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Your reference

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Date 22 December 1978

R S Gorham Esq

Middle East Department

Foreign & Commonwealth Office

Dear Robin,

IRAN: RELEASE OF CONFIDENTIAL RECORDS

1. I have now confirmed, as I said in my interim reply to your letter of 16 November, that the State Department papers for 1952 to 1954 are still with Henry Precht, the Country Director for Iran. His clearance (and that of other interested agencies) is required before the State Department Historian can release the documents. Precht has confirmed to me that he intends to continue to sit on the papers.
2. I have now also spoken to the State Department Associate Historian and to the UK Desk Officer. The position is that the Historian has just begun, with his approach to Precht and other agencies, the clearance process. This is expected to take until the end of 1979; the Historian will then require another year to process the documents for publication. Even were the Historian to receive immediate clearance from interested agencies it would therefore be early 1980 before the documents reached the public domain. Although there is a 20-year review, current regulations allow interested agencies to delay publication for up to 30 years; if they wish to secure a delay beyond that the case must go to the Secretary of State who can order the Historian to delay publication further (but the Department of State or other agencies would have to have a very strong case for delaying beyond 30 years). It is therefore within the power of Precht or his colleagues in other agencies to delay publication until at least 1982.
3. The Historian's standard practice is to send copies of any British documents he intends releasing to the US Embassy in London with a request that we agree to their publication. We have a veto. (The clearance process on the 1952-54 Iran papers has not yet got this far.) But there is no requirement on the Historian to consult us about any other documents. The Associate Historian made it very clear that he had in the past resisted requests from other governments for joint consultation and would resist very strongly any such request from us. He acknowledged,

Note for file.

/however,

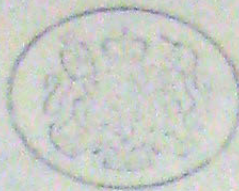
As the revolution is upon us,

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the problem is no longer Anglo-American:

the first revolution will be from the Iranian side.

K-L 18/1



however, that were we to approach the State Department with a particular request that documents not be released, we might be successful. The UK Desk officer indicated that he would be prepared to support an approach of this kind. But, as the Associate Historian pointed out, our interest here coincides with those of the Iranian desk who are consequently likely to remain our best advocate.

4. We would certainly have no objection to making a more formal request for the kind of consultation proposed in para 3 of your letter but my conclusion from this preliminary round is that we would not have much success.

5. Footnote: the Historians have read the 1952-54 papers and find them a "marvellous compilation".

Yours ever,

R J S Muir

Copies: Miss E C Blayney, Library & Records, FCO
Mr Streams, Security Dept, FCO
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