saqr, and not a word of it would be changed. In any case Iran had agreed with the British and the Saudis on a median line, and the Tunbs were on the Iranian side of it. Iqbal, the Minister of Oil, had been in London recently and this had been agreed at the Foreign Office. Had the British not told Saqr? Khalid said no, but if there was such an agreement it presumably gave Bahrain to the Arabs. Nasibi said no, Bahrain was another question, to be decided by the people of Bahrain themselves. He urged Khalid not to delay over accepting the Iranian text. Delay was not in Ras al Khaimah's interests. She needed the help of Iran, and the Tunbs were a small thing by comparison. Khalid said there might be oil there. Nasibi replied that if there was, Iran would give the proceeds to Ras al Khaimah, but the geologists were convinced that there was not. The importance of the islands for Iran was strategic. Khalid mentioned three things which Ras al Khaimah wanted from Iran: a loan, some arms and a road from Ras al Khaimah to Sha'am (30 kilometres). He suggested that these be considered separately from the question of the islands. Nasibi said they must be taken together. Ras al Khaimah was asking for a lot. The total cost of the three items might be £25 million. Khalid said no, far less than that. He then brought the first meeting to an end by saying that he must reflect on the matter overnight.

3. Next day Khalid asked three questions. First, if Saqr

/signed

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BAHRAIN

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signed the Iranian text, what kind of reply would he receive? Nasibi said this was a matter for the Foreign Ministry, and he would get a text from them for Khalid before he left. (He did not do so.) Nasibi thought it would be in general terms, pledging Iran's co-operation in preserving the common interests of the two parties.

4. Second, Khalid asked what would happen to the inhabitants of the Tunbs if they came under Iranian sovereignty. Nasibi said they would be in the same position as the Iranians in Dubai. They would have hospitals etc. and their rights would be preserved.

5. Third, Khalid said that Ras al Khaimah had signed a concession agreement with the Union Oil Co. including the Tunbs, and this had been approved by the Foreign Office. Would Iran bear the cost of compensating the Company? Nasibi said she would, directly or indirectly. He would have to see the agreement, and consult the N.I.O.C. Perhaps there could be a 50/50 settlement.

6. Finally Nasibi said that the Tunbs had been taken from Iran by the British, who were now trying to give them to Ras al-Khaimah. This was like borrowing a car and then giving it to someone else. It could not be allowed. Ras al Khaimah must accept the Iranian draft, and accept it before 9 November when the Shah would leave for his meeting with King Feisal. Khalid said he could not give a definite reply on behalf of Ras al Khaimah, but he would report what Nasibi had said.

7. At some stage Nasibi asked what was the attitude of the British to these negotiations between Iran and Ras al Khaimah. Khalid replied that the Political Agent in Dubai had told Saqr that if he could conclude an agreement that was in his own interest, there would be no objection from the British side. The Iranians said they did not believe this. The Political Agent must be trying to cause trouble between them.

8. Khalid strikes me as a very honest and straightforward chap, even a bit naive, and his account sounded frank and convincing. Both he and his father complained about the deviousness of the Iranians. I asked whether Saqr was quite sure that there had been no misunderstanding at his first meeting. He said definitely not. He was very disappointed at the latest turn of events. He would now have to think again, but he would not hurry to meet the deadline of 9 November. He might try to send an answer before the Shah returned from seeing King Feisal.

9. I said I could not speak for the Saudis, but I did know the facts as regards the British. I then spoke as instructed in paragraph 3 of F.C.O. telegram No.1111, but without producing point (c) since Saqr seemed satisfied with (a) and (b). I added, speaking personally, that a settlement by agreement would be welcome to us, but that I thought Saqr would be making a mistake if he concluded an agreement under Iranian pressure.

/10. ...Finally

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10. Finally Saqr asked his question about the United Nations which I reported in paragraph 5 of my telegram.

11. I feel sure that Saqr will be very grateful for anything further that we are able to tell him when he calls on the Political Resident on 9 November.

(J.L. Bullard)

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