

BAHRAIN

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DEMOCRATISING THE GULF

A highly militarized region is seeking an alternative course to stability

One of the most important questions widely considered in the aftermath of the liberation of Kuwait is regarding the future of the Gulf regions and more specifically; is the region heading towards more democratisation or heavier militarisation. At the moment no conclusive judgement can be made and the race is there between the two possible courses.

On the one hand, there is a strong tendency towards defence treaties with the western powers which took part in the Desert episode last year and stockpiling arms and ammunition. Perhaps this course of action is being adopted as a result of the deep embarrassment felt by the Gulf Cooperation Countries after the poor performance (indeed the total lack of it) of the "Peninsula Shield" forces (the joint Gulf military venture) during the Gulf crisis. It is known that not a single shot was fired by this force against the Iraqi forces as they made their advance towards Kuwait in the early hours of 2nd August 1990. In fact the largest airbase of these forces is at Hafer Al Batn, a Saudi town 130 miles south east of Kuwait City. It is now felt there is an overriding need to overhaul the military arrangements currently employed by the GCC countries. This military concern is overshadowed by the desire to effect a major change in the alliances and political priorities in the region. It is also felt that a new look at the concept of Gulf Security be considered in view of the political and military developments.

To underline the new realities in the Gulf, the Kuwaitis and Bahrainis signed defence treaties with the United States last year. Kuwait also signed treaties with both, Britain and France. She has so far carried three joint military manoeuvres with the US armed forces off the cost of Kuwait, the last of which was in the second week of this month. Kuwait has also received 3 F18 Hornet combat aircraft from the US as a part of a new arms deal. These arrangements have come at a time of obscure aims and strategies of the GCC highlighted by the last GCC summit in Kuwait last December. They are also indications of the conflict of priorities and interests among the Gulf countries especially in light of the rejection of the Omani initiative presented by Sultan Qaboos to the Kuwait's summit. That initiative had called for the creation of a 100,000 strong force to replace the existing Peninsula Shield arrangement which consists

of 10,000 troops and which proved total ineffectiveness.

This tendency to by-pass joint pacts and agreements among the Gulf countries indicates the extent of the lost faith in the Saudi-dominated Gulf Cooperation Council. It also points to the hasty reactions to the crisis and the lack of vision with regards to its implications. So far no real effort has been made to review the situation in the Gulf and the inherent causes of debacle. This inclination towards greater involvement in militarisation is not paralleled by efforts to reform the internal situations. There have been promises of marginal rectification of the situation, but so far nothing concrete is forthcoming. The issue of democracy in the Gulf region is as painful as the talk of the state of human rights and the general freedoms in the region. However there are indications that the popular temper is becoming even more frustrated and that the authorities are beginning to feel the pinch.

Last month, for the first time in recent years, an important document was signed and handed to the Emir of the State of Qatar. Eleven people signed a petition on behalf of 50 Qatari dignitaries from the most famous families in the country and delivered it to the ruler, Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad Al Thani. This qualitative change in Qatar is only the beginning of a new era in the Gulf region characterised by public awareness and persistence in demands for political reforms. The Qatari petition critically evaluated the internal situation emphasising aspects of mismanagement and tribal domination. It demanded the formulation of a constitution and the institutionalisation of democracy as a people's right. It also outlined a proposed political reforms programme that should lead to a better participation by the people in the political affairs. This development is significant especially in light of the fact that there is a race against time by the Gulf regimes to forestall any popular movement that could lead to a change in the status quo. It also underlines the extent of anger and frustration among the elites and their desire to see a fundamental improvement in the political situation within each of the GCC countries in response to the ever-widening process of change in the new world.

The Qatari development, however, is not the only one in the Gulf. Saudi Arabia is passing through a silent revolution unknown

to the outside world. popular disenchantment is growing and the ruling Al Saud family is reluctant to effect any change in the political arena. The monopoly of power is the order of the day and the machines of repression is ever growing. Last month a petition was signed by dozens of dignitaries and delivered to King Fahd. It demanded the implementation of the system of "Shura" or collective consultation and a halt to the political games being practiced by the regime. The religious establishment has been infuriated by three factors; firstly they view the activities of the secular forces in the kingdom and their endeavour to liberalise the society as a threat to the established norms and practices of the country. Secondly, the recent political manoeuvres on the issue of the Palestinian problem and the peace process is unjustified in the absence of a process of consultation and consider the results of the recent Saudi-Israeli rapprochement null and void. The visit to the kingdom by a group of Jewish businessmen and activists has caused a furore in the hitherto conservative circles and thirdly; the religious establishment demands a political dialogue leading to a constitutional development and eventual elections. Put together the factors have pushed Muslim activists in major cities to erupt in rage and the mosques have become a landmark in their activities.

King Fahd, on his part, contributed to this state of chaos and uncertainty by expressing his intention to introduce a consultative (advisory) council to enlist some popular participation, membership of which is by appointment. This promise has, so far, been unfulfilled and the people are not taking the King's promise seriously. Even if fulfilled, an appointed council can in no way fulfil the aspirations of the Saudis who are outraged by the persistent royal claim that the society is not ready yet for democracy or that our traditions and values are an obstacle in the way of democracy. It was reported that many personalities were either detained or interrogated about the petition to the King and many Imams were prevented from giving their Friday sermons at the mosques.

In anticipation of the possibility of political instability in his country, Sultan Qaboos of Oman introduced a consultative assembly consisting of 59 appointed members to monitor

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A Tale of Two Men A Chained Bahraini and a British Torturer

The case of Dr. Abdul Latif Al Mahmood is still alive and well. Despite the fact that the enormous international pressure on the Bahraini authorities forced them to release Dr. Al Mahmood on bail, the case itself has caused a furore not only amongst the people but within the ruling family itself. The two weeks of detention at Al Qala prison in Manama have only contributed to make the victim more resolute in his stand.

As mentioned above, Dr Abdul Latif Al Mahmood, the lecturer and the head of the Department of Sharia at the Bahrain University, was released on bail (500 Bahraini Dinar, or US\$1200) on 28th December 1991. He was told he would be tried later. The charges against him, as he declared on Friday 3rd January were "very serious". They included defamation of the Emiri personality, incitement to rebellion and an attempt to overthrow the government. These charges, if proved, could put him in jail for life. He laughed as he iterated these charges to his audience who gathered for the Friday prayers at the mosque of which he had been the Imam.

Since his release, Dr. Al Mahmood has been prevented from heading the prayers at the mosque or delivering a sermon or a lecture. But he had the courage to defy the authorities and address the worshippers after the prayers and inform them of his ordeal. He was proud of it and expressed no remorse. Indeed he stood by the contents of his speech which he had delivered in Kuwait three weeks earlier and repeated his determination to repeat what he had written and said if the opportunity arose again.

While awaiting the "trial" patiently, Dr. Al Mahmood was tipped off that it would be left hanging in the air to act as a deterrent to him "not to get involved in politics again". But Dr. Al Mahmood has another plan of his own. If they do not take him to court, he will! He is considering the matter seriously and is likely to try to inflict as much injury to the pride of the Al Khalifa as possible. Perhaps the extent of the international support he had received has made him even more steadfast. Perhaps Dr. Al Mahmood has come to the conclusion that the status quo must not be allowed to prevail forever, and that the foolish act of his arrest must become the turning point in the relations with the regime.

Whatever the reasons are, it is clear that the arrest of Dr. Al Mahmood has done nothing to promote the cause of the Al Khalifa family. It is reported that a major row had erupted in their circles in the aftermath of their debacle and one leading Al Khalifa figure was quoted saying to his colleagues at the "Council of the Tribe": "You have made him a hero. Perhaps he was right. Perhaps if they did not resort to their oppressive tools this time, the whole affair, including his speech in Kuwait, would have been forgotten.

The British Officer, Mr Ian Henderson is again at the centre of the episode. He master-

mind the operation that failed drastically. This was not the first time and will not be the last. Less than two years earlier he had attempted a dangerous play which also failed. He had misled the British Security Service by giving them false information on Bahraini opponents in Britain. Three were arrested under the "Prevention of Terrorism Act" and after four days of intensive interrogation released without being charged. The three Bahraini intellectuals were found innocent and received sympathy with their just cause from every corner of the world. Mr Henderson was left biting his fingers. His doctrine which is based on pre-emptive strikes against opponents with utmost ferocity does not always work. It has worked against hundreds of defenceless Bahrainis, but when a person like Dr Abdul Latif Al Mahmood is targeted the matter is entirely different. Mr Henderson "enjoyed" the company of Dr. Al Mahmood and kept him in cells for two weeks. He bombarded him with tens of questions, perhaps hundreds. It is now known that eleven of these questions were sent to the Emir and the Prime Minister for approval so as not to keep them out of the blame.

Dr. Al Mahmood at one stage gave himself the liberty to ask the Scotsman (Henderson) whether he could freely say at Hyde Park what he had said in Kuwait, and if this is the case, why was he interned for his opinion. He was asked whether he was ready to be governed by the Shias (a hypothetical case raised to saw dissension amongst the Bahraini people). Dr. Al Mahmood refused to be drawn to sectarian matters and affirmed that Quran was a unifying force among Muslims. During his detention, Dr. Al Mahmood's family was approached by agents of the government and told to request a pardon from the Emir, a suggestion flatly rejected by the whole family.

Today, two months after the episode, the case is still pending. Dr Al Mahmood is neither guilty, no innocent. His release on bail was not the end of the matter. He attends Bahrain's University of which he is a senior lecturer and the head of one of its faculties, but he is not allowed to see his students, talk to them, or even give them tuition. He cannot leave the country and is not allowed to lead prayers. His case, however, is not unique in Bahraini society. Many citizens are in a similar situation, and some of them have been like this for over a decade. The Al Khalifa family has successfully managed to keep a tight lid on events in Bahrain and little is known about events in this Gulf island. Dr. Al Mahmood's case gained prominence because it took place partly in Kuwait and because the overall situation nowadays is different. The treatment by the government of the people who express their opinion is unique and indicative of the extent of repression and suppression in the island.

Once again the two main actors are; a Bahraini in chains and a British Officer armed with all tools of repression and torture.

Shame on You: The 14 Day Ordeal of a Bahraini in a Kuwaiti cell

On 25 January 1992, a Bahraini national was arrested at the Kuwaiti border post of Nuwaisib. Mr Hamza Hasan Al Ghannami, who was on his way to Kuwait looking for a job had been imprisoned by the Bahraini authorities in August 1988 with a number of youths, who were subsequently ill-treated. His wife was also interrogated by the Bahraini Special branch. He spent twenty months in prison before being acquitted by the State Security Court in March 1990. Since then he has been unable to find employment as the Special Branch prevents employers from recruiting ex-political prisoners.

However, as the government was pressed by international human rights organisations, some ex-political prisoners were able to retrieve their passports last September. Responding to calls from both the Bahraini and Kuwaiti governments, Mr Hasan joined the thousands of youths who decided to move to Kuwait seeking low-rate employment.

On 25 January the Kuwaiti custom officers asked him to prove that he was not the same person designated by the computer as a "wanted" man. After four hours of questioning he was taken to the Passports Directorate at Shuwaik. There, he was informed that he was under arrest for "State Security" offences!

He was subsequently taken to the State Security Centre. There, he was blindfolded and the interrogation started. He was questioned about the purpose of his visit to Kuwait? Whom did he know in Kuwait and Bahrain and what are his political and religious views. He was left in a cell for 8 days. After that the interrogation officer threatened him to speak "the truth" otherwise no one would salvage him from the "highest authority in Kuwait". Next he was hand-cuffed and beating started on the head, feet, stomach and sensitive parts. After a long session the Bahraini citizen was asked to take off all his clothes. As the officer wreaked the body of the prisoner, it was clear that an indecent assault was to take place. The Bahraini violently refused to succumb. The following day, he was transferred to the department of deportation where he was detained for a further four days awaiting an air ticket from his family. He was deported after being told that his name had been passed to the Kuwaiti intelligence by the Bahraini authorities!

At the time when the Kuwaiti authorities scream about the atrocities committed by Saddam Hussein, they themselves are committing indecent assaults on innocent citizens of another Gulf country. We definitely sympathise with the families of the Kuwaiti prisoners of war and call upon the international community to exert pressure on Iraq for their release. But the Kuwaiti government must not be allowed to get away with similar acts of oppression.

A Brief Taste of Democracy

The story of Bahrain's National Assembly

By the end of the sixties Britain decided to pull-out all its forces from the East of Suez, which included the Gulf region. The dilemma in the Gulf emerged as it became apparent that the created small states (Bahrain, Qatar and the seven emirates comprising the present U.A.E) cannot be transferred to stand-alone entities. The British proposal of unifying the nine ruling families didn't see the light, as the animosity between the Al-Khalifa ruling family (of Bahrain) and Al-Thani ruling family (of Qatar) couldn't be settled. The Al-Khalifa family faced two problems, relating to external and internal security.

Bahrain, as a small state with negligible defence forces, cannot defend the country against ambitious expansionist forces, such as the Wahhabis of Saudi Arabia and the Shah of Iran.

On the defence question, the Al-Khalifa were happy to transfer the Jufair naval base from Britain to the United States, and grant the Pentagon a free access to Bahrain's territories.

Politically, Britain and the United States used their influence on the Shah to retract his claim for the Fourteenth Province of Iran (meaning Bahrain). A face-saving exercise was implemented, whereby the United Nations sent an envoy to report the wishes of the Bahraini people. This U.N. action slightly cornered the Al-Khalifa family, who felt that the internal situation is unstable because of dissatisfaction of the public and because the national movement has been active for forty years demanding popular participation.

The present ruler, Essa bin Salman Al-Khalifa, paid a visit to the holy city of Najaf in Iraq and met the then world-leading figure for the Shia Muslims, Ayatullah Sayyid Muhsin Al-Hakim and requested him to appeal to the Bahraini Shia (some 70% of the population) to express their wishes in favour of the Al-Khalifa ruling family. In return, the under-dog treatment of the Shia would end and the Al-Khalifa would not attempt to prevent the Shia from practicing their rituals (as the Saudis may wish). During the visit, the ruler offered a gesture by allowing those religious scholars (such as Sayyid Ali Kamal-U-Din), who had participated in leading the national movement in the fifties to return to Bahrain.

The UN envoy visited Bahrain in May 1970 and toured the country meeting senior personalities, clubs members and others discussing with them the desired political identity of Bahrain. His report concluded that the "overwhelming majority of the people of Bahrain prefer an independent state". The Al-Khalifa considered the conclusion as a rubber stamp of their rule.

The national movement was intensifying its activities and the intelligentsia would settle down for no less than a parliament. The ruling family was divided between two wings.

The first was against any form of popular participation, and considered these ideas as a threat to the prestige and sovereignty of the ruling family. The maximum "concession" this wing would accept was a constitution

written by a selected number of people. This wing was led by the eldest brother of the ruler, who has since been the Prime Minister, Khalifa bin Salman Al-Khalifa.

The other point of view was put forward by the present Foreign Minister, Mohammed bin Mubarak Al-Khalifa, who realised that it was best to offer a certain amount of popular participation rather than having it imposed on the ruling family, and therefore losing prestige. The mingling of the two sides and the continued popular pressure resulted in the announcement of the establishment of a Constituent Assembly, half elected and half appointed by the ruler, to offer advice on a constitution document drafted by the ruling family. After one year of deliberations the constitution (basically a modified copy of the Kuwaiti constitution) was issued.

The constitution called for, amongst others, the establishment of a National Assembly comprising of 30 elected people and some fourteen appointed ministers. In both the first and second assemblies four tendencies emerged, which latter formed themselves into blocs: the Religious (Islamic) Bloc, the People (Leftist) Bloc, the Independent (Centre) Bloc and the Government (ministers) Bloc. In the National Assembly, the first two comprised of nine and eight people consequently who constituted the opposition to the Government, while the independent Bloc comprising of the remaining thirteen members were not coherent in their policies. The first year of the National Assembly (1973-74) was spent in getting to know each other and the ways of lobbying and formulating policies. The Government headed by Khalifa bin Salman Al-Khalifa adopted an adversary attitude towards the MPs and attempted to limit their powers to an advisory

Henderson Promoted: Intensification of Torture

Contrary to the reports that Ian Henderson, the British Officer at the heart of the security operations in Bahrain, was about to retire, there are developments within the Interior Ministry indicating otherwise. According to the most recent reports, Jim Bill, a veteran Security Officer from Britain, and the Director of Public Security is retiring this year. He will be succeeded by his deputy, Sheikh Ibrahim bin Hamad Al Khalifa.

Ian Henderson, who is the Assistant of the Deputy Director of Public Security, will take up the post of the Deputy Director of Public Security, a promotional step though a symbolic one. He has been running the Security Service for about a quarter of a century following his recruitment a year after the massive students uprising of 1965.

During Mr Henderson's reign, the Bahrain's Security Service has become one of the most repressive machines in the region, employing torture as a routine practice and resorting to the most wicked means to extract confessions. Under his instructions, six people died as a direct result of torture inflicted on them whilst in detention.

role. However, this was not to be accepted by the MPs who were holding surgeries in their constituencies and were intent on achieving the programmes presented during their election campaigns.

Students demonstrations were frequently held to protest against the policies of the Education Ministry. Labour strikes in the Aluminium smelter and other sectors of the industry continued to press for higher salaries in line with inflation, improved working conditions and the right of labour to organise their affairs through unions, as "granted" by the constitution. Mass gatherings were held every where, and debates were conducted on all issues of importance to the people. At the same time the Special Branch was busy monitoring, arresting and interrogating activists (mainly workers).

Towards the end of 1974 the MPs moved the debates in the parliament to the core of problems and began questioning issues such as the budget, the financial allocations of the ruling family, the foreign military presence, the ill-treatment of political prisoners, the dominance of British Officers in the sensitive positions of the Public Security department and so forth.

In October 1974, while these debates were taking place, the ruler issued a "Decree Law on State Security Measures" permitting administrative detention by order of the Interior Minister for up to three years (renewable) of any person suspected of involvement in activities judged by the Minister as a threat to the internal or external security of the state. Any person held by these provisions has no right of appeal and may not be informed of the evidence against him. The decree also grants the Interior Ministry officials (mainly the British-led Special Branch) unlimited powers in the ways of arrest and interrogation, thus paving the way for a wide use of all kinds of psychological and physical torture (including indent acts).

The people of Bahrain were stunned by the publication of such a law, and the MPs found themselves by-passed and patronised. This environment resulted in an unexpected unity between the two opposition blocs, who were later joined by the independent Bloc in demanding the revocation of the law.

By mid 1975 the clashes between all the elected MPs and the Government intensified and the ruling family failed to drive a wedge between the various MPs. The Prime Minister found a golden opportunity to bring the parliament to an end, by ordering his ministers not to attend the sessions. The parliament was therefore paralysed as it couldn't hold the session without a quorum.

On 24 August 1975, the Prime Minister resigned in protest against the MPs, claiming that the parliamentarians hindered the work of the government and the experiment proved to be a waste of time. The following day his brother, the ruler, issued a decree dissolving the parliament and suspending two articles in the constitution which called for an election after two months of termination.

On 25 August 1975, Khalifa bin Salman Al-Khalifa emerged triumphant, and was asked by his brother to reinstall the same government and take all the responsibilities of the legislature until further notice. Seven-teen years on, Khalifa's dominance continues.

Democratising the Gulf

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the political and economic development in Oman. This council has replaced an earlier one that had been largely ineffective and inefficient. It held two meetings each year and had 40 members all of whom were appointed by the Sultan. It is worth noting here that there are eleven political prisoners in Oman and are serving a long prison sentence following their arrest five years ago. Oman is not expected to witness a major outbreak of public anger although there are occasional clandestine activities carried out by factions opposing the Sultan and accusing him of abandoning the values and ideals of the society. There are three people in prison accused of distributing leaflets on the National Day 1990.

In Kuwait, however, the situation is somewhat different. Since the liberation a year ago, the country has gone through a period of re-evaluation and Kuwaitis have demanded a return to a fully constitutional life on the basis of the 1962 constitution. The constitutional movement which was repressed in the four years preceding the Iraqi invasion was revived and an all-out campaign came into being following the liberation. The Al Sabah family was forced to give in on the issue of elections and a pledge has been given for October elections of the National Assembly. Unsurprisingly, the Americans have shown a discreet interest in Kuwait's internal affairs. Addressing a press conference for a seminar entitled "Kuwait, USA and Freedom" held at the Graduate society in Kuwait at the beginning of this month, Congressman Robert J. Lagomarsino said, "As a member of the United States congress, and as a member of our Foreign Affairs Committee, I feel it is important for you to know that the United States and its government feels strongly about what is going on in your country. The US has always stood for its democratic principles and we are proud to support others who believe in the same principles. As George Bush said in an interview a few weeks ago with David Frost, "The role of the United States in today's world is to support democracy around the world."

The democratic process in Kuwait, though limited and fragile, is an encouraging sign and the people of the region are following its development closely. The Americans who, according to the Congressman, are keen to promote democratic principles world-wide are under the spotlight with regards to their relations with the Gulf ruling families. What is feared here is the pursuance by the US administration of a double-standard policy in relation to democracy in the Gulf.

The situation in Kuwait is of particular importance to everyone in the Gulf. There is a great concern that the Saudis may jump in at a specific moment to forestall the democratic process in the region under the pretext that it will jeopardise the stability of the Gulf. The seriousness of Mr. George Bush's commitment to democracy is thus at stake.

Perhaps the most outrageous situation with regards to repression and lack of any form of political participation is in Bahrain. In this small island in the Gulf, the Khalifa family has ruled since 1783 and are resolute in their rejection of any democratic process. In fact the issue of freedom and human rights has always been a sour one. The last democratic experience was short lived. It started on the departure of the British forces from the Gulf in 1971 and was abandoned by an Emiri (Royal) decree in August

1975. (See page 3) Since then no room for any form of democracy has ever been afforded to the people and anyone who dares talk about such matters is destined to go to jail. The constitution is frozen and a state of emergency has continued since 1956 save for the brief thaw of the democratic period mentioned above. The lack of democracy is largely attributed to a British Officer in charge of internal security apparatus in Bahrain. The notorious Ian Henderson who is in his early sixties is a veteran intelligence officer who had been seconded to Kenya in the fifties to counter the Mau Mau insurgency. In 1966 Mr Henderson came to Bahrain and established the Sheikdom of Fear in Bahrain. In the seventies and eighties, Mr Henderson utilised his full experience to suppress the national aspirations of the people of Bahrain. He made sure that, by spreading a reign of repression and fear, no serious opposition would ever grow again in Bahrain. He was following in the steps of his predecessor, Sir Charles Belgrave who had built the modern state of Bahrain in the period of

1926-1957 on the premise that giving an inch will result in abandoning the whole. Despite the Henderson doctrine, the national aspiration of the people of Bahrain have only matured and developed. Today, Bahrain is poised for a major change towards democracy, human rights and freedoms. The only hindrance here is the opposition of the United States and Britain to release their grip on the situation and let the people enter a contest with the government on a one-to-one basis.

The situation in the Gulf is so volatile that it could erupt ferociously any moment. The biggest obstacle to the process of change comes from two circles, the tribal regimes a and the big powers with interests in the Gulf, at the forefront of which is the United States and Britain. The most important thing here is for the politicians of these countries to accept the fact that wishes of the people must not be ignored if a state of stability and tranquility is to exist in this vital region.

Double Standards: How the British condoned Henderson's terror campaign

A mercenary is a person who engages himself in fighting or a conflict for no cause or reason other than greed for collection of money. Unfortunately, earning a living from being a mercenary is not considered a criminal offence in civilised countries like the United Kingdom.

The drug barons of Colombia hire dozens of British mercenaries who are known to their government but are subject to no criminal proceedings as long as the killing and money earning happens outside the U.K., and of course those killed must not be British.

In Yugoslavia, Croats are engaged in a civil war with the Serbs. Last month the media reported that more than two-hundred British mercenaries joined Croatian forces, and even Radio 4 interviewed a person who openly recruits mercenaries in the United Kingdom.

After all it is "not against the law of the land". In the mentioned interview, it was stated that some of these mercenaries would be prepared to fight even if they were not paid. The reason here, as claimed, is psychological. These men have served in the British army, and were trained for fighting real "world-wide" wars. To their disappointment, no such war took place while they were training and would therefore be willing to release their tension by practicing shooting on real human beings rather than dummies.

An Egyptian friend, who is also a British citizen, worked in Bahrain for several years. Being a British citizen made him "qualified" for mixing "freely" with the British Community in Bahrain. Many of these expatriates are highly respected people who are serving and earning honourably. However, some of those he mixed with were members of the Special Branch, which is run by the British since its formation in 1957. The only live subject these people talk about is how much money they are earning and what are the privileges they are enjoying.

Mr Ian Henderson has been in charge of the security and intelligence service (S.I.S) since 1966. Before then he had been an Assistant Commissioner of Police in Kenya, where he fought Mau Mau tribes and captured their Chief, Dedan Kimathi in 1956.

After Kenya's independence in 1964, the first Home Affairs Minister, Mr Oginga Odinga seized the opportunity and declared the British Assistant Commissioner of Police Leslie Pridgeon and Ian Henderson together with three other British Assistants as "prohibited immigrants" and ordered them to leave Kenya in 24 hours.

In 1965 a popular uprising took place in Bahrain. After four months of fierce clashes between students and workers on one side and police on the other, the British army was deployed to quell the uprising.

The British thus decided to restructure the Special Branch and posted Ian Henderson to head this task. Since then he interrogated, tortured, killed, expelled, jailed, spread rumours, ordered sexual abuses on youths in custody, and terrorised the public. There is no enmity between the Bahraini and British peoples and there is no holy cause for Mr Henderson. He is certainly not serving the Crown honourably. Indeed, he is a symbol of the most hated feature of the regime, and the people of Bahrain are bewildered by Britain's double-standard in this respect.

At the height of the Gulf War, Mr Douglas Hurd, the British Foreign Secretary proposed a plan for creating a stable and peaceful environment in the Middle East. He suggested an economic development plan, between rich and poor countries, a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict and a security structure for the Gulf. Nothing in his plan related to human rights or democracy.

Mr Hurd merely represents the traditional British approach to dealing with the Gulf region, i.e., maintaining the status-quo. This policy is nearly two-centuries old. In two hundred years, the world has changed dramatically. Things which were possible to enforce then can't last forever.

The present world's environment despises all out-dated political systems. The United Kingdom, at present, has leverage on the political situation in Bahrain. This leverage can be used to correct mistakes of the past and enhance British standing in the world. There certainly will be tomorrow's world which will neither be like yesterday's or today's worlds. A progressive and honest policy is thus urgently needed.