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Despatch no. 90. ✓
(1011/1349/56)

BRITISH RESIDENCY,
BAHRAIN.

CONFIDENTIAL.

1016/135

July 31, 1956.

Office. I now submit to you the results of this investigation, for Sir, as instructed to Mr. W. F. Adams, Third Secretary at the

I have the honour to enclose the translation of a speech delivered by Abdulrahman Al Bakir, the Secretary of the National Union Committee of Bahrain, during his recent sojourn in Cairo. The speech has been published both as a booklet in Cairo, and as a supplement to the Bahrain newspaper, Al Mizan. There is hardly a sentence in it which is not either inaccurate or misleading or both.

2. I have been particularly concerned by the story of the growth of the Nationalist movement in Bahrain described in those paragraphs headed "Education", "Journalism", "The British in Bahrain", "Awakening of the Giant" and "The Story of the 'shaking off' by the People", because they give a totally false impression of the recent history of these islands, and in view of the inability of most Bahrainis to exercise critical discrimination even in a matter which should be so familiar to them, it might easily form the basis of a dangerous myth. On the other hand, it must be admitted that the speech does emphasise a fact which has some times been disregarded, that political discontent in Bahrain is not a recent phenomenon but has had a long and complex development. At any rate, Al Bakir's account has prompted me to have research conducted into the material contained in

The Right Honourable Selwyn Lloyd, C.B.E., M.P.,
etc., etc., etc.

Foreign Office,

LONDON, S.W.1.

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This occurred on page 2, when one of the Ruler's political archives bequeathed to this Residency and to the Political Agency, Bahrain, by the Government of India, and as these records are not directly available to the Foreign Office, I now submit the results of this investigation, for which I am indebted to Mr. W.J. Adams, Third Secretary at the Residency.

3. I think, however, that I should preface this review with a few remarks about Abdulrahman Al Bakir himself.

4. Al Bakir told my First Secretary (Information) that his family were originally Bagdadi Jews who came down the Gulf and were converted to Islam. Nearly all the Al Bakir are now settled in Qatar and Abdulrahman was born of Qatari parents in Bahrain where he received his education. In 1948, the Ruler of Bahrain, against Mr. Belgrave's advice, granted him a Bahraini passport on the grounds of birth. His main domicile, however, until 1952 seems to have been Qatar, though there is no doubt that he has spent much of his life travelling from place to place in the Gulf, and has probably visited Kenya and Zanzibar, where he professed to have been impressed by the colonial policy of Her Majesty's Government as opposed to their policy in the Persian Gulf Sheikdoms. He may also have visited Cairo for the first time during the war. He claims to have worked for the British on a contracting job connected with the Sharjah airfield during this period. I gather that he has always been interested in political movements in the Gulf and that he made an anti-British speech in Kuwait (and) 1951, or 1952. His recent involvement in Bahraini affairs dates from 1952 when he fled from Qatar. The story of that incident was related in the Qatar Monthly Diary for June 1952 as follows:-

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"This occurred on June 7 when one of the Ruler's sons, Khalifa bin Ali, an unpleasant youth both physically diseased and mentally unstable, assaulted the Doha ice merchant, Abdurrehman Bakir, for refusing to sell him more than the Ramadhan ration, and dragged him off to the Palace. The Ruler refused to support his son, thrashed him publicly, and banished him to Saudi Arabia, where he is now undertaking a penitential pilgrimage. Abdurrehman Bakir, who is probably the most disreputable merchant in Doha, fled to Bahrain and the Ruler has forbidden him to return, thus ridding the country of two of its most troublesome characters at one stroke."

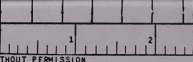
5. Al Bakir's career after this is well known since it is intimately bound up with the history of the present crisis, so I will confine myself to the salient points. After his ignominious departure from Qatar, he became an influential participant in the political club life of Bahrain, and as he implies, played a part in the attempt to unite Sunni and Shi'a discontent after the communal riots of September 1953, an attempt which provided the initial inspiration for the foundation of the High Executive Committee movement itself. Later, Al Bakir became the Secretary and principal spokesman of the Committee. In March 1954, however, the Ruler, who had, not surprisingly, come to regard Al Bakir as one of the most sinister influences in the country, put pressure on him and obliged him to leave Bahrain for a while. In October of that year he returned, but was soon in fresh trouble, because the periodical 'Saut Al Bahrain', of which he was the editor, had published an anti-Saudi article which offended the Ruler. As a result of this his passport was confiscated by the Government, and henceforth Al Bakir was able to pose as an

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outraged patriot, deprived of his national rights. Indeed, this event was made the focus for the unification of Sunni and Sh'ia agitators behind the Committee. Al Bakir continued to take a leading part in the movement, and was one of the principal organisers of the strike which the Committee organised in December 1954. He was personally responsible, as he claims, for the organisation of the taxi drivers' grievances, and the foundation of the popular insurance scheme known as the "Sanduq". He played a commanding rôle in all the agitation of 1955, but after the second strike of March 1956 was again asked unofficially at the behest of the Ruler to quit the country for a period, which he did with apparent willingness, ostensibly because he wished to take medical treatment in Beirut having quietly collected funds for the purpose both from the Bahrain Government and from the Ruler of Qatar.

6. A few days after his arrival in that city, however, he moved on to Cairo where he has remained until just recently. His public utterances in Egypt have been consistently anti-British and have closely followed the Egyptian pan Arab line. On the other hand, in conversation with British officials both in Bahrain and in Cairo, he has always professed to value the British connexion as a vital safeguard for the Bahraini people both internally against the inertia of the ruling family, and externally against the ambitions of Saudi Arabia and Iran. There is in fact good reason to believe that despite Al Bakir's public servility to Egypt, he has in the past been by conviction a moderate, and that he has generally exercised a restraining influence on the National Union Committee. There will soon be an opportunity of seeing whether this assessment is still true, for last week he left Cairo for Beirut and Damascus and is expected to return to Bahrain early next month.



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7. I regret that I have not been able to discover much about the early history of education in Bahrain, and cannot, therefore, say much about Al Bakir's statements on that subject. The files are not very helpful and in fact the Political Agent in Bahrain wrote to the Political Resident in 1938: "I am unable to trace much correspondence in the past with regard to education here".
8. One or two points have emerged, however. The Shaikh Hafidh (Hafiz) Wahba, whom Al Bakir describes as having been compelled by the British to leave Bahrain, is identical with 'Mulla Hafiz', an Egyptian schoolmaster and agitator expelled by Shaikh Hamad for his complicity in the Sunni intrigues of 1923. This man later entered the service of Ibn Saud, and is now, of course, the Saudi Ambassador in London. Unfortunately the addresses are discontinued and
9. In 1927 the Government did, as Al Bakir relates, take over education under the nominal direction of Shaikh Abdulla bin Isa. I do not think, however, that the previous condition of education can have been so desirable as Al Bakir would have us believe, for I have found several references to "the disgraceful old days of the Board of Education" which suggest that the state of affairs prevailing before 1927 were a source of dishonest profit to some persons.
10. There is, however, no doubt that the Syrian ("Lebanese") Director of Education who held sway in the 1930's was a most unpopular figure since one of the demands of the agitators in 1938 was for his removal.
11. Al Bakir's remarks about the treaties concluded between the Government of India and the Al Khalifa are slightly more accurate than most of his observations. Nevertheless there

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is, so far as I can see, no mention of the confiscation of forts, guns and boats in the 1820 treaty. Moreover, the terms of the 1861 treaty are quite different from those mentioned by Al Bakir, though one of his clauses (2) covers more or less the same ground as Article 4 of the treaty which deals with 'most favoured nation' privileges, and the right of British subjects to be tried by the Political Resident. The 1880 treaty does contain articles which are substantially the same as the first two clauses of Al Bakir's version, though what he quotes as the third clause of that treaty (about the Ruler not disposing of any part of his territory except to the British Government) is taken from the 1892 revision.

12. Unfortunately the archives are discontinuous and disappointingly uneven, and this has inevitably influenced the balance of my narrative to some extent. I think it can, however, be safely said that the internal political history of Bahrain from 1921 to the present day falls into six quite clearly defined stages:-

- I The crisis of 1921-1923, culminating in the deposition of Shaikh Isa.
- II The foundation of "the Bahrain Government" (1923-1930).
- III A period of comparative tranquillity marked by the discovery of oil (1930-1935).
- IV A period of renewed agitation with two separate outbreaks in 1935 and 1938.
- V Fifteen years of political inactivity but mounting dissatisfaction (1938-1953).
- VI The present crisis (1953-1956).

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13. At the outset I must point out one particularly gross error in Al Bakir's speech. Whenever he mentions the date 1912, which occurs in the Arabic versions of both the Cairo and Bahrain editions, he means, or should mean, either the period (1921-3) or 1923 itself. Nothing relevant occurred in 1912 and the events he links with that date took place a decade later.

14. The principle of British interference in cases of chronic misgovernment in Bahrain was stated as early as 1869 when as a result of the internal unrest resulting from the murder of the Ruler, Shaikh Ali, the Government of India considered themselves bound "to prevent grave outrage or oppression by the Ruler, or at any rate not to remain unconcerned spectators of such acts of violence, but rather to use their influence to repress them".

15. The embarrassments that were liable to ensue from our alliance with the inefficient and tyrannical Al Khalifa were recognised by the Political Resident, Major Cox, when he wrote in March 1905: "I do not see how we can expect anything but periodical trouble from a continuation of our laudable attempt to carry on the government of the Islands through the rule of a chief (Shaikh Isa bin Ali) who has shown himself to possess few, if any, of the qualifications necessary for the maintenance of order, the security of persons and of trade".

16. It appears, however, that in fact most of our interventions in Bahrain's affairs during the first two decades of this century were for purposes of protecting non-Bahraini traders, British, German, Persian, etc., and not in order the shield the Ruler's subjects from the violence of his rule.

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17. Violence and discontent appear to have been a constant feature of the modern history of Bahrain. As long ago as the 7th of May, 1839, the Political Resident, Captain Hennell, wrote in a despatch to the Government of Bombay: "... the aboriginal or Sh'ia inhabitants [of Bahrain] (generally known as the Baharna) who are an unwarlike race but who, smarting under the oppressive conduct of their Utubi (Al Khalifa) masters would gladly see the downfall of that tribe". It is difficult to say why matters came to a head in 1921, though certainly conditions had degenerated fast in the immediately preceding period.

18. Despite the long-established nature of this discontent, however, I am convinced that there was a definite crisis in the year 1921, and that the "Bahrain situation" was not, as some people have later implied, 'discovered' by the resolute Major Daly (later Sir Clive Daly) who arrived in the islands as Political Agent in that year.

19. Major Daly quickly summed up the situation in a series of urgent communications to Bushire. According to his analysis the Ruler, Shaikh Isa, was by no means the most sinister member of the Al Khalifa. "Shaikh Isa's wife", he reported, "holds a regular court and imprisons and punishes at her will with a total disregard of the most elementary laws of even Arab justice. The Salifeh diving court has degenerated into a single venal Judge owing to Shaikh Isa having become deeply indebted to Rashid bin Mohama a disturbing element is the rapid increase of the family of Al Khalifa. There is no outlet for the many younger members and no attempt is made to educate them for any occupation."

20. Major Daly also reported that terrible oppression was practised on the Baharna by the Al Khalifa, and especially by the able and immoral Shaikh Abdulla bin Isa who had his

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father's and mother's complete confidence and consequently ruled Bahrain.

21. In his despatch of the 8th of January, 1923, to the Political Resident, Major Daly listed the following factors as the main reasons for the oppression and discontent:

"A. The great increase of wealth of the ruling family owing to the improved customs service and to seizure of property from the Baharna. [To these I would add the exploitation of pearl divers.]

B. The increase of power to oppress as a result of 'A'. [This mainly took the form of forced labour (the Sakhra) and other "feudal" impositions.]

C. "The events of late years in Iraq, India and Egypt which have been closely followed and a greatly increased tendency of the inhabitants to travel and consequent enlightenment of their leaders."

D. "The repressive policy of the Rulers, who are more ignorant and less travelled than the majority of their subjects and have taken no steps to educate the cadets of their family."

E. "The influence of newspapers, which since the war are imported in considerable numbers from Egypt, India, Iraq and Persia, and which have given rise to ideas of democracy completely opposed to the antiquated and autocratic rule of the Shaikhs."

F. The influx of foreigners during the pearling season."

22. I would also mention the fact that the Sunni were virtually immune from taxation which was borne entirely by the

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Baharna. As we shall see, however, many of the sources of discontent were inherent in the social structure of Bahrain.

23. Shaikh Isa had enough wit to realise that the situation had interred a stage of unusual difficulty and in 1921 he voluntarily and spontaneously gave his son, the mild and pliable Hamad, full executive powers and retired into the background, whence he could intrigue until conditions were favourable for his re-emergence. In fact, his indirect tyranny continued, while his wife and Shaikh Abdulla made Hamad's regency a mockery.

24. In December 1921 the Baharna villagers presented the first of their petitions to Major Daly, and in March 1922 the Political Resident, Lieutenant-Colonel Trevor, visited Bahrain to deliver a rebuke and warning to Shaikh Isa.

25. At about that time another Baharna petition was presented to the Political Agent calling for:-

- (1) The abolition of sakhra (forced labour);
- (2) The provision of an adequate and sanitary prison;
- (3) The forbidding of members of the ruling family other than the Heir Apparent to try cases or inflict punishments;
- (4) The issue of written summonses for appearances in Court, in lieu of the practice of suddenly arresting the required defendants and witnesses.

26. Despite Lieutenant-Colonel Trevor's warning, the Al Khalifa continued in their evil ways. The young Shaikh Salman bin Hamad (the present Ruler) is noted as being particularly oppressive in the Courts. Shaikh Abdulla bin Isa soon broke his promise to co-operate with his brother

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Hamad, and amongst other things stirred up intrigue against his brother in the Persian and Egyptian press. Moreover, some of the Sunni tribes, notably the Dawasir, the unruly allies of the Al Khalifa, delivered a series of brutal attacks on Sh'ia villages, such as Barbar and Aali. Foreign Arab agents were not slow to take advantage of the anarchy, and in May the Sunni-Sh'ia struggle in Bahrain gained a temporarily international significance, when Nejd merchants, led by Abdulla Al Qusaibi were involved in brawls with Persian merchants under the command of Yussef Kanoo. This is no doubt the incident referred to by Al Bakir when, after describing the arrest of certain agitators he states: "This action caused the public to show indignation and they emphatically demanded that they should have a say in the administration of the affairs of their country. The British realised that it would not be to their advantage to agree to this demand. They therefore arranged that foreigners should create disturbances, whereupon the British interfered openly."

27. The Political Agent, Political Resident and the Government of India were not prepared to tolerate this chaos for long. On the 17th of May, 1923, the Political Resident again visited Bahrain and obliged Shaikh Isa to abdicate in favour of Hamad. Soon afterwards, Major Daly received a letter of gratitude from the Baharna community signed with 328 signatures, and a letter of complaint and condemnation from certain Sunnis led by Abdul Wahab Zayani, described by Al Bakir as "the leaders of the Nationalist Movement at that time", and later the same group delivered a remarkable petition for a National Parliament.

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28. This astonishing document, of which Al Bakir gives a garbled version, ran as follows:-

"We, the undersigned leaders of tribes, Ulama' and Traders state:

"In view of the state of affairs in our country and our honour and rights we are resolved that the Great Government is just and will not agree to the besmirching of the honour of Muslims and will not approve of what Major Daly is doing to cause ill feeling between us and the High Government and to break the good relations between us, and that she will uphold right if demanded of her, and therefore we publish our requests which are as follows, and request enquiry into our claims. We have agreed to strive for the following objects which are our only chance of living in our Mother Country and retaining honour:

- (1) Our Shaikh Isa to remain as the ruler as regards all internal affairs as in the past without any interference from the Consul and in accordance with the good relations between us and the British Government. If he should of his own free will accept Hamad as his Agent we will accept him.
- (2) All Court cases to be sent to the Shara or Urfa (Commercial) Courts, which is in accordance with the Shara.
- (3) A National Parliament to be started to look after the interests of the people as in other countries [and according to some versions, departmental sub-councils to be established also].
- (4) A council of four acceptable persons skilled in diving affairs to decide all diving cases.
[Presumably these were to be pearl merchants who

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could retain an oppressive control over the divers.]

(5) The Consul to be forbidden to break the good relations existing between Great Britain and the Bahrain Government or to interfere in internal matters."

29. To understand the situation in which such a collection of demands was possible it is necessary to consider the basic social structure of the country. The Al Khalifa rule was founded on the privileged position of the Sunni, and both required the continuance of Baharna servility. On the 9th of June, 1924, the Political Resident, Lieutenant-Colonel Prideaux, wrote to the Secretary to the Government of India as follows:-

"The Government of India will remember that in 1869 the father of Shaikh Isa bin Ali was killed by a cousin who usurped the Chiefship of Bahrain. The British Government intervened, the enemies of the deceased Shaikh Ali bin Isa were imprisoned, and Shaikh Isa was installed as chief on the nomination of the Arab (i.e. Sunni) tribes of Bahrain. Shaikh Isa has always entertained an exaggerated idea of the benefits conferred on him on this occasion by the tribes, who in consequence have been accustomed to assert their internal autocracy and to deny the Chiefs right to pass orders upon them. This has been the chief cause of the Shaikh's unsatisfactory rule. The mass of the people of Bahrain, who are Arab-speaking Shiaks, were the sufferers and their condition resembled that of helots, who could call no lands nor the produce of any lands their own

30. Later in the same despatch he says:

"The persons most interested in suppressing the new régime [Shaikh Hamad's rule] are the tribal /Shaikns

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Shaikhs, the more dishonest and tyrannical pearling Makhodas [captains and some times owners of pearling launches, but often used loosely to mean pearl merchant class, on whom the Al Khalifa were dependent for funds to a considerable extent] and the cadet members of the Al Khalifa family, who receive allowances from the State."

31. The unholy alliance between the Al Khalifa, the Sunni tribes and the Sunni pearl merchants was thus firmly based.
32. Nevertheless, the methods of Abdul Wahab Zayani, the author of the Sunni petition, were more sophisticated than most of his kind. He had always been attracted by modern political ideas, and had thereby incurred the displeasure of Shaikh Isa.
33. "Abdul Wahab's parliament", wrote Lieutenant-Colonel Trevor to the Government of India on the 22nd of March, 1924, "consisted (in his imagination) of a few men, certainly not more than a dozen, all Sunnis, presided over and presumably nominated by himself. Major Daly tells me that Abdul Wahab returned from Bombay (where he had been compelled to reside owing to the unpopularity of his views with the Al Khalifa family) about the time he himself was appointed Political Agent. At first Major Daly, thinking that Abdul Wahab was agitating for representative government, interested himself a good deal in the matter having long interviews with Abdul Wahab, etc., but as soon as he found out the true nature of Abdul Wahab's so-called parliament, he saw it would be useless, as even if it materialised and got power, it would only transfer power from the hands of the Shaikh to those of an oligarchy." Lieutenant-Colonel Trevor went on to say: "Abdul Wahab's congress is described as including the Chiefs of the Tribes, Nobles, Ulama and Merchants and the twelve /delegates

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delegates included "the  the Taifa". As a matter of fact there are no real tribes worthy of the name in Bahrain - the Dawasir were the nearest approach to a real tribe, but they have gone (see below). Abdul Wahab alternately describes himself as the "Chief of a Taifa" or one of the "Ulema". He is neither (his only claim to being one of the "Ulema" consists in the white turban which he habitually wears) being merely one of the Zayani family which consists of a small number of well-to-do pearling nakhudas and traders"

34. After Major Daly's unsympathetic reaction to his schemes and after it became obvious that the Sunni oligarchy could not expect the backing of the Government of India, Zayani transferred his support to Shaikh Isa whom he now represented as a maligned Arab martyr chieftan who had suffered in the cause of patriotism. For his pains he and his friends Abdul Latif and Ahmed bin Layeh were exiled to India, and the Egyptian headmaster, Mulla Hafiz, was deported at the same time. In India Zayani composed a long memorial on behalf of Shaikh Isa which they addressed to the Viceroy, Lord Reading. Incidentally, the first reference that I can find to Sa'ad Al Shemlan, the Sunni agitator of the 1938 disturbances and father of Abdul Aziz Shemlan, the acting Secretary of the National Union Committee, is his signature on a letter of this period written in support of Zayani.


35. The tone and quality of Zayani's memorial can be gauged from the paragraph which begins: "Your Excellency, Bahrain has a minority of the Sh'ia community. The clerk of the Consulate started dictating their statements expressing gratitude and support for Mr. Daly and they wrote against their will, and under pressure, and some of them wrote for self-interest, etc."

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36. It is significant  that the document also contains complaints to the effect that Major Daly had transferred the revenue of the Government to a British bank [this no doubt caused irritation to nakhuda money lenders,] and had brought in foreigners to supplant the native police. The new levies were recruited in 1924 and replaced the obsolete Shaikhly Guard and night watchman system. The new corps apparently contained some Persians and Baharnas, but the Sunni Arabs, as one might expect from a pampered class, considered such service beneath them.

37. The memorandum also implied that Major Daly had conceived a serious dislike of the Arab people during his earlier career in Mesopotamia. There is, of course, no evidence for this.

38. Even the decisive action of May, 1923, did not completely quell the more extreme of the Al Khalifa and the tribesmen. Fortunately, the Dawasir, disgusted by the new state of affairs, made one of their periodic abandonments of their stronghold of Budaia and emigrated to the mainland, and the Political Resident was careful to see that they left no remnant behind to stir up trouble. In the early part of 1924, however, Shaikh Khalid al Khalifa, the Ruler's cousin, was responsible for two murderous onslaughts on the Baharna settlements on Sitra, and Shaikh Hamad was obliged to banish some of this section of his family from the country. The perpetual intrigues of the dispossessed Shaikh Isa and the masterful Abdulla were not so easily extinguished, and it became clear that if Shaikh Hamad's régime was to survive, he would require considerable assistance from outside. This was indeed one of the factors in the establishment of "The Bahrain Government" in the period 1925-1930.

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39. Before I move on to consider that period, I should like to point out some of the features of the 1921-1923 crisis which have had a permanent significance. In the first place, the intervention of 'the Great Government' had brought home to the Ruler and to all classes of his subjects that the British representatives of the Government of India were able and, if sufficiently moved, willing to interfere decisively in the internal affairs of Bahrain. Now, although that intervention had the salutary effect of preventing the Ruler and his family from indulging in the more flagrant forms of oppression, they lost thereby to some extent their will to rule, and began to rely on the British to pull them out of any internal difficulty. This was accentuated by the personalities of both Shaikh Hamad and his son, the present Ruler, Shaikh Salman, who though harmless and well-meaning enough, cannot be described as dynamic personalities and would not have survived long outside a semi-protected state. The same observation can be applied to their disgruntled people, who have ever since looked to us and not to the Bahrain Government for the practical realisation of their political demands, and it is interesting to note that the Baharna leaders petitioned the Political Agent at the beginning of the 1935, the 1938 and the 1954 troubles, just as they had in 1921. On the subsequent occasions, however, the Political Agent made no promises but referred them to their Ruler. Another significant feature of the crisis had been the satisfaction of the fundamental demand of the wretched Sh'ia peasantry, that is the liberation of themselves and their lands from arbitrary tyranny. Thenceforth the village Baharna tended to lose interest in politics, and for the next twenty years at any rate, left such matters to the town Baharna politicians to a considerable extent. The last point which

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is noteworthy is that in 1932 crisis, though the basic grievances had been Baharna grievances, it was the Sunni 'reactionary oligarchy' who possessed the vocabulary and technique of political protest. Even to-day, under the impact of Egyptian precept and example, the Sunni politicians of Bahrain tend to possess more revolutionary 'know how' than the Baharna.

40. I must also draw attention to the wider motives for the Government of India's decisive interference in Shaikh Isa's government. It appears from the files that Lieutenant-Colonel Trevor and Major Daly were both chiefly moved by what seemed to them the absolute necessity of putting an end to an insupportable tyranny and ameliorating the terrible suffering of the Baharna. The Government of Simla, however, in its endorsement of their policy, undoubtedly took into consideration the Persian claim to Bahrain and the embarrassment which we might suffer if the world became acquainted with the disgraceful conditions prevailing in Bahrain as a result of the case being brought by Persia before the League of Nations. The growing power on the mainland of Arabia of the Sultan of Nejd (as Ibn Saud was then styled) may well have been another factor which entered into the Government of India's thinking at this time.

41. In putting forward this analysis, it should in all fairness be recorded that during part of 1923 Lieutenant-Colonel Trevor was absent from Bushire and was temporarily relieved by Lieutenant-Colonel Knox. At the beginning of his tenure of office, Lieutenant-Colonel Knox tried, unsuccessfully, to present a totally different interpretation of the Bahrain situation to the Government of India. The only possible explanation is that he had come heavily under the influence of the propaganda of the Sunni party.

42. "Shaikh

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42. "Shaikh Isa's case" is stated in May, 1923, "has not been fully presented and sufficient consideration has not been paid to the Sunni point of view". Much of the Baharna agitation was in his view bogus or at least exaggerated. "I do not agree", he says, "that misrule has reached such a pitch - matters are no worse than the state of affairs we have tolerated for twenty years". He rather gives away his argument, however, when he remarks in connexion with taxation: "You will not carry responsible Sunni opinion with you unless you allow for the privileged position of the Sunnis". Lieutenant-Colonel Knox's advice was to delay drastic reforms until after the death of Shaikh Isa.

43. Whatever may be thought of his assessment of the situation, and I do not think that it can possibly have been as valid as that of Lieutenant-Colonel Trevor and Major Daly, it was probably necessary to come to some sort of compromise with the Al Khalifa, if they were to continue as the ruling class, and there was unfortunately no obvious substitute for what Lieutenant-Colonel Barrett called that "brood of uneducated savages with a veneer of town manners".

44. This is the background against which Lieutenant-Colonel Haworth wrote on the 2nd of February, 1927, to the Foreign Secretary to the Government of India: "Daly's unquenchable energy did a good deal of harm. Not only did people dislike the total suppression of Shaikh Hamad (who was admittedly somewhat cowed by the events of the crisis) but his political limitations had a bad effect upon the Arabs of the country around and made them afraid of us." Again, the Political Resident wrote to the Acting Political Agent, Captain Alban: "The Shaikh has been too much suppressed".

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45. It should be remembered that the Indian Government had an increasing interest in a stable and settled regime in Bahrain. Apart from the potential menace presented by Reza Shah on one hand and Ibn Saud on the other, our trade with the island was increasing and 1925 was the date of the first oil concession. Moreover the value of Bahrain as a possible air and naval base had been considered. And besides political factors, Bahrain had now to be viewed as a place where numbers of British people would be obliged to live.

46. These considerations and the continuing chaos of the Shaikhly rule led to a policy of penetrating the Ruler's administration with British Officials and to the foundation of the "Bahrain Government" as we now know it. In 1923 a new British Director of Customs was introduced. In 1924 the Levies were founded, and in 1926 these were replaced by a regular police force. In 1926 also Mr. Charles Belgrave was appointed Financial Adviser.

47. The following extract from Captain Prior's despatch of June 29, 1929, to the Political Resident describes the Bahrain Government in the first flush of its early achievements. It is remarkable how much was accomplished in those early years and how little development, comparatively speaking, there has been since that time. This is easily the most optimistic despatch on the Bahrain Political files:-
 "I will now consider what reforms were contemplated. It appears from the letter forwarded with Residency letter to the Government No. 307/5 of 15/6/23 that the principal reforms contemplated were reform of finances, including the civil list, Customs, Government offices and a survey. As a result of the second Sitrah outrage a levy corps was formed, to be disbanded later and Punjabi Mussalmans being substituted for the Muscatli Baluchis. Pearling reforms were

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were also contemplated though I cannot trace any proposals made to the Government concerning this. Proposals were made for a Judicial assistant to the Political Agent, to be paid for by the State, but this idea was apparently dropped, and finally Mr. Belgrave was engaged as Financial Adviser. Mr. de Grenier had already been engaged to reorganise the Customs after Mr. Fowyer."

48. "The reforms which were actually effected are:-

- a) A Financial Adviser controlling all expenditure and doing his best to limit a too buoyant Civil List.
- b) A reorganised Customs department, with which is combined Boat Registration, Collection of Pearling Licenses, Passport and Port Officer's duties.
- c) A reformed Court consisting of the Adviser and Shaikh's heir apparent and a lower court composed of the Assistant Adviser and another Al Khalifa.
- d) Diving reforms. A properly constituted Court, supervision of Nakhodas books and an account book for each diver.
- e) Land Department. A survey has almost been completed and when finished surveyors will be released.
- f) Police under a British Commandant and no longer under the municipality. They consist of roughly 100 Indian armed police (replaced by Arabs) and a local force of uniformed constables, mostly Persians, and a force of natus or night watchmen.
- g) Public works. Sea-road built; artesian wells sunk, electric light about to be installed.
- h) Education. One girls school and five boys schools.
- i) Waqfs. Shia Waqfs removed from Qadhis by popular desire and placed in charge of laymen. An attempt by the Bahrain Government to do this in 1926 created a riot but it has now come about by the action of the Shias themselves.
- j) Municipalities. The Manama municipality has made great strides and the newly created Muharraq municipality has made wonderful progress.

49. Even then however there were doubts about the reliability of the unique political structure of Bahrain especially with respect to the position of the Indian Government. Captain Prior's despatch continues "Our penetration of Bahrain has been inevitable and is now accepted and it is

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too late to go back now. In fact it is obvious to the student of history that Bahrain will become another Zanzibar. If a protectorate is declared the day will be hastened and as the administration is more closely regulated, so our real power will diminish just as the power of the District Magistrate in Mount Abu has decreased since it was leased from the Sirahi State and made British territory. We should therefore, while not risking the improvements we have faced so much obloquy to bring about, set our face against any further extension of British influence, which paradoxically will only weaken our position, and put off the evil day of what I may call "Zanzibarisation" as long as possible."

50. The artificiality of the Bahrain Government was in fact apparent from the outset, and many of the despatches of this period are full of constitutional theorising and comparisons with the Indian States. The problem of whether we should take over more or less administrative functions was continually discussed. There were also incidentally early doubts about the long term efficiency of the Bahrain Government and Mr. Belgrave's position was already considered to be over-centralised.

51. The Political Resident, Lieutenant Colonel Barrett, believed that the most desirable solution was that the Al Khalifa should be trained to take an expert part in administration and that an Administrative Council should be formed after old Shaikh Isa's death.

52. In a despatch to the Government of India of August 28, 1929 he wrote "Eight Bahrain boys, including three close relations of the Ruling Chief, have been sent to the American University at Beirut for Education. I trust that these boys will turn out well, and with Shaikh Mubarak - the most promising of the sons of Shaikh Hamad - will provide material for the
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higher appointments in the State, and ultimately will prove competent to take over the positions now held by the European Adviser and Customs Director".

53. Some of the observations made about the young shaikhs are interesting in the light of their subsequent development. Shaikh Khalifa bin Mohamed (Number 12 in Bahrain personalities list) the present Director of Public Security was considered promising. Shaikh Daij bin Hamad, (Number 7 in Bahrain personalities) the present Chief Judge and a notorious libertine, was a very spoilt child and his indulgent family could not bear to send him abroad to be educated. The present Ruler, Shaikh Salman bin Hamad, was described as possessing some solid qualities but was uneducated, and was "in some ways little removed from the Bedu."

54. From 1930-35 there are virtually no papers on the internal politics of Bahrain. This was evidently a period of comparative calm when all classes were more or less satisfied with the reforms of the immediately preceding period. The great preoccupation of the time was of course the search for oil and on June 1, 1932 it was struck for the first time in Bahrain, and for the first time on the western shore of the Persian Gulf.

55. On the 7th November, 1934 the Political Agent, Lieutenant Colonel Loch wrote to the Political Resident Lieutenant Colonel Fowle, "I am rather disturbed by a recrudescence of the old bitter feeling between Sunnis and Sh'iahs in Bahrain. When I returned to Bahrain two years ago, I was immensely struck by the good relations between the two denominations. Unfortunately a change has occurred in the last few months."

56. The first signs of revived discontent were the conversion of an obscure member of the Al Khalifa to the Shia sect which caused a great stir in the Ruling family, and a series of

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complaints by villages that the Ruler's camels were trampling on their fields and killing their trees. These complaints inspired the Political Agent to deliver the Ruler a lecture on the origins of the French Revolution. Another symptom of unrest was the number of rent cases in the Courts. Evidently the Al Khalifa were in the habit of disposing of rent leases to Baharna peasants by auction, with the result that the tenant acquired his lease at a price far beyond his means and was eventually hauled before the Courts for failure to pay. This situation was accentuated by a fall in the price of dates. There were also Baharna complaints that the law as being administered in the Sunnis' favour. Shaikh Salman bin Hamad was again marked out as a particular offender.

57. Nevertheless, the significant point is that these agricultural complaints, although heeded and to some extent remedied by the Government, were never presented in a unified form. The formal petition compiled by the Baharna leaders (mainly Manama merchants and schoolmasters) was concerned with separate and personal grievances. Yet these men henceforth claimed (and claim) to be the leaders of all the Baharna. Indeed some of their names are familiar enough: Mansur Al Oraiyyadh (no. 14 in Bahrain Personalities list), Muhsin Al Tajir, until recently one of the Sh'ia members of the National Union Committee (no. 16 in Bahrain Personalities list) and Abdulla Ali Al Alaiwat, who is still a member. Admittedly there were also the villagers Abdul Aziz bin Haji of Burri and Ali bin Abbas of Aali, but it is clear that the Manama Baharna were much more prominent, active and vocal.

58. Their first demands were:

- 1) That Court cases should be settled in accordance with established law.

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2) That the Baharna should have proportional representation on the Municipal and Urfi (Commercial) Councils.

3) That the Baharna should be restored their rights on the Board of Education (evidently a reference to the pre-1927 state of affairs).

The second and third of these requests were obviously of no interest to the village Sh'ia.

59. The Ruler's reply to these demands, though admittedly prompted by the Political Agent, was satisfactory enough. He agreed that all the existing 'Alans' (decrees) should be collated and published in a book, and that a committee should be formed to draft a Civil and a Criminal Code for non-Sharia cases. He also agreed to increased Sh'ia representation on the Municipal and Urfi councils and welcomed an increase of Sh'ia students in the schools. Indeed, he said he had put the latter reforms into motion before the agitation had occurred.

60. The four town Baharna, however, were dissatisfied by this reply. They described it as mere "hawa" (wind) and in a conversation with Mr. Belgrave "complained of being more 'multhoon' than they were in Shaikh Isa's time because in those days they lived in darkness but to-day they were beginning to see, owing to travel and reading, and the Baharna now compared their position to that of the people of other countries such as Iraq". "I suggested" wrote Mr. Belgrave, "a comparison with Ibn Saud's country, but such a comparison, they said, would be a comparison to sheer oppression."

61. Later these leaders put forward an amplification of their former demands requesting a majority on the Municipal Councils, /elections

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elections for the Majlis al Urri, more Sh'ia schoolmasters in the town schools [they were apparently quite uninterested in the Government proposal of more village schools], appointment of the young Sh'ia Abdul Karim, the present head of Manama police, as Chief of Police, and also of a third Sh'ia Qadhi. Besides this they called for the employment of more Baharna in the Bahrain Petroleum Company.

62. The Ruler granted the four an audience but soon lost his temper and dismissed them abruptly. He had concluded, probably correctly, that most of their further demands were not shared by the majority of their community.

63. After that the political agitation seems to have petered out and the rest of 1935 was taken up with a long and infinitely complicated wrangle about the Sh'ia Sharia Court, in fact lingering on until 1938. The Qadhis, particularly Shaikh Abdulla of Manama, were exceedingly corrupt and were intensely disliked by most of their 'flock'. One by one they were eased out of their positions (two in 1938) and replaced by better men, notable Shaikh Al Hilli from Iraq (who died here just recently). Nevertheless they were still able to exert a certain influence on some of the Baharna and Shaikh Abdulla at least remained a thorn in the flesh of the Bahrain Government for several years to come.

64. Meanwhile the Bahrain Government paid a certain amount of attention to the Courts, including the appointment of another Al Khalifa Judge, but none of this activity seems to have amounted to much. The idea of a British Legal Adviser was suggested and rejected. The legal drafting and compiling committee which the Ruler had promised was set up under Shaikh Salman, Yussef Kanoo and Mansur Al Craiyadh. It sat for a month or so and then the members became bored.

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The extent of its achievement is marked by Colonel Prior in his despatch of the 25th of May, 1941, which, incidentally, unmasks the true author of the 'Ruler's' reforms: "As regards the Bahrain Courts, the public have cause for complaint. About ten years ago, when the Courts were very much better, I urged Belgrave to introduce some codes and to collect and collate the very large number of 'Alans or notices of the Bahrain Government which had the force of law. I obtained copies of the Sudan Penal Code which was admirably suited to Bahrain, and had the inestimable advantage of a first class Arabic translation, and recommended its introduction. I also got him to place a small committee in charge of the compilation of the 'Alans. But these proposals are where I left them in 1932 The Shaikhly Judges are incompetent, lazy and arbitrary and compare unfavourably with those in Kuwait." We are still, of course, to-day awaiting the arrival of Dr. Sanhoury from Egypt.

65. There was a slight rustle of the old agricultural troubles before the agitation of 1938, but there is no doubt that the main seat of the trouble was in the towns.

66. The Political Agent, Mr. Weightman, analysed the causes of the outbreak as follows:-

- 1) The advent of the semi-intelligentsia and effendi class in the towns and in the Bahrain Petroleum Company, a class imbued with advanced political ideas and influenced by the Arab press which owing to the contemporary troubles in Palestine was violently anti-British. This class the Political Agent dismissed as "insignificant, unrepresentative and contemptible".

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- 2) The influence of the constitutional developments in Kuwait and Dubai. 1938 was the year when a form of consiliar institution was temporarily established in the governments of both those states. ? consulative
- 3) Economic depression owing to a general fall in world prices and a decrease in local purchasing power owing to a diminution of the number of Europeans and Americans in the Bahrain Petroleum Company. This is perhaps to be linked with the lull which separated the end of the exploration stage and the beginning of production.
- 4) Complaints about the courts.

67. The Agitation of November 1938 was remarkable for the first alliance between Baharna and Sunni leaders. The Baharna were the Manama Baharna leaders of the 1935 petition, and the Sunni involved were a combination of disreputable and congenial malcontents, certain young and frustrated members of well known Holis families - Fakroo, Kanoo etc. (These are Persian Sunnis claiming distant Arab origin who have resided in Bahrain for several generations), and the new "effendi" of whatever social or sectarian origin. These elements were not unified into a single group and the several coalitions which were established did not last more than a few days. It is therefore impossible, for the very inadequate information contained on the files, to produce a coherent account.

68. Mr. Belgrave in a letter of that time to the Political Agent listed the trouble makers as follows:- the Baharna leaders, Muhsin al Tajir and his brother Said Said, Abdulla ali Alwaat, Mansur Al Arayyed, Seyid Ali, the dismissed and embittered Shia Qadhi Shaikh Abdulla who was still agitating for the removal of the other two old Qadhis who had plotted his overthrow; and the following "Arabs" - Ibrahim bin Jabr -

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"a semi religious crank from Muharraq;" Sa'ad bin Shemlar -
"an ex Wakhlil debarred from the courts for dishonesty;" Ali
bin Khalifa al Fadhl - irrated at not being appointed to
various committees: Khalil Moayyed - "a progressive." To
these should be added Ahmed Shirawi who was exiled with Sa'ad.
Ahmed is the father of Yussef Shirawi an official of the Public
Relations Department to the Bahrain Government. He now lives
in Saudi Arabia and for the sake of his son has become a
"moderate." There were also in this group some Holis families
such as the Kanoos, who were disgruntled because the Government
had refused to lend them money.

69. "Most of the latter", wrote Mr. Belgrave, referring to the
'Arab Agitators,' "have personal grievances, including the
supreme grievance of having at one time or another been detected
in some particularly disgraceful villany."

70. As for the "effendis" and young intellectuals, the only
detail I can discover is a list of youths, suspected of having
written for "Al Rabit al Arabiya," an anti-British Egyptian
newspaper which carried various misleading articles on Bahrain
during 1938 and 1939. One of these young men turns out to be
Ali Al Tajir a nephew of Muhsin Al Tajir and one of the elected
members of the present but as yet untried Education Committee.
He is today employed by Petroleum Concessions Limited, as a
translator and in this capacity has rendered most valuable
service by translating the bulk of the documents connected
with the Buraimi case.

71. The first approach to the Government was made by five
Baharna and five Arabs (of the Sa'ad Shemlan group) who demanded
the removal of the Syrian director of Education and the reform
of the Law, and complained about the lack of discipline and
prevalence of corruption in (though not the racial composition
of) the Police force, abuses in the Sharia courts, the prefer-
ential treatment given by the Bahrain Petroleum Company to

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foreigners, confusion in the Passport and Electricity departments, the rudeness of Customs officials, the corruption and harshness in the jails (feters, etc.) and in fact castigated virtually all departments of the Government.

72. They also put forward certain fundamental constitutional demands. "The object of the persons who moved the question of reforms," reported the Political Agent to the Political Resident on October 27, 1938, "is to form a Council of Administration like that of Kuwait consisting of ten members - five Bahrainis and five Arabs. Besides this council, they want to form a Committee to whom all the orders passed by the Council are sent for confirmation. The head of this Committee will be Shaikh Abdulla bin Isa who has also been earmarked for heir apparentship. The people do not want Shaikh Salman to be an heir apparent though Yussef Fakhrroo is trying to get the people on his side. Shaikh Hamad will remain as before the Ruler of Bahrain. My informant told me that they also do not want Mr. Belgrave to remain any longer in Bahrain but if the Political Agent insists that he should remain, they have no objection on condition that he should be a Financial Adviser and his duties to be limited to keeping and checking the account of the Bahrain Petroleum Company and at the same time be under the Council. But if the Political Agent agrees that Mr. Belgrave should leave Bahrain and does not appoint another man in his place as Financial Adviser and entrust the Council with the financial affairs, they are prepared to undertake the work and submit the accounts to the Political Agent for inspection."

73. It rapidly became evident that the ten leaders were not united. The Baharna representatives came separately to see Mr. Belgrave and admitted that their real complaints were

- 1) The inefficiency of the courts, especially the Sharia

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2) Too many Sunnis on the Municipalities and in the schools. The Government obviously had its eye on the support of these Baharna when it promised that a legal expert should be chosen from abroad, to reform the courts and train the Al Khalifa judges, dismissed another Shia Qadhi, produced a strict list of procedure for Shia Qadhis, and planned a survey of the existing Educational system with a view to reform.

74. After this the town Baharna became markedly less vociferous, and although there is some evidence that they toured the villages to whip up support for agitation against the Bahrain Petroleum Company, and received, so it is reported a very mixed reception in certain villages, notably Sanabis, as a result of Qadhi opposition, the initiative certainly passed to the Sunni Agitators.

75. The Bahrain Government was now confident that it could deal with the situation. Shemlan and Ahmed Shirawi were clapped into gaol. The following day their supporters held a partial strike, mainly of the clerical and technical employees of the Bahrain Petroleum Company and the Ruler promptly arrested the ringleader, Ali bin Khalifa Al Fadhl also.

76. During the next few months there was a storm of indignation from all radical Sunni elements. Shemlan's supporters, usually styled the "National Free Youth," produced many pamphlets, curiously similar to the publications of the present Committee, demanding the release of the prisoners, an elected Council of Education, a Judicial Council, a Labour dispute Committee. It is significant that they also called for the abolition of the cinema, no doubt an attempt to secure fanatic religious support.

Their efforts however, to enlist the aid of the divers and lower class Baharna failed completely. Some of the pamphlets also called for the removal of the Adviser. 77. A curious compilation of this period was a petition produced by certain Hollis 'progressives', including Abdulrahman /Zayani

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Zayani and Yussef Kanoo, which embodied the four somewhat ill-assorted stipulations - 1) Reforms in the Police, 2) Reforms in the Courts and 3) Restrictions on Liquor to remain, 4) No liberty for women.

78. The Bahrain Government was so confused by all this polemic literature that it asked for a definitive memorandum of grievances to be prepared and presented. The people who considered themselves fitted for such a task were one Arab, one Holis Merchant and three of the veritable Manama Baharna.


79. These worthies defined the public demands as 1) an education committee consisting of four Sunni and four Shia, 2) the dismissal of the existing judges and the appointment of four new ones - two from the people (one Sunni and one Shia), one from the Government and an expert criminal judge from Iraq who could be replaced by a Bahraini in due course. 3) The Municipalities should contain Bahrainis instead of foreigners (I do not quite understand this though it may have been a move against certain Holis merchants). 4) The establishment of a Labour disputes committee, 5) a council of six (three Sunnis and three Shia) to represent the people.

80. So far as I can see the only response by the Bahrain Government to this compilation was the appointment, after a long investigation into labour conditions in the Bahrain Petroleum Company, of an official Government representative to the Company, the undertaking of an Educational Survey, which had already been promised, and the decision to appoint a British Legal Adviser who was never in fact found.

81. The agitation gradually died down. The 'Arabs' of Hidd and some Baharna villagers, no doubt influenced by Qadhis, came forward and presented written declarations of loyalty to the Ruler and dissociation from the demands of the agitators. Ali Al Fadhl appealed from gaol for intercession to King Ibn

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 Saud whom he had once served in the Yemen, and after special pleading by the latter he was released, while Shemlan and Shirawi were exiled to India where they aired their grievances in the Bombay press. It seems that other members of their group were sufficiently cowed to refrain from supporting action. Indeed the Bahrain Government was left in peace for 15 years.

82. But despite these fifteen years of silence which separated the 1938 troubles from the disturbances of 1953, it should be noted that the Political Resident in office in 1938 did not share the complacent belief of the Ruler, Mr. Belgrave and the Political Agent that the crisis of that year had been satisfactorily surmounted. Sir Trenchard Fowle had farseeing ideas for the development of Bahrain's constitution. 83. "The obvious remedy appears to me," he wrote to the Political Agent on November 17, 1938, "an Advisory Council to be set up by the Shaikh and subject to what you have to say on the subject, I propose giving this advice to Shaikh Hamad and the Bahrain Government. I gave exactly the same advice to two other Shaikhs - Kuwait and Dubai. They did not take it and the consequence is that both of them have now been forcibly saddled with Executive Councils. In other words, instead of the Shaikhs sitting on the Council, the Council sits on the Shaikhs. Exactly the same thing will happen in Bahrain in my opinion sooner or later unless my suggestion is put into force. The popular movement, though not very strong at the moment, will no doubt grow in power and be joined by other elements who have hitherto held aloof from it - i.e. the Baharna, divers, coolies, foreigners etc. It would of course have been better if the Bahrain Government had exercised reasonable foresight and instituted some such Council before the present agitation, but it is now better late than never. The advantages of such a council in clearing the air, meeting /the legitimate

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the legitimate grievances of the popular party, and giving the latter some of the hard experience and responsibility of self-government, seems to me clear. Further, having made this large concession, which will give a legal focus for expression of grievances, the Bahrain Government will be in a stronger position to deal fairly with those who employ illegal means. The essence of the Council would be that the members would be nominated by the Shaikh. I have little doubt that sooner or later agitation will arise that first, the Council should not be nominated, but elected by popular suffrage and second, that it should be Executive and not Advisory. But if the members are wisely chosen by the Shaikh in the first instance under a Good President, this agitation should become formidable later rather than sooner, and in any case, even if eventually some sort of an Executive Council has to be established, an interval filled by an Advisory Council, by which much valuable experience will be gained by all concerned, would be a very useful stepping stone."

84. In a subsequent despatch written on the 13 of December 1938, the Political Resident made another proposal of the same kind, "What would you and Belgrave think of an Advisory Financial Committee on the same lines as the Educational Committee?"

85. On the other hand Mr. Weightman, the Political Agent, whose views on the situation seem to have been indistinguishable from those of the Adviser, considered that both these constitutional innovations were unacceptable, unnecessary and undesirable. He did appreciate however, in his despatch of November the 26th 1938 that "admittedly one must not ignore the spirit of the times, and great care and foresight must be employed. Propaganda is essential to dissipate ignorance and misconception, and there must be active steps in support of it Belgrave must be relieved more and more from routine."

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86. His general attitude towards the agitation of the period is seen in his despatch of December 28th 1938. "We had not seen how Bahrain would react to anonymous underground agitation, and I was worried by the apparent credulity of the people towards false or distorted rumour. The agitation was amorphous and it was impossible in the early stages to ascertain clearly how widespread restlessness might be. The ultimate result has been heartening. The 'real Arabs' have rallied to the Shaikh in a spirit of genuine affection and loyalty; the Baharna of the villages have been pouring into Manama lately to declare their entire contentment and loyalty and to protest against the assumption of leadership over them by some of the Manama Town Baharna "politicians;" fuller investigation has shown that the agitation and so called nationalism centred in the community of Holis, and resentment at what is regarded locally as their impertinence and presumption is profound. In the light of these facts I would say that the odds are heavily against the growth of any sort of popular agitation for years to come and granted the method of evolution for which I have pleaded (advocating Departmental reform rather than fundamental constitutional changes) I should anticipate the continuance in its essentials of the present system of Government in Bahrain long after the present generation is in its grave."

87. Mr. Weightman's analysis of the nature of the agitation was accurate in some respects, for it is true that the Sunni agitators of 1938 represented hardly anyone but themselves. Nevertheless unlike the Zayani clique of 1923, they had at least some intention, in alliance with the town Baharna leaders, of speaking for all sections of the community, and there is no doubt that they can be regarded as the true, if remote, precursors of the present Committee movement. Indeed

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however thin the claims of 1935 appear to have been, there is clearly some personal justification for the impatience of men like Abdul Aziz Shemlan who have been brought up in an atmosphere of demagogic politics and for the Baharna leaders who have been engaged in a 'dogged struggle for increased communal rights since 1935. For this reason at least I feel that it might have been a very good thing if more heed had been paid to Sir Trenchard Powlie's prophecy and to his proposals, though I can well appreciate that the Government of India would have had a very difficult time with the Adviser and Shaikh Hamad.

88. It is of some interest that during late 1938 and early 1939 there was considerable comment on the Bahrain situation in the nationalist press in other parts of the Arab world. The violently anti-British press of Iraq was particularly active. One article in the Beirut Newspaper, 'Al Nahar' (December 17th, 1938) was entitled - "Is Mr. Paqriff (Belgrave) Dictator of Bahrain?" The Egyptian newspaper 'Al Rabita' (July 27th, 1938) attacked Britain's strategic control of the islands and it is instructive to compare this extract with Al Bakir's similar remarks. "The British Government proposed through the British Consul in Bahrain to buy this plot of ground and meeting with refusal took it by force. On the spot, the British have built several buildings for Military use, a sports ground, a cinema and a ball room for British soldiers. On the coast an aerodrome has been created. Four warships and four flying boats stay nearby permanently. The Bahrain Government paid for all the expenses and the British Government did not pay a piastre." A typical Iraqi article from 'Al Istiqlal' of Baghdad (February 5th, 1939) stated: "The Arabs' feeling of sympathy towards Palestine has been choked and they have been prevented from raising subscriptions for the Palestine victims. The situation is terrible but the complaints are overlooked. The Government is tyrannic

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and went as far as trying to revive the old war of the commun-
 itics. They believe in the principle of divide and rule.
 Bahrain has its eyes turned to Iraq and firmly hopes to put
 her fate in Iraqi hands." One is immediately reminded of the
 Egyptian propaganda of our own day.

89. As has been noticed, what Mr. Weightman called "the present
 system of government" continued unchallenged and events
 justified him in his expectation of a long session of agitation,
 though his estimate that the respite would continue for more
 than a generation has proved over-sanguine. The most striking
 testimonial of this that I know is Sir Rupert Hay's sole
 comment, in paragraph 12 of the Bahrain section of his compila-
 tion P.C. 53, on the subject covered by this despatch. "There
 has been" he writes, "no sign of any agitation in Bahrain for
 a more popular form of government but anonymous pamphlets
 have appeared from time to time demanding Belgrave's removal,
 and there have been complaints mostly anonymous regarding the
 Bahrain Government Hospital and the British Medical Officer in
 charge of it, the local courts, and the lack of accommodation
 in the schools. Some younger members of the intelligensia
 are believed to be responsible for such agitation but there
 does not appear to be any organized party." It is now difficult
 to understand how the Bahrain Government was granted such a
 long period of peace and quiet, though it was not, in its
 comfortable torpor, spared the criticism of official observers
 as is vividly illustrated by Lieutenant Colonel Prior's
 despatch of May 25, a portion of which was enclosed under cover
 of my letter 1011/1/329/566 of the 23rd of July to ^{Mr.} Riches.
 Indeed a reading of these archives confirms me in the depressing
 belief that 'the Bahrain Government' though successful and
 popular enough in its golden age, and though benevolent
 enough so far as purely material reform is concerned, has
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failed to evolve constitutionally, except when prodded very hard by ourselves, and has for some considerable time been badly obsolete in form and totally insensitive to the climate of the age and the aspiration of the rising classes.

90. I will forbear from commenting in detail on Al Bakir's account of the final and contemporary phase of the history of agitation in Bahrain for the details are well known and available. I merely observe that most of his facts dealing with this period, though tendenciously and egotistically selected and interpreted, are substantially correct. This is not surprising for here Abdulrahman Al Bakir, latter day Bahraini politician, is on more familiar ground.

91. I am sending copies of this despatch and its enclosure to Her Majesty's Political Agency, Bahrain.

I have the honour to be,

With the highest respect

Sir,

Your obedient servant,

Charles Gault

(C.A. Gault)

The Right Honourable Selwyn Lloyd, C.B.E., M.P.

Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs,
Foreign Office,

LONDON, S.W. 1.