

BAHRAIN

A monthly newsletter issued by the Bahrain Freedom Movement

Awaiting the Outcome of the Legal Debacle at the International Court of Justice **The Tale of Two Tribes at the Hague**

On 7th February 1994, the Algerian judge, Mohammad Al Bajawi was assigned to preside over one of the longest protracted disputes in the Gulf region. With sixteen international judges along his side, Mr. Bajawi had to endure the agony of listening with special attention to the court proceedings which lasted for ten days, with no stoppages save for the times necessary to cater for human needs. Both Qatar and Bahrain have been preparing for this international hearing at the Hague for the last three years. The two parties have not come to the international court this time to put their respective view points in order to reach a verdict on the border dispute between them. The main aim of the hearing was to determine whether the International Court of Justice can intervene in the case after the state of Qatar had asked her to look into the dispute. Bahrain, the other party to the dispute, refuses to be drawn to the court because, in her view, Qatar had acted contrary to the spirit of the 1990 Doha agreement between the two countries witnessed by Saudi Arabia. The whole show was therefore to look into the legality of Qatar's attempt to put the case in front of the Court without Bahrain's connivance.

Border disputes in the Gulf are amongst the most dangerous in the world, having led to two major wars in the last fourteen years. Saddam Hussain resorted to the use of force to settle the border dispute with the state of Kuwait, causing one of the most destructive wars this century. Border clashes have often taken place between Saudi Arabia and Yemen, Saudi Arabia and Oman, Oman and the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Bahrain, and between Saudi Arabia and Qatar. In fact, the latter was the main cause for the flare up of hostilities among the Gulf states, mainly; between Qatar, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. In 1992, the Saudi border guards attacked and occupied a Qatari border post at Al Khafoos killing two Qatari soldiers in the process. That incident has now led to the fragmentation of the Gulf alliance with no prospect of rapid reconciliation. Qatar had been so incensed by the Saudi action that she went out of her way to establish fully-fledged relations with Iraq. More importantly perhaps is the recent rapprochement between the Qatari government and Israel. It appears that the Al Thani of Qatar are bent on "teaching the Saudis a lesson".

Although much despised, resorting to the international court is the least of evils in a situation where war is the only real alternative. The prospect of war between two small states such as Qatar and Bahrain has always been a nightmare since the 1986 armed attack by Qatari forces on a Bahraini border post at Fasht al Dibel. That incident raised the temperature in

the Gulf since it took place at a time of rising tension at the peak of the Iraq-Iran war. Twenty eight people some of whom were working for the Dutch construction company, BallastNidam, were taken prisoners by the Qataris and were not released until high level mediation were effected. The Qataris maintain that taking the case to the international court was a less drastic course of action than the military option. But the Bahrainis disagree with the Qatari initiative maintaining that Doha's unilateral action is contrary to the 1990 Doha agreement between the two countries.

It was during the GCC summit at Doha which was being held at the peak of the crisis arising from Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, that Qatar insisted on listing the border dispute with Bahrain high on the agenda. The war was barely three weeks away, and the leaders of the GCC countries were anxious to avoid further embarrassment through internal disputes. The Saudis were annoyed by the Qatari attempt to disrupt the summit, but had no option except to act rapidly to contain the situation. With half a million soldiers mainly American poised for war, King Fahd had it on his shoulder to calm the antagonists and put his personal credibility at stake by offering his mediation. The two antagonists gave the Saudi initiative six months after which they agreed to take the case jointly to the International Court of Justice. The Bahrainis believe a joint affidavit is necessary for the court to be able to take up the case, whilst the Qataris think a unilateral action is sufficient to meet the conditions of the Doha agreement.

The two teams of experts took up their stands at the court from 1st to 11th March 1994 and each of them, armed with the best international experts on the subject, tried to force his view on the court. The Qatari team, led by Dr. Najeeb bin Mohammed al Ne'aim, consisted of four more experts, Sir Ian Sinclair, Mr. Shankerdas, Professor Jan Salmon and Professor Jan Pierre. The Bahraini team was headed by the Minister of Legal Affairs, consisted of Professor Derek Boyet, Professor Luther Bacht, Dr. Gemenis de Aritchiga, Professor Prspier Vile, and Mr. Keith Hye. The Qatari team put their case for the first three days arguing that the Court has the power to take up the case on the unilateral invitation by Qatar. Too much details were presented to the point where hours were spent on lingual examination of the Doha accord. The Bahrainis then took up the challenge and tried to invalidate Qatar's argument through a critical analysis of the Doha accord. Each team was then given an extra day to sum up its arguments before the court rose on 11th March. The seventeen judges will go into recess to study the implications of the arguments and

decide accordingly. It has been a period of nerve stretching and it has shown the extent of endurance needed to continue with this legal process. Although the judges will take up to four months to reach a verdict. However border experts believe the Qataris have no chance of winning over the case. Bahrain had exercised sovereignty over the disputed areas for centuries whilst the Al Thani of Qatar had been in office for no more than 130 years. The islands of Hawar, which are at the core of the present dispute have always been under the Bahraini jurisdiction. In 1939 Britain which had protection treaties with Both Al Khalifa of Bahrain and Al Thani of Qatar, judged that the islands belonged to Bahrain. In 1944, following continuous protestations from Qatar, an accord was signed giving Bahrain the sovereignty over the Hwar islands. Infact, the Al Khalifa have, until recently, claimed sovereignty over the town of Zebara, in the north east of the Qatari peninsula. The town was the base of the Al Khalifa family for decades after their arrival into Qatar from Kuwait in mid eighteenth century.

It was clear from the composition of the Qatari team of experts that they had spared no money or effort to imply the strongest possible experts in the field. However, that is unlikely to change the situation, and the people of Bahrain will not accept giving up their territories to the Al Thani. This is not because of their love to the Al Khalifa who have committed countless crimes against the land of Bahrain and its people in the last two centuries. It is because they believe the Al Thani of Qatar are exploiting the present circumstances where the Al Khalifa are hated both at home and abroad and force their plans on the Bahraini people. The government of Bahrain could have improved their performance on the political level by enhancing the relations with their subjects, but their selfish attitudes and family greed have prevented any process of reconciliation. In the unlikely event of the Al Thani succeeding in their claim, which will still take many more years, the outcome could herald the end of the Al Khalifa reign in Bahrain.

The issue of the islands of Fasht al Dibel, Jarada, and Hawar are national issues and every possible effort should be made to ensure a successful outcome of the legal confrontation. We would have wished the whole Gulf to become one entity to replace this undesirable fragmentation of our nation. But failing to achieve this noble aim, national boundaries become sacred, and it is the duty of the people to make sure the rulers do not sell out their land. The Al Khalifa have spared no effort to suppress the people and their aspirations, but it is doubtful they will pursue the noble cause of protecting the borders with the same vigour.

20,000 Unemployed Nationals Versus 120,000 Foreign Work-Force

The Myth of Bahrainisation

If there is a serious problem in Bahrain today then it must be the joblessness. The Consultative Council's main (behind the scene task) has been finding ways to reduce the national unemployment. The Council in business since 1992 and whose members are appointed by the government (via the Amir) conduct their weekly meetings behind closed doors; the proceedings are not disclosed to the public.

In 1991, Bahrain had a total population of 518,243 of which 63% or 326,493 were Bahrainis and the balance expatriate. More importantly, in 1991 again, of the labour force of 201,800 only 90,100 or 44.6% were Bahrainis and the rest represented the non-Bahrainis.

By Gulf standards Bahrain is noted for releasing statistics but the problem is that a great deal of the figures are contradictory year after another. Or that the forecast turns out to be wrong.

For example. In early 1993, a local magazine spoke of 20,000 Bahrainis with no jobs or 22% of those eligible to work. Recently, an official stated to Al-Ayyam daily that by the year 2000 some 30,000 Bahrainis will still be without job.

Now, at least 15% jobless rate is no longer challenged by the authorities. Certainly this is a huge figure for a country many people abroad think of as a model for economic diversification in the Middle East. What the authorities have done is that of starting the manufacturing activity but employing mostly workers from the Far East and sub-Indian continent. Only 28% Bahrainis belonged to the work force in 1991. At least 37% of the Bahrainis are below 14 years of age. They are yet to enter the working force. Hundreds of those graduating from the colleges and schools face uncertain future.

The authorities have indicated their total inability (or lack of desire) to solve the problem. This is apart from cosmetic measures here and there. For example, the Amir responded (at last) to Bahrainisation. He ordered his Court officials to swap few dozen of Bengoli and Pakistani farmers working in his gardens by local substitutes. Still, many of those employed are forced to accept very low pay jobs. Bahrain definitely and will always need people with skills in the areas of finance and petroleum in addition to semi-skilled and non-skilled from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and the Philippines. However, when one looks at a figure of about 120,000 foreign work-force wonders why some 20,000 nationals are jobless.

The local culture permits that the unemployed remain in the father's house as long as they wish and not worry about all sorts of expenses. It is not like the U.K. or the U.S. where the unemployed can be readily seen and have to struggle. For another, there is no cost for the regime due to lack of social welfare programmes for the sacked and unemployed. There is a great deal of hidden or disguised unemployment. Incidentally, there is unemployment even

among the expatriates! The reason being a great deal of the semi-skilled workers come to the country through what is known as "free visa." Here someone from Al Khalifa or any rich and influential person pays for the arrival of hundreds of these expatriates who come for any sort of occupation with no specific skills. The "master" in this case tells them that they are free to find any sort of job and that they must pay him (the sponsor) certain amount every year or so. The amount normally runs for just above \$1,000 every two years. There are people who are sponsoring some 300 to 500 expatriates. Many of these expatriates live in very miserable conditions. And they compete with the locals for the scarce jobs.

The economic realities have forced Bahrainis to enter all sorts of jobs including petrol stations; many locals work as porters in the central market complex. This is in sharp contrast to the situation in the neighbouring Gulf states. True those states are richer than Bahrain, but one wonders why there should be so many foreigners in the country if the nation could not feed its own people. Certainly the unemployment situation for Bahrainis would be considerably done away with if the expatri-

ate community was reduced by 50%. Still and based on the 1990 figures only 26.8% of the Bahrainis were in the labour force. May be only 20% of the national population actually is engaged in working. In the case of the U.S., labour force comprises 50% of the population and still there is serious job problems. In the case of Egypt it is 31.6%. Worse yet, the population is growing by around 3.2% annually and more and more are graduating from schools facing an uncertain future. All because "ruling family" has no time to plan for the future. The Al Khalifa members spend most of their time in show off cases, travelling or entertaining foreign women in their mansions.

The future is gloomy given the following facts. As of the date, nearly 37% of the Bahrainis are not part of the labour force because they are below 14. Every year, Bahrain's high schools and colleges graduate tens of people. Key employment industries such as banking and oil are set for major decline. Tourism is on the rise, but the field is not famous for local employment. It is believed that the government is now worried about finding suitable and unsuitable jobs for the citizen. However, it is too little too late.

The Amir's Road to Damsacus

The head of the ruling Al-Khalifa tribe (Amir) Sheikh Isa bin Salman Al-Khalifa paid a state-visit to Syria, a country that has usually been black-listed by Bahrain's security forces. Many opposition figures reside in Damascus and in the Eighties any Bahraini who dared to visit Syria was liable for persecution. So what has changed. After the second Gulf War, the Syrian joined the Allied forces and in the euphoric moment after victory on Iraq, the GCC declared a joint pact between the six Gulf Sheikdoms one side and Syria and Egypt on the other. This has never materialised. However, the Qataris have managed to out-manoeuvre the Gulf rulers by embarking on an active foreign policy in order to combat the influence of Saudi Arabia and win their case against Bahrain and Saudi Arabia over disputed territories.

The Al-Khalifa felt their weak position and decide to counter the Qatari offensive. Since the Qataris started talking to the Israelis, the Al-Khalifa decided to establish an opposing foreign policy axis, by paying a lip-service to a new relation with Syria involving security arrangement. This may help strengthen the position against Qatar when dealing with territorial disputes.

The Bahraini prime minister attempted to threaten the other Gulf rulers by sending positive signals to the Iraqi dictator, Saddam, Hussein. The Qataris managed to secure the Baghdad axis. So, the Al-Khalifa directed their mission to Iraq's arch-enemy, Syria. Will they succeed? No one knows, and since money

determines the ultimate winner and looser, Qatar's cheque-book is bigger.

The Attempt of the Bahraini government to enter the Arab politics in this way and at this movement could not be guaranteed to succeed. In a world where big fish can easily swallow the small ones, there is little place for a weak regime such as that of the Al Khalifa. They have always levied on the periphery of Arab politics, especially in light of their policy to go along the Saudi political line. With the Saudi-Qatari relations experiencing immense strain, the Al Khalifa felt it was their chance to make a move that could not provoke the Saudis. They had to be very careful. When, in June 1992, the Bahraini premier, Sheikh Khalifa bin Salman took the unusual step of contacting the Iraqi president, he was severely reprimanded by the Saudis. They time was not right then. It is still now right now. The Amir of Bahrain knows that the Qataris are gambling in their pro-Iraqi policies and could not continue doing so without an outside support. To protect themselves from a western backlash to their pro-Iraqi tendencies, they had to show a goodwill gesture towards Israel, a step that has been widely condemned both in the Gulf and the Arab world.

However, the Amir of Bahrain could still count on a Saudi stand which is both supportive and appreciative towards the recent trends in the Al Khalifa's internal and external policies. But short-term gains in this respect is offset by long-term sour relations internally. The Amir's Syrian trip could not have changed the chances of the Amir to the better.

The General Public Defies the Ban on Public Functions Human Rights Monitor

* A delegation of Bahraini opposition toured the European Union offices responsible for relations with the Gulf States and presented the appalling state of human rights in Bahrain. The delegation was warmly received and sympathy was expressed towards the cause of the troubled Bahraini people.

It is expected that with the continuing deterioration in the human rights situation, there will be a backlash against the government of Bahrain. The United Nations Human Rights Commission is under pressure to act to counter the ever-rising violations of human rights in the country. The Bahraini delegations met with various political parties and human rights organisations. Communiqués were issued and the European Parliament is preparing a resolution that could put the situation of human rights in Bahrain under European scrutiny.

* Greeting cards were distributed amongst the private and foreign firms and banks indicating the demands of the Bahraini people for restoring the parliamentary life, reactivation of the constitution, release of political detainees, abrogation of the State Security Law and return of exiled people.

* On the last Friday of Ramadan, people gathered in Mo'min Mosque to celebrate the Day of Quds and defy the authorities ban on public functions. The anti-riot police surrounded the area but did not intervene. Other public functions were held in other places in the presence of intelligence officers.

* Sheikh Abdul Amir Al-Jamri was summoned twice to the Interior Ministry. He was questioned about the public functions held in Mo'min Mosque and other places and why a permission was not sought. Al-Jamri answered: Why don't you issue an order in the national press to call for every public function to be permitted by the Interior Ministry?

* On 20 March, Seyid Hayder Al-Setri and Mr. Moneer Al-Nuaimi were summoned to the Hora Police HQ. The interrogator, Mr. Abdul Salam Al-Ansari questioned on the celebrations held in Mo'min Mosque and why a permission was not taken. The passport of Mr. Moneer Al-Nuaimi was confiscated and he is being called for more interrogations.

* The political prisoners in Jaw Prison No. 2 were transferred to Jaw Prison No. 1. There are now a total of 24 prisoners of conscience held at Jaw Prison No. 1. Criminal prisoners have been transferred to Jaw Prison No. 2. The latter has now been equipped with a TV for tantalising the prisoners of conscience who suffer from extreme restrictions on access to news, reading and writing materials.

* On the occasion of the Eid (End of the fasting month of Ramadan) the Authorities released the fourteen people detained after the attack on Mo'min Mosque on 19 January 1994. The released spoke of inhumane treatment and intimidation while in detention. Ten more peo-

ple were released after spending more than 12 years in jail after unfair trial.

* Amnesty International issued the following urgent action: EXTERNAL (for general distribution) Further information on UA 22/94 (MDE 11/02/94, 24 January 1994) - Fear of Torture / Legal Concern.

BAHRAIN: Tawfiq AL-MAHROUS, 'Abd al-Ridha AL-SHUWEIKH, 'Ali 'OMRAN, and 14 others (names unknown)

A number of arrests took place at al-Mu'min Mosque on 19 January 1994. Since then some have been released, but those named above and 14 others, whose names are not known, are believed to remain in prison. They may already have been charged and sentenced. Their whereabouts remain unknown and they are believed to be held in incommunicado detention. They may have been subjected to torture or ill-treatment.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The arrests allegedly took place on the evening of 19 January as members of the majority Shi'a community were gathered at al-Mu'min Mosque for the 40th day commemoration ceremony of the death of Ayatollah Golpayegani. The gathering was reportedly a peaceful one. According to reports the mosque was surrounded by police and those inside given five minutes to leave. The police then entered the mosque using tear gas and rubber bullets to disperse the crowd.

An unknown number of arrests took place at the mosque while others were arrested later at their homes. Some were allegedly beaten at the time of their arrest.

FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION:
Please send telegrams /telexes /faxes and airmail letters either in English, Arabic or in your own language:

- urging that the names and whereabouts of all those arrested on 19 January 1994, in connection with the gathering at al-Mu'min Mosque, be made public;

- seeking assurances that all those held are being humanely treated in accordance with international human rights standards, and that they are being granted access to lawyers, relatives and medical treatment, if necessary; if they have been tried and sentenced, requesting details such as the date and place of their trial, the charges of which they were convicted, and the sentences passed; urging the immediate and unconditional release of any who are held solely for the non-violent expression of their conscientiously held beliefs; requesting the authorities to initiate a thorough and independent inquiry into the reports of arrests and beatings by police during what appears to have been a peaceful ceremony on 19 January at al-Mu'min Mosque in Manama, and to make the findings public.

The List of the Don'ts

Life Without Human Values In Bahrain

Don't speak, Don't write, Don't gather, Don't ask... The list of the Don'ts in Bahrain is endless and you only have to live there to know how it feels to be under the rule of dictators.

In closed societies, where totalitarianism is the order of the day, little room for freedom and justice exists. Tools of oppression, laws of repression and state of fear become the norm. People are often banished in groups, and there is no room for public expression of agony. This is how Hitler ruled Germany and how Stalin monopolised power in the former Soviet Union. Many politicians all over the world tried to emulate the behaviour of these dictators and many had succeeded. Although their actions are not often scrutinised especially if they enjoy good relations with the West, circumstances change and their actions become known as time passes.

Until recently, dictators such as Saddam Hussain were viewed by the West as friends and allies, and the opposition was always viewed with suspicion and mistrust. The discovery by the West of the evil nature of Saddam's regime came too late, and the Iraqi people had to endure quarter of a century of endless repression. Still there is reluctance in the West when it comes to deal with the Iraqi situation. There are, however, other dictators on a smaller scale. They are not often apparent, but their people bear the cruelty of their regimes.

The government of Bahrain represent one of these regimes whose core politics are based on oppression. In fact, the Bahraini premier, Sheikh Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa looks to Saddam for guidance and often views his actions with admiration. In June 1992, Khalifa opened a dialogue with Saddam Hussain in a step that caused a furore at the time. The action was an attempt to annoy the Kuwaiti government but its implications were far-reaching. The government of Bahrain was severely reprimanded by the Saudis and has since then kept quiet.

However, it is difficult to convince the Bahraini people that their government deserves to be considered in a position other than that of the Iraqi regime. Bahrain has now become a place of total despair and fear to the extent that young Bahrain students abroad fear the reprisal of their government if they are asked to take part in any student activities regardless of their nature.

More worrying is the tendency in the last twenty years to monopolise all aspects of public activities. In Bahrain, for example, meeting of groups of any kind is prohibited unless authorised by the ministry of the interior. Under this context, the Mo'min mosque was burnt three months ago because an "unauthorised" meeting was taking place at the mosque at that time.

No one is allowed to collect money for charity work unless authorisation of the ministry of the interior is obtained. Cultural activities of any kind are not allowed except by official approval. Plays, concerts, seminars are among the activities governed by the emergency laws imposed by the Al Khalifa of Bahrain.

Subservience to Al-Saud Threatens Bahrain's Sovereignty Beyond The Petrodollars

The influence of the Saudi regime on Bahrain's affairs has augmented ever since the departure of the British troops from the island; Bahrain acquired its independence from Britain in August 1971. London did not like to see a Saudi domination over Bahrain's internal and foreign affairs. Observers have always viewed the Saudi movements in Bahrain with suspicious eyes for the Saudis have a proven record of aggression against the neighbours. This is true in the case of Saudi attack on Qatar and Saudi meddling in Yemen's affairs.

The Riyadh government's leverage on Manama stems from the significance of Saudi Arabia in Bahrain's economy and not Bahrain's dependence on Saudi security. In fact, Al Khalifa are aware of Riyadh's ambitions and designs on Bahrain.

In the early 1800s the Wahabis of Saudi Arabia had a representative in Bahrain levying taxes. When the Gulf tribal sheikhs succumbed to the British in 1820, the Saudi designs on these Gulf countries were delayed. But apparently oil discoveries in the region and World War Two had adversely affected the British influence on the region. Bahrain was under direct threat of a take-over by either the then Shah of Iran or Saudis.

The Al-Khalifa ruling family have always suspected the intentions of the Saudis, and only agreed to give the go-ahead for linking Bahrain to Saudi Arabia via a causeway after the US had managed to convince the Gulf rulers to unite against the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Now the Saudis have substantial say on the nation's oil-based economy. This started in the 1940s with the setting up of a pipeline to transfer oil from the Eastern Province in Saudi Arabia to the Sitra refinery. Bahrain is unique in the Gulf region as it does not export crude oil. All of the oil inshore is taken to the refinery for processing into petroleum products primarily for exports. Nearly 85% of the refinery's needs is imported from Saudi Arabia through the pipeline. And in 1958, Saudi Arabia asserted its control on Abu Sa'fa, a Bahraini offshore island. But the Saudis agreed to share the resources of Abu Sa'fa output sales on a 50-50 basis with Bahrain.

The inshore oil of Jebel Dukhan provides about 20% of the budget revenues. This averages some 42,000 barrels per day. It is very likely that the wells of Jebel Dukhan will run dry by the year 2005. The other source of oil revenues from crude oil stems from Abu Sa'fa which is shared with but controlled by Saudi Arabia. Here is the element of uncertainty for Bahrain. But to the Saudis, Abu Sa'fa is their best card to influence events in Bahrain given the importance of Abu Sa'fa to the budget. In 1992, the Riyadh government agreed to raise the share of Bahrain oil of Abu Sa'fa from 75,000 barrels per day to 100,000 barrels for the years 1993 and 1994 only. The decision was hailed by Al Khalifa as a clear sign of Saudi

generosity. With Saudis having so much oil, nearly 10 million barrels per day sustainable capacity, one wonders why the Saudis keep insisting on owning wells which originally belong to Bahrain. Thus, Bahrain's own production of inshore oil together with oil transfer (sold at the market price to Bahrain) from Saudi Arabia via the pipeline go for processing at Sitra. The finished products are sold mostly to Japanese firms. Bahrain does not export crude oil directly. The Abu Sa'fa oil is sold by ARAMCO and not by Bahrain. The authorities in Bahrain are credited the amount minus administrative expenses. The price of Saudi dominance is clear. The Saudis now have direct military access to the islands, they dictate most foreign policies, they dominate the official religious curriculum and they have a religious propagation society venting scattering hatred. It is that even the decision to attack the Mo'min Mosque in the heart of Manama had to do -in part- with satisfying the Saudis by clamping down on Shia religious activities.

The Saudis are noted for creating troubles in the area, so then the countries would appreciate having special ties to the Riyadh government. In fact, the very creation of the Gulf Cooperation Council was set up due to Saudi pressure; the Saudis were quite aware that the GCC would be dominated by Riyadh. The Americans were happy with the GCC. On a different note, much of the troubles in Yemen are caused by Saudi Arabia as Riyadh would like to see a weak neighbouring Yemen in order to win some territorial concessions and avert success of democracy. The Al-Khalifa government fears the Riyadh regime though publicly and formally all sorts of respect are shown to the Saudi government. Sometimes, the fear (or respect) goes beyond the internationally recognized protocol. For example, when Saudi Defence Minister Prince Sultan visits Bahrain, he is greeted on arrival by the Amir and not just his Bahraini counterpart.

True the priority to the regime is very survival but other considerations cannot be ignored. The regime spends some 43% of the budget on the internal security and defence together. At the stake is keeping the regime in power. At the same time, Bahrain's economy is badly in need of foreign investment. The point is that internal instability is not to the benefit of a regime that is looking for business confidence. News of the attack on Mo'min Mosque, for example, was widespread, reported by the Reuters, BBC, MEED and many other sources. Certainly, those in planning in Bahrain have received a blow in their marketing campaign. Both politically and economically, the attack on the mosque was a terrible mistake. Already many Bahrainis are jobless and such an attack would only serve the opposition and not the regime. The regime has thrived by using the carrot and stick policy. With Bahrain's economic trouble which has no end in sight, the stick is used more often. However, violence will eventually breed violence.

What Did Linda See: The Amir, His Brother Exploit Their Status Shamelessly

Here is an account of a British writer who visited Bahrain twenty years ago. Linda Blandford describes in her book "Oil Sheikhs" how the Amir, Sheikh Isa bin Salman Al-Khalifa and his brother, Sheikh Mohammed were conducting their lives. Twenty years on, nothing has changed.

Linda says: Isa's only Al Khalifa rival is the island's richest and meanest man, younger brother Mohammed. Mohammed has lost any chance of government power since his squabble with the ruler in 1968. The Bahrainis don't mind: they won't forget how he shone as chief of police and public security (1965: riots, 8 killed.).

Sheikh Mohammed broods in his white fortress of a palace and competes with Isa wherever he can. Isa runs a majlis for all the island's men to come for a moan and a prattle. Brother Mohammed must have one too. Isa takes delivery of a new model of Rolls Royce (popular guess: about 200 cars), Mohammed (popular guess: about 2000) does not waste a moment ordering his.

Mohammed sulks but he does not forget the call of business. A merchant, well-placed to know, puts Mohammed's income at a bout 100,000 dinars a month. Add up just a few of his many interest: 12,000 dinars a month rent from the Delmon hotel, 10,000 dinars from the Jashenmal office block (home of Manama's biggest department store on the ground floor, the garish new dinner-dance spot, the pearl on the top, and a crop of bankers' suites between Kleinwort Benson, Union Bank of Switzerland, British Bank of the Middle East...). And don't forget 14,000 dinars a month rent for the National Bank of Bahrain building.

He's a rich sulk. Isa has never been a sulk. But he's happiest on Fridays; his weekend timetable is a fixture. He sits in the majlis early in the morning, goes to mosque and then to the sea side. Not any old sea-side. The ruler has his own. I'm scooting along in a Mini-Moke; there's a holiday feeling in the air. Twenty-three miles out of Manama (having got past the depressing view of the Awali American oil town and the old ruler's palace rotting in the scrub) we come to a crossroads. The Datsuns, Toyotas and Bahrainis turn left to the Bapaco (Bahrain Oil Company) beach. We turn right, down a mud path to a riot of green trees (at last), and the rulers beach.

A soldier stops each car at the gate, to check in cameras, he hands out a cloakroom ticket and hangs up the camera on one of the hooks hammered into a nearby tree. It's already jammed with Pentax, Niccon, Leicaflex and Kodak instamatics. This unusual cloakroom attendant stops the Mini-Moke, glares hard at me and then gruffly addresses the Englishman at the wheel. "What nationality does it have?" This takes a while to sink in; he means me. "It's British" I answer indignantly. A long, thoughtful stare. "Hmm. You look like Arab lady. No come in if Arab lady" only the sight of a British passport satisfies him.