

CHAPTER IV

KHAZ^CAL, THE BAKHTIYĀRĪ KHĀNS, AND THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT 1908-1914

KHAZ^CAL AND THE BAKHTIYĀRĪ KHĀNS, 1908-1914

A factor complicating Britain's policy in southwestern Persia from 1908-1914 was the trouble between the Bakhtiyārī khāns and the Shaykh of Muḥammadarah. The May 1908 discovery of oil in the Bakhtiyārī country made it very important for Britain to maintain good relations with the khāns and, if possible, to gain some measure of control over their turbulent and factious internal affairs. However, the latter was a difficult task. Unlike the case of Shaykh Khaz^Cal, the British were not in a position to threaten the use of force against the Bakhtiyārīs, as the grounding of the Comet in 1907 had humiliatingly demonstrated. Moreover, the khāns were less vulnerable to British pressure. They were better acquainted and more intimately connected with the sources of power in Tehran and for that reason were less dependent on British protection against the Central Government than the Shaykh of Muḥammadarah. The British could try indirect pressure on the khāns by withholding subsidies or by meddling in factional politics, but previous experiences had proved that

the pursuit of such methods was liable to provoke retaliation against British interests in the Bakhtiyārī country. Britain was thus forced to be very careful in her relations with the Bakhtiyārīs, and her known connection with the Shaykh made the relationship even more delicate.¹

The agreement reached between Shaykh Khazāli and the Ilkhān of the Bakhtiyārīs, Şamşam al-Sultānah, in the spring of 1908, although highly gratifying to India and the Foreign Office, did not actually settle any of the substantive issues between them. It was rather a truce dictated by circumstances external to Ārabistān. The struggle between the Constitutionalists and the Royalists in both Tehran and the provinces was growing more serious each day. On August 31, 1907 (the date of the signing of the Anglo-Russian Convention), the Prime Minister Amīn al-Sultān had been assassinated by a member of a nationalist organization. In December, the Shāh had tried, but failed, to bring about a coup. In February 1908, the Shāh was the target of a bomb, which failed to explode. All over Persia, the anjumans (local revolutionary councils) were restive.²

The Shaykh and the Bakhtiyārī khāns were worried. They all had ties with the Qajar regime--not the least of which,

¹Gene Ralph Garthwaite, The Bakhtiyari Khans: Tribal Disunity in Iran, 1880-1895, Ph. D. Dissertation, University of California, 1969, passim.

²E. G. Browne, The Persian Revolution, 1905-1909 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1910), 150, 162-64.

especially in Khaz^cal's case, were firmans granting title to their lands and possessions. What would the attitude of a truly revolutionary constitutional government be toward their positions?

By virtue of their closer connection with the Persian Government, the khāns felt the revolutionary shocks more strongly. It was they who first approached Khaz^cal in January 1908, suggesting that they settle their differences and form an alliance for mutual protection. And it was they who in February 1908 first approached Lorimer (now a captain), indicating that they wished their lands to become quasi-British protectorates and citing Masquat and Kuwait as examples.

Although Lorimer was skeptical that the Shaykh would commit himself fully to the khāns' plans, Cox did not reject the proposal. He depreciatingly championed it "as a local officer," recalling Curzon's feeling that Britain's hold over the area should be strengthened and pointed out the possibility of German penetration. Khaz^cal, he added, was fearful not only of the Central Government but of Turkish attempts to take advantage of Persian territory. For these reasons, he might well be willing to make the temporary accommodation reached with the khāns a permanent one.³

³Capt. D. L. R. Lorimer, Vice Consul at Ahwāz, to Maj. Percy Z. Cox, British Resident at Bushihr, No. 44, Camp Wais, February 3, 1908, F.O. 371/502; Cox to Government of India, Bushihr, March 22, 1908, F.O. 371/502.

The Foreign Office, however, was not interested. The Bakhtiyārīs were "unreliable," and they would doubtless use any assurance beyond an expression of "friendly sympathy" to embroil Britain in difficulties with the Tehran Government. Cox's proposal for an assurance to the Bakhtiyārīs was rejected.

In the interim (in April 1908), Khazāli and the khāns had gone ahead and made their "formal alliance." The British, although pleased at the prospect of peace and order in the region, were not hopeful of its duration.⁴

Their misgivings proved justified when in June 1908, Muhammad ʿAlī Shāh shelled the Majlis and dispersed its members, touching off a new wave of revolutionary unrest. The Bakhtiyārīs, having failed to get the British to guarantee the security of their position, acted to get it for themselves. To the surprise of many, including the British, the Bakhtiyārī khāns became champions of the Nationalist cause, against which they had sought British protection, and their tribesmen became soldiers of its army. Instead of opposing the revolution, the khāns pre-empted it. In January 1909, following a carefully planned coup, Şamşam al-Sultānah took control of Isfahān in the name of its revolutionary anjuman, ousted its repressive and rebellious Prince-Governor, Zill al-Sultān, and dispersed the disloyal Imperial troops.⁵

⁴F.O. 371/502, file 6730.

⁵Browne, Persian Revolution, 197-212, 266-67.

Khaz^{Cal}, however, did not declare himself either way although he was under considerable pressure to do so. The great mujtahid, Muḥammad Kazim al-Khurāsānī, sent a special messenger from Najaf to tell him that it was time he declared himself for or against the Majlis: if he was for it, he should withhold revenue from Tehran, seize the customs receipts, and send aid to the besieged Nationalists at Tabriz. On the opposing side, the Shāh--through Niẓām al-Sultānah--was pressing the Shaykh to support him. Khaz^{Cal} had heard rumors that Ṣaṣṣam had received certain promises concerning Ārabistān from the Constitutionalists at Isfahān. The Shaykh sought British advice. He would have to choose sides, he told his British friends. Which side should he choose?⁶

The British did not respond. The Shaykh continued to press for an answer partially on the ground that if he backed the losing side, Britain would have an excuse to repudiate her assurances to him. British assurances to Shaykh Khaz^{Cal}, it will be recalled, were contingent on his continued loyalty to the Persian Government.

The British could hardly advise Khaz^{Cal} to rebel. Neither could they advise him to oppose the nationalist aims, with which they were to some extent in sympathy. The natural inclination of the Shaykh seemed to lie in the direction of not declaring himself either way. In the end, the British

⁶William McDouall, Consul at Muḥammarah, to Captain A. P. Trevor, Ass't Political Officer at Bushihr, Secret, Muḥammarah, January 30, 1909, F.O. 460/1.

decided to shore up the fence on which he was sitting.

KhazCal "impounded" the customs receipts and refused to allow them to be sent either to Tehran or to the Nationalists. In order to strengthen his position in this regard, he asked that the British write him a stiffly worded note saying that the receipts were pledged as security for a British loan and should be safeguarded by him. This was done, and the Shaykh was also admonished not to involve himself in party politics.

However, this advice did not stop pleas of assistance from both sides. Sardār AsCad, who had already visited KhazCal on his return from Europe, wanted funds to finance the Bakhtiyārī advance on Tehran. The Shāh wanted three hundred troops to restore order at Bushihr and Bandar CAbbās. (Actually, this task had already been performed by British marines.) KhazCal continued to ask for advice. He was, at the moment, attempting to get a guarantee from the British that they would defend his position against the encroachments of the Persian Government regardless of its form, and he doubtless wished to spur them to greater activity. Cox was driven to tell KhazCal that if he could "go sick--or go up the Karun and the Shah & the Ulema & the Samsam all go to the devil he would be acting in accordance with our advice not to involve himself in party politics."⁷

⁷F.O. 371/715, file 10028; Cox to McDouall, Bushihr, April 20, 1909, F.O. 460/1.

The Bakhtiyārīs marched north and into history as the saviors of the Constitution. Muḥammad ḤAlī Shāh was deposed, and the Bakhtiyārī khāns became leading figures in the new government. All this was accomplished without the aid or hindrance of the Muḥammarah customs--although KhazḤal did borrow £2,000 privately from Lynch Brothers and make a loan to the cause of constitutional government in the hope that Bakhtiyārī lands around Ram Hormuz would be allowed to fall into his hands.

While the Bakhtiyārīs were augmenting their power and the country was in a state of chaos, KhazḤal quietly reached agreements with the A.P.O.C. over ḤAbādān Island and with the British Government over the future of irrigation projects in ḤArabistān. As a result, his position within Persia received further guarantees from Great Britain. He requested that the nature and terms of his dealings with foreign governments and companies be kept secret from both the highly xenophobic Ḥulamā and the Nationalist leaders. Nevertheless, the Oil Company agreement was an open secret, and the new Persian Government objected strongly not only to its terms, of which it had not been informed, but also to the fact that it had been negotiated at all.

The tenuous relationship was strained even further by other incidents. In the midst of the tumultuous events at Tehran, KhazḤal took the opportunity to "restore order" at Shūshtar and Dizfūl by appointing his nominees to govern them. In November, the Central Government and KhazḤal

clashed over the appointment of a new governor, who did not have KhazC'al's approval. There was also the question of revenue--part of which KhazC'al wanted to withhold to defray the expenses of keeping order. And KhazC'al's troubles with the Belgian customs administration were a constant source of annoyance and friction with the Central Government. There can be no doubt that a strong Bakhtiyārī representation in Tehran did not improve the Government's relations with the Shaykh of Muhammarah.⁸

By the beginning of 1910, it was clear that the brief honeymoon between KhazC'al and the khāns was over. The fact that the khāns were always very influential and sometimes predominated in the Tehran Government only served to complicate KhazC'al's already poor relations with them, thus making things more difficult both for him and for the British. Britain had the unenviable task of inducing KhazC'al to remain nominally loyal to the Central Government, now largely controlled by his old rivals the Bakhtiyārī khāns, while carefully keeping him out of their reach. The Shaykh, however, had no illusions about his adversaries, The Bakhtiyārīs were Bakhtiyārīs, and he was determined to protect himself against them by whatever means at his disposal.

In February 1910, KhazC'al was warned against joining the QashqaC'is, another powerful group of south Persian nomads, in a move against the Bakhtiyārī base of power at

⁸F.O. 460/2; F.O. 460/3; F.O. 371/715 file 10028.

Isfahān. Such a move, warned Barclay, the British Minister, would alienate Britain's sympathy. The Shaykh in turn demanded British protection against Bakhtiyārī or Central Government aggression while continuing his efforts to organize fellow tribal leaders such as the Lur chief, the Wāli of Pusht-i-Kuh, into an alliance designed to resist Central Government-Bakhtiyārī domination.⁹

On being warned strongly against such action, Khaz^{Cal} assured the British that any agreement he made with the tribal leaders in the south would be innocuous. Along with the warning, however, the Foreign Office granted him an assurance that he would have British support if the Persian Government, "whether it be Royalist or Nationalist," tried to encroach on his jurisdiction or property in ^CArabistān. The Shaykh then pressed for an extension of the guarantee to include the Bakhtiyārī tribe itself--realizing that under the circumstances a guarantee against the encroachments of the Central Government did not mean much if the Bakhtiyārīs were to be employed as an extra-legal arm of the state. This according to Barclay constituted a real dilemma.

To guarantee Arabistan against Bakhtiari aggression . . . would of course be very difficult, as well as inconsistent with principle of our policy in South Persia, but presuming we are debarred from interference in intertribal politics, are we

⁹Sir Gerald Barclay, Minister to Persia, to Sir Edward Grey, Foreign Secretary, Tel. No. 68 (P), Tehran, February 15, 1910, F.O. 371/946; Barclay to Grey, Tel. No. 108 (P), Tehran, March 14, 1910, F.O. 371/946.

able reasonably to persevere in forcing advice on Sheikh of Mohammerah when we are unable to protect him against the consequences of such advice?¹⁰

The Foreign Office agreed.

Barclay therefore did not press Khaz^Cal quite so strongly and began to urge upon Sardār As^Cad, the Minister of the Interior of the new government, the necessity of good relations with the Shaykh. But Khaz^Cal and the others remained suspicious of and hostile to the Minister as the symbol of Bakhtiyārī domination. Finally the British representative suggested to Sardār As^Cad, somewhat reluctantly, for the Sardār was an able man, that he leave the cabinet. Sardār As^Cad was shuffled out of his Interior post and later out of the cabinet--but not before Bakhtiyārī tribesmen began raiding into Khaz^Cal's northern territories and encouraging opposition to the Shaykh's role in faction-torn Shūsh-tar and Dizfūl.

The removal of Sardār As^Cad from the cabinet did not solve Khaz^Cal's problems with the khāns either. The faction of the Bakhtiyārīs headed by Sardār As^Cad, the Ilkhānī, tried to rouse the Arab tribes in northern ^CArabistān against the Shaykh. As a counter move, Khaz^Cal aligned himself with another Bakhtiyārī faction, the Hajjī Ikhānī. Threatening

¹⁰Barclay to Grey, Tel. No. 156 (P), Tehran, April 14, 1910, F.O. 371/946; F.O. to I.O., April 18, 1910, F.O. 371/946; Grey to Barclay, Tel. No. 97 (P), F.O., April 13, 1910, F.O. 371/946.

telegrams were sent and large numbers of tribal levies were put under arms.

The spectacle of KhazCāl intriguing with tribal chiefs in what was tantamount to open rebellion disturbed the British, but in view of their inability and disinclination to intervene officially in inter-tribal affairs, there was little they could or would do. Cox believed that so long as the Shaykh's activities did not go so far as to threaten Persia's territorial integrity, the British should let him protect himself as best he could. As a matter of fact, the Resident argued, by maintaining a balance of power between the rival groups in southwest Persia, that KhazCāl's intrigues and alliances were actually serving to keep the possibility of the outbreak of armed conflict to a minimum. Although Cox's policy was not officially endorsed, it was, for the moment, followed.

Throughout 1910, the conflict between KhazCāl and the Bakhtiyārīs became increasingly serious. Farhan Asad, Shaykh of the KaCb Dubays, with the backing of the Ilkhānī group of the Bakhtiyārīs rose against KhazCāl. In November, Shaykh KhazCāl put his army in the field and threatened to force Farhan into submission while the Shaykh's allies, the Ḥajjī Ilkhānī group of the Bakhtiyārīs, threatened to attack their Ilkhānī fellow tribesmen if they supported Farhan. Barclay in Tehran warned Sardār AsCad not to permit his faction to support Farhan. The warnings by Barclay and the Ḥajjī Ilkhānī were heeded, and KhazCāl proceeded to

reduce the Ka^cb Dubays without any particular trouble.

However, Farhan took refuge in Bakhtiyārī territory, and in spite of the representations of Barclay, Sardār As^cad refused to surrender him to Khaz^cal. Inasmuch as there seemed to be no further likelihood of a clash between Khaz^cal and the Bakhtiyārīs, Barclay did not press further. He did, however, warn Sardār As^cad that "any disturbances of the status quo in the Sheikh of Mohammerah's territory would be a matter of serious concern to His Majesty's Government."

At the same time, Barclay stated in response to queries from the Persian Foreign Minister that while Khaz^cal was not "a British protected person," he had "special relations" with Great Britain. The actual terms of the assurances extended to the Shaykh in October, and about which the Persian Government was curious, were not, however, divulged.¹¹

It should be noted that in the interest of the security of their own commercial and political position in ^cArabistān, the British, particularly Cox and his subordinates, supported the tribal policies of the Shaykh of Muḥammadrah. The British were aware that having all the Arab tribes in the province under the control of one person, who could be easily influenced by them, would greatly reduce tribal outbreaks and

¹¹Barclay to Grey, No. 231, Tehran, December 15, 1910, F.O. 371/1183; Grey to Barclay, Tel. No. 363 (P), F.O., December 15, 1910, F.O. 371/949; F.O. 371/946 file 121; F.O. 371/947 file 121; F.O. 371/1182; F.O. 371/1183; F.O. 371/1185; F.O. 371/959.

would therefore be favorable to commerce. The idea no doubt had an administrative simplicity that must have appealed to the military sense of order of British Indian Army officers. It was indeed of no concern to Britain if the Shaykh imposed tribute upon tribes that had formerly been independent of Muḥammarah. Britain was pledged to refrain from meddling in inter-tribal rivalries. However, if the Bakhtiyārīs were to interfere in the Shaykh's domains with the intention of tampering with the affairs of ᵀArabistān and upsetting the status quo, such interference would be regarded as a matter of serious concern to the British Government. If the Bakhtiyārīs, acting in their capacities as cabinet ministers, tried to impose the authority of the Central Government over the Arab tribes, such action would be regarded as highly unfriendly by the British in view of their "special relations" with the Shaykh.

In the areas surrounding Shūshtar and Dizfūl, neither wholly Arab nor wholly Bakhtiyārī, the problem was very complex. The towns themselves were rent by internal dissent, and struggles for power between hereditary factions were often violent. Periodically the Shaykh of Muḥammarah would be called in by the Central Government to restore order. He would do so and appoint deputy governors to rule until the Government could send governors from Tehran to take charge. The Shaykh generally demanded some voice in the selection of a new governor to insure that Arab interests, e.g. his interests, were protected, or at least not injured.

The Bakhtiyārīs too played the politics of moieties to protect their own position.

In 1909 and 1910, the Shaykh had come in to restore order but had withdrawn, leaving Persian governors to cope with the situation as best they could. In 1911, the Shaykh had gone into Shūshtar while the Bakhtiyārīs occupied Dizfūl.

In February 1912, another conflict between the Shaykh and the khāns began to develop over these towns. In Tehran, the Bakhtiyārī khāns were the dominant figures of the Government, and acting in its name, the khāns appointed a Bakhtiyārī to the governorship of Shūshtar and demanded that Khazcal withdraw his deputies.

Khazcal, protesting his loyalty to the Persian State and against the underhanded action of the khāns, refused and demanded that "neutral" governors be appointed to the cultural shatter zone areas of Behbahan, Shūshtar, and Dizfūl. The British moved quickly to mediate, demanding of Sardār Ascad that a "neutral" governor be sent to Shūshtar and that British consular officials be afforded the opportunity to examine the claims of both sides and arrange a compromise.

When the neutral governor arrived on April 5, however, Khazcal--acting on the governor's request--refused to withdraw his Arabs. He argued that the two hundred Bakhtiyārī cavalymen which were to be the governor's "escort" would in fact make that official a puppet of the khāns. On April 23, the Bakhtiyārīs, who were armed with machine guns and artillery belonging to the Central Government, drove the

Arabs out by force. Khaz^{cal} withdrew his forces to Ahwāz with the avowed intention of collecting an "overwhelming force" to bight the Bakhtiyārīs.

In Tehran, Sir Walter Townley, the new Minister to Persia, pressed both the Government and Sardār As^{cad} to ask the khāns to cease their aggression and withdraw their forces from Shūshtar. In Britain, officials urged moderation upon the Shaykh. Orders were issued, and the khāns agreed to allow British agents to work out a modus vivendi. On May 9, the Bakhtiyārīs got out of Shūshtar and the Arabs moved in. Both parties claimed that their interests had been damaged by the exchange and by the fact that they had followed British advice. The Arabs claimed that the Bakhtiyārīs had extorted money from the Shaykh's supporters in Shūshtar, while the Bakhtiyārīs maintained that the Arabs had looted Bakhtiyārī lands. Haworth, the Consul at Muḥammarah, took the Shaykh's side, and Grey, the Vice Consul at Ahwāz, that of the Bakhtiyārīs. Haworth claimed that the Arabs would overrun the Bakhtiyārīs by sheer weight of numbers. Grey countered that the Bakhtiyārīs would cut the Arabs to pieces by virtue of superior fighting qualities. Townley, not knowing whom to believe and not wanting a show-down in any case, proposed that a meeting of Haworth, Grey, and the representatives of the two contending parties with Cox as referee be held in the autumn when the Bakhtiyārī tribes returned to their winter quarters. This was agreed to by all concerned.

However, before the meeting was held, Khaz^Cal learned that the khāns (contravening their agreement of the spring of 1908) had purchased the Jarrāhī lands belonging to Mushīr al-Dawlah and were negotiating to buy those belonging to Nizām al-Sultānah. These lands had long been administered by the Shaykh and occupied by the Ka^Cb, to which his own clan belonged. The Ka^Cb were formerly the dominant Arab tribe in ^CArabistān and had long memories. They were troublesome enough without the Bakhtiyārī khāns meddling in their administration. The Shaykh said he would fight if the Bakhtiyārīs retained control.

On the official front, the Bakhtiyārī Government threatened Muḥammarah another way. In the continuing border dispute between Persia and Turkey, which had been appealed to the Hague Tribunal, the Persians were apparently ready to accept Turkish claims to the Muḥammarah region in return for the withdrawal of their claims to Khanaqīn.

Moreover, the Shaykh heard that the khāns were planning to attack him in the autumn when the tribes were in winter quarters along his northern borders. He demanded that the British either guarantee him against a Bakhtiyārī attack or allow him to prepare his forces to meet it. In the meantime, he fostered good relations with certain of the junior Bakhtiyārī khāns who were intriguing against their seniors in Tehran.

But before it was necessary to choose either of Khaz^Cal's alternatives, Townley's efforts brought 1) a pledge

not to attack--at least not until the results of the meeting proved hopeless--and 2) the information that the khāns bought the land with the idea of selling it to the Shaykh. Their own nuisance value would presumably add a large extra increment to the land value.

Yet the Shaykh remained suspicious to the point that Townley was moved to remark that he was acting like a spoiled child. "It seems to me," he wrote Cox, "that the fact that the Sardar-i-Jang's [the newly appointed Ilkhān] assurances are transmitted by me and that I believe in them should suffice to satisfy the Shaikh."¹²

Khaz^Cal began to seek arms anyway--even from the Central Government.

They were not needed, however. Khaz^Cal's private dealings with the junior khāns forced a more conciliatory attitude on the part of the senior khāns. And they, at British insistence, also patched up the differences in Bakhtiyārī ranks by choosing a new Ilkhān, for a fixed term, to impose order in the Bakhtiyārī country--and thus insure the protection of British interests.

By September, all parties agreed that a settlement threshed out under the eyes of Grey, Haworth, and Cox was not really necessary. In October, Khaz^Cal reached a preliminary agreement with the Ilkhān's representative: the

¹²Sir Walter Townley, Minister to Persia, to Cox, Tel. No. 158, Tehran, August 3, 1912, F.O. 371/1445; F.O. 371/1443; F.O. 460/2; F.O. 371/1445; F.O. 371/1446.

governors of Dizfūl and Shūshtar were to be neutral; problems with the Arabs were to be referred to the Shaykh, and those with the Bakhtiyārīs, to the khāns. More importantly, from the Shaykh's standpoint, the Jarrāhī lands were to be sold to him for the price the khāns paid.

By November, the new Ilkhān was attempting to raise Shaykh Ghazban, chief of the powerful border tribe of the Banū Lām, against Khaz^{Cal}. In December, the chief khāns at Tehran denounced the sale of the Jarrāhī lands (not having received the price they wanted) and threatened to drive the Shaykh into the sea. Khaz^{Cal} complained that Townley's guarantee of the khāns' good faith, by causing him to cease his efforts to arm and prepare his forces, had seriously compromised his power to resist. Cox recommended to the Government of India that the Shaykh be allowed to import 2,000 rifles from Masqat. And Townley shamefacedly admitted that he had just been administered a lesson in the trustworthiness of Bakhtiyārī khāns.

Townley's new insight into the character of the khāns did not, however, bring him over to the Shaykh's point of view. In January 1913, Russian troops were still in north Persia; Russian influence in Tehran was growing steadily; unrest was growing in the capital and the provinces; and the Bakhtiyārīs with their retinue of tribesmen in the capital still provided an element of stability there. Hopefully, they would provide a barrier to check the further growth of Russian influence. If Townley alienated the

khāns, he feared they would turn to Russia. And Russia could drive a wedge deep into Britain's position in the south. In short, Townley felt he needed Bakhtiyārī good will.

At the same time, possibly through the lesson he had learned, he lost whatever confidence he may have had in his power and ability to influence Bakhtiyārī affairs. For this reason, he refused to accept Cox's suggestion that the Legation arbitrarily fix a fair price for the Jarrāhī lands and insist that the khāns take it. He querulously added that, "The khans are not under my thumb as the Shaikh is under yours."¹³

Cox at Bushihr and Haworth at Muḥammarah continued to press the point that failure to back the Shaykh would jeopardize Britain's position in Arabistān. Already Khazal, who had only within the last year granted her an option for Khūr Mūsā, land for a Consulate, and right-of-way for railroads, was beginning to lose confidence. Haworth wrote:

It has been stated by your Excellency that we have the Shaikh under our thumb. This condition of affairs has not come to pass without careful nurturing, and is build on confidence in us, which, if we fail in our word, or in the spirit of it, will be greatly shaken.

I told him when he was nervous regarding the Bakhtiari that he might rest assured as we never broke our word. If he (and as a result also the Shaikh of Kuwait) comes to think that we are only fair weather friends, I would submit that

¹³Townley to Cox, Tel. No. 23, Tehran, January 16, 1913, F.O. 371/1722; F.O. 371/1445; F.O. 371/1723; F.O. 371/1443; F.O. 371/1707.

the consequences for our policy in the Persian Gulf will be very grave.¹⁴

Townley, however, remained unmoved. He was afraid to pressure the khāns--as a matter of fact, he allowed himself to be convinced that the Bakhtiyārī had every right to squeeze the Shaykh and get every toman they could from him. After all, Khaz^{Cal} had hoped to get the land for a mere 10,000 tomans, and the khāns had simply outfoxed him. Townley estimated that the khāns might come down from 200,000 tomans to 30,000, although he felt that the latter figure was still much less than the land was worth. This view had some validity, but Townley was not prepared to press it either. He threw the matter into the hands of Cox, Grey, and Haworth to settle with the khāns in the south.

Cox had every confidence that he could reach a settlement with Sardār-i-Jang but was not hopeful that the "Big Khans" in Tehran would accept it.

Townley behaved much as expected, but Grey was able to bring Sardār-i-Jang to agreement, and the khāns in Tehran accepted the settlement--although not without grumbling and causing poor Sir Walter Townley further disquiet and providing him with the opportunity for writing another justificatory dispatch to London.

Although Haworth and his chief at Bushihr were not particularly hopeful that the agreement would last, it, in

¹⁴Major Haworth, Consul at Muḥammaraḥ, to Townley, Tel. No. 6, Muḥammaraḥ, February 3, 1913; F.O. 371/1707.

fact, worked for a number of years. The Bakhtiyārīs' influence in Tehran had declined from the high point of 1912. Their rapacity as cabinet ministers and provincial governors had made them thoroughly detested by the Persian population, who saw them as aliens and usurpers and who overlooked the fact that many native Persian officials were as venal and as violent. Their relative power in south Persia had declined as the result of a Swedish-officered gendarmerie which was introduced into the area late in 1912. Thus, the khāns were in greater need of British friendship than before and were more willing to abide by a settlement with the Shaykh of Muḥammarah.

However, this change in the relationship among the Bakhtiyārī, the British, and the Shaykh was not immediately recognized by Cox and Haworth in the months between July 1913 and the outbreak of World War I. Worried that lukewarm British support for the Shaykh against the Bakhtiyārīs for two successive years had shaken Arab confidence in British support and that the need for Arab mobilizations for these same years had made the Shaykh's tribesmen question the necessity of that support, Haworth and Cox urged that Britain's obligations to protect Khaz^cal's position be more binding. And Khaz^cal still worried by the Bakhtiyārīs and feeling burdened by the cost of large-scale mobilization, had wished to extend the assurances also. Thus, the perennial bad relations between the Shaykh and the khāns was one of the elements of the pre-war policy debate concerning

the tightening of British control over south Persia.¹⁵

KHAZĀL AND THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT, 1908-1914

Between 1908 and 1914, Britain's presence in ḤArabistān increased enormously. At the beginning of 1908, the Concessions Syndicate, Ltd., had been a hard-luck group of oil wildcatters in which His Majesty's Government had taken a friendly interest. By August 1914, the Anglo-Persian Oil Company was a major industrial concern in which His Majesty's Government had taken a controlling interest. In 1908, Britain had been fearful that foreign development of the vast irrigation potential of the Kārūn valley would offer Germany an opportunity to gain a commercial and eventually a political foothold in the Persian Gulf region. By 1914, through arrangements with the Shaykh of Muḥammarah, all irrigation projects requiring the investment of foreign capital were secured for British enterprise.

In 1908, British companies had been blocked from building railways in ḤArabistān by Russian maneuvering and by lack of Foreign Office support. By 1914, an all-British group--the Persian Railways Syndicate--with the aid of the Foreign Office had obtained an option for a railway from Muḥammarah to Khurramabād. In 1908, the British had feared that the German Baghdad railway would find an outlet to the

¹⁵F.O. 371/1707; F.O. 371/1722; F.O. 371/1708; Garthwaite, Bakhtiyari Khans, 259-60; F.O. 371/2076.