

**Sir Charles Belgrave and the Rise and Fall
of Bahrain's National Union Committee**

January 1953 to April 1957

by

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To the people of Bahrain

Table of Contents

	Abstract.....	i
	Abbreviations.....	ii
	Preface.....	iv
	Map.....	xvii
	Introduction.....	1
	<i>Part I: The Search for a ‘Hero’: the Rise of the Nationalist Movement</i>	
1	Background to Bahrain’s Sectarian Tensions, Trade Unions, and the Sunni-Shi’ite Clash of 1953, January 1953-February 1954.....	31
2	Bahrain’s ‘Suez Canal Companies’ and the attack on the Police Fort, March-September 1954.....	49
3	The Formation of the Nationalist Movement, October-December 1954.....	70
	<i>Part II: Turning East</i>	
4	Pacts and Committees, January-June 1955.....	87
5	The Nationalists cry ‘Arms for Egypt’, July-December 1955.....	116
	<i>Part III: The Nationalists’ Strike</i>	
6	Local Elections, the Glubb Affair, and Selwyn Lloyd’s Corner, January-10 March 1956.....	147
7	The Municipality Incident, Official Recognition of the Nationalist Movement, and the Belgrave Question, 11 March-June 1956.....	177
	<i>Part IV: The Imminent Clash and Downfall</i>	
8	Belgrave’s Resignation, the Ghosts of Past Appeasers, the Suez War, and Anti-British Riots in Bahrain, July-November 1956	231
9	The Trials, Exile, and Belgrave’s Departure, December 1956-April 1957	275
10	Conclusion.....	297
	List of Sources Consulted.....	303

Abstract

The period between 1953 and 1957 saw Bahrain at the zenith of the political struggle between Sir Charles Belgrave, the British Adviser to the Government of Bahrain appointed by the Ruler, and the local nationalist movement. The Adviser had exercised considerable influence and had managed various facets of government administration since his arrival in 1926. The Movement sought to limit Belgrave's authority through a set of demands for reform. These demands were to develop into a call for his dismissal. The Movement arose during the time that nationalism regionally (and in particular its Egyptian brand) was on the rise in the Arab World. This era was also marked by an awakening of the Soviet Union's interest in the Middle East and its resources as it established a foothold in the region through Egypt. The conflict in Bahrain represented a model of the global events of the Cold War as it threatened the cohesiveness of the Baghdad Pact and was among a series of events that fed into Britain's road to the 1956 Suez War.

This thesis offers insight into the political struggle as it traces the development of the nationalist movement; the major drives that steered it, particularly that of nationalism in Egypt; the role of the Adviser and whether his actions facilitated British policy or affected it negatively. It also explores British policy which sought to strike a balance between the Ruler, who wished to retain his Adviser, and the nationalists while preserving British interest in the region.

Abbreviations

ARAMCO	Arabian-American Oil Company, known today as the Saudi Arabian Oil Company
BAPCO	Bahrain Petroleum Company
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BDEEP	British Documents on the End of Empire Project
BOAC	British Overseas Airways Corporation
CENTO	Central Treaty Organisation
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency (US)
CIGS	Chief of the Imperial General Staff
CO	Colonial Office
COS	Chiefs of Staff
DEFE	Ministry of Defense
EOKA	The National Organisation of Cypriot Fighters
FLN	Front de Libération Nationale [The National Liberation Front]
FO	Foreign Office
HC	House of Commons
HEC	Higher Executive Committee
HH	His/Her Highness
HL	House of Lords
HM	His/Her Majesty
HMG	His/Her Majesty's Government

HMS	His/Her Majesty's Ship
ICC	Isa Cultural Centre
IOR	India Office Records
MEDO	Middle East Defence Organisation
MI6	Military Intelligence, Section 6
MP	Member of Parliament
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NUC	National Union Committee
PREM	Prime Minister's Office Files
RAF	Royal Air Force
RCC	Revolution Command Council
SEATO	South-East Asia Treaty Organisation
SOSFA	Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs
TNA	The National Archive
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
US (A)	United States (of America)
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WIYC	World Islamic Youth Congress
WTO	Warsaw Treaty Organisation

Preface

A little less than fifty years ago, Sir Charles Dalrymple Belgrave left Bahrain and went back to his home country, Britain. However his name will always be linked with the history of Bahrain. Some of the older generation of Bahrainis hold fond memories of Belgrave, the British Adviser to the Government of Bahrain from 1926 to 1957. My late grandmother used to describe how she would see Belgrave riding his horse in the early hours of the morning in the streets of the capital of Manama near his house waving to Bahrainis as he inspected the streets. Although he worked under the title of Adviser to the Government of Bahrain, his work was more comprehensive as he actually managed the affairs of the local Administration. During his stay in Bahrain he successfully created 'one of the best administrated states in the Middle East', as the former British diplomat to the Middle East Sir William Rupert Hay, noted.¹

His contributions affected the development of all aspects of Bahraini life and transformed the sheikhdom into a modern state. 'He Said Forward! To the Backward' declared *Life* magazine's reporter James Bell, as he documented the Adviser's work. Bell also added that the Adviser had 'made ancient Bahrain a model for a new Western policy in [the] Middle East'.² It was also Belgrave who

¹ W.R. Hay, 'The Impact of the Oil Industry on the Persian Gulf Shaykhdoms', *Middle East Journal*, 9.4, (1955), 361-72 (363).

² J. Bell, 'He Said Forward! To the Backward!', *Life*, 17 November 1952, 157-74 (157).

‘established law thus preventing subjugation and exploitation’, commented Bahraini writer and poet Hassan Kamal.³

His contributions were overshadowed, *inter alia*, by his centralisation of power, the public’s demand for reform, the rise of regional nationalist powers (in particular Egypt’s Free Officers’ Movement), and the exploitation of nationalists by the major powers during the Cold War. These global factors fed into a local political crisis in Bahrain. The nationalist movement that had arisen in Bahrain came to be known as the Higher Executive Committee, later renamed as the National Union Committee (or Committee of National Union). The Party is colloquially known in Bahrain as *Al-Hay’eh* (The Committee). The Movement offered a short-lived political *modus vivendi* between Muslim Sunnis and Shi’ites.

The fond memories that some in Bahrain held of the Adviser turned into anger aimed against him and Britain, as the country came under its protection. I vividly remember my mother recalling demonstrators in the capital Manama shouting slogans: ‘go home Belgrave!’, ‘down with Eden!’, and ‘down with Lloyd!’ during the Suez War. The last two were in reference to Sir Anthony Eden, the British Prime Minister and Sir Selwyn Lloyd, the British Foreign Secretary. Furthermore, I remember conversations from my childhood as I accompanied my late grandfather to local men’s *Majlis* (lounge) where they discussed their memories of events from that time period. I particularly remember the stories about the stoning of Lloyd’s car procession by demonstrators in Bahrain in March 1956.

Although the exact details of the discussions escape me, I have clear images of the

³ H. Kamal, ‘*Belgrave Al-Insan*’ [Belgrave the Person], *Kurasat Charles Belgrave 1926-1957* [Charles Belgrave’s Booklet], (Muharraq: 2008), 17-19 (17).

events from that time which were given to me through the memories of many Bahrainis from that generation. It was apparent that not only Belgrave left a mark on Bahrain's political scene but so did the members of the nationalist movement, in particular Abdul-Rahman Al-Bakir and Abdul-Aziz Al-Shamlan. Unfortunately many of those who survived that era -- regardless of their political inclinations -- have died without documenting their memories or perspectives of that crucial time in Bahrain's modern history.

Nothing captured my imagination more than my mother's story of her uncle and brother discreetly looking from the arabesque window of the family's old residence in *Fareej Al-Fadhel* (Al-Fadhel neighbourhood) in Manama in the early hours of 6 November 1956 as they witnessed the arrest of the leader of Bahrain's nationalist movement, Abdul-Rahman Al-Bakir, who lived in very near to the family's home. The arrest signalled the fall of the nationalist organisation.

As an adult, these second-hand memories of the events surrounding the conflict that had unfolded in Bahrain from 1953 to 1957 remained with me. I was curious to know more and I started to look for what had been published about them. I was also intrigued by the words of Bahraini journalist Saeed Al-Hamad in February 2012 as he commented in an article published by Bahrain's *Al-Ayam* (The Days) newspaper mourning the death of a supporter of the Movement. He said:

Documentation and writing about history is not part and parcel of our Arab culture. Despite the fact that many new generations studied in Western schools and universities, they did not learn how to implement it and are not influenced by this important Western quality. The history of our men and women from the national movement is scattered and under threat of being lost.⁴

⁴ S. Al-Hamad, '*Jassim BuHiji Wada'an*' [Farwell to Jassim BuHiji], *Al-Ayam*, 28 February 2012, 21.

These words of Al-Hamad and the encouragement of Bahraini historian and friend Dr Abdul-Hamid Al-Mahadeen to research further into Belgrave's life and influence re-kindled an interest that had been sparked in me as a child. This provoked me to research the struggle for power that engulfed the Bahraini Administration, managed by Belgrave, and the nationalist movement.

The conflict in Bahrain was not a mere internal political dispute but one that was influenced by regional changes with international repercussions overshadowed by the Cold War and a battle for supremacy by the superpowers in the Middle East. It baffled Britain and left its policy makers between the Scylla and Charybdis of how to handle the crisis and its fast-paced developments. The situation became so critical that it caused Sir Roger Stevens, the British Ambassador to Iran, to declare that 'The Bahrain issue may well prove to be a chink in the armour of the Baghdad Pact which its enemies may seek to exploit'.⁵ The so-called Baghdad Pact was in reference to the name given to the Western alliance brokered by Britain to defend the Middle East from possible Soviet aggression. Since the Bahraini nationalist party had aligned itself with Egyptian regional policy that stood in opposition to the Pact, this will be highlighted in this thesis.

Not only were the events of the political struggle in Bahrain a mystery to me, but so was the British policy towards the Movement throughout the Party's development. A sense of distrust existed regarding Belgrave's actions even after his death. Bahrain's former weekly newspaper *Al-Adwha'a* (The Lights) whose Editor-in-Chief was Mahmood Al-Mardi, one of Belgrave's opponents and a supporter of the

⁵ *The National Archives (TNA)*, FO 371/120545, Roger Stevens to FO, 30 March 1956.

nationalist movement, declared in its obituary of Belgrave in reference to the last years of his tenure:

History will tell whether the source of the decisions, judgments, and policies he implemented was himself and his diligence or were dictated to him from above or in line with the local situation prevalent during his tenure.⁶

Thus this thesis comes to address the political struggle between Belgrave who acted as the head figure of the Bahraini Administration on behalf of the Ruler and the nationalist movement of that era. This has required access to a wide range of primary sources.

Initial research was conducted on the *Records of Bahrain: Primary Documents 1820-1960*. The records included republished correspondences, reports, and letters *vis-à-vis* Bahrain from the India Office Records (IOR) and the Foreign Office (FO). Other similar republished volumes of documents were inspected such as the *Ruling Families of Arabia: Bahrain: the Ruling Family of Al-Khalifah* and *Arab Gulf Cities: Manama*. The volumes were either divided chronologically or by topic. These were used to identify relevant papers, names, and files during the process of research as they only included a selected number of documents. The next stage explored documents at The National Archives (TNA) at Kew, Richmond. The research method was based on exploring Bahrain's local events and also aimed at viewing the greater picture of developments regionally and globally. The research included, *inter alia*, names of personalities in relation to the thesis, location, departments, time period, British policy in Bahrain and the Middle East, and archives of the British Residency and Political Agency in the Gulf. Furthermore the documents explored at TNA

⁶ 'Wafat Al-Sir Charles Belgrave' [The Death of Sir Charles Belgrave], *Al-Adwha'a*, 6 March 1969, 3.

included, *inter alia*, letters on policy from the Foreign Secretary, correspondences between the Residency and the Eastern Department of the FO, letters from the Agency to the Residency (and *vice versa*), a collection of proclamations by the Ruler of Bahrain and correspondences, circulars, pamphlets, letters and petitions by the nationalist movement, letters forwarded by Belgrave to British officers in Bahrain, Ministry of Defense's Chiefs of Staff (COS) memoranda, the treasury's imperial and foreign division files, and Prime Ministerial notes and minutes of conversation.⁷ It should be said *en passant* that not all files from the period under study had dealt only with the political affairs of Bahrain. Some focused on other matters, such as court hearings and social life. It must also be noted that a number of FO folders on the Bahraini conflict at TNA included some repeated correspondences and instructions on British policy. For example the following folders: FO 1016/467, FO 371/120547, and FO 371/120573 included repeated documents among them. Britain's stance on Egypt, the Glubb Pasha issue, and the Baghdad Pact were additionally viewed. The British Cabinet papers at TNA were also explored which paid special attention to the Bahraini conflict after the Lloyd incident in March 1956. Overall, the documents at TNA provided a detailed insight onto the issue in Bahrain and illustrated how Britain's FO and the Residency handled the islands' political developments and internal strife as will be revealed in the thesis as events unfold. Documents at the IOR were also viewed but only to provide the necessary

⁷ If two or more correspondences from one party to another in the same folder and dated on the same date, the despatch number or other reference number of the correspondence was used to distinguish between the two.

background to the topic as the records of the archive do not cover the time period of the thesis.

The Government of Bahrain's annual reports republished in a number of volumes under the title of *Bahrain Government Annual Reports 1924-1970* were explored in the preparation of this thesis. The Residency's monthly and annual administration republished reports on the Gulf region were also scrutinised. These included the *Political Diaries of the Persian Gulf* and the *Persian Gulf Administration Reports*.

Another category covered was the memoirs and diaries of personalities directly related to the research. The memoirs of those concerned include Belgrave's memoir on Bahrain entitled *Personal Column* that offered a general sketch of the development of the crisis in Bahrain with little detail. Al-Bakir's account in *From Bahrain to Exile* in the Arabic language stands as the only published description of events from a member of the nationalist movement. There are a number of issues with the memoir. First, it provided only slight insight into the inner politics of the Movement. Second, two dominant gaps can be found in the memoir as little information is provided, the first was evident in 1955 and the second was during the period of Al-Bakir's departure from Bahrain between the end of March and September 1956. The third issue is Al-Bakir's incoherent narrative flow. He shifts from a topic to another one totally unrelated to it. In addition to Al-Bakir's memoir, a long speech he presented in Arabic in 1956 to the Kuwaiti Studentship Union entitled *The Political Situation in Bahrain and its Recent Events*, republished in 2007, was also reviewed.

Memoirs of other personalities who lived through the period under review were also consulted. For example, the memoirs of Resident Bernard Burrows *Footnotes in the Sand* and *Diplomat in a Changing World* and the memoir of Ivor Lucas *A Road to Damascus: Mainly Diplomatic Memoirs from the Middle East* who was employed at the Residency and established contact with the Movement was examined. Memoirs of British Cabinet and international policy makers were also observed. Additionally, memoirs by British employees in Bahrain and travellers to the island were obtained. Two key memoirs provided a rare insight into the various stages of the Bahraini conflict. The first was by a former employee at the Bahrain Petroleum Company (BAPCO), HV Mapp who extended a rare insight into the work and views of Al-Bakir as he developed a close friendship with him in late 1952 and early 1953 as observed in his publication *Leave Well Alone! Where Oil Shapes Dynasties and Destinies*. The other memoir *The Golden Bubble: Arabian Gulf Documentary* was by the traveller Roderic Owen who claimed to be an eyewitness to the stoning of Lloyd's car convoy.

The known memoirs of the Free Officers' Movement, Egyptian politicians, and journalists were also investigated. These memoirs proved a disappointment in this regard as no information was available on their policy in Bahrain. Three memoirs that dealt with the life of two of the eight frontline members of the Movement by their sons or relatives were published in Arabic in Bahrain. These included the memoir of Abdul-Karim Al-Alaiwat son of Abd-Ali Al-Alaiwat entitled *Bahrain... My Memoir from the Committee to Independence*. The other two memoirs were also published by a son and a relative respectively of Al-Syed Ali Kamal-el-

Deen, the first by Ebrahim Kamal-el-Deen entitled *A Nation's Memory* and the second by Hassan M Kamal-el-Deen entitled *On the Nation's Shores: The Scholarly Reformer Al-Sayed Ali Al-Sayed Ebrahim Kamal-el-Deen*. The three publications did not provide any new information on the topic.

Published and unpublished diaries and papers were also studied. This included the personal diary of Belgrave found at the University of Exeter's Special Collections. The diary offered some insight into the conflict from the Adviser's perspective. However although Belgrave mentioned his encounters with British or Bahraini personalities involved in the crisis, he rarely offered details of those encounters. Additionally Selwyn Lloyd's papers and diary at Churchill College Cambridge were searched which proved to be a disappointment as little information is provided on the affair. This is in addition to the published diary entries of Sir Evelyn Shuckburgh (the Foreign Secretary's Principal Private Secretary 1951-54 and the FO's Under-Secretary overseeing Middle Eastern affairs 1954-56) known as *Descent to Suez: Diaries 1951-1956: Evelyn Shuckburgh* and his unpublished work at the University of Birmingham. Shuckburgh's work provided insight onto Eden's reaction to events as they unfolded. An account of a diary in Arabic kept by Al-Shamlan, a frontline member of the nationalist party was collected and published in Arabic by the late Bahraini journalist Khalid Al-Bassam. The diary entitled *Exile Diaries: Abdul-Aziz Al-Shamlan in Saint Helena 1956-1961* was collected from Al-Shamlan in the 1980s but was only published in 2007 by Al-Bassam. The published diary started in late December 1956 and ended in March 1959 though the title might give a *prima facie* case that it lasted until 1961 since the editor filled the gap years

with general information. The diary focused primarily on events following the Party's downfall and presented little information of the events under review here.

Other personal archives of British personalities who impacted the nationalists, were involved in and/or adopted the campaign to free its exiled members such as Barbara Ann Castle, Nevill Barbour, VA Wight-Boycott, Reginald Paget, and Donald Chesworth's, were observed. These did not contain any new information of value. Additionally, Hansard's record of debates at the House of Lords (HL) and House of Commons (HC) were searched. The debates provided an insight on how some British politicians viewed the conflict in Bahrain. However most of the debates occurred during the final months of the Movement and following the exile of three of the Party's members. Documented oral projects on the Suez War or with British diplomats that included interviews with personalities who offered insight on the Bahraini conflict, such as Churchill College Cambridge's *The British Diplomatic Oral History Programme* and King's College London's *Suez Oral History Project, 1956*, were also reviewed.

Newspapers from the era under study were examined. First, the archive of nationalist press from the 1950s which consisted of articles by members and supporters of the Bahraini Movement that included the magazine known as *Sawut Al-Bahrain* (The Voice of Bahrain) and biweekly newspapers such as *Al-Qafilah* (The Caravan), *Al-Watan* (The Nation), and *Al-Mizan* (The Scale). The archives of those publications are available at Isa Cultural Centre (ICC) in Bahrain. Second, archives of international press, including *The Manchester Guardian/The Guardian*, *The Times*, *The Observer*, *Daily Express*, *Daily Mirror*, *The Spectator*, *Reynold's News*, the *New*

York Times, *Chicago Sun-Times*, and *The Economist* were consulted. International press interest in the conflict was dominantly noticeable following the stoning of Lloyd's car and the subsequent events.

Rare interviews and articles on the Movement and its personalities were also inspected from modern Bahraini out-of-print or existing newspapers post the 1950s that were collected personally or were available at the ICC or in the Abdullah Al-Zayed House for Bahraini Press Heritage and Extension in Bahrain. In relation to the court hearings on the exiled members of the Movement in St Helena, available information was viewed from the Incorporated Council of Law Reporting for England and Wales, the British and Irish Legal Information Institute, and FO and Colonial Office (CO) papers at TNA. The Incorporated Council of Law Reporting's papers included detailed information on the proceedings themselves. The FO's papers concentrated mostly on the political aspect of the case and the CO's papers focused mostly on details of the proceedings, with repeated information on the Movement's background, arrests in Bahrain, and deportation to St Helena. Additionally the CO's papers included affidavits for witnesses related to the case.

Correspondences among Western policy makers were also investigated either through TNA's archives or from published ones, such as *The Churchill-Eisenhower Correspondence, 1953-1955* and *The Eden-Eisenhower Correspondence, 1955-1957*. Finally, republished government documents from the *British Documents of the End of Empire Project* (BDEEP) were also examined *vis-à-vis* British policy and activities in the region during the period under review. Other documents relating to regional events and policy were also searched at TNA. Additional republished

international documents from the *Foreign Relations of the United States* (FRUS) series and *Documents on International Affairs 1956* were inspected.

The transliteration of Arabic names in the thesis is adapted from modern usage. An effort was also made to use the accepted transliteration of family names as adopted by each family's descendants in Bahrain. In addition, personalities mentioned here are referred to by their last names. However common usage declares that sometimes certain figures in the Arab World are referred to by their first names (e.g. 'Nuri Al-Saeed' as 'Nuri').

It is intended that this thesis will fill in the gap of public knowledge about the political struggle that took place in Bahrain from 1953 to 1957. It must be said that this has been a long quest to find substantive answers to the questions raised around this complex moment in the long history of Bahrain.

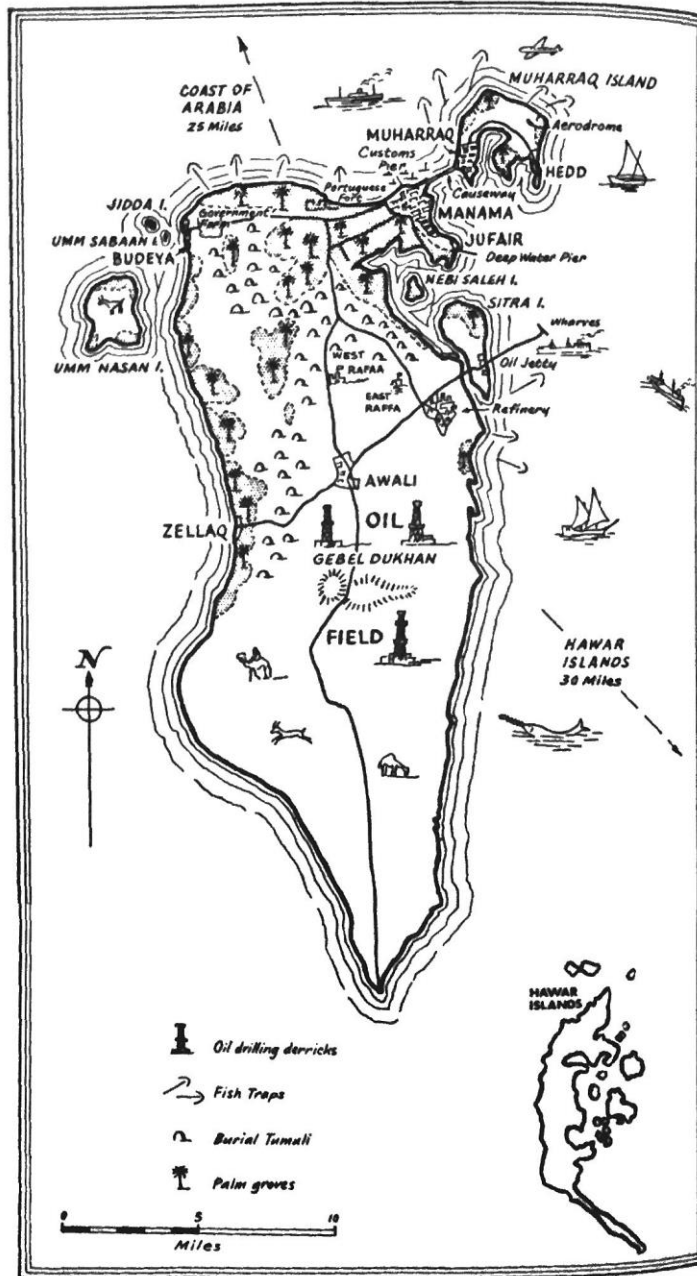
It would not have been possible for this thesis to have been brought to light without the assistance, support, and guidance of numerous people. I extend my gratitude to my supervisor Professor John Charmley for his support and direction. I also offer my appreciation to Professor Cathie Carmichael for her support and the University of East Anglia for awarding me a studentship during my period of study.

I would also like to thank a number of universities, archives, and institutions for their assistance in retrieving documents necessary for my research. I am deeply grateful to the following individuals: Dr Rosie Llewellyn-Jones, Archivist at the Royal Society for Asian Affairs; Paul Hastings and Helen Yates at the Incorporated Council of Law Reporting; Catherine Martin, Martin Killeen, Helen Fisher, and Vicky Clubb at the Cadbury Research Library in the University of Birmingham. Further, I extend

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The islands of Bahrain



Reproduced from Charles Belgrave, Personal Column (Beirut: 1972)

Introduction

The political struggle between Bahrain's Administration, represented by the person of the British Adviser Sir Charles Belgrave, and the political movement of the 1950s offered a unique look into Britain's role and policy in a state under British protection. Regional political transformations and fear of the Soviet expansion that led Britain on the road to the Suez *debacle* cast shadows on the internal politics of Bahrain.

The driving force behind Bahrain's mid-twentieth century nationalist movement of the 1950s was that of an *esprit de corps* based on Arab unity and nationalism. The British Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Sir William Strang in a letter to Sir Thomas Lloyd as early as June 1952 noted his views on 'The problem of nationalism'. Strang defined nationalism

as the emotions of a people or group of people primarily in backward or 'new' countries seeking to assert their national aspirations. These can often but by no means invariably be fulfilled only at the expense of the older Western Powers.

He further added that nationalism centered on 'internal discontent and the need to find a scapegoat or distraction'.⁸ The scapegoat and person the nationalists would lay their wrath on in Bahrain would become the person of the Adviser.

⁸ *British Documents of the End of Empire (BDEEP)*, Series A, Part I, vol. 3, 'The Conservative Government and the End of Empire', 1951-1957. Doc. 4: CO 936/217, [The problem of nationalism]: letter from Sir W Strang to Sir T Lloyd, *Enclosure*: FO Permanent Under-Secretary's Committee paper, 21 June 1952.

In order to understand the nature of Bahrain's political scene in the mid-twentieth century, it is imperative to provide a brief overview of Bahrain, its social composition, British-Bahraini relations, British representation in the region, how the position of the Adviser developed as occupied by Belgrave, and the rise of regional nationalist elements that provided the perfect environment for the rise of the nationalist movement of the 1950s.

The archipelago consisting of the islands of the modern Kingdom of Bahrain lies in the heart of the Arabian Gulf.⁹ Bahrain consists of thirty-three islands. The main and largest island in the archipelago is named as Bahrain and is home to the country's capital city of Manama. The islands' geographically neighbours are Saudi Arabia to the West and Qatar to the Southeast.

The country is home to a diverse population of Arabs (Muslim Sunnis), *Baharna* (Arab Muslim Shi'ites), *Hawala* (Arab Sunnis who were in constant migration and travel between the two sides of the Arabian Gulf shores) and Persians (majority of whom are Shi'ites). Bahrain is also home to a minority of Jews and Christians. Sunni-Shi'ite relations, marked by occasional tensions between the two sides, are a significant feature of the era in Bahrain's political scene of the period under study in the thesis.¹⁰

The ruling family in Bahrain is the Al-Khalifas who originated from the Nejd in the Arabian Peninsula and were among a group of Sunni families known as the

⁹ Throughout the current thesis, 'Arabian Gulf' is adopted in reference to the Persian Gulf.

¹⁰ The closest census conducted in relation to the time period of the thesis was in 1950. According to the census the population of Bahrain including foreigners was 109,650. The census did not assess the Sunni to Shi'ite ratio. See 'Government of Bahrain: Annual Report for Year 1369 (October 1949-October 1950)', in *The Bahrain Government Annual Reports 1924-1956*, vol. IV 1947-1952, ed. R.L. Jarman, (Buckinghamshire: 1986), 1-77 (6).

Utobs. The Al-Khalifas conquered Bahrain, which was then governed by Nasir Al-Mathkoor, in 1783 under the command of Sheikh Ahmed bin Mohammed Al-Khalifa, known by all in Bahrain as Ahmed *Al-Fateh* (the Conqueror).¹¹

Britain's incursion into the Arabian Gulf came through its establishment of a residency for its East India Company in 1763 for the purpose of trade. The harassment of British ships in the Gulf's waters encouraged it to impose its authority on the region by the use of force and through a series of treaties with the Arab sheikhdoms.¹² From 1820 to 1971 Bahrain was bound by treaties with Britain, the first, signed in 1820, was known as the General Treaty and was also signed by various sheikhdoms in the region. It included, *inter alia*, the outlaw of piracy, the establishment of peaceful relations between the sheikhdoms and the British Government, and the registration of ships.¹³ The second treaty was signed in 1861 and was made directly between the Ruler of Bahrain and the British Government. It called on Bahrain to abstain 'from the prosecution of war, piracy, and slavery by sea' and was tied to a British offer to protect the islands from external aggression. The treaty also granted the special treatment of British subjects, trade, and it specified tax duties.¹⁴ A new agreement, which restricted Bahrain's foreign relations, was

¹¹ M. Gazal, *Tarikh Al-Utob Al-Khalifa fi Al-Bahrain min 1700 ila 1970* [The History of Al-Utobs Al-Khalifas in Bahrain from 1700 to 1970] (Manama: 1991), 80; J.B. Kelly, *Britain and the Persian Gulf 1795-1880*, (New York: 1991), 26-27; and 'Introduction', in *Ruling Families of Arabia: Bahrain: The Ruling Family of Al-Khalifah*, ed. A.D.L. Rush, (London: 1991), xv-xvi.

¹² W.R. Hay, *The Persian Gulf* (Washington: 1959), 11-12; and P. Risso, 'Cross-Cultural Perceptions of Piracy: Maritime Violence in the Western Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf Region during a Long Eighteenth Century', *Journal of World History*, 12.2, 293-319 (314-15).

¹³ *India Office Records (IOR)/L/PS/20/C158D*, General Treaty with the Arab Tribes of the Persian Gulf-1820, 23 February 1820.

¹⁴ *IOR/L/PS/20/C158D*, Terms of a Friendly Convention Entered into between Shaikh Mohamed bin Khalifah, Independents Ruler of Bahrain, on the Part of Himself and Successors, and Captain Felix Jones, Her Majesty's Indian Navy, Political Resident of Her Britannic Majesty in the Gulf of Persia, on the Part of the British Government, 1861.

signed in 1880. The treaty forbade Bahrain from holding treaties with foreign states without the British Government's prior approval. In addition, Bahrain was not allowed to let any other state establish a consulate without British consent.¹⁵ The treaty was followed by another in 1892 that added a further clause in which Bahrain would forbid the sale or occupation of its property to other foreign states, apart from Britain.¹⁶

With these treaties Bahrain became part of Britain's informal empire, a phrase traced to Dr CR Fay in the *Cambridge History of the British Empire* in 1940. The phrase was further explored and developed by historians John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson in their article *The Imperialism of Free Trade* in 1953. Gallagher and Robinson believed that Britain's industrialisation 'necessitated linking underdeveloped areas with British foreign trade' with a policy of extending power to these regions 'informally if possible and formally if necessary'.¹⁷ Informal empire as viewed by historian Ian Brown can be

characterized as a deliberate attempt on the part of a metropolitan power to determine the economic policies of another state in its own interests by any means short of out-right annexation.¹⁸

The Persian Gulf Residency administered the affairs of the Arab Gulf States under British protection. The head of the Residency (the Resident) oversaw the operation of his representatives in the Gulf and handled with His/Her Majesty's

¹⁵ IOR/L/PS/20/C158D, Translation of Agreement Signed by the Chief of Bahrain, 22 December 1880.

¹⁶ IOR/L/PS/20/C158D, Exclusive Agreement of the Shaikh of Bahrain with the British Government, 13 March 1892.

¹⁷ J. Gallagher and R. Robinson, 'The Imperialism of Free Trade', *The Economic History Review*, 6.1, (1953), 1-15 (7 and 13).

¹⁸ I. Brown, 'British Financial Advisers in Siam in the Reign of King Chulalongkorn', *Modern Asian Studies*, 12.2, (1978), 193-215 (214).

Government's (HMG) policy in the region. The representatives who reported to the Residency were known as Political Agents and each maintained his own personal staff headquartered in the Political Agency. The Agents interacted with the rulers, each responsible for his designated region. The Agency was also responsible for the affairs and wellbeing of the people who came under HMG's responsibility. The Residency's offices moved from Bushire in southwest Persia to Juffair in Bahrain in 1946.¹⁹ According to former Resident Sir William Rupert Hay, the Residency following India's independence in 1947, was considered to be 'subordinate to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in London'. The Resident enjoyed the status of that of an ambassador.²⁰ Both the Residency and Agency would later play a role as mediators between the Bahraini Administration and nationalist movement.

A report despatched by the British Resident in the Gulf Stuart G Knox to Sir Denys de S Bray, the Foreign Secretary to the Government of India, elaborated further on the circumstances and steps taken towards political reform in Bahrain that led to Belgrave's appointment. Reform was initially imposed following a fight that broke out between a group of *Nejdīs*, dominantly Sunnis originating from the centre of the Arabian Peninsula, and Persian Shi'ites on 10 May 1923. The fighting developed alarmingly into a Sunni-Shi'ite quarrel throughout the islands that demanded British interference on the ground three days later. It was estimated that five died during the clashes. The incident provided a pretext to the Residency to force the seventy-five-year-old Ruler of Bahrain His Highness (HH) Sheikh Isa bin Ali Al-Khalifa to step down and allow his son to take over for the purpose of

¹⁹ TNA, FO 371/98459, A.D.M. Ross at FO, 26 March 1952.

²⁰ Hay, *The Persian Gulf*, 19.

introducing reform. As a result of British pressure, the Ruler's eldest son HH Sheikh Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa became the new head of the Sheikdom in 1923. Knox believed that with this new and young leadership, 'Bahrain should not be left without a good Englishman in charge' who 'should be prepared to stay' and understand how matters function on the islands.²¹ Early reform was sought in the capacity of management of the country's finances, the reorganisation of customs, the establishment of government offices in Manama, and a survey of the islands as proposed by Bahrain's Political Agent Clive Kirkpatrick Daly.²²

The Residency contemplated on the position, title, and overall responsibilities of the Englishman to be in charge of affairs in Bahrain. One of the initial proposals was to hire an assistant to the Political Agent. Daly proposed that the assistant be paid directly by Bahrain, a view that was not encouraged by Resident Lieutenant-Colonel Arthur P Trevor.²³ The idea of an assistant to the Political Agent never materialised as an initiative from the Residency. However in 1925, it took on a different form when the Ruler of Bahrain Sheikh Hamad asked Daly to assist him to recruit a British officer to work for his Government in the capacity of Financial Adviser. The idea for the position was possibly inspired by an earlier experiment in which the Englishman Bertram Thomas was hired by the Sultan of Muscat and Oman to administer the Sultanate's finances, as Resident Francis B Prideaux noted.²⁴ To aid the process of searching for the right candidate,

²¹ IOR/R/15/1/331, Residency to Foreign Secretary to the Government of India, Enclosing Report on Bahrain Reforms, 31 May 1923.

²² IOR/R/15/1/331, Daly to Knox, 10 June 1923.

²³ IOR/L/PS/10/1039, Residency to Government of India, 26 December 1923.

²⁴ IOR/R/15/2/128, Residency to India Office Political Department, 15 September 1925.

an advertisement in the 'Personal Column' section of *The Times* of London was placed in 1925. The advertisement sought the services of a man aged between twenty-two and twenty-eight with minimum education to work for an unspecified eastern state. The advertisement caught the attention of Charles Belgrave, a thirty-one-year-old British officer who was in London at the time on leave from service in East Africa and he decided to forward his résumé.²⁵

Belgrave was called to an interview in London by the Gulf's Resident Prideaux. The Resident confirmed to the India Office's Political Department that Belgrave was on leave from Tanganyika in East Africa. He also noted some of Belgrave's skills that included a command of Arabic, Swahili, and French. Belgrave was chosen as the most suitable candidate for the job and was informed by Prideaux that he was to be posted and would come under the pay of Bahrain.²⁶ There seemed to have been some confusion in relation to Belgrave's age, since the advertisement required a man in his twenties while Belgrave was in his thirties. The confusion deliberate or not was justified by Belgrave to Prideaux in a letter dated 11 September 1925. He apologised for what had apparently been a misunderstanding on his part about his age, as he said that he had thought he was twenty-eight years old but when he got a hold of his birth certificate it was apparent to him that he was born in 1894.²⁷

Belgrave's résumé presented with his application provided an overview of his career prior to his appointment in Tanganyika. For his education, Belgrave

²⁵ C.D. Belgrave, *Personal Column*, (Beirut: 1972), 7-9.

²⁶ IOR/R/15/2/128, Residency to India Office Political Department, 15 September 1925.

²⁷ IOR/R/15/1/362, Belgrave to Prideaux, 11 September 1925.

attended Bedford School and was later enrolled at Lincoln College, Oxford, for a semester. He was unable to further his education as he enrolled to serve his country in the 1914-18 First World War. Belgrave joined the Royal Warwickshire Regiment in February 1915 and received training until August when he was assigned to the British Camel Company in Sudan. In early 1917 he was stationed in Egypt and Palestine. After the war he was appointed to his first administrative post in 1920 as a Political Officer and Judicial Officer in the Siwa Oasis in the west of Egypt.²⁸ Belgrave was the son of a barrister-at-law named Dalrymple James Belgrave who died on 2 May 1922.²⁹

A draft of the agreement to appoint Belgrave was created to be signed between him and the Ruler of Bahrain, Sheikh Hamad. The initial period of employment was for four years.³⁰ Prideaux outlined to the Foreign Secretary to the Government of India what responsibilities Belgrave was required to undertake. Though the official title of Belgrave would be the Financial Adviser to the Government of Bahrain, he would 'work as Personal Assistant to Shaikh Hamad'. He would further be instructed to supervise administrative work of the state.³¹

Before his departure from London for Bahrain, Belgrave married through his family's association Marjorie Lepel Barrett-Lennard, a Baron's daughter, in early 1926.³² Her brother, Sir Richard Barrett-Lennard, served as a Director of Norwich Union insurance company and who (through Belgrave and a Bahraini merchant)

²⁸ IOR/R/15/1/362, Belgrave's Résumé.

²⁹ 'Obituary: Dalrymple James Belgrave', *The Times*, 4 May 1922, 1.

³⁰ IOR/R/15/1/362, Memorandum of Agreement between the Ruler of Bahrain and Belgrave.

³¹ IOR/R/15/2/128, Residency to Foreign Secretary to the Government of India, 10 October 1925.

³² Belgrave, *Personal Column*, 11.

helped to establish representation to the company in Bahrain.³³ Belgrave and his newly-wedded wife arrived in Bahrain on 31 March 1926.³⁴ The official appointment of Belgrave by the Government of Bahrain addressed to the Political Agency was dated 12 April 1926.³⁵ Belgrave borrowed the name of *The Times* advertisement section as the title for his published memoir on Bahrain, *Personal Column*.

The initial contract of four years in service to Bahrain's Government became three decades. Belgrave's presence was felt early as was documented by the Political Agent in Bahrain, Captain CG Prior, to the Secretary to the Resident in 1929. Reforms undertaken by Belgrave in the first three years of his service were summarised by Prior into the following points: his control of expenditure; the reorganisation of customs; the reformation of courts; the organisation of the pearl industry; the establishment of a Land Department with a survey of Bahrain in the process of completion; the development of the Police Force (the Adviser also assumed the title of Police Commandant); the development of a Public Works Department (with the intention of installing electricity soon); the organisation of *Waqfs*;³⁶ the establishment of a municipality on Muharraq Island; and the establishment of the first girls' school. With the rate of developments that took

³³ J. Mantle, *Norwich Union: The First 200 Years* (London: 1997), 90-91; K.M. Kanoo, *The House of Kanoo: A Century of an Arabian Family Business* (London: 1997), 146; and M. Field, *The Merchants: The Big Business Families of Arabia* (London: 1984), 281.

³⁴ Belgrave, *Personal Column*, 15.

³⁵ IOR/R/15/2/128, Government of Bahrain to Daly, 12 April 1926.

³⁶ *Waqf*: Religious endowments.

place turning Bahrain from a sheikhdom to a modernised state, Prior believed 'that it will be impossible to dispense with Mr Belgrave'.³⁷

Before the discovery of oil in commercial amounts in 1932 in Bahrain, the state was known mainly for its pearl industry and the employment of its youth in the trade. Bahraini pearl merchants sold their wares in, Mumbai, London, and Paris. The development of the oil industry, the arrival on the market of cultured pearls from Japan, the modernisation of Bahrain, and the establishment of foreign companies caused the pearl industry to decline and gradually to close.³⁸

Belgrave's management of the Administration led to centralisation of power and the title he adopted in government correspondences was the Adviser instead of the Financial Adviser. This centralisation earned him titles like the '*de facto* Prime Minister' of Bahrain and its 'chief executive'.³⁹ His tight grip on the state's affairs and Administration resulted in discontent as early as 1934 and was noticeable in early 1935. It was the *Baharna* who voiced their disapproval of some of the Administration's policies as Belgrave outlined to the Political Agent Colonel Loch. Two figures from among the protesters would later become frontline members of the nationalist movement of the 1950s: Abd-Ali Al-Alaiwat and Mohsin Al-Tajir.⁴⁰ Their demands centered on three issues, the first being the reform of courts, 'Proportional Representation on the Municipal Councils' of Manama and Muharraq,

³⁷ IOR/R/15/2/127, Prior to the Secretary to the Resident, 29 June 1929.

³⁸ Hay, 'The Impact of the Oil Industry on the Persian Gulf Shaykhdoms', 361-72 (362); and C.D. Belgrave, 'Bahrain', *Journal of The Royal Central Asian Society*, 15.4, (1928), 440-45 (442).

³⁹ W. Wyatt, *Confessions of an Optimist* (London: 1985), 245; J. Onley, *Britain and the Gulf Shaikhdoms, 1820-1971: The Politics of Protection* (Doha: 2009), 18; and M. Field, *The Merchants: The Big Business Families of Arabia* (London: 1984), 91.

⁴⁰ IOR/R/15/2/176, Belgrave to Colonel Loch, 28 January 1935.

and improved education facilities, as summarised by Resident Lieutenant-Colonel Trenchard Fowle.⁴¹

Although the demands of the mid-1930s faded as they were poorly supported, they returned in a different form in 1938. Again the *Baharna* issued a set of demands that included the establishment of a Legislative Committee, reform of the Police Force, reform of courts, the termination of the services of the Education Department's Inspector, dismissal of two Shi'ite *Sharia* (Islamic law) judges, and the declaration of Sheikh Salman as heir-apparent, as the Ruler had yet to publically proclaim a successor.⁴² In the same year, a movement from among the Sunnis rose in Bahrain. It was led by Ali bin Khalifa Al-Fadhel, Ebrahim bin Abdulla Kamal, Ahmed Al-Shirawi, and Saad Al-Shamlan. The last member was the father of Abdul-Aziz Al-Shamlan, the frontline member of the political movement of the mid-twentieth century. According to Belgrave in Bahrain's annual government report for the year 1938, the Sunnis had unsuccessfully attempted to unite Sunnis and Shi'ites in a single political front. The Shi'ites, however, 'were not drawn into the affair' as the Adviser declared. The demands centered on, *inter alia*, the formation of a Legislative Council, reform in the judiciary system, and the establishment of a committee to supervise the education department.⁴³ The nationalists of the 1950s were to echo these demands. The Movement was overpowered by the Administration and its ringleaders were arrested.

⁴¹ IOR/R/15/1/343, Fowle to Foreign Secretary to the Government of India, 18 March 1935.

⁴² IOR/R/15/2/176, Minutes on the Agitators Objectives, February 1938.

⁴³ 'Government of Bahrain: Annual Report for Year 1357 (March 1938-February 1939)', in *The Bahrain Government Annual Reports 1924-1956*, vol. II, 1937-1942, ed. R.L. Jarman, (Buckinghamshire: 1986), 1-56 (29).

Britain's Political Agent Hugh Weightman noted to the Residency the possible causes for the rise of the Movement. He highlighted the rise in nationalism among newly-educated Bahraini youth though its ideals had arrived late to the islands, the formation of a Legislative Council in Kuwait and disturbances in Dubai both in 1938, the reduction in size of BAPCO's local labour force, the collapse of the pearl industry, and the subsequent bankruptcies among merchants.⁴⁴ In addition to the demands publically presented (according to the Political Agent's unnamed informant) the supporters of the Movement in 1938 did not wish to see Belgrave remain in Bahrain or, if he did so, for his duties to be limited to the financial aspect of the Administration.⁴⁵

The period of the 1939-45 Second World War and shortly after witnessed a time of internal political stability in Bahrain. Sheikh Hamad the Ruler of Bahrain died at the age of seventy on 20 February 1942.⁴⁶ His eldest son, HH Sheikh Salman bin Hamad Al-Khalifa, had been declared his successor by his father and he was recognised as the Ruler of Bahrain by HMG.⁴⁷ The role of the new Ruler would become significant during the rise and fall of the political movement in the 1950s, as will be made clear later in this thesis.

The decision in 1947 by Britain to withdraw from Palestine and the subsequent United Nations' (UN) partition of Palestine had an effect on Bahrain and demonstrations ran rampant. Trouble in Bahrain occurred on 4 and 5 December

⁴⁴ IOR/R/15/1/343, Weightman to Fowle, 19 November 1938.

⁴⁵ IOR/R/15/1/343, Weightman's Report on Bahrain, 27 October 1938.

⁴⁶ IOR/R/15/2/803, Death Certificate of Sheikh Hamad Al-Khalifa, 20 February 1942.

⁴⁷ 'Administration Report of the Persian Gulf for the Year 1942', in *The Persian Gulf Administration Reports 1873-1947*, vol. X 1941-1947, 1-22 (2-3).

1947. A group of men who labelled themselves as the Popular Front, a majority of whom were Sunnis, played a role in the events that were associated with the disturbances in support of the Palestinian cause. Others in Bahrain joined the demonstrations that turned into a riot. In relation to the disturbance at least three of the organisers named by Belgrave became prominent or founding members of the later nationalist movement. They were Abdul-Aziz Al-Shamlan, Mahmood Al-Mardi, and Mohammed Qassim Al-Shirawi.⁴⁸

British officials in Bahrain considered as early as 1946 the position of Belgrave. Resident Hay noted to EP Donaldson at the India Office that Belgrave would turn fifty-five years of age in late 1949 and that Britain's policy ought to 'ensure that he goes then if nothing has induced him to retire earlier'.⁴⁹ Further, Hay sensed that Belgrave had intended to have his only son James Hamad Belgrave groomed to take over his responsibilities as Adviser.⁵⁰ Although the Resident credited Belgrave for masterminding the development of Bahrain, he believed that Belgrave had failed to keep up with the changing times and was too deeply attached to the *ancien regime*.⁵¹

In Bahrain, 1950s saw the return from Qatar of Abdul-Rahman Al-Bakir who, in the view of this thesis, became the principal orchestrator of the nationalist movement. Al-Bakir was born in Bahrain in 1917. From there he traveled to various places, including Qatar, Dubai, and Africa and worked as an employee at

⁴⁸ TNA, FO 371/68330, Belgrave's Note on the Anti-Palestine Partition Disturbances.

⁴⁹ TNA, FO 371/68881, Resident to India Office, 10 July 1946.

⁵⁰ TNA, FO 371/68881, Resident to India Office, 3 September 1946.

⁵¹ TNA, FO 371/68319, Residency to Foreign Office, 17 April 1948.

BAPCO in 1936.⁵² In his memoir Al-Bakir claimed that after a short stay in Bahrain in the late 1940s he returned to Qatar in 1949 to participate in the establishment of a construction company there. He would visit Bahrain on a monthly basis until 1952 when he settled back there.⁵³ He did not elaborate further on the reason of his permanent departure from Qatar. Al-Bakir's work and activities prompted Charles Gault, the then Political Agent in 1956, to search through his records. Gault revealed that Al-Bakir before his return to Bahrain had actually worked as an ice merchant in Doha, Qatar. During his stay in Doha a sharp dispute arose between him and a member of the Qatari ruling family in June 1952, as Al-Bakir refused to sell more ice than the allocated portions assigned during the Muslim holy month of *Ramadan*. Angered by his own relative's conduct, the Ruler of Qatar banished the royal miscreant to Saudi Arabia and Al-Bakir fled to Bahrain.⁵⁴ In Bahrain, Al-Bakir immediately engaged himself in political activity, initially seeking to form a labour union. The sectarian clash of 1953 in Bahrain between Sunnis and Shi'ites gave Al-Bakir the perfect opportunity to unite both fronts and establish a politically-oriented party.

The internal situation in Bahrain was ripe for such an organisation to appear as regional transformations were taking place. Dr Mohammed Mosaddegh, the Prime Minister of Iran, nationalised Iranian oil in 1951 and the Free Officers' Movement in Egypt launched a *coup d'état* that overthrew King Farouk in 1952. The

⁵² 'Aham Al-Shakhsiyat alti Asrat "Al-Hay'eh"' [Contemporary Personalities that Witnessed the Committee], *Abwab Al-Wasat*, 13 October 2004, 13.

⁵³ A.R. Al-Bakir, *Min Al-Bahrain Ila Al-Manfa* [From Bahrain to Exile] (London: 1989), 28-29, hereafter *From Bahrain to Exile*.

⁵⁴ TNA, FO 371/120549, Gault to the Foreign Secretary for Foreign Affairs, 31 July 1956.

United States' (US) intelligence services came in contact early with some of the members of the Free Officers even before the King's deposition. It included a meeting conducted between Kermit Roosevelt the Central Intelligence Agency's (CIA) Head of Middle East Operations and Gamal Abdel-Nasser, the principal mastermind of the Movement.⁵⁵ Jefferson Caffery, the US Ambassador to Egypt, referred to the officers as 'his "boys"'.⁵⁶ Initially the officers' selected Major-General Mohammed Naguib as the Movement's figurehead.⁵⁷ Nasser and Naguib would later quarrel over power, as outlined in this thesis, and Bahrainis followed with interest the outcome of the Egyptian struggle.

Further, confessions on the nature of the ties between the two sides were revealed through the published work of former American intelligence operatives like Miles Copeland, Wilbur Eveland, and Archie Roosevelt.⁵⁸ As Egypt experienced political instability following the Second World War and the 1948-49 First Arab-Israeli War, the *coup's* goals, *inter alia*, were to stabilise Egypt, reduce the landlords' influence, reduce the influence of the Parliament that featured candidates supported by the US, Britain, and the Soviets, and to reduce the influence of radical elements from Egyptian society that included the theocratic Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood Movement and Communists. Furthermore, Copeland added that the Americans

⁵⁵ R. McNamara, *Britain, Nasser and the Balance of Power in the Middle East 1952-1967* (London: 2003), 24.

⁵⁶ Quoted in P.F. Dur, *Ambassador of Revolutions an Outline of His Career* (Louisiana: 1998), 71.

⁵⁷ 'Gen. Neguib Mohammed's Coup d'état', *The Times*, 24 July 1952, 6; and D.D. Eisenhower, *Mandate for Change 1953-1956* (London: 1963), 150.

⁵⁸ These confessions were documented by American operatives published through their memoirs, for example see M. Copeland, *The Game of Nations* (New York: 1969); M. Copeland, *The Game Player: Confessions of the CIA's Original Political Operative* (London: 1989), hereafter *The Game Player*; W.C. Eveland, *Ropes of Sand: America's Failure in the Middle East* (London: 1980), hereafter *Ropes of Sand*; and A. Roosevelt, *For Lust of Knowing: Memoirs of an Intelligence Officer* (London: 1988), hereafter *For Lust of Knowing*.

aimed to create a 'Moslem Billy Graham' who would hold immeasurable powers that would enable him to execute 'unpopular decisions', one of which would be peace with the Israelis.⁵⁹

According to the Egyptian writer and novelist Tawfiq Al-Hakim, Nasser claimed to have been influenced by his novel *The Return of the Spirit* published in 1933. The novel was set during the Egyptian revolution against the British in 1919. It revolved around the search for a hero or a saviour for Egypt.⁶⁰ Similarly it was Al-Hakim who labeled the Free Officers' Movement following Farouk's overthrow as the 'blessed movement'.⁶¹ As Nasser solidified his position, other nationalist movements in the Arab World came under the influence and support of Egypt. Sir Bernard Burrows, the Gulf's Resident from 1953 to 1958, who played a role in Bahrain's internal conflict during the rise of the 1950s movement noted:

the themes of Arab unity and liberation from Western imperialism carry some mystical power among the younger and more idealistic members of society and command at least lip service from the rest.⁶²

During the period under study Nasser avoided 'direct aggression' with other Arab States but adopted a policy of 'infiltration and sudden revolution'.⁶³

In Wilbur Eveland's view Britain linked K Roosevelt's cooperation with Nasser as the CIA aided him with finances to initiate trouble in the Arabian Gulf States.⁶⁴ In an interview with Nasser, British Ambassador to Egypt Humphrey

⁵⁹ Copeland, *The Game Player*, 198-99; and Copeland, *The Game of Nations*, 67 and 93.

⁶⁰ T. Al-Hakim, *Awdat Al-Rooh* [The Return of the Spirit] (Cairo: 1933).

⁶¹ K. Azib and S. Khalifa, *Gamal Abdel-Nasser min Al-Qariyah ila Al-Watan Al-Arabi Al-Kabir* [Gamal Abdel-Nasser from the Village to the Grand Arab Nation] (Cairo: 2011), 29-30; and T. Al-Hakim, *Awdat Al-Wa'ie* [Return of Consciousness] (Cairo: 1972), 20, hereafter *Return of Consciousness*.

⁶² TNA, FO 371/120561, Burrows to FO, 24 December 1955

⁶³ S.G. Rostand, 'Dealing with Nasserism', *New York Times*, 17 July 1958, 26.

⁶⁴ Eveland, *Ropes of Sand*, 155.

Trevelyan claimed that Nasser had informed him that ‘that the accusations about his activities against the British in Aden and Bahrain were groundless’. Trevelyan did not accept Nasser’s views, as he believed that ‘Representatives of extremist parties in both were received in Cairo and we believed that they were given material support’.⁶⁵ The thesis will examine the relation between the Bahraini nationalist movement and Nasser’s Egypt to explore the extent of the support (if it existed) and if the Party really was influenced or its activities were dictated by Cairo.

Nasser was soon to turn to the Soviets for support, gradually ending his honeymoon with the Americans, as he adopted a policy of ‘positive neutrality’ in the Cold War.⁶⁶ Egypt’s turn towards the East was felt and admired through nationalist press, circulars, and actions in Bahrain, as this thesis presents. With the materialisation of the West’s Northern Tier concept to defend the Middle East from Soviet aggression into the Baghdad Pact arena, divisions intensified regionally as Egypt opposed the Pact that included Iraq. Whilst Bahrain aimed to strengthen its Police Force with the recruitment of Iraqi officers, the political party strongly opposed the decision as this thesis illustrates.

A lot was at stake for Britain as it tried to deal with its own ally’s (the US) intrigues, Soviet penetration into the Middle East, and nationalist forces. All three threatened Britain’s position in the Middle East arena. In Sir Edward Grigg’s view, the Middle East was ‘a region of life-and-death consequence for Britain and the

⁶⁵ H. Trevelyan, *The Middle East in Revolution* (London: 1970), 71.

⁶⁶ K. Wheelock, *Nasser’s New Egypt: A Critical Analysis* (London: 1960), 50, hereafter *Nasser’s New Egypt*; S.G. Galpern, *Money, Oil and Empire in the Middle East* (Cambridge: 2009), 153; D. Carlton, *Britain and the Suez Crisis* (Oxford: 1988), 7; and W.Z. Laqueur, *The Soviet Union and the Middle East* (London: 1959), 319.

British Empire'.⁶⁷ Further, the strategic importance of the Middle East to Britain is summarised into four points: its air bases; the production and supply of oil; serving as 'a centre for communications'; and serving as a defensive barrier against Soviet penetration into Africa.⁶⁸ Eden believed during the peak of trouble in Bahrain in March 1956 that Britain's position in the Middle East and policy was to be 'founded on the need to protect our oil interests in Iraq and in the Persian Gulf' as it was clearly coming under threat and exploitation.⁶⁹

This thesis explores the background, development, and fall of the nationalist party and seeks to answer a number of questions: what was British policy like throughout the different stages of the Movement? During the crisis was Belgrave an instrument for the British or did his actions harm Britain? How were relations between the nationalist movement and the British in Bahrain? Was the Movement inspired or driven by Nasser's Egypt?

To answer these questions, this thesis is accordingly divided into four parts in chronological order of events. Each part consists of two chapters with the exception of the first part which consists of three. The thesis is designed such that the events that took place in Bahrain are discussed in parallel to macro-events that occurred during the same time period as it influenced developments in Bahrain.

These global events included the rise of Nasser in Egypt, the formation of the Baghdad Pact and its repercussions, the Egyptian-Soviet arms deal, Egypt's move

⁶⁷ BDEEP, Series B, Part I, vol. 4, 'Egypt and the Defence of the Middle East', 1945-1949. Doc. 11, CAB 66/67, CP (45)55, 'Imperial security in the Middle East': War Cabinet memorandum by Sir E Grigg, 2 July 1945.

⁶⁸ BDEEP, Series B, Part I, vol. 4, 'Egypt and the Defence of the Middle East', 1945-1949. Doc. 142: DEFE 4/23, COS 102(49)4, annex, 'Middle East strategy and defence policy': report by the JPS to the COS, 11 July 1949 (JP(49)59). *Appendix "A"*, 15 July 1949.

⁶⁹ TNA, CAB 128/30 C.M. (56) 19th conclusions, 6 March 1956.

towards the Soviet sphere, the Suez Crisis, and the Cold War. As the title of the thesis suggests, the thesis covers the time period highlighted by sectarian tensions and the earliest political initiatives by the nationalist movement's founder in 1953 to address certain grievances until the departure of Belgrave in April 1957.

Additionally, an overview of the proceedings that involved three exiled members of the Movement was also presented in the thesis.

Chapter One discusses the background and sectarian tensions of the 1950s in Bahrain setting the scene for the major conflict of 1953. This is followed by an examination of Al-Bakir's earliest initiatives and political manoeuvring driven by his desire to form a trade union in addition to his attempted interaction with British politicians visiting Bahrain as early as January 1953. Details of the sectarian Sunni-Shi'ite clash of September 1953 are presented as they provided Al-Bakir with the pretext to endeavour to unite both Sunni and Shi'ite fronts and turn a social movement into a politically-oriented one. Chapter Two surveys the growth of nationalist agitation against foreign-owned-or-operated companies and the attack on Bahrain's Police Fort by demonstrators. The nationalists aimed to strengthen unity amongst Bahrainis putting their disputes aside and a petition by locals for reform was forwarded to the Ruler. Chapter Three traces the spark that led to a public gathering by Bahrainis that resulted in the founding of the nationalist movement.

In Part Two of the thesis, Chapter Four covers a time period characterised by the formation of regional defensive pacts and the formation of government committees in Bahrain. Additionally, Eden's brief visit to Bahrain and early British

policy towards the Movement is revealed. Nasser's unexpected stop off in Bahrain when returning from the Bandung Conference in March 1955 signalled the commencement of an era highlighted by the Soviet penetration into the region as the chapter highlights. The alignment of the Bahraini nationalists with Nasser's ideals and turn to the East was characterised by their call to raise funds in support of Egypt's purchase of arms from the Soviets, as Chapter Five presents.

Chapter Six of Part Three of this thesis explores the nationalist movement's peak as it decisively won the Education Council's elections. The chapter also reflects on the dismissal of Sir John Bagot Glubb Pasha as Head of the Arab Legion in Jordan and the ramifications this had for Bahrain, including the stoning of Lloyd's car convoy which followed. Moreover, demands were made calling for Belgrave's dismissal. Chapter Seven investigates how a trivial dispute in Manama's vegetable market turned into a major riot, an indication of the level of tension in the country. The incident was followed by a strike and official recognition of the political party by the Government of Bahrain. This time period, featured in Part Three, offers a unique look at how the British Cabinet dealt with the nationalists and how they approached the Belgrave question.

Chapter Eight of Part Four explores how British policy makers pressed Bahrain towards creating a dignified exit for the Adviser. This incident was followed by Nasser's nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company. Al-Bakir's absence from Bahrain and comments to the press was closely monitored as the chapter assesses. Furthermore, the Party's decision to form a paramilitary organisation in the form of a Scouts movement is examined as it alarmed British officials in Bahrain.

The riots that began with the start of the Suez War led to a state of widespread chaos throughout the islands. British forces intervened, and supporters of the Movement were arrested. The final chapter in the thesis covers the trials of five frontline members of the Party in Bahrain, the exile of three to St Helena, their appeals for a *habeas corpus*, and Belgrave's departure.

Historiography

The history and development of the crisis that unfolded between Bahrain's Administration represented in the person of Belgrave and the nationalist movement of the 1950s has not received thorough attention in light of the greater Cold War narrative in the Middle Eastern arena. This might be attributed to other concurrent events that had foreshadowed it such as the rise of Nasser and the Free Officers' Movement, the evacuation treaty between Egypt and Britain, the Egyptian-Israeli border tensions, the Egyptian-Soviet arms deal, the sacking of Glubb Pasha in Jordan, and the nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company.

It must also be said that Bahraini and Arab historians who have investigated the conflict failed to link local developments to the wider context of the Cold War and turned the topic instead into a purely local development inspired by Egypt. Consequently, British policy in Bahrain seemed either ambiguous or based on the

historians' own assumptions and/or political orientation as this Historiography presents.⁷⁰

Another error in which historians in Bahrain and the Arab World fall into when recounting events is based on their reliance on only three sources: those being the memoir and diary of Belgrave; Al-Bakir's memoir; and (to a lesser extent) on selected republished FO documents. In some cases, although little information on the conflict was presented, Al-Bakir's memoir was heavily utilised and his claims were presented without questioning their validity. Those historians have, therefore, denied themselves access to a wealth of information on the topic found in other sources, such as the FO documents at TNA including *inter alia* British Cabinet papers, memoirs and diaries of British Cabinet members and officials in Bahrain, memoirs of travellers, and international newspapers.

Some of the earliest traces of the foundation and influences on the Movement in Bahrain have been covered, in particular the rise of nationalist activities such as Mosaddegh's nationalisation of Iranian oil.⁷¹ As a consequence of this action Britain suffered, as historian Douglas Farnie puts it, its 'greatest blow ever inflicted on the British economic empire in the Middle East'.⁷² Bahrainis' fascination with Mosaddegh was evident as he was viewed as a saviour and 'in the early part of 1953 pictures of him could be seen in many shops in Manamah', observed Arab-American

⁷⁰ An example of Bahraini and Arab historians whose work dealt with or touched on the topic of the thesis include: Rashid Al-Jassim, Noor-el-Deen Hajlawi, Ebrahim Al-Aubaidi, Abdulla Al-Ghanem, Rashid Al-Zayani, Falah Al-Mudairis, Mohammed Al-Jassim, Sawsan Al-Shaer, Ahmed Hamidan, and Tayebah Al-Anzi.

⁷¹ For information on Mosaddegh and his nationalisation of Iranian oil see C. De Bellaigue, *Patriot of Persia* (New York: 2012).

⁷² D.A. Farnie, *East and West of Suez: The Suez Canal in History 1854-1956* (London: 1969), 101, hereafter *East and West of Suez*.

historian Fahim Qubain.⁷³ But it was the Egyptian *coup d'état* of 23 July 1952, later named as the Revolution of 1952, that 'took the British by surprise', which gradually inflamed nationalist aspirations throughout the Arab World.⁷⁴ These two events -- Iran's nationalisation of its oil industry and the Egyptian *coup* -- 'shaped Middle Eastern developments', as Diane Kunz perceived and Bahrain was no different.⁷⁵

A key event in the evolution of the nationalist movement in Bahrain was a sectarian clash that occurred between Sunnis and Shi'ites in September 1953. Western historians had ignored the details of this event when tracing the history and development of the nationalist party. Bahraini and Arab historians failed to investigate it thoroughly. Despite the little information presented about this event, some were quick to blame British policy for it. Bahraini historian Rashid Al-Jassim pointed the finger at the British for igniting sectarian tensions and claimed that, 'imperialism and its aides spread agitation and intrigue' during the month that the conflict had unfolded.⁷⁶ Arab historian Noor-el-Deen Hajlawi reiterated a similar view and reckoned that 'the British benefited from the sectarian tensions to their gains, in order to undermine any nationalist movement'.⁷⁷

Iraqi historian Ebrahim Al-Aubaidi laid the blame on the Bahraini Administration. He contended that the 'ruling regime did not stand still but rather sought to seek revenge by igniting sectarian tensions again so as to distract those

⁷³ F.I. Qubain, 'Social Classes and Tensions in Bahrain', *Middle East Journal*, 9.1, (1955), 269-80 (275).

⁷⁴ D. R. Devereux, *The Formulation of British Defence Policy towards the Middle East 1948-56* (New York: 1990), 126, hereafter *Formulation of British Defence Policy*.

⁷⁵ D.B. Kunz, *The Economic Diplomacy of the Suez Crisis* (Chapel Hill, NC: 1991), 18.

⁷⁶ R.I. Al-Jassim, *Al-Bahrain wa Um'quah Al-Arabi wa Al-Islami min Al-Qazoo Al-Burtghali wa hata Istiqlal Al-Bahrain 1521-1971* [Bahrain and its Arab and Islamic Depth from the Portuguese Invasion until Bahrain's Independence 1521-1971]. Vol 1, (Beirut: 2016), 281.

⁷⁷ N. Hajlawi, *Tathir Al-Fikr Al-Nasri ala Al-Khaleej Al-Arabi* [The Influence of Nasserism on the Arabian Gulf 1952-1971] (Beirut), 178.

with unimportant matters'. Al-Aubaidi further argued that 'Belgrave personally took part and encouraged such events'.⁷⁸ The accusations of blaming the British policy or Belgrave for a long-standing dispute like Sunni-Shi'ite quarrels were displayed as facts without providing strong evidence. The idea of placing the foreigner as the scapegoat brings to mind Trevelyan's assertion that, 'It was an old saying in the Arab world that when two fish were fighting in the sea, the British were behind it'.⁷⁹ The current thesis explores the nature of the British policy towards the political situation in Bahrain and whether Britain, Belgrave or both had an active role in inciting both Muslim sects.

When the Movement was formed in 1954, Qubain believed that for the first time in recent Bahraini history both religious groups worked together as an entity, and as 'members of an economic group'.⁸⁰ The short-lived cohesiveness of this unity was put to question by Bahraini historian Abdulla Al-Ghanem, who alluded to the disputes that had risen between the senior members of the Party. He argued that Sunni members of the Party sought 'reform', while the Shi'ites aimed towards 'a complete overhaul of the regime'.⁸¹ The Sunni-Shi'ite structure within the Movement is explored in this thesis.

Although the effect of Nasser's Egypt on the Movement was noted, the nature of the ties between the Party and the Egyptian Government were never explored.

According to Arab historian Majid Khadduri, one of Nasser's nationalist foreign

⁷⁸ E.K. Al-Aubaidi, *Al-Harakah Al-Wataniya fi Al-Bahrain* [National movements in Bahrain 1914-1971] (London: 2004), 118.

⁷⁹ Trevelyan, *The Middle East in Revolution*, 10.

⁸⁰ Qubain, 'Social Classes and Tensions in Bahrain', 269-80 (273).

⁸¹ A. Al-Ghanem, *Tarikh Bidayt Al-Eslah fi Al-Bahrain* [The History of Early Reform in Bahrain] (2009), 465.

policy goals was the ‘support of revolutionary movements in other Arab countries’.⁸² The American historian of Palestinian origin, Rosemarie Said Zahlan, confirmed the influence of Nasser via the utilisation of various media channels and especially the radio in Bahrain saying:

His call for the loosening of imperial control throughout the Arab world struck a resonant note in Bahrain where thousands listened regularly to *Sawt al Arab* [Voice of the Arabs], the Egyptian radio station.⁸³

Further, Nasser’s portraits were commonly seen in Bahrain and the Gulf, ‘hung for years on almost every commoner’s wall, side by side – whether for reasons of loyalty or of discretion – with that of the local ruler’, Glen Balfour-Paul, former British diplomat and historian noted.⁸⁴ As no further details as to the relationship between the two sides was provided, this thesis aims to explore the nature of the ties between the two.

Rashid Al-Zayani, a Bahraini historian and businessman, in his short analysis of the Movement, raised a number of unanswered questions. He viewed British policy towards the Movement to be unclear and asked, ‘were they really behind agitating the Committee? Or were they against the Adviser, Belgrave? Or with him?’⁸⁵ This raises the need to examine British policy in Bahrain and its stance towards Belgrave, the Movement, and general reform – a much-neglected topic in published work on this era.

⁸² M. Khadduri, *Political Trends in the Arab World: The Role of Ideas and Ideals in Politics* (Baltimore, MD: 1970), 168.

⁸³ R.S. Zahlan, *The Making of the Modern Gulf States* (Reading: 2002), 67.

⁸⁴ G. Balfour-Paul, *The End of Empire in the Middle East: Britain’s Relinquishment of Power in Her last three Arab Dependencies* (Cambridge: 1991), 149.

⁸⁵ R. Al-Zayani, *Al-Bahrain baynah Ahdyan: Al-Himayah wa Al-Istiqlal* [Bahrain between Two Eras: The Protectorate and Independence] (Manama: 2002), 347.

Following the dismissal of Glubb Pasha in Jordan, Bahraini protestors attacked Selwyn Lloyd's car convoy during his short visit to Bahrain on 2 March 1956. Western historians such as Anthony Verrier, Barry Turner, DR Thorpe, Erskine Childers, Keith Kyle, Peter Wilby, and W Scott Lucas, touched on the topic, however, without providing much detail on the incident or the origins of the conflict in Bahrain and instead noted the event as part of the proceedings that led Britain towards the Suez War.⁸⁶

One of the exceptions to the above amongst Western historians is Miriam Joyce who provided in a short article further details to the stoning of the convoy and the legal battle that ensued over the three Bahraini political exiles following the fall of the nationalist movement. Details of what came before to the stoning incident were not presented. Joyce claimed that it was the Ruler of Bahrain 'Shaykh Salman [who] ordered the arrest of the leaders of the Committee of National Union'.⁸⁷ That claim by Joyce will be examined further in this thesis. Another exception is seen in the work of Simon Smith, who brought to light the dilemma that overtook the British Government on the topic of Belgrave, following the Lloyd incident. He believed that Eden insisted on 'Belgrave's retention', contradicting both 'British officers in the Gulf, and within the Foreign Office itself'. Meanwhile, the Gulf Residency had already 'informally' told the Party that Belgrave's tenure would be coming to an

⁸⁶ A. Verrier, *Through the Looking Glass: British Foreign Policy in Age of Illusions* (London: 1983), 134; B. Turner, *Suez 1956: The Inside Story of the First Oil War* (London: 2006), 165; D.R. Thorpe, *Eden: The Life and Times of Anthony Eden First Earl of Avon, 1897-1977* (London: 2004), 465; D.R. Thorpe, *Selwyn Lloyd* (London: 1989), 200; E.B. Childers, *The Road to Suez* (London: 1962), 145; K. Kyle, *Suez: Britain's End of Empire in the Middle East* (London: 2011), 94, P. Wilby, *Eden* (London: 2006), 93; and W.S. Lucas, *Divided We Stand: Britain, the US and the Suez Crisis* (London: 1991), 95.

⁸⁷ M. Joyce, 'The Bahraini Three on St Helena, 1956-1961', *The Middle East Journal*, 54.4 (2000), in <<https://www.questia.com/read/1P3-63386231/the-bahraini-three-on-st-helena-1956-1961>> [accessed 19 September 2015].

end.⁸⁸ Similar to Joyce, Smith omitted the beginnings of the Movement going straight to the stoning incident and what followed.

On the stoning of Lloyd's car, Bahraini and Arab historians mention little detail of the incident. For example, Al-Ghanem and Falah Al-Mudairis both skip the incident as a whole and jump to the events that followed.⁸⁹ Al-Aubaidi, however, provided a summary of the incident by using only two sources to recall the event, those being the *Government of Bahrain Annual Report of 1956* and Belgrave's memoir.⁹⁰ The incident and details of the stoning of the Foreign Secretary's car will be examined in this thesis as this event could well be considered as a crucial moment in the conflict and one that involved British Cabinet members directly in Bahrain's affairs.

In addition to the historians who wrote about the events that unfolded between Belgrave and the nationalists, there have been attempts by Bahrainis to translate selected passages from Belgrave's memoir, diary, and other publications while offering some commentary. The first attempted translation was published by Mahdi Abdulla entitled *The Memoirs of Belgrave, the Former Adviser of the Government of Bahrain* in 1991 and the second was by Sheikha Mai Al-Khalifa in her book *Charles Belgrave Biography and Memoirs 1926-1957* in 2000. Other publications that had covered the nationalist movement of the 1950s in Bahrain

⁸⁸ S.C. Smith, *Britain's Revival and Fall in the Gulf: Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar and the Trucial States, 1950-1971* (London: 2013), 10.

⁸⁹ A. Al-Ghanem, *Tarikh Bidayt Al-Eslah fi Al-Bahrain* [The History of Early Reform in Bahrain] (2009), 465; and F. Al-Mudairis, *Al-Harakat wa Al-Jama'at Al-Siyasiya fi Al-Bahrain 1938-2002* [The Political Movements and Groups in Bahrain 1938-2002] (Beirut: 2004), 20-23.

⁹⁰ E.K. Al-Aubaidi, *Al-Harakah Al-Wataniya fi Al-Bahrain* [National movements in Bahrain 1914-1971] (London: 2004), 135-36.

included Mohammed Al-Jassim and Sawsan Al-Shaer's *Bahrain... The Story of Political Struggle 1904-1956* and Ahmed Hamidan's *The National Union Committee in Bahrain*.⁹¹ These publications have also limited themselves to selected sources.

In his PhD dissertation entitled *Social and Political Change in Bahrain since the First World War* awarded in 1973 by Durham University, Mohammed Ghanim Al-Rumaihi from Kuwait touched on the rise and development of the Movement in Bahrain as part of tracing the socio-political changes that swept Bahrain following the First World War. A basic sketch of the conflict was covered; Al-Rumaihi relied mainly on the memoirs of Belgrave and Al-Bakir to explain the events of the 1950s in Bahrain. Additionally he utilised the Bahraini Government's annual reports, the nationalist movement's circulars, nationalist press, and some international newspapers. His usage of the limited sources is understandable since TNA's archive on Bahrain and the situation in the 1950s was not made public in the 1970s.⁹²

⁹¹ M. Abdulla (ed.), *Muthakrat Belgrave: Mustashar Hakumat Al-Bahrain Sabiqan* [The Memoirs of Belgrave: Former Adviser to the Government of Bahrain] (Beirut: 1991); M. Al-Khalifa (ed.), *Charles Belgrave Al-Sira wa Al-Muthakarāt 1926-1957* [Charles Belgrave Biography and Memoirs 1926-1957] (Beirut: 2000); M. Al-Jassim and S.A. Al-Shaer, *Al-Bahrain Qisat Al-Sira'a Al-Siyasi 1904-1956* [Bahrain... The Story of Political Struggle 1904-1956] (2000); and A. Hamidan, *Hayet Al-Itihad Al-Watani fi Al-Bahrain* [The National Union Committee in Bahrain] (Beirut: 2004). There are other publications that dealt with certain phases of Belgrave's life that excluded the time period of this thesis. For example, Mahdi Al-Tajir's work entitled, *Bahrain 1920-1945: Britain, the Shaikh and the Administration* (1987) examined the introduction of modern government systems in Bahrain that aided in the process of transforming the islands' from a sheikhdom to a modern state. The publication also highlights how the steps of modernisation affected Bahrainis, with a particular focus on the development and relations of the Arab Shi'ite community with the Government of Bahrain. Furthermore, another attempt in documenting a different phase of Belgrave's life is found in *Charles Belgrave under the Shades of Siwa Oasis* (2012), by Hamad E. Abdulla. The publication researched the former Adviser's experience in his first administrative post in Egypt from 1920 to 1922. See M. Al-Tajir, *Bahrain 1920-1945: Britain, the Shaikh and the Administration* (New York: 1987); and H. Abdulla, *Charles Belgrave fi Thilal Wahat Siwa* [Charles Belgrave in the Shades of Siwa Oasis] (Manama: 2012).

⁹² M.G. Al-Rumaihi, '*Social and Political Change in Bahrain Since the First World War*' (Durham University: 1973).

Another PhD dissertation that touched on the topic of the thesis was by Bahraini historian Saeed Khalil Hashim entitled *The Influence of Iraq on the Nationalist Movements of Kuwait and Bahrain 1920-1961*, awarded in 1984 by the University of Exeter. The thesis was divided into two parts, one on Kuwait and the other on Bahrain with a time period that extended from 1920 to 1961; limited information was presented in relation to the topic of this thesis. Though Hashim did utilise documents from TNA, it was mostly used to cover the time period prior to the early 1950s. Events that took place following the early 1950s might have not been available to Hashim to assess. In order to explain the events of the 1950s in Bahrain, Hashim heavily relied on Al-Bakir's memoir. Additionally nationalist newspapers were explored and some interviews with surviving members of the Movement at the time were conducted.⁹³

Moreover, the Iraqi historian Tayebah Al-Anzi wrote a Master's thesis at the University of Basra in Iraq in Arabic entitled *Charles Belgrave's Role in Bahrain between 1926-1957* in 2010 covering Belgrave's work in Bahrain. The research relied heavily on secondary sources to reconstruct events and allocated only a limited portion of the work to the 1950s conflict.⁹⁴

Finally, an attempt was made by Belgrave's nephew and former diplomat Robert Belgrave, who launched a project that aimed to document the life and times of his relation. Unfortunately, the project now known as *The Papers of Robert*

⁹³ S.K. Hashim, *The Influence of Iraq on the Nationalist Movements of Kuwait and Bahrain 1920-1961* (University of Exeter: 1984).

⁹⁴ N.A.K. Al-Anzi, *Dawir Charles Belgrave fi Al-Bahrain bayna Amay 1926-1957* [Charles Belgrave's Role in Bahrain between 1926-1957] (University of Basra: 2010).

Belgrave did not see the light of day as he died before completing his work. The documents collected by Robert Belgrave and his work, which he seems to have only just started, are currently located at the archives of the University of Exeter. The documents available there give an overview of Belgrave's life and work, particularly in Bahrain. In a journal article in Bahrain's *Al-Watheekah* in 1985, Robert Belgrave announced his intention to publish a biography of Belgrave, which he was working on at the time.⁹⁵

All the works presented thus far offer only a short overview of the political crisis from the mid-twentieth century. Therefore, this thesis aims to draw on a wide range of available Arabic and English sources to better understand and fill in the details of the developments that unfolded in Bahrain against the backdrop of the greater Cold War scenario.

⁹⁵ R. Belgrave, '*Charles Dalrymple Belgrave: Mustashar Qadeem fi Al-Bahrain*' [Charles Dalrymple Belgrave: An Old Adviser in Bahrain], *Al-Watheekah*, 6.1, (1985), 39-53 (39-40).

Part I: The Search for a 'Hero': the Rise of the Nationalist Movement

Chapter One

Background to Bahrain's Sectarian Tensions, Trade Unions, and the Sunni-Shi'ite Clash of 1953

January 1953 to February 1954

With nationalistic fever on the march in the Middle East, the search for Bahrain's version of a nationalist 'hero', as in Tawfiq Al-Hakim's novel *The Return of the Spirit*, was on. As soon as Al-Bakir returned to Bahrain he began to involve himself in political activity aimed at the establishment of trade unions. A perfect opportunity presented itself in September 1953 when the Sunni-Shi'ite sectarian clash erupted. This part of the thesis will explore how the conflict offered the prospect of establishing a *détente* between the two opposing sides, utilising the void the crisis had created and the need for a saviour, while at the same time turning the Movement into a political entity. The conflict that had unfolded surprised British officials in Bahrain who tried to seek an explanation for the events.

Evidence of disunity and a lack of trust between Bahrain's Sunnis and Shi'ites were clear from an earlier stage. The clash of 1953 was not the product of a sudden spur of the moment, but rather a result of a long-held deep distrust between the two communities that eventually manifested itself. In order to understand the nature of the tensions of 1953, it is important briefly to examine the background and anxieties

that led to the crisis as well as providing an overview of developments in Egypt in order to trace the latter's influence on the Bahraini movement.

Before 1953 tensions between the two largest religious communities in Bahrain (Muslim Sunnis and Shi'ites) were growing alarmingly. *Sawut Al-Bahrain*, the island's only magazine at the time, portrayed the level of distrust in Bahrain in 1950 in an article entitled, 'Sectarianism is our biggest problem'. The author, Ibn Thabit, believed that a single community did not exist in Bahrain 'but rather opposing societies and groups which are full of grudge for one another and seek to conspire against each other'.⁹⁶ The author will almost certainly have used the *nom de plume* Ibn Thabit to hide his or her identity for fear of being criticised or even harassed by their own community.

Hay, the British Resident from 1946 to 1953,⁹⁷ recorded the growing tensions between the two communities in a report in 1951 forwarded to GW Furlonge at the Eastern Department in the FO, as he summarised events in the Arabian Gulf. In relation to Bahrain he said: 'Although there have been no incidents, ill feeling between the Shias and the Sunnis is stronger than usual'.⁹⁸

Signs of a coming crisis were revealed in the summer of 1951 *vis-à-vis* the Manama Municipal Committee. The Committee consisted of twenty-four persons; twelve elected and twelve nominated. Although elections for the Committee the

⁹⁶ 'Al-Taefiyah Alatunah Al-Kubra' [Sectarianism is our Biggest Problem], *Sawut Al-Bahrain*, September 1950, 11.

⁹⁷ Sir William Rupert Hay was born on 16 December 1893. He enrolled in 1920 with the Indian Political Service and worked in a number of locations in Asia, such as Afghanistan, Baluchistan and the Arabian Gulf. Hay was appointed as the British Resident to the Gulf in 1946 and remained in post until 1953. He was succeeded by Sir Bernard Burrows. See Hay, 'The Impact of the Oil Industry on the Persian Gulf Shaykhdoms', 361-72 (361).

⁹⁸ 'W.R. Hay, Summary of events in the Persian Gulf during the month of November 1951', in *Political Diaries of the Persian Gulf*, vol. 19 1951-1954, ed. R.L. Jarman (London: 1990), 1-9 (6).

previous year went smoothly, frustration amongst the *Baharna* was quickly manifested. The *Baharna* had won only two seats on the Committee, one of which was held by Abd-Ali Al-Alaiwat who would later become a frontline member of the nationalist movement, and the Government had nominated only three *Baharna*. The Arab Shi'ite community believed that they were due more representation. The Resident considered that their failure to gain more seats was due to their 'very poor' electioneering. Later, a dispute within the Committee arose and was based on a third attempt by a Sunni member to award compensation to a demolished local shop in Manama for the purpose of expanding the neighbouring street. The majority of the Committee's members accepted the proposal in its third attempt of passing. The *Baharna* members [two elected and three nominated], however, rejected the decision to compensate and resigned from the Committee. The incident led the Arab Shi'ite community to air further grievances, one of which was the increase in property rent at the vegetable, fish, and meat markets. The property was rented to a majority of *Baharna* and owned by the Ruler and his brother Sheikh Duaij Al-Khalifa. The landlords blamed the increase in rent on the expenditure involved in constructing and maintaining the market. The Government attempted to persuade the five members to retract their resignations, but to no avail.⁹⁹

Trouble in the Manama Municipal Committee continued the following year when the *Baharna* threatened to boycott the elections due to be held in October 1952 unless the Committee was to be comprised of equal Sunni to Shi'ite representation. The Ruler accepted the demands and said that the Committee

⁹⁹ TNA, FO 371/91264, Hay to FO, 2 June 1951; and TNA, FO 371/91264, Hay to FO, 16 June 1951.

should consist of six Sunnis and six Shi'ites.¹⁰⁰ This was not well received by some Sunnis on the grounds that the *Baharna* were never previously awarded with 'much representation', and this *impasse* resulted in the Government's indefinite postponement of elections to the Committee.¹⁰¹

On the regional scene, Britain was in the process of negotiating its troops' evacuation from the Suez Canal Zone. The idea of the withdrawal appealed to Eden who aimed to convince Prime Minister Winston Churchill that by withdrawing British forces from Egypt it would attract the Egyptians to enter into an anti-Communist Middle Eastern defence alliance, which was known in its infant stage as the Middle East Defence Organisation (MEDO), propagated significantly following the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950.¹⁰² However the British COS believed that 'it was unlikely that General Neguib would be prepared to commit Egypt to participation in MEDO until he had reached a firm agreement with us about evacuation'.¹⁰³ Egyptians resisted entry into any alliances before and during Naguib's presidency.¹⁰⁴ As a result it was in Britain's interest to evacuate from the

¹⁰⁰ 'W.R. Hay, Summary of Events in the Persian Gulf during the month of September 1952', in *Political Diaries of the Persian Gulf*, vol. 19 1951-1954, ed. R.L. Jarman (London: 1990), 1-7 (3-4).

¹⁰¹ 'W.R. Hay, Summary of Events in the Persian Gulf during the month of October 1952', in *Political Diaries of the Persian Gulf*, vol. 19 1951-1954, ed. R.L. Jarman (London: 1990), 1-6 (3).

¹⁰² BDEEP, Series B, Part III, vol. 4, 'Egypt and the Defence of the Middle East' 1953-1956. Doc. 454: PREM 11/484, 1 December 1953. 'The Canal Zone': minute by Mr Eden to Mr Churchill on the advantages of an agreement with Egypt without making further concessions, 1 December 1953; E. Monroe, Elizabeth, *Britain's Moment in the Middle East 1914-1956* (London: 1963), 174; R. Takehy, *The Origins of the Eisenhower Doctrine: The US, Britain and Nasser's Egypt, 1951-57* (New York: 2000), 6, hereafter *Origins of the Eisenhower Doctrine*; and Devereux, *Formulation of British Defence Policy*, 46.

¹⁰³ BDEEP, Series B, Part II, vol. 4, 'Egypt and the Defence of the Middle East' 1949-1953. Doc. 335: DEFE 4/57, COS 153(52) 2, 'Middle East defence organisation': COS Committee minutes on American suggestions for joint proposals on a base settlement, 7 November 1952; TNA, CAB 129/59, C (53)65, Egypt: The Alternatives, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 16 February 1953; and TNA, CAB 129/58, C. (53) 17 Revise, Egypt: Defence Negotiations, 14 January 1953.

¹⁰⁴ Prior to the Egyptian *coup d'état* pamphlets distributed by the Free Officers rejected the idea of participating in Western-oriented pacts as Khalid Mohieddin, an early prominent member of the military movement, recalled in his memoir of pamphlets that stated: 'Down with colonialism. Down with alliances with the colonialists. Down with defence alliances. Down with military Pacts'. See K. Mohieddin, *Wa Al-A'an Atak'lam* [Now I Speak] (Cairo: 1992), 91-92, hereafter *Now I Speak*.

Suez Canal Zone in the hope that Egypt would ease its stance towards MEDO and as a sign of goodwill. Eden also believed that reaching an agreement with Egypt would improve Britain's relations with the rest of the Arab World.¹⁰⁵ Although the stationing of troops in the Suez Canal Zone was of vital importance to the British during the First and Second World Wars, the coming of the hydrogen bomb 'transformed the military situation' as it limited the need for 'conventional forces'.¹⁰⁶ Moreover, the cost of maintaining the base in Egypt with approximately 80,000 personnel was seen in Britain as a burden.¹⁰⁷

Britain's foreign policy's *demarches* in the Middle East at the time can be summarised into the following four points as presented by Field Marshall Sir John Harding, Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS). First was denying Communists from having the Middle East fall under their sphere of influence. Second was to protect the oil resources of the Arabian Gulf region. Third was the protection of the southern parts of Turkey. And fourthly to secure the safety and freedom of sea passage via the Suez Canal.¹⁰⁸

In Bahrain in the beginning of 1953, Al-Bakir was involved in the early attempts to give voice to various grievances. This included a demand to establish a trade union in Bahrain. No such organisation existed at the time nor was approved

¹⁰⁵ BDEEP, Series B, Part III, vol. 4, 'Egypt and the Defence of the Middle East' 1953-1956. Doc. 472: CAB 129/65, C (54)6, 'Middle East policy': Cabinet memorandum by Mr Eden on three possible courses of action if no agreement is reached with Egypt, 7 January 1954.

¹⁰⁶ BDEEP, Series A, Part I, vol. 3, 'The Conservative Government and the End of Empire', 1951-1957. Doc. 21: CAB 134/1315, PR(56)3, 'The future of the United Kingdom in world affairs': memorandum by officials of the Treasury, Foreign Office and Ministry of Defence for Cabinet Policy Review Committee. *Appendix A*, 1 June 1956.

¹⁰⁷ BDEEP, Series B, Part III, vol. 4, 'Egypt and the Defence of the Middle East' 1953-1956. Doc. 499: FO 371/108415, 'Egypt: arguments for a defence agreement': memorandum by E B Boothby, 1 March 1954.

¹⁰⁸ BDEEP, Series B, Part III, vol. 4, 'Egypt and the Defence of the Middle East' 1953-1956. Doc. 455: FO 371/102823, 'Suez Canal base': note by Field Marshal Sir J Harding for Field Marshal Lord Alexander of Tunis, December 1953.

of by the Administration.¹⁰⁹ One of his earliest known attempts to have his 'voice heard' was during a visit that was carried out by six British Members of Parliament (MPs) to Bahrain in early 1953. The incident was noted in HV Mapp's memoir and he sympathised with Al-Bakir's demand for a trade union. The MPs were on a tour of the Middle East organised by Lebanese MP and businessman Emile Bustani. Mapp considered the visit to be a 'flop' as he unsuccessfully attempted to arrange a meeting between the MPs and Al-Bakir.¹¹⁰

It is unclear why Al-Bakir chose to adopt the idea of establishing trade unions in Bahrain, which later turned into an early formal demand by his Movement. He had recently worked as a self-employed merchant and was not part of any labour force. A possible explanation is that trade unions offered a form of unification between Sunnis and Shi'ites under the flag of improving working conditions. Most importantly a trade union can be exploited as a political entity able to paralyse the state through strikes, if political demands were not met. The threat of strikes and its implementation as a weapon against the Administration became a feature of the Bahraini nationalist movement of the mid-twentieth century, as this thesis will describe.

The visit of the six British MPs to Bahrain started on 20 January 1953.

Barbara Castle mentioned it in her memoir. It consisted of three Labour MPs: Castle, John Freeman, and Jimmie Johnson; and three Torie MPs: Burney Drayton, Stephen

¹⁰⁹ A trade union could be defined as 'a continuous association of wage-earners for the purpose of maintaining or improving the conditions of their working lives', as identified by Sidney and Beatrice Webb. See S. Webb and B. Webb, *The History of Trade Unionism* (London: 1920), 1.

¹¹⁰ H.V. Mapp, *Leave Well Alone! Where Oil Shapes Dynasties and Destinies* (Essex: 1994), 223, hereafter *Leave Well Alone*.

McAdden, and Terry Clarke. Castle did not mention details of the visit, nor did she proffer any comments on her stop in Bahrain.¹¹¹ Her diaries also included no information on her trip to Bahrain but just gave general information on the islands.¹¹²

Sawut Al-Bahrain featured the news of the arrival of the MPs in a one-page article. The magazine sent an unnamed representative to brief the delegation and said that

When someone tried to get into contact with them [the British MPs] from Bahrain's men to explain to them the case of the Bahraini populace, they pretended to be tied with pre-arranged appointments!

The magazine also noted that a set of queries was presented to the delegation but got no answer. The questions focused on local and regional affairs that included the wish to be allowed by the Administration to form trade unions.¹¹³

The British Resident echoed the complaint that Bahrain did not have a trade union in a report in 1951. Hay pointed to receiving 'an anonymous circular' with abusive language towards Belgrave and the Government of Britain. One of the demands (the only one mentioned in Hay's account) was 'the formation of trade unions'.¹¹⁴ It is probable that the source of the demand was Al-Bakir, himself. The demand to establish a trade union in Bahrain became the first grievance adopted for action by Al-Bakir in 1953. The demand would be echoed later by his Movement

¹¹¹ B. Castle, *Fighting All the Way* (London: 1993), 244-49.

¹¹² University of Oxford, Bodleian Library, Catalogue of Barbara Anne Castle: Baroness Castle of Blackburn 1868-2002, MS. Castle 2, fols. 60v-62r and 81r-86r.

¹¹³ 'Sita Nuwab Biritaniyeen Yahiloon Mashkil El-Sharq Al-Awsat' [Six British Members of the Parliament out to Solve the Problems of the Middle East], *Sawut Al-Bahrain*, February 1953, 35.

¹¹⁴ 'W.R. Hay, Summary of Events in the Persian Gulf from my return from leave on the 21st September up to the end of October 1951', in *Political Diaries of the Persian Gulf*, vol. 19 1951-1954, ed. R.L. Jarman (London: 1990), 1-9 (5).

and would eventually lead to the establishment of a Labour Law in Bahrain as the thesis highlights later. An early Egyptian incursion in Bahrain came with the first official visit of members of the Egyptian military regime following the *coup* when Major General Mohammed Ebrahim, the Egyptian Army's Chief of Staff, arrived on a short visit to Bahrain en route to Pakistan in February 1953. Ebrahim was accompanied by a delegation of sixteen officials. A welcoming ceremony was organised for the guests at Bahrain's Al-Ahli Club. Regarding the visit, Bahrain's nationalist newspaper *Al-Qafilah* declared that Bahrainis had met the Egyptian officers, 'as if they had met [the whole] of Egypt'. It continued in admiration, 'Looking at the faces of those heroes, one could see the expression of hope of what one aspires to obtain through Egypt from grace and renaissance'.¹¹⁵ In addition to Ebrahim's visit, Mustafa Amin owner of Egypt's *Akhbar Al-Youm* (The News of Today) newspaper and CIA agent (unknown to be one at the time), paid a visit to Bahrain as part of his tour of the Arab World.¹¹⁶ The British Residency sensed a level of agitation fomenting against the person of Belgrave and his centralisation of the administration in 1953. In a letter from Hay to the FO, the Resident believed that agitation was mainly a result of editorialising in Bahrain's nationalist press.¹¹⁷

The Egyptian Free Officers' Revolution Command Council (RCC), which was established to manage the affairs of the country, announced on 18 June 1953 the foundation of the Egyptian Republic and the official abolishing of its monarchy.

¹¹⁵ 'Ma'a Nasoor Al-Nile' [With the Hawks of the Nile], *Al-Qafilah*, 13 February 1953, 1.

¹¹⁶ 'Mahthar Al-Shahar: Daga'iq ma'a Al-Ustad Mustafa Amin' [This Month's Report: A Few Minutes with Mustafa Amin], *Sawut Al-Bahrain*, March-April 1953, 33 and 38. For information on Mustafa Amin's role with the CIA see S. Dorril, *MI6: Inside the Covert World of Her Majesty's Secret Intelligence Service* (New York: 2002), 602.

¹¹⁷ TNA, FO 371/104387, Hay to FO, 15 April 1953.

Naguib, the figurehead of the RCC, was its first President.¹¹⁸ In the same year Nasser published his infamous book *The Philosophy of the Revolution*, a *vade mecum* for young and aspiring Arab nationalists in the Middle East. In reality the publication was an ‘adolescent document’ as Jean Lacatoure, the French historian described it. It was made up of the memoirs and visions of this ambitious Egyptian military officer.¹¹⁹ Sir Anthony Parsons, Britain’s Political Agent in Bahrain from 1965 to 1969, commented on Nasser’s work, saying that it ‘must be either for children or for foreigners with limited knowledge of Arabic’.¹²⁰ The publication prompted Sir Anthony Nutting, the British Minister of State, to suggest to Nasser he avoid writing any further books.¹²¹ Eden, on the other hand, compared the work to ‘Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*’.¹²² According to Copeland’s assertion the actual author of Nasser’s book was his friend, journalist, and historian Mohammed H Heikal.¹²³ The book was a means for Nasser to introduce himself to Egyptians and the Arab World, preparing the way for his takeover of power and the eclipse of Naguib.

July 1953 marked the start of the Cairo-based *Sawut Al-Arab* (Voice of the Arabs) radio station broadcast to the Arab World. The Egyptian Ahmed Al-Saeed was to become the leading voice of the network and its Director. He believed that part of the purpose behind the station ‘was to inform Arabs of their own governments’ sins’. The name, *Sawut Al-Arab*, was borrowed from a short broadcast

¹¹⁸ ‘Egypt Now a Republic; Naguib Her President’, *New York Times*, 19 June 1953, 1.

¹¹⁹ J. Lacatoure, *Nasser*, 145.

¹²⁰ A. Parsons, *They Say the Lion* (London: 1986), 60.

¹²¹ A. Nutting, *I Saw for Myself: The Aftermath of Suez*, 95, hereafter *The Aftermath of Suez*.

¹²² A. Eden, *The Memoirs of Sir Anthony Eden: Full Circle* (London: 1960), 543, hereafter *Full Circle*.

¹²³ Copeland, *The Game of Nations*, 65.

by Naguib on 4 July that carried the name, later turning it into a radio station complete with its own range of programming.¹²⁴

The creation of what would become a popular radio station among the Arabs came at the height of the then Egyptian-CIA cooperation. The CIA's Kermit Roosevelt recruited people such as Paul Linebarger 'the greatest "black" propagandist' to advise and train the Egyptians on how to utilise their press and radio facilities. When it came to the radio, the aim was to set up 'the most powerful [station] in the entire Middle East'. The Egyptians would release reports that seemed to promote the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) but caused more harm than good to the overall image of the Soviets. In contrast they would issue news reports against the US but that had a reverse effect.¹²⁵

Non-Arab owned media participated in agitating Bahrainis. Moscow Radio, for example, labelled Belgrave a 'Dictator'!¹²⁶ Mapp who was in Bahrain added in his memoir that whenever the Russian radio called out the Adviser, the Ruler 'chuckles'.¹²⁷ The American President Dwight D Eisenhower understood the rise of 'virulent nationalism' in the Middle East and considered the Russians to be taking advantage of the situation. To him 'the evidence of Communist meddling was evident'.¹²⁸ The death of Joseph Stalin in 1953 marked a new turning point in Soviet

¹²⁴ L.M. James, 'Whose Voice? Nasser, the Arabs, and 'Sawt al-Arab' Radio', *Traditional Broadcasting Studies*, 16, (2006) in <<http://tbsjournal.arabmediasociety.com/James.html>> [accessed 2 January 2016].

¹²⁵ Copeland, *The Game Player*, 167 and 180; Copeland, *The Game of Nations*, 116-17; and Eveland, *Ropes of Sand*, 103. For more information on the development of Egyptian radio see, D.A. Boyd, *Broadcasting in the Arab World: A Survey of Radio and Television in the Middle East*, (Philadelphia, PA: 1982).

¹²⁶ Bell, 'He Said Forward! To the Backward', 157-74 (172).

¹²⁷ Mapp, *Leave Well Alone*, 61.

¹²⁸ Eisenhower, *Mandate for Change 1953-1956*, 157.

foreign policy followed by the gradual emergence of Nikita Khrushchev as the new Soviet leader. According to Khrushchev, Stalin avoided any major interference in the Middle East as 'he realistically recognized that the balance of power wasn't in our favor and that Britain wouldn't have stood for our interference'. But the new Soviet leadership saw in the Egyptians a possible penetrating point into the Arab World in order 'to weaken the influence of English colonialism in the Near East – and that was in the interest of the Soviet Union'.¹²⁹ It was at this time, in the summer of 1953, that the Russians conducted their first successful test of the hydrogen bomb, only four years after developing the atomic bomb.¹³⁰

In September 1953, the annual two-day Shi'ite religious festival of *Ashura* was due. The festival is observed by Shi'ites worldwide on 9 and 10 of the month of *Muharram* of the Islamic *Hijri* lunar calendar, and that year it fell on 19 and 20 of September. The occasion marks the martyrdom of Hussain, Prophet Mohammed's grandson. The rituals were not limited to *Ma'tems*,¹³¹ but took on the form of processions marching down the streets and parading. Usually crowds of people (including Sunnis) gathered on the roadside as curious observers. These parades featured men beating their chests in sorrow, others beating their back and shoulders with chains as a form of self-flagellation, a display of black flags, and at

¹²⁹ N. Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers* (London: 1971), 431-32.

¹³⁰ The Soviets officially announced their first successful test of the hydrogen bomb on 12 August 1953. See 'Russia's Hydrogen Bomb: Premier Questioned', *The Manchester Guardian*, 11 November 1953, 2; and P.G. Boyle (ed.), *The Eden-Eisenhower Correspondence, 1955-1957* (Chapel Hill, NC: 2005), 'The Issues', 53-78 (53).

¹³¹ *Ma'tem*: Also known as a *Hussainiya*, is a religious structure similar in appearance to a mosque but is considered to be a multi-task building more like a church hall, utilised only by Muslim Shi'ites. In the *Ma'tem* religious occasions are observed including the births and deaths of Shi'ite saints, funeral gatherings, wedding receptions, *Qu'ranic* recitation, religious sermons, and other public functions. For information on *Ma'tems* and their history in Bahrain see A. Saif, *Al-Ma'atem fi Al-Bahrain: Dirasah Tawtheeqiyah* [Ma'tems in Bahrain: A Documentary Study] (Manama: 1995).

times men cutting their foreheads with knives and swords. These occasions are usually charged with religious emotions from both sides, as the Shi'ites recalled stories relating to the death of Hussain whereas the Sunnis viewed the practices of the celebration as a religious *bida'a*.¹³²

Although the Bahraini Administration did not expect a massive conflict between Sunnis and Shi'ites during the coming festival, Bahrain's then Political Agent JW Wall in a report to the newly appointed Resident Sir Bernard Burrows,¹³³ claimed that security measures were carried out locally to prevent any possible disturbance amongst the Shi'ites of Persian origin. The reason for the concern was the growing feud between supporters of Mosaddegh and those of Fazlollah Zahedi and the fear was that it might be carried onto the streets of Manama.¹³⁴ Zahedi organised a *coup d'état* aided by pro-Shah demonstrators to overthrow Mosaddegh and counter communist infiltration in a covert operation with the CIA and Britain's Military Intelligence, Section 6 (MI6) known as operation AJAX.¹³⁵

¹³² *Bida'a*: Literally translated into a religious innovation. It's a religious practice or form of worship regarded by Muslim religious scholars [in this case Sunnis] to be neither prescribed by the Muslim holy book the *Qu'ran* or Prophet Mohammed's sayings, and or by early Muslim generations.

Therefore any religious act or practice or form of worship that falls under this category is forbidden.

¹³³ Sir Bernard Alexander Brocas Burrows was born in Britain on 3 July 1910. For his education he attended Eton and Oxford's Trinity College. He started working at the FO in 1934. Burrows was transferred to Cairo from 1938 to 1945. He returned to London in 1945 and was transferred later to the British Embassy in the US as the Head of Chancery. During the time he had worked in the US he crossed-roads with the notorious British spy for the Soviets Guy Burgess who was appointed to work at the embassy in 1950. Following his work in the US he was appointed as Resident in the Arabian Gulf region, succeeding Hay on 27 July 1953. See 'Cool Briton in Hot Spot: Bernard Alexander Brocas Burrows', *New York Times* 29 July 1957, 4; and A. Lownie, *Stalin's Englishman: The Lives of Guy Burgess* (London: 2015), 200.

¹³⁴ TNA, FO 371/104263, Wall to Burrows, 5 October 1953.

¹³⁵ D.B. Kunz, *The Economic Diplomacy of the Suez Crisis* (Chapel Hill, NC: 1991), 32; Eisenhower, *Mandate for Change 1953-1956*, 164; P. Calvocoressi and G. Wint, *Middle East Crisis* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: 1957), 34; W.S. Lucas, *Britain and Suez: the Lion's Last Roar* (Manchester: 1996), 10; and Eveland, *Ropes of Sand*, 108.

Bahrain's newspaper *Al-Qafilah* expressed its support for Mosaddegh following his removal from power in an article entitled 'Iran Lost Mosaddegh'.¹³⁶ The newspaper, in the same edition, also attacked an unnamed British doctor who had named his dog in a derogatory sense after 'the savior of Iran', Mosaddegh as *Al-Qafilah* noted. The report was designed to inflame public opinion against the British.¹³⁷

Consequently by the coming of the anniversary of the Shi'ite festival in September 1953, emotions were running high on both the local and regional levels. It was only a matter of time before a clash was bound to take place and the opportunity presented itself in *Muharram*. Though the first day of the festival passed without any cited trouble, the second day on 20 September proved catastrophic. According to Bahrain's Government Annual Report for 1953 a procession of Bahraini Shi'ites was marching down Belgrave Road in Manama in close proximity to the British Political Agency.¹³⁸ The procession was headed in the direction it was agreed upon with the local authorities and under police protection. Suddenly a dispute erupted between two men who claimed to lead a specific group amongst the procession. Some of the onlookers who were Sunni jumped into the argument. It did not take long before a fight broke out between the Sunnis and Shi'ites as the spectators clashed with the procession. Fighting developed more aggressively and stones, wood, and bottles were thrown; people from their own

¹³⁶ A. Bahlol, 'Iran Khasirat Mosaddegh' [Iran Lost Mosaddegh], *Al-Qafilah*, 4 September 1953, 3.

¹³⁷ 'Qilat Adab!' [Lack of Manners!], *Al-Qafilah*, 4 September 1953, 1.

¹³⁸ Belgrave Road was located in the heart of old Manama City and is known today as Sheikh Isa Al-Kabir [Sheikh Isa the Great] Road. It lies in close proximity to the British Embassy and the American Mission Hospital.

rooftops also participated in the action. Sixty people in total were reportedly injured.¹³⁹

Wall, the British Political Agent, offered in an account forwarded to the Residency an illustration of the events on that day based on a British eyewitness named as 'Mr. Wallace' who claimed from his viewpoint that a member of the procession got into an altercation with the spectators threatening them and 'starting excitement among the crowd'. Before any further developments took place, the police intervened to arrest the agitator and peace was restored. Nonetheless, a group of Shi'ites appeared determined to free the accused agitator; consequently, control of the crowd was lost. During the *imbroglio* some of the demonstrators headed towards the Political Agency's headquarters and the Agency's guards fired shots in the air to disperse the approaching crowd, according to the Bahrain Government Annual Report. Wall, however, claimed uncertainty as to who first fired the shots, whether it was the police or the Political Agency's guards. Later, according to the Political Agent, 'Peace was finally restored during lunchtime following the arrival of police reinforcements headed by Belgrave personally'.¹⁴⁰

Tensions between the two sects continued well into the following day. Rumours spread amongst both communities as stories were carried of clashes between the two groups. One of the rumours that spread was an attack by the *Baharna* of Arad village on Sunnis in Muharraq. Sunnis were determined to march

¹³⁹ 'Government of Bahrain Annual Report for Year 1954 (September 1953-December 1954)', in *The Bahrain Government Annual Reports 1924-1956*, vol. V 1952-1956, ed. R.L. Jarman, (Buckinghamshire: 1986), 1-105 (47).

¹⁴⁰ FO 371/104263, Wall to Burrows, 6 October 1953; and 'Government of Bahrain Annual Report for Year 1954 (September 1953-December 1954)', 1-105 (47).

into the village of Arad but Sheikh Abdulla bin Isa Al-Khalifa, the Ruler's uncle, convinced them not to do so. He also wisely placed his cars with armed personnel of his own, to block any penetration by angry Sunni mobs into Arad. Finally a curfew was imposed on the night of 21 September from 8.30 pm to 5.00 am. A ban on the assembly of six or more people was also imposed. On 23 September, the curfew was lifted and the ban on local assembly was also lifted six days later. The incident and what had followed highlighted the need to improve the training of local police in dealing with large riots, as Wall identified. He also believed that there was 'a real need for more British officers', in Bahrain's Police Force.¹⁴¹ In a discussion recorded by Burrows with Belgrave, the need to better equip and develop Bahrain's police was mutually agreed on.¹⁴²

By the end of September the Bahraini Administration was unfortunately slow in reacting to the sectarian crisis. A state address should have been issued immediately after the outbreak of the riot. The end of the eventful month of September, although no deaths were recorded, only saw the arrest of two to three in relation to the disturbance. In Wall's view the Administration's strategy was to ease tensions within the community and let emotions settle down. In an effort by the British to explain the unforeseen events, the Political Agent presented the Resident with a number of possible theories. One was the spread of agitation by Shi'ites coming from Persia, Iraq, and Al-Hassa in Saudi Arabia to Bahrain. The other possibility was tied to the greater picture of regional developments as he said:

¹⁴¹ TNA, FO 371/104263, Burrows to FO, 22 September 1953; and TNA, FO 371/104263, Wall to Burrows, 6 October 1953.

¹⁴² TNA, FO 371/104263, Burrows to Belgrave, 13 October 1953.

through increased contact with the rest of the Middle East and through the influence of irresponsible and inflammatory publicity of the sort that keeps the idle crowds of the great Arab towns in a state of excitement, are losing the languor and placidity that seem to have characterized them since the pacification of the Gulf in the last century.¹⁴³

Burrows shared a similar view to that of Wall's second theory which he expressed in a message posted to His Majesty's (HM) Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Sir Anthony Eden, that although he was glad that the disturbance was of an internal nature and did not single out Britain as a target, he feared

that the existence of this tension must be in some ways related to the general heightening of nationalistic and religious fervour spread throughout the Middle East by the Arabic press and radio.¹⁴⁴

Al-Bakir shared a different and rather a controversial point-of-view and he blamed the sectarian riots on the British. He reflected in his memoir that the British feared the rise of youth in Bahrain. Therefore, he claimed, they used Belgrave whose orders and plans were executed through *agents provocateurs* to instigate sectarian hatred between the Sunnis and Shi'ites. The conflict, he argued, would keep the two sects occupied with their own personal affairs and thereby divert them from interfering in other, greater, issues.¹⁴⁵ Al-Bakir went on further to claim in 1956 in a speech to the Kuwaiti Studentship Union in Cairo that sectarianism in Bahrain was the Adviser's own creation and that 'it [sectarianism] was unknown until that time period'. However Sunni-Shi'ite tensions existed prior to Belgrave's arrival as was presented in thesis introduction (cf the clash of 1923 between *Nejdīs* and Persians that transpired into a sectarian conflict). Moreover, Al-Bakir failed to

¹⁴³ TNA, FO 371/104263, Wall to Burrows, 6 October 1953.

¹⁴⁴ TNA, FO 371/104263, Burrows to Eden, 13 October 1953.

¹⁴⁵ Al-Bakir, *From Bahrain to Exile*, 39-40.

provide evidence to support this charge.¹⁴⁶

The tactic of using the British (or a British personality) as a scapegoat immediately following the event was also reflected in Bahrain's nationalist newspaper *Al-Qafilah* whose editorial team included Al-Bakir. Interestingly there was no censorship of articles documented for the newspaper until the publication of its issue of 2 October 1953, which was the first issue to be published following the riot. The first page alone included a total of five articles that were completely censored by the Administration. Nothing was left intact from the articles except the titles, for the journalists wanted to show what the topics were. The titles that were published gave an understanding of what might have been the possible content of the censored articles as it seemed that the writers attempted to blame the British for being behind, or involved in, igniting the clashes. The titles of the five censored articles were, 'Beyond the Tragedy', 'Tears and Smiles', 'What a disappointment', 'The Hand', possibly in an attempt to hint at the involvement of a foreign power in recent events, and 'This Crisis is caused by...' also hinting at foreign intervention.¹⁴⁷

No British FO documents survive today that support Al-Bakir's theory of a plot to start sectarian tensions in Bahrain among FO papers *vis-à-vis* Bahrain nor in the personal memoirs and diaries of officials including that of Belgrave. Al-Bakir also does not present a *pièce justificative* as proof to support his argument which is based mainly on speculation. He attempted to lay the blame on the foreigner for the country's own misfortunes instead of acknowledging that there was an inherently

¹⁴⁶ A.R. Al-Bakir, *Al-Awath'a Al-Siyasiyah fi Al-Bahrain wa Al-Ahdath Al-Akhirah fiha* [The Political Situation in Bahrain and its Recent Events] (2007), 48, hereafter *The Political Situation in Bahrain*.

¹⁴⁷ *Al-Qafilah*, 2 October 1953, 1.

deeply-rooted problem in the society that was in need for healing, reflection, and recovery in a possible attempt to lay people's differences behind, and gain public support for a new and upcoming movement.

Al-Bakir also claimed in his memoir that he was asked to leave Bahrain for Lebanon by the Administration as *persona non grata* for four months following the riot. The only explanation provided by Al-Bakir as to the reason behind his departure was that he had made a number of phone calls and met with various members of Sunni and Shi'ite communities following the riot.¹⁴⁸ However there are no FO documents to be found at TNA in relation to the reason behind Al-Bakir's departure.

In early 1954 major developments in Egypt were taking place as a struggle for power ensued among members of the RCC. This contest came to light following the resignation of Naguib on 25 February 1954 in protest at his authority being undermined by other members of the RCC.¹⁴⁹ In Bahrain local nationalists exerted an effort to reconcile the broken Sunni-Shi'ite relations. Unified grievances against foreign-owned-or-operated business establishments in Bahrain became the focal point of their attacks. Nothing can unify conflicting parties like rallying against a greater foreign enemy. The systematic attacks on these establishments manifested themselves in a conflict that occurred in the premises of Bahrain's petroleum company.

¹⁴⁸ Al-Bakir, *From Bahrain to Exile*, 40.

¹⁴⁹ M. Naguib, *Kalimat... Lil-Tarikh* [My Word... For History] (Cairo: 2011), 126-51.

Chapter Two

Bahrain's 'Suez Canal Companies' and the attack on the Police Fort

March to September 1954

Foreign-operated-or-owned companies stood as a symbol of oppression and exploitation to the nationalists in Bahrain. They viewed them as malicious entities and an extension of colonialism out to deprive locals of their national resources while enslaving employees in what could be described as Bahrain's own Suez Canal Companies, in reference to Egypt's Suez Canal Company.¹⁵⁰ In Bahrain there were systematic attacks by the nationalist press targeting BAPCO and other organisations with accounts of events in those companies, some of which were presented as facts backed by cursory investigative reporting. The aim of these reports was to build a case by which nationalists could air their protests, blaming their frustrations on British influence. Moreover, it was in the nationalists' *vade mecum*, Nasser's manual, where he stressed the importance of Arab oil as he illustrated that 'Half the proved reserves of oil in the world lie beneath Arab soil'.¹⁵¹ The focus of nationalists on Bahrain's oil company was of no coincidence since oil was an element of crucial importance to Britain from a financial perspective and for its overall strategy to defend the Middle East. A COS memorandum reviewing British strategy in the Middle East stressed the importance of retaining 'the countries of the Middle East

¹⁵⁰ To better understand what the Suez Canal Company meant to Egyptian nationalists, Erskine B Childers, a British journalist and writer presented the nationalist views of the Company as an entity exploiting the locals via its 'Anglo-French holdings'. Furthermore, to the Egyptians the Company was associated indefinitely with what they viewed as its 'submissive past'. See Childers, *The Road to Suez*, 116.

¹⁵¹ G. Abdel-Nasser, *Egypt's Liberation: The Philosophy of the Revolution* (Washington: 1955), 108.

within the Western orbit', as its oil requirements were 'of great importance' to Britain.¹⁵²

The events that unfolded in 1954 turned Bahrain, in Belgrave's eyes, into a 'very different place to what it was when I had first known it'.¹⁵³ The grievances that were aired that year led to further conflict as it manifested itself in a fight at the petroleum company, an attack on Bahrain's Police Fort that turned into a bloody demonstration, strikes, and a state of fearful anticipation. All these events further moved the Sunni-Shi'ite communities to join forces. Local developments accompanied Bahrainis' reaction to Egypt's leadership crisis and a new visit by one of Nasser's aides.

Regionally the month of March 1954 was a turning point in the history of Egypt and subsequently the Arab World as changes there helped to shape the country's new leadership with Nasser becoming victorious in the fight for Egypt's leadership. The competition between Naguib and Nasser for power turned into a crisis within the state's military in the spring of 1954, in what could be labeled as the 'Crisis of March', as Gammal Hammad, a member of the Free Officers noted.¹⁵⁴ The struggle ended with Nasser's victory and with Naguib returning to the Presidency by public demand and from the military. However his authority was reduced to the mere title of President and Nasser successfully dismissed Naguib's high-ranking military aides. Nasser's rise reshaped the political field in Egypt as a

¹⁵² BDEEP, Series B, Part II, vol. 4, 'Egypt and the Defence of the Middle East' 1949-1953. Doc. 177: DEFE 5/24, COS (50)363, annex, 'Review of Middle East strategy': COS Committee memorandum. *Appendices*, 15 September 1950.

¹⁵³ Belgrave, *Personal Column*, 199.

¹⁵⁴ 'Interview with Gamal Hammad', *Shahid ala Al-Asar* [Witness onto an Era], *Al-Jazeera*, 10 November 2008-9 February 2009, part 2 and 6.

new totalitarian regime started to take shape and this period is best described as 'the fall of liberalism in Egypt'.¹⁵⁵

Bahrain's *Al-Qafilah* captured the local fascination with the developments and division over whom to support as the newspaper had reported a fight that erupted between two men at a local coffee shop as a result of a heated debate over the matter. One debater supported Naguib whom he described as a 'supporter of freedoms', the other supported Nasser described as 'the Revolution's man'.¹⁵⁶

The centre point of nationalists' attacks, BAPCO, witnessed important transformations in the early 1950s as it signed its new fifty-fifty agreement with the Bahraini Government, guaranteeing equal shares with the company for the first time since its establishment in 1929. The deal was inspired by a similar understanding made by the Venezuelans followed by the Saudis.¹⁵⁷ The Ruler's initial agreement to the new deal was signed on 18 April 1950.¹⁵⁸

BAPCO, in the 1950s, offered a number of services and consisted of different divisions.¹⁵⁹ One of the company's functions was the refining of Saudi Arabian crude oil.¹⁶⁰ In the aftermath of the Iranian oil crisis, Bahrain had built one of the largest

¹⁵⁵ A.A. Ramadan, *Al-Sira'a Al-Ijtima'ee wa Al-Siyasi fi Misr* [The Social and Political Struggle in Egypt] (Cairo: 1989), 195-209.

¹⁵⁶ The end result of the argument was that one had knocked a tray full of hot tea on himself leading to a further quarrel with the coffee shop's owner. See Wahid, 'Sada'a Al-Niza'a bayna Mohammed Naguib wa Jamal Abdel-Nasser' [Echos of the Struggle between Mohammed Naguib and Gamal Abdel-Nasser]; *Al-Qafilah*, 14 May 1954, 6.

¹⁵⁷ W.M.R. Louis, *The British Empire in the Middle East 1945-1951: Arab Nationalism, the United States and Postwar Imperialism* (Oxford: 1985), 594; and J. Marlowe, *The Persian Gulf in the Twentieth Century* (London: 1962), 172, hereafter *The Persian Gulf*.

¹⁵⁸ IOR/R/15/2/18, Ruler of Bahrain to the Chief Local Representative of BAPCO, 18 April 1950.

¹⁵⁹ According to Angela Clarke, by 1952 BAPCO's divisions operated three different functions. The first being its production unit, second its refining unit, and third its marketing unit. See A. Clarke, *Bahrain Oil and Development 1929-1989* (London: 1990), 248.

¹⁶⁰ R. Mikesell and H.B. Chenery, *Arabian Oil: American's Stake in the Middle East* (Chapel Hill, NC: 1949), 61.

oil refining centres in the region.¹⁶¹ Although the company was registered in Canada with its shares owned by the Standard Oil Company of California and the Texas Oil Company, the majority of its management was British and its status was that of a British-operated company.¹⁶²

From a global perspective and in light of the Cold War, Bahrain and its oil fields were of a strategic importance to the British in view of the threat of Soviet advance into the region as a COS memorandum from April 1952 revealed. The British had devised a plan to protect Bahrain, its oil fields, refinery, and oil passage from any dreaded Soviet penetration into the area. For the defense plan twenty-four frigates and thirty-four minesweepers, one infantry division, and ten squadrons were allocated. The plan was devised with the assumption that both Iraq and Iran had fallen into the hands of the enemy.

The plan was broached with Mosaddegh still in power as it was feared that the Soviets might wish to take advantage of the situation in the Gulf. The memorandum estimated that the Soviets could reach Bahrain's oil fields within sixty days after gaining complete control of both Iraq and Iran. Furthermore the importance associated with Bahrain's oil fields was attached to the anxiety that Kuwait's oil fields (also under British protection) would capitulate following Soviet annexation of Iraq and Iran. Hence the next line of defence for Britain would be Bahrain and its oil fields.¹⁶³

¹⁶¹ S.H. Longrigg, *Oil in the Middle East: Its Discovery and Development* (London: 1961), 219.

¹⁶² Hay, *The Persian Gulf*, 94; and J.H.D. Belgrave, *Welcome to Bahrain* (London: 1973), 48.

¹⁶³ TNA, DEFE 4/53/58, C.O.S. (52)58H, Defence of the Bahrein Oil Area in Isolation, 9 April 1952.

A campaign against BAPCO was launched by *Sawut Al-Bahrain* and *Al-Qafilah* through a series of articles. In the campaign the company was named as 'Tyrannical BAPCO', 'a small state', and 'the colonialist company'. Claims were also made of arbitrary dismissals, locals were said to have been abused by their foreign superiors, employees insisted that they suffered with 'decayed brains', others said they had lost their legs, and some claimed to have mysteriously acquired tuberculosis.¹⁶⁴

The treatment of Bahrainis by foreigners (even with non-employees) was highlighted in *Al-Qafilah* which published a letter in English from a Bahraini to the Editor regarding his experience with his BAPCO Club member friend. He claimed that he was asked to leave the club's dining hall by an Englishman for no reason but mere racism. The author of the letter warned in modest English,

Those Britons who have stinking ideas about Asians do not seem to possess enough sense to realize that by have such attitude they are only boiling our blood, but digging their own graves. It is time WE struggled for our rights, because now we are living in the age of TWENTIETH CENTURY. Long Live Bahrain.¹⁶⁵

The letter was published in its original form of English and translated into Arabic. The incident may have been only apocryphal, or have been an unfortunate 'one-off' incident and not part of the British or BAPCO's policy at the time. However it was used to generate further bad feeling against the company and, in particular, its British element.

¹⁶⁴ 'Baynana wa bayna Bapco' [Between us and BAPCO], *Sawut Al-Bahrain*, March-April 1952, 21; 'BAPCO Al-Mustabida' [Tyrannical BAPCO], *Al-Qafilah*, 19 February 1954, 2; and 'Anba'a Al-Bahrain wa Al-Khaleej' [News from Bahrain and the Gulf], *Sawut Al-Bahrain*, January 1954, 65.

¹⁶⁵ E. Eshaq, 'It is High Time BAPCO Behaves Better', *Al-Qafilah*, 21 August 1953, 3.

The Bahraini press also launched a campaign around the simple matter of shortening working hours during the month of *Ramadan*, turning it into a religious affair and describing BAPCO as a company that ‘mocks everything in relation to their beliefs’.¹⁶⁶ Al-Bakir went on to claim that Bahrain was losing some of the benefit due from oil production mainly ‘due to the conspiracies, its strings were weaved by the British Government’s men in Bahrain and their associates from the Bahrain Petroleum Company’. He then blamed BAPCO when Bahrainis opted to leave their jobs at BAPCO for other regional jobs in the petroleum industry citing the company’s tight budget and without elaborating on the issue. Al-Bakir claimed that of a total of 12,700 employees at the company only 2,700 were locals and the rest were foreigners. Al-Bakir produced these figures in an address to the Kuwaiti Studentship Union in Cairo in 1956.¹⁶⁷

However the data presented by Al-Bakir was misleading. According to the former Resident Hay in a journal article published in 1955, the approximate number of local employees at BAPCO was 5,000.¹⁶⁸ Other sources, -- the Political Agency’s annual report of 1954 and the *New York Times* in 1955 -- published more detailed figures of the oil company’s employees in Bahrain, saying that the number of employees totalled 8,532, of which 5,829 were Bahrainis.¹⁶⁹ In addition, a report from BAPCO found at the company’s library and close to this time period dated 31 December 1950 detailing the nationalities of the employees of the company, with

¹⁶⁶ Aqil, ‘*BAPCO Sharikat Nift Al-Bahrain tatihu taghnujan wa dallalan*’ [BAPCO, the Bahrain Petroleum Company Sways Coquettishly and flirtatiously], *Sawut Al-Bahrain*, May 1954, 26.

¹⁶⁷ Al-Bakir, *The Political Situation in Bahrain*, 20-21.

¹⁶⁸ Hay, ‘The Impact of the Oil Industry on the Persian Gulf Shaykhdoms’, 361-72 (362).

¹⁶⁹ TNA, FO 371/114576, Wall, the Annual Administration Report for Her Majesty’s Political Agency at Bahrain for the Year 1954; and ‘Bahrein Oil Output Up Slightly in 1954’, *New York Times*, 4 May 1955, 46.

figures being close to that of the *New York Times*' range. It gave the total number of employees as 7,299, of which 4,303 were Bahrainis.¹⁷⁰ There were no layoffs of local employees in Bahrain during this time to support Al-Bakir's statement.

The ideas the local press produced were held by some individuals in Bahrain, as a British traveler Roderic Owen documented in his memoir on how locals attacked BAPCO's policies as they questioned him on the topic: 'Why should Europeans get paid one rupee more than Bahrainis?', 'Why doesn't BAPCO do more for Bahrain?' Comparisons were made with the Arabian-American Oil Company (ARAMCO) of Saudi Arabia in terms of employee benefits. Underlying all this was a belief that 'All the oil belongs to the Bahrainis'.¹⁷¹

Although Bahrain's petroleum company employed a substantial amount of Bahrainis, none of its senior employees at the time were locals, mainly due 'to the lack of educated Bahrainis' in the field. Furthermore, a considerable number of Bahrainis failed to complete their education after acquiring basic educational skills at the secondary level. It would take years for locals to reach a level that would enable them to compete for higher managerial posts. Europeans earned higher wages in comparison to locals to compensate them for moving from the comfort of their technologically-advanced environments to Bahrain. Comparing BAPCO's pay and benefits to that of ARAMCO was unfair, as the Saudi company's production and revenues way surpassed that of Bahrain's BAPCO.¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ The Bahrein Petroleum Company Limited in Awali, BAPCO's Library, BAPCO's 1951 Annual Report.

¹⁷¹ R. Owen, *The Golden Bubble: Arabian Gulf Documentary* (London: 1957), 226-27, hereafter *The Golden Bubble*.

¹⁷² Hay, 'The Impact of the Oil Industry on the Persian Gulf Shaykhdoms', 361-72 (363).

Other companies in Bahrain, such as the trading house Gray Mackenzie, were also attacked in the nationalist press. Gray Mackenzie was accused of offering financial bonuses only to its non-Bahraini employees.¹⁷³ The British Overseas Airways Corporation (BOAC) also suffered its share of attacks when it was accused 'of bringing the largest amount of Indians to this island', awarding them with jobs as drivers, a profession in which Bahrainis can easily be recruited instead, *Al-Qafilah* proclaimed.¹⁷⁴

Meetings between Sunnis and Shi'ites to bring about a *détente* were underway, according to Al-Bakir. The only source available for these meetings is Al-Bakir's memoir; hence caution must be exercised as we lack supporting evidence. Al-Bakir said that, by May 1954, efforts were being made to agree on official political representation from both communities following his return to Bahrain from Lebanon. The initial arrangement consisted of seven Sunnis who planned to reach out to the Shi'ite community. The Sunnis included: Abdulla Al-Zain, Yusuf Al-Saie, Abdul-Rahman Abdul-Ghaffar, Abdul-Aziz Al-Shamlan, Ali Al-Wazzan, and Al-Bakir himself. A contact with a representative from the Shi'ites was made and an arrangement to meet for the first time was made. The meeting was conducted at Hassan Al-Aradi's house in Ras Al-Ru'man in Manama on 7 May. From the Shi'ite side the following attended: Al-Sayed Ali bin Ebrahim Kamal-el-Deen, Mohsin Al-Tajir, Abd-Ali Al-Alaiwat, Abdulla Abu Dheeb, Abdulla Abu Hindi, and Hassan Al-Aradi. The first meeting brought little progress but a second meeting was scheduled

¹⁷³ H. Rahma and Abdul-Sahib and N. BaHiji, '*Shakwa thid Sharikat Gray Mackenzie*' [A Complaint against the Company Gray Mackenzie], *Al-Qafilah*, 12 November 1954, 1.

¹⁷⁴ Mim. Ain., '*Al-B.O.A.C Tatahada*' [The B.O.A.C.'s Challenge], *Al-Qafilah*, 5 June 1953, 3.

for three days later and with fewer representatives. The second meeting was more fruitful as both parties agreed to a general meeting in which both would invite as many from each community as they wished. The new meeting was to take place on 18 May in the Al-Ju'mah Mosque in Muharraq. Al-Bakir later declared that the meeting was put off after the Ruler got wind of it and expressed his objections to it.¹⁷⁵

The rumours of Sunni-Shi'ite meetings had reached the Ruler were confirmed by Belgrave's diary of 17 May. He noted that the Ruler believed that the objective of the meetings was not to reach reconciliation between the two but was rather driven by the Sunnis to put forth to the Administration sets of political demands. Belgrave did not hide his feelings towards the affair. 'I personally am against it', he said.¹⁷⁶

Burrows, in a message to Eden, underlined his awareness of a number of Sunnis and Shi'ites who had conducted meetings in Bahrain to ease sectarian tensions. Burrows highlighted the local Administration's wariness of the possibility of political demands which might follow the Sunni-Shi'ite dialogue. Furthermore, the Residency voiced its suspicion of this group's motives. They advised the Ruler to take measures to ease local tensions.

One of the ideas presented to the Ruler was the formation of a committee representing both sects to investigate the previous year's events. But the Ruler believed that a suggestion to form an investigative committee made no sense as its

¹⁷⁵ Al-Bakir, *From Bahrain to Exile*, 46-49.

¹⁷⁶ University of Exeter, Special Collections, *Sir Charles Dalrymple Belgrave's Personal Diaries*, 17 May 1954.

authority would be challenged by the 'agitators' as such a body would be seen to represent the Government. Furthermore, the appointed committee members might, the Ruler felt, view themselves equal in authority to the Government and could then push for demands, such as the Adviser's dismissal, a move which was rarely mentioned but much feared. According to Burrows, the Ruler feared that such measures 'would betray the Adviser', in order to satisfy 'a gang of ignorant self-seekers'.¹⁷⁷

The 15 May was marked by a visit from an unnamed Egyptian Brigadier which Belgrave noted in his diary.¹⁷⁸ The Brigadier was probably Mohammed Fuad Galal as he was recorded as having presented a talk on Arab nationalism around that time at the Al-Urubah Club [The Pan-Arab Club] in Bahrain.¹⁷⁹ Galal was an aide of Nasser who was introduced to the Egyptian leader via Heikal. He was appointed as a member in the State's Services Council responsible for the development of public projects derived mainly from the confiscated wealth of the former King.¹⁸⁰ He was also appointed Minister of Social Affairs in Egypt from 7 September 1952 to 18 June 1953.¹⁸¹

Prior to and following the second anniversary of the Free Officers' revolution in Egypt, the nationalist press in Bahrain celebrated the occasion. Ali Sayyar, a local

¹⁷⁷ TNA, FO 371/109813, Burrows to Eden, 23 June 1954.

¹⁷⁸ *Sir Charles Dalrymple Belgrave's Personal Diaries*, 15 May 1954.

¹⁷⁹ T. Al-Baharna, *Nadi Al-Urubah wa Sitaan A'man fi Khidmat Al-Thaqafah wa Al-Mujtama'a 1939-1999* [Al-Aruba Club, Sixty Years of Intellectual and Social Services 1939-1999] (Manama: 1999), 229.

¹⁸⁰ 'Abdel-Nasser wa Heikal liqa'a "Al-Tha'er" wa "Al-Journaligy" wasat Al-Naar wa Al-Dumu'a' [Abdel-Nasser and Heikal, the meeting between "the revolutionary" and "the journalist" amidst the fire and tears], *Al-Sabah*, (2013), <<http://www.elsaba7.com/NewsPrint.aspx?Id=127524>> [accessed 21 December 2015].

¹⁸¹ *Al-Ra'ees Mohammed Naguib* [President Mohammed Naguib], <<http://naguib.bibalex.org/DocumentForm.aspx?Page=13>> [accessed 3 January 2016].

journalist and future member of the Party, advised Bahrainis to travel to Egypt as only then would they 'realise to what extent Egypt loves Bahrain'. He also praised the work of Abdul-Latif Al-Baghdadi, a prominent member of the Free Officers responsible for municipal affairs at the time,¹⁸² whose work had successfully 'turned Cairo's huts into palaces'. The journalist later compared Al-Baghdadi's work to housing conditions in Bahrain, in an attempt to undermine the efficacy of Belgrave's Administration.¹⁸³

The anniversary of the revolution also marked the introduction of a new tone in the nationalist press aimed at justifying the Egyptian regime and Nasser's suppression of freedoms. *Al-Qafilah* criticised those who called 'upon a fictitious democracy', and viewed democracy as a method to 'exploit the labouring people'. The newspaper also viewed democracy as 'an elegant word that hides within it venomous poison'.¹⁸⁴ It is unknown if these claims truly represented the views of those nationalists who later became leading figures within a reformist movement that called upon a form of democratic representation. Maybe the writers were influenced by Egyptian propaganda. Or it could have been that the concept of democracy seemed vague and unclear to them.

Despite attempts to reconcile Sunnis and Shi'ites in Bahrain, sectarian tensions were running high in the summer of 1954. On 2 June an incident occurred in Muharraq between two cattle fodder sellers, one being Sunni and the other a

¹⁸² A. Goldschmidt Jr., 'Abd al-Latif al-Baghdadi', *Biographical Dictionary of Modern Egypt* (London: 2000), 31.

¹⁸³ A. Sayyar, '*Nughat fawgah Al-Huroof*' [Dots on top of Words], *Al-Watan*, 1 June 1956, 2.

¹⁸⁴ '23 Yulya...' [July 23...], *Al-Qafilah*, 23 July 1954, 1.

Shi'ite. An argument between the two developed resulting in the accidental death of the elderly Sunni when he was knocked to the ground.¹⁸⁵

A more serious disturbance occurred at BAPCO's drum plant in Sitra, an island dominated by its Shi'ite population, as tensions generated in the local press, regional developments, and sectarian anxieties spread to the company's employees. A dispute between Sunnis and Shi'ites over bicycles on 15 June turned ugly.

According to the memoir of Abdul-Karim Al-Alaiwat, the fight that took place between the two parties developed as a result of a practical joke played by two Shi'ite employees who deflated the tyres of bicycles owned by two Sunnis. As soon as the fight occurred, and news of it spread, relatives of the Sunnis involved rushed to the scene to aid their family member. Shi'ites from a neighbouring village also arrived to take part in the fight, headed by a man identified as Hassan Marzook.¹⁸⁶

Following the disorder in BAPCO, Al-Bakir claimed that he was asked to leave Bahrain once again for a period of three months on 28 June and this time went to Egypt.¹⁸⁷ Eleven Bahrainis were swiftly put on trial on 30 June due to the recent disturbance at the oil company, three of whom were Sunnis and eight were Shi'ites. The trial took place at the Police Fort in Manama, a poor choice of location. The site had been chosen with the aim of providing a larger space for individuals concerned with the trial and for security reasons. However the selected location seemed to have later agitated the crowds outside as they feared that the venue would not give

¹⁸⁵ *Sir Charles Dalrymple Belgrave's Personal Diaries*, 2 June 1954.

¹⁸⁶ 'Government of Bahrain: Annual Report for Year 1954 (September 1953-December 1954)', 1-105 (48-49); and A.K. Al-Alaiwat, *Al-Bahrain... Muthakrati min Al-Hay'eh Ila Al-Istiqlal* [Bahrain... My Memoir from the Committee to Independence] (Manama: 2014), 45.

¹⁸⁷ Al-Bakir, *From Bahrain to Exile*, 49-52.

the Shi'ite defendants a fair hearing. Moreover the appointed judges were Sunnis from the royal family and the Shi'ites feared that they would be given an unfair hearing. The final verdict reached in the trial sentenced one of the accused Shi'ites to a one-year in prison and a fine, three others to two years imprisonment and a fine, and a fourth to a one-month jail sentence. The three Sunnis received only a one-month jail sentence. Burrows explained what might be misread according to him as unfair verdicts between the two sects, was due to the Shi'ite crowd who had arrived from a village in close proximity to BAPCO's station to take part in the fight.¹⁸⁸

As soon as the verdicts were read out, according to Belgrave who himself had announced the sentences, chaos erupted as Shi'ites opposed to the court's decision declared their objection. Crowds ran into the Manama *Souq* (market) calling on shopkeepers to close their stores. Later a crowd of demonstrators assembled at the British Political Agency, although no serious rioting was recorded.¹⁸⁹

Burrows despatched to the FO on the same day a sketch of the events and added that the demonstrators who had gathered at the Agency's headquarters managed to meet the Political Agent and insisted on their demands to have the British intervene to nullify the sentences and for British protection. The number of demonstrators was estimated to be approximately one hundred. The angry crowd made it clear to Wall their desire to stay until all their demands were met. Nevertheless, the Agent managed successfully to disperse them.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁸ TNA, FO 371/109813, Burrows to FO, 20 July 1954.

¹⁸⁹ *Sir Charles Dalrymple Belgrave's Personal Diaries*, 30 June 1954.

¹⁹⁰ TNA, FO 371/109813, Burrows to FO, 30 June 1954.

The following day was marked by further trouble. It started when a crowd of some two hundred agitated Shi'ites gathered at 10.00 am in the Mu'min Mosque very near to the Manama Police Fort. The crowd armed themselves 'with bits of wood, iron piping and leaves of motor-car springs' and marched towards the fort. The purpose was to break through the fort and free the sentenced Shi'ites, presuming that they were held there. The police shot at the crowd after two revolvers were fired from the demonstrators' position, without receiving orders to do so. The immediate result was that three demonstrators were killed and three others wounded. Following the attack a number of rioters rushed to the public Hospital in Salmaniya, Manama, near to the Agency, and took away the bodies of the three fallen protestors. The sight caused more excitement among the crowds, some of whom rushed into the Agency itself and seized a British flag. Burrows claimed that the Political Agent persuaded the mob to leave the premises of the Agency after the arrival of the bodies of the fallen. The Agent stated that the demonstrators demanded 'British protection, backed by British troops in the town'. Further, they threatened that if their demands were not met it would make them 'determined to overthrow the ruling family'. Nevertheless Burrows underlined to the FO (using Wall's information) that none of the Shi'ite community leaders were part of the recent disturbances and that those who led the recent disorder were men 'of no great repute or intelligence'. The Agent also ordered the disarmament of all Agency guards for fear of crowds attempting to overcome the Agency in the future and that the Agency's guards would be unable to restrain themselves. Immediately following the spread of the news of the day's events, the Ruler contacted the Political Agent

asking for his advice. The Agent put forward a policy of pacifying the angry crowds and suggested the creation of a committee to investigate the disturbance and its immediate announcement. The Ruler followed the Agent's advice and the order to establish a 'Commission of Enquiry' by the Ruler was announced officially by noon on that very day. Burrows also alerted the FO to the Ruler's suspicion of British policy in Bahrain which he expressed during a meeting with Wall, saying that a rumour made its way to him that the Agency was urging Bahraini Shi'ites to rebel against the Government.¹⁹¹

On the following day, 2 July, Sir Ralph Stevenson, the then British Ambassador to Egypt, responded to a report requested by TE Bromley to present his views in countering Egyptian influence. Stevenson said that he had viewed reports from various Arab cities such as Benghazi, Beirut, Khartoum, Amman, Damascus, Jeddah, and Baghdad in order to form an understanding of how these cities were influenced but he had yet to receive a statement from Bahrain.¹⁹² The reason for Stevenson not receiving information was possibly the Residency's occupation with the current disturbances.

As a consequence of the events, a strike was declared by the Shi'ite community, according to the Bahrain Government's Annual Report, and some of those who wished to work were allegedly intimidated and forced not to do so.¹⁹³ It was at that point that the Political Agent met with the Ruler on 3 July to advise him

¹⁹¹ TNA, FO 371/109813, Burrows to FO, 20 July 1954.

¹⁹² BDEEP, Series B, Part III, vol. 4, 'Egypt and the Defence of the Middle East' 1953-1956. Doc. 527: FO 371/108563, [Egyptian propaganda]: letter from Sir R Stevenson to T E Bromley on how to counter Egyptian influence, 2 July 1954.

¹⁹³ 'Government of Bahrain: Annual Report for Year 1954 (September 1953-December 1954)', 1-105 (49).

about taking further steps to ease the current civil strife. One of the steps proposed was to announce the hiring of a Judicial Adviser acting as Chief of Justice. The second was to appoint a British officer to oversee the Police Force instead of Belgrave. Third was to increase the police budget.¹⁹⁴ That date coincided with spread of pamphlets that announced the formation of a Sunni-Shi'ite front. The front that named itself as the 'People of Bahrain' had also forwarded its set of demands to the Ruler, the Political Agency, and to the Residency. The demands consisted of seven points as follows: the election of an 'Advisory Council' with identical Sunni-Shi'ite representation; the formation of a committee specialising in drafting 'a code of laws' for Bahrain; the appointment of judges holding degrees in law; the formation of elected councils representing the municipalities, health, and education; the reform of the Police Force in addition to placing responsibility of any misconduct by the police on its supervisor; the compensation of victims of various disturbances since the sectarian riots of 1953; and the punishment of the policemen responsible for firing on demonstrators on 1 July.¹⁹⁵ The identities of those involved in the pamphlet and who or what they actually represented was unknown. There was no mention of any demand that affected the position of Belgrave. But the first five demands listed all affected the Adviser's status in a direct and indirect way and if they were accepted they would nullify his position in controlling a number of the Administration's departments.

¹⁹⁴ TNA, FO 371/109813, Wall to FO, 4 July 1954.

¹⁹⁵ TNA, FO 1016/333, 'The Demands submitted by the People of Bahrain to His Highness the Ruler with the Request that he may Order their being put to Reality', 3 July 1954; and TNA, FO 371/109813, Burrows to FO, 4 July 1954.

With the ongoing strike, Sunnis described by Burrows as 'tribesmen' on the night of 6 July headed to the Ruler's palace offering their services in order to force the reopening of the local *souq*. Instead, the Ruler sent a police force of seventy-five men to the market place, their presence encouraged locals to reopen their stores safely without others forcing them to close. The *souq* finally opened and life gradually returned to normal.¹⁹⁶ BAPCO's oil refinery was also affected by the strike but after the 10 July employees returned to work.¹⁹⁷

The Commission of Enquiry announced by the Ruler consisted of a British judge as its adviser, Sheikh Abdulla bin Isa Al-Khalifa, Abdul-Latif bin Mohammed Al-Sa'ad, and Abdul-Hussain Hilli. The last two being a Sunni and a Shi'ite *Sharia* judges respectively. However the two judges later refused to take part in the commission and were replaced by the Ruler with Ahmed Fakhroo, a Sunni businessman, and Mansoor Al-Arrayed, a well-known senior Shi'ite.¹⁹⁸

The Commission of Enquiry swiftly convened and met from 7 to 10 July, basing its findings on interviews it published in its report and presented it to the Ruler. The Commission interviewed a number of eyewitnesses and had reached out to Al-Alaiwat to assist in the process of locating the eyewitnesses who wished to participate with their testimonies to the Commission. The Commission stated that the rioters had hidden the number plates of the buses that had brought the demonstrators to the Mu'min Mosque. They had also armed themselves after breaking into Turani's Scrapyard in Manama. An officer from the fort named Hamad

¹⁹⁶ TNA, FO 371/109813, Burrows to FO, 20 July 1954.

¹⁹⁷ Belgrave, *Personal Column*, 202; and TNA, FO 371/109813, Burrows to FO, 10 July 1954.

¹⁹⁸ TNA, FO 371/109813, Burrows to FO on Developments in Bahrain, 20 July 1954.

bin Rashid, struggled to persuade the crowd to disperse but with little success and from then on shots were heard being fired from the crowd, the police lost control and fired back. The report also specified that four people in total had died, three arrived dead to the hospital, and one died later of his wounds. Two British volunteers donated blood for three of the wounded rioters thereby saving their lives. The Commission concluded that, although the crowds were in an 'aggressive and threatening mood', the police should have used less lethal methods to disperse of angry mobs.¹⁹⁹

At least three of the four fallen demonstrators lived outside of Manama and three of the four were younger than twenty-one.²⁰⁰ In this matter Burrows stated in his monthly Residency report of the Arab Gulf States under British protection that in memory of the four killed, photographs of the four were printed in Lebanon, around 1,500 copies, sold at one-eighth of a Rupee per copy to the locals.²⁰¹

In the Resident's view, the Bahraini sectarian tensions should be attributed to the general attitudes and regional tensions as 'influence percolates even here through the Egyptian press and the various Arab radio broadcasts'.²⁰² Following the recent trouble the Adviser received a letter from the Ruler on 19 September

¹⁹⁹ TNA, FO 371/109813, Commission of Enquiry Report.

²⁰⁰ The identities of the four fallen Bahrainis is as follows: Ebrahim Abdul-Rasool bin Saif, from Manama, twenty years of age; Mohammed Al-Hajj Khadhem Al-Hajj Ali, from Al-Malikiya, twenty-one years of age; Ali Ahmed Al-Saeed, from Muqaba, eighteen years of age; and Ali Al-Hajj Hassan Al-Hajj Abdulla, from Sitra, twenty-nine years of age. See 'Akhar Uthu Qiyadi ala Qayid Al-Hayat min "Hayet Al-Itihad Al-Watani"' [The Last Alive Member of the "National Union Committee"], *Al-Wasat*, 12 October 2002, 2.

²⁰¹ 'Bernard Burrows, Residency's Monthly Report for September 1954', in *Political Diaries of the Persian Gulf*, vol. 19 1951-1954, ed. R.L. Jarman (London: 1990), 1-6 (5).

²⁰² TNA, FO 371/109813, Burrows to FO, 20 July 1954.

ordering him to close *Sawut Al-Bahrain* for an 'indefinite period'.²⁰³ The magazine's last publication were issues nine and ten of its fourth year in July and August of 1954. Although the action did not yield any immediate results, its repercussions were later felt, as it will be presented in the following chapter.

After a relatively peaceful period, troubles returned to Bahrain when the Administration imposed a law forcing vehicle owners to subscribe to a third-party insurance scheme. The reason for implementing the law was that some drivers responsible for vehicle accidents were not financially capable of covering the cost of damage they had incurred to others and this resulted in their imprisonment. Hence there was a need to implement a law forcing all parties to at least cover themselves by third-party insurance. Taxi and bus drivers made their opinion publically known against the new law by going on strike on 25 September. A new proposal to counter the Government's plan was made with the idea of establishing a *Sanduk* [a Box] a kind of 'local insurance plan'.²⁰⁴

On 26 September Belgrave's diary entry reported on the visit of three Bahrainis who wanted to mediate in this the new crisis. They were Jabir Al-Musallem, Mansoor Al-Arrayed, and Khalil Al-Moayyed. The three proposed to the Adviser the idea of forming the box as a Bahraini insurance fund scheme in which drivers can subscribe to as an alternative to engaging an insurance company. Belgrave in return informed the three that the Administration would not take part in this arrangement, although he did not provide them with a definite answer as to

²⁰³ *Sir Charles Dalrymple Belgrave's Personal Diaries*, 19 September 1954.

²⁰⁴ 'Government of Bahrain: Annual Report for Year 1954 (September 1953-December 1954)', 1-105 (49).

whether he had accepted or rejected the proposal.²⁰⁵ Al-Bakir returned to Bahrain during the taxi and bus drivers' strike. He claimed that the idea of creating the box was his own as he had proposed it earlier to two of the three men who had met Belgrave. Following a deadlock between the Administration and the strikers, an agreement was reached to accept the formation of a local Cooperative Compensation Fund and Al-Bakir was elected as its Secretary.²⁰⁶ Khalil Al-Moayyed was elected as its Chairman, Mansoor Al-Arrayed was appointed member, and Abdulla Fakhroo was nominated Treasurer.²⁰⁷

Apart from Belgrave's diary entry and Al-Bakir's memoir, British officials recorded little information on the taxi and bus drivers' strike. However the monthly report by the Residency for November declared that the third-party insurance scheme was postponed by the Administration until 1 January 1955 and that the drivers ended their strike on 1 October.²⁰⁸

Superficially the situation might have seemed a purely local affair, its complexities can be tied to the overall sense of grievances against foreign-owned-or-operated companies, for insurance companies established in Bahrain at the time were all foreign. The general frustration towards these companies can be viewed in the larger local and regional context of attacks on foreign-owned-or-operated

²⁰⁵ *Sir Charles Dalrymple Belgrave's Personal Diaries*, 26 September 1954.

²⁰⁶ Al-Bakir, *From Bahrain to Exile*, 53-54.

²⁰⁷ According to Bahraini historian Ghassan Al-Shehabi, the Fund continued to function until the mid-1990s. See G. Al-Shehabi, 'Sunduk Al-Tawithat... Al-Tajrubah Al-Ta'imeniya Al-Tawuniyah Al-Ra'eda Arabiyan' [The Compensation Box... The Pioneering Arab Cooperative Insurance Experiment], *Abwab Al-Wasat*, 13 October 2004, 12.

²⁰⁸ 'Bernard Burrows, Residency's Monthly Reports on November 1954', in *Political Diaries of the Persian Gulf*, vol. 19 1951-1954, ed. R.L. Jarman (London: 1990), 1-5 (3).

companies, which -- in a sense -- became Bahrain's own version of Egypt's Suez Canal Company.

The disturbances of the year did not end at this point, as later a decision made by the Bahraini Administration against Al-Bakir developed into an overwhelming support for the latter. The result was the creation of the nationalist party coinciding with the Anglo-Egyptian evacuation treaty and Nasser's tightened grip on Egypt's rule.

Chapter Three

The Formation of the Nationalist Movement

October to December 1954

In order to better understand the background against which Bahrain's nationalist party was born, it is important to first recognise the global context and the surrounding atmosphere that helped to engender its appearance. The events that unfolded in the Middle East in the years 1955-56 could not have taken place if it was not for those of 1954 as these prepared 'the stage' for them.²⁰⁹ Bahrain was no exception to this, as the events that had unfolded throughout 1954, and in particular during its final three months, set the political scene for the next two years.

On the global stage alliances and negotiations were being struck to further solidify Western advantage over Russian influence. The first step involved a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), a global alliance against the USSR originally established in 1949. Its founding members were the US, Canada, Iceland, Denmark, Norway, Netherlands, Belgium, Luxemburg, Britain, France, and Portugal.²¹⁰ The member concerned was Turkey, which achieved membership of the alliance in late 1952.²¹¹ A new proposed alliance between Turkey and Pakistan, based on the US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles' suggestion, materialised when both countries came to terms on 2 April 1954. The signing of the new treaty was

²⁰⁹ D. Uriel, *King Hussein and the Challenge of Arab Radicalism*, (Oxford: 1989), 21.

²¹⁰ R. Escott, *Time of Fear and Hope: The Making of the North Atlantic Treaty 1947-1949* (Ontario: 1977), 9 and 193.

²¹¹ Eden, *Full Circle*, 243.

followed by another -- an initial agreement between Egypt and Britain on 27 July for the latter to evacuate militarily from the Suez Canal Zone.²¹²

The deal to evacuate was backed by Prime Minister Churchill, who had initially declined the approach to withdraw. But the formation and gradual link between Western-aligned pacts in the East and the West and the subsequent reduction in expense encouraged him to finally agree to the concept of withdrawal.²¹³ Following the Geneva Conference on Indochina in 1954 between Western and Communist states,²¹⁴ the idea of organising a defensive alliance in East Asia was pushed forward. Hence came the creation of the South East Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO) when an understanding was reached on 8 September in Manila between the organising states being the US, Britain, France, Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, Pakistan, and the Philippines, giving way to the formation of the Pact.²¹⁵ With Pakistan already in an alliance with Turkey, the West had successfully linked the two defensive pacts together.²¹⁶

The Middle East remained pactless and under the threat of a possible direct or indirect Soviet incursion. To counteract that the concept of the Northern Tier

²¹² On JF Dulles' proposal see *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS)*, vol. XIV, 'Arab-Israeli Dispute, 1955'. Doc. 60: Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy, 31 March 1955; on the news of Turkey and Pakistan's signature of a Pact see 'Turkey, Pakistan Sign Defense Pact: Invite Neighboring Nations to Enter Alliance Again', *New York Times*, 3 April 1954, 8; W.J. Gallman, *Iraq Under General Nuri: My Recollections of Nuri al-said, 1954-1958* (Baltimore, MD: 1964), 22, hereafter *Iraq Under General Nuri*; and on the news of Britain reaching an agreement with the Egyptians on the Suez Canal Base see 'Full Agreement on Suez Canal Base', *The Times*, 28 July 1954, 8.

²¹³ TNA, CAB 128/27, C.C. (54), 47th Conclusions, 7 July 1954.

²¹⁴ For information on the Geneva Conference see J. Cable, *The Geneva Conference of 1954 on Indochina* (London: 1986).

²¹⁵ S. Aster, *British Prime Ministers: Anthony Eden* (London: 1976), 113; F.S. Northedge, *Descent from Power: British Foreign Policy 1945-1973* (London: 1974), 284; and *Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), 1954*,

<<https://history.state.gov/milestones/1953-1960/seato>> [accessed 2 February 2016].

²¹⁶ Takehy, *Origins of the Eisenhower Doctrine*, 56.

states was approached, abandoning the previous idea of MEDO with Egypt at its centre. The Northern Tier meant that the reliance on other states, such as Turkey, Pakistan and (later) Iraq needed to become the cornerstones of a defensive bulwark for the region.²¹⁷

When Nuri Al-Saeed returned to the post of Prime Minister in Iraq in August 1954 he set about his mission to have Iraq become part of the grand Western alliances directed against the 'Soviet menace'.²¹⁸ Nuri's initiative provided a scheme that not only acted as a defensive methodology against the Soviets but offered to act as a bridge between the alliances in East Asia and Europe, SEATO and NATO.²¹⁹ Nuri envisioned Iraq becoming part of that alliance network even before being offered the Premiership for the seventh time in Iraq as he had discussed the matter with Lloyd and Sir Evelyn Shuckburgh as early as July 1954.²²⁰ His vision was encouraged in part by the Turco-Pakistani alliance that stimulated him to get in contact with the Turks on the possibility of expanding the alliance.²²¹ Not only did the pacts act as a defensive deterrent against Soviet-Communist expansion, they

²¹⁷ BDEEP, Series B, Part III, vol. 4, 'Egypt and the Defence of the Middle East' 1953-1956. Doc. 506: FO 371/110787, [Turco-Pakistani pact]: letter from Sir J Bowker (Ankara) to R Allen on the proposed pact's importance for future British defence arrangements in the Middle East, 26 March 1954; and BDEEP, Series B, Part III, vol. 4, 'Egypt and the Defence of the Middle East' 1953-1956. Doc. 548: FO 371/111003, 'Anglo-Iraqi defence questions': memorandum by P S Falla on the advantages and disadvantages of a northern tier defence arrangement, 25 September 1954.

²¹⁸ Dann, *King Hussein and the Challenge of Arab Radicalism*, 21.

²¹⁹ M.H. Heikal, *Sphinx and Commissar: The Rise and Fall of Soviet Influence in the Arab World* (London: 1978), 56.

²²⁰ J. Charmley (ed.), *Descent to Suez: Diaries 1951-1956: Evelyn Shuckburgh* (London: 1986) entry from 15 July 1954, 224, hereafter *Descent to Suez*.

²²¹ Gallman, *Iraq Under General Nuri*, 27.

brought awareness to the populations of the countries involved that the Soviet threat was alive and well.²²²

A delegation of Egyptian diplomats led by Major Salah Salem, the then Minister of National Guidance, arrived in Baghdad on 13 August to open discussions with the Iraqis on the Arab World's future policy. The Egyptians objected to entering into any form of an alliance that included Turkey or Pakistan.²²³ It was followed by Nuri's attempt to personally convince Nasser of the alliance in Cairo. The two leaders had met face to face for the first and last time in September 1954. The Iraqi Prime Minister's failure in Cairo took him to London and Eden decided to adopt Baghdad as the new cornerstone of a Western-oriented Middle Eastern alliance.²²⁴

The evacuation treaty was signed between Egypt and Britain on 19 October. Sir Anthony Nutting, the British Minister of State, negotiated the final detail of the treaty with Nasser.²²⁵ The Agreement *inter alia* laid down that British troops should withdraw in twenty months, the maintenance of the base during peacetime by technicians, and the use of the base in case of emergency by Britain if an attack on any other Arab State or Turkey occurred.²²⁶ The signature of the treaty was followed by an attack on Nasser's life on 26 October in Al-Ma'nshiya Square in Alexandria. The perpetrators were radical members of the Muslim Brotherhood and

²²² BDEEP, Series B, Part III, vol. 4, 'Egypt and the Defence of the Middle East 1953-1956', ed. J. Kent, 'Introduction', xxxvi.

²²³ Gallman, *Iraq Under General Nuri*, 24.

²²⁴ TNA, FO 371/111000, Minutes by Eden, 20 September 1954.

²²⁵ Nutting, *The Aftermath of Suez*, 94.

²²⁶ BDEEP, Series B, Part III, vol. 4, 'Egypt and the Defence of the Middle East' 1953-1956. Doc. 554: DEFE 7/1011, 'Anglo-Egyptian agreement regarding the Suez Canal base': text of the final agreement, 19 October 1954.

they were quickly put on trial and six were sent to the gallows.²²⁷ The incident also resulted in the arrest and removal of the powerless Naguib from the Presidency, accused of conspiring with the extremists. Naguib was imprisoned on 14 November, never to return to political life.²²⁸

Most importantly, the signing of the treaty created the opportunity of pushing towards an Egyptian-Israeli settlement, and so Plan Alpha was conceived. Francis Russell of the American State Department and Sir Evelyn Shuckburgh the then Under-Secretary in the FO overseeing Middle Eastern affairs were both assigned by Eden and Dulles to develop the Plan.²²⁹ However a great stumbling block was placed early in negotiating a settlement between the two sides as the Israelis resisted the idea of offering land repatriation, gained from the First Arab-Israeli War, to the Arabs. The concessions involved, as Harold Macmillan noted: 'the establishment of a sovereign Arab right-of-way across the Negev', linking Egypt with Jordan.²³⁰

In this confused and eventful regional environment, two events in Bahrain hastened the creation of a unified nationalist front. The first being the closure of *Sawut Al-Bahrain* (cf Chapter Two). The second was the withdrawal of Al-Bakir's passport by the Administration following the creation of the Cooperative Compensation Fund. No explanation was provided in Belgrave's diary or memoir,

²²⁷ 'Shots at Col. Nasser: Premier Unhurt', *The Times*, 27 October 1954, 6; 'Executions in Cairo', *The Times*, 8 December 1954, 7; and see also J. Gordon, *Nasser's Blessed Movement* (Oxford: 1992), 4.

²²⁸ 'Naguib is Deposed as Coup Plotter by Egypt's Junta: President Accused of Role in Attempt of Terrorists to Assassinate Premier', *New York Times*, 15 November 1954, 1; see also J. Lacouture, *The Demigods: Charismatic Leadership in the Third World* (New York: 1970), 186; and Naguib, *My Word... For History*, 186.

²²⁹ Charmley (ed.), *Descent to Suez*, 210-12.

²³⁰ H. Macmillan, *Tides of Fortune* (London: 1969), 631; and M.H. Heikal, *Cutting the Lion's Tail: Suez Through Egyptian Eyes* (London: 1986), 107, hereafter *Cutting the Lion's Tail*.

the Bahrain Government Annual Reports, or British papers as to why such a measure was taken. Al-Bakir, however, offered his own explanation as he related it to his work at the Cooperative Compensation Fund. He claimed that he was bribed with 50,000 Rupees by an unnamed representative from a competing foreign-owned agency to leave his post at the Fund.²³¹ On the grounds of his claim, a question arises as to why was he the only one offered a bribe to abandon his post? Why was there not a similar approach to other senior members of the Fund? Al-Bakir later tied the issue to his passport status as he asserted that the withdrawal came as a result of foreign companies' pressure on Belgrave to do so.

A series of meetings were coordinated between Sunnis and Shi'ites following the news of Al-Bakir's passport withdrawal but the first initial meetings did not grab the attention of British officials in Bahrain. It was not until the third meeting between members of the two communities that the Movement was noticed. The first meeting was held on 6 October at the Khamis Mosque in Manama and aimed to confront Belgrave's 'dictatorship'. The initial meeting agreed to organise another, bigger, gathering at Bin Khamis *Ma'tem* in Sanabis, a village in Manama, on 13 October. This was the birth date of the Movement and it was decided in the meeting, according to Al-Bakir, to establish a unified political front that consisted of one hundred and twenty founding members. The Party's general assembly consisted of eight members: four Sunnis and four Shi'ites, the Sunnis being: Abdul-Aziz Al-Shamlan, Ebrahim Ibn Musa, Ebrahim Fakhroo, and Al-Bakir. The four Shi'ites were: Abd-Ali Al-Alaiwat, Al-Syed Ali Kamal-el-Deen, Abdulla Abu Deed, and Mohsin Al-

²³¹ Al-Bakir, *From Bahrain to Exile*, 54-56.

Tajir. Al-Bakir was elected the Movement's General Secretary. The new Movement was named the Higher Executive Committee (HEC).²³² Belgrave mocked it: 'Higher than what?' he said.²³³ To him the name might have seemed intimidating, giving it a higher authority to that of the Administration and of the Ruler.

A new gathering at the Mu'min Mosque in Manama on 18 October finally caught British attention. The date chosen for the gathering marked a Shi'ite occasion celebrating forty days since the passing of the anniversary of Hussein's martyrdom, thus guaranteeing a large audience of mourners. Wall posted an account of the meeting's proceedings to the Residency. The message declared that the *dynamo* behind the Movement's creation was Sunni journalists from *Al-Qafilah* and *Sawut Al-Bahrain*. Wall highlighted his surprise about the success the group had achieved 'in rallying the two communities to adopt a common political programme'.²³⁴ News of the gathering reached Belgrave, as he noted in his diary and he reported rumours he had heard that the HEC was out to set political demands that involved the formation of committees to oversee governmental departments, a matter he strongly opposed, as it directly threatened his status.²³⁵

Al-Qafilah covered the proceedings of the day. It stated that an oath read by Mahmood Al-Mardi was recited. The oath pronounced:

I swear by God Almighty to be faithful to the Arab nations' cause and to march in solidarity united with the sons of my country. No sectarianism, no division and God is my witness.²³⁶

²³² Al-Bakir, *From Bahrain to Exile*, 56-62.

²³³ Belgrave, *Personal Column*, 204.

²³⁴ TNA, FO 1016/309, Wall to Burrows on Public Sentiment for Representational Government, 25 October 1954.

²³⁵ *Sir Charles Dalrymple Belgrave's Personal Diaries*, 17 October 1954.

²³⁶ '*Al-Intifada Al-Kubra fi Tarikh Al-Bahrain*' [The Great Uprising in Bahrain's History], *Al-Qafilah*, 26 October 1954, 1.

A set of speeches were made during the meeting and all, as the Political Agent noted, agreed 'in blaming the British for everything that is wrong in Bahrain'. It was estimated that three to four thousand attended the meeting.²³⁷

Sets of political demands were proclaimed and a petition was forwarded to the Ruler. The petition included four demands: first, the formation of a 'Legislative Assembly' via general elections; second, the introduction of a Penal Code; third, for the Government to allow the establishment of trade unions; fourth, the foundation of a 'high court of appeal' to act as an arbiter 'between the Legislative and Executive Authorities'. The petition was signed by the eight frontline members of the HEC and was dated 28 October 1954.²³⁸ Al-Bakir claimed that the petition was given to the Ruler by hand, by two members of the HEC: Ibn Musa and Abu Dheeb.²³⁹ Belgrave mockingly described the two HEC members who submitted the petition as 'a small tobacco shop owner and a recently-bankrupt boat owner of Hedd'.²⁴⁰ Belgrave's views of the Movement were tied with its individuals, even if the two members of the HEC were as described by the Adviser, what would it take away from them? Belgrave was only attempting to self-justify his opposition to the Party by ridiculing its members. The Adviser also mocked the HEC by describing them as the presenters of Bahrain's *Magna Carta*.²⁴¹ Surprisingly, in his memoir, Nutting shared a similar impression of the members of the HEC, albeit not in a demeaning and

²³⁷ TNA, FO 1016/309, Wall to Burrows on Public Sentiment for Representational Government, 25 October 1954.

²³⁸ TNA, FO 371/109813, Petition (English translation) from the Higher Executive Committee to HH Sheikh Salman bin Hamad al Khalifah, 28 October 1954.

²³⁹ Al-Bakir, *From Bahrain to Exile*, 66.

²⁴⁰ *Sir Charles Dalrymple Belgrave's Personal Diaries*, 30 October 1954.

²⁴¹ *Sir Charles Dalrymple Belgrave's Personal Diaries*, 26 October 1954.

sarcastic way, comparing them to 'English barons who brought about the signing of *Magna Charta*'.²⁴²

The most striking feature of the demands according to Wall's intelligence was the information that reached him of the HEC's plans in case the Ruler refused their demands. The Party had planned to send representatives to Cairo and hire an Egyptian lawyer to file a case in British courts in London against the Administration. The Political Agent did not hide the Ruler's suspicions of the Movement fearing that the British might be enticed to intervene as they had in 1923 when they removed his grandfather from power. Wall additionally blamed the Bahraini Administration for its failure, since the attack on the fort, to display to the general public the steps it had taken towards internal reform, due to it not having 'any organ of publicity'. Reforms before the incident were made by the Administration, but were not announced publically. These reforms included the appointment of Geoffrey L Peace as a Judicial Adviser and the hiring of Colonel Hamersley as an Assistant Commandant to the Police. In addition to this, steps had been taken to arrange for the compensation of the families of those who fell on 1 July.²⁴³

Was it possible that the formation of the HEC, the courage to voice its demands, and to challenge the Administration was merely a result of local developments? It is highly unlikely to be the case, as the formation of the nationalist party coincided with the announcement that the British would evacuate the Suez Canal Zone. The declaration of withdrawal must have seemed to the nationalists in

²⁴² Nutting, *The Aftermath of Suez*, 72.

²⁴³ TNA, FO 1016/309, Wall to Burrows on Public Sentiment for Representational Government, 25 October 1954.

Bahrain as a sign of weakness and will have stimulated the Movement to come forward with its own set of demands.

In late October the British Broadcasting Corporation's (BBC) Assistant Head of Eastern Service, Nevill Barbour, toured the Middle East and included a short stay in Bahrain. The Adviser met Barbour on 30 October.²⁴⁴ In Nevill Barbour's collection kept at St Antony's College in Oxford he recorded some information on the new *modus vivendi* formed between Sunnis and Shi'ites. He sympathised with the Movement and recounted details of a meeting conducted with 'the principal organiser of this political demonstration' whom he did not name, but was likely to have been Al-Bakir. The meeting took place at a Bahraini club to which a member of staff from the Political Agency had taken him. The opposition figure that Barbour met objected to the BBC's Arabic Service coverage of Bahrain, claiming that it offered 'a misleading picture of local conditions'.²⁴⁵

In Shuckburgh's unpublished diary notes of his tour of the Middle East, the FO's Under-Secretary visited Bahrain accompanied by Robert Belgrave on 6 November, arriving from Iraq. On the day of their arrival at the Residency they were taken to a banquet in the Ruler's palace. Shuckburgh recorded an intriguing encounter at the banquet where he met the Adviser. It was Belgrave who had approached the Under-Secretary and talked 'gravely about unrest in Bahrain'. In Shuckburgh's judgment, the Adviser seemed to have 'no remedy' for the ongoing conflict and acted rather 'curiously reserved'. On the following day a private

²⁴⁴ Sir Charles Dalrymple Belgrave's *Personal Diaries*, 30 October 1955.

²⁴⁵ St Antony's College in Oxford, the Middle East Centre Archive, Nevill Barbour Collection 1921-1963, GB165-0019, Box 3, File 2: 'Report on Tour of Middle East by Nevill Barbour Assistant Head of Eastern Service, 1954'.

meeting was held that included Shuckburgh, Burrows, Wall, and Sheikh Salman in his palace in Riffa. The conversation initially dealt with British support for the Administration in Bahrain in light of recent events. Shuckburgh urged the Ruler to reach out to the general public and use the radio and press to achieve this. He also advocated pushing the Administration towards further reform of the judiciary and commended the Ruler for his appointment of a Judicial Adviser. Shuckburgh was informed according to his diary, although he did not name his source, that the Ruler believed that the British were 'supporting the agitators against him'. Belgrave later met with Shuckburgh and had a personal discussion *vis-à-vis* local affairs.

Shuckburgh said that any crackdown on the agitators by Britain would be seen as interference in the state's domestic affairs. The Under-Secretary encouraged the Administration to improve its public security forces. He also urged the Adviser to publish a pro-government newspaper and he noted in his diary the possibility of publishing 'a British-subsidised newspaper' for the entire Gulf region similar to the *Iraq Times* with Bahrain as its headquarters. However, his suggestion was not made to Belgrave at the time.²⁴⁶

The HEC announced the formation of a new 'box', a fund to support the Party by collecting subscriptions. The 'box' was named the National Savings Fund.²⁴⁷ The HEC continued to hold meetings by taking advantage of Muslim celebrations to generate the largest possible crowds, and this time the Prophet Mohammed's birthday was chosen. The anniversary fell on 8 November and the gathering was

²⁴⁶ University of Birmingham, Cadbury Research Library, Special Collections: Papers of Sir Evelyn Shuckburgh, GB 150 MS 191, MS191/1/2/3, from 6 to 7 November 1954, 80-84.

²⁴⁷ TNA, FO 1016/309, 'To the struggling Bahra'ni People', The Higher Executive Committee, 2 November 1954.

conducted at the Eid Mosque. *Al-Qafilah* published extracts from Al-Bakir's speech during the gathering in which he continued his attacks on foreign-owned-or-operated enterprises in Bahrain, accusing them of 'blackmail' and demanded that they give 'what they owe of rights to oppressed people'.²⁴⁸

The Ruler refused the demands by the HEC and Burrows informed the FO. The Residency advised the Ruler to further publicise the Government's work and instructed the Administration to look into turning the Official Gazette into a weekly newspaper.²⁴⁹

With rumours of possible strikes occurring in response to the Ruler's refusal, accompanied by trouble similar to the fort attack of the previous summer, the Resident wrote a strongly worded letter to the Ruler saying that he, 'has now been good enough to discuss with the Political Agent and myself the problems which have arisen in the internal affairs of Bahrain for which Your Highness is responsible'. He advised (or rather directed) him in this matter to form a Commission of his own selection to look into public demands and needs. The Commission would report their findings to the Ruler. He would then decide what course of action to take based on the findings. In Burrows' view this action would ease the current internal political situation.²⁵⁰ The Ruler replied to the 'kind letter', but did not take any further action.²⁵¹

²⁴⁸ Al-Bakir, *From Bahrain to Exile*, 68; and 'Ahdafuna wa Matalibunah Al-Shabiyah' [Our National Goals and Demands], *Al-Qafilah*, 12 November 1954.

²⁴⁹ TNA, FO 371/109813, Burrows to FO, 12 November 1954.

²⁵⁰ TNA, FO 371/114586, Resident to the Ruler of Bahrain, 1 December 1954.

²⁵¹ TNA, FO 371/114586, Translation of Reply from the Ruler of Bahrain to Political Resident, 11 December 1954.

The Administration later heeded the advice of the Residency and a public announcement was made on the appointment of a Commission to investigate the performance of various government sectors without naming any of its members. The HEC, in response, issued a statement labelling themselves as ‘the effective instrument for expressing the wishes of this struggling nation’. The proclamation rejected the actions taken and it called for a ‘boycott [of] this Commission and regard anyone cooperating with it as a traitor’.²⁵²

Facing a stalemate, the Political Agent aimed to act as a mediator to defuse the situation between the local Administration and the HEC. In early December Wall met personally with Al-Bakir and Kamal-el-Deen who discussed with him their views about the Government’s proclamation. Wall was informed by the two that they would boycott the Commission and would be calling for a national strike starting on Saturday 4 December.

The two nationalists demanded from Wall that the Commission be made up of individuals seen as ‘neutral’ and that it should comprise six members, half of them to be ‘representatives of the people’ and the other half appointed by HMG and not the Ruler. But Wall turned down British participation in the affair. Furthermore he expressed to Al-Bakir and Kamal-el-Deen that it was unfair on their part to object to the Commission before any members were selected. But to no avail and they insisted on going ahead with the strike. The strike was later declared by the HEC to begin at 6.00 am on 4 December and to continue on through 10 December.²⁵³

²⁵² TNA, FO 1016/309, Higher Executive Committee Proclamation, December 1954.

²⁵³ TNA, FO 371/109813, Wall to Burrows, 2 December 1954.

The meeting between Wall and the two HEC members is recorded by Belgrave in his diary entry of 2 December, as Wall had informed the Adviser of seeing the two. No details were provided as to who had called on whom and/or the details of the meeting.²⁵⁴ The meeting with the Agency was a most unusual situation for the nationalists. They had consistently and publically objected about British 'interference' in domestic affairs and the management of companies by foreigners. But, despite this, they demanded that they have three elected representatives in the Commission and that the other three were to be chosen by the British.

Al-Bakir denied any direct contact with British officials at the time, asserting that his only contact with the British was through a Bahraini employed at the Residency. Moreover, on a different occasion in the early days of the HEC, he claimed that he was approached by an unidentified man who advised him to contact the public relations officer (ranked as a Third Secretary at the Agency) but that he had refused to do so.²⁵⁵ Of the two, Wall and Al-Bakir, the latter would lose more in the eyes of his supporters if he had revealed his early communication with the Agency. As to Wall, he would not benefit from forwarding false reports to the Residency or to the FO thus jeopardising his career.

The announced strike was an early test for the HEC and of its popularity. If successful, further pressure would be placed on the Administration. However if it failed it would put the Movement in a difficult situation. The first day of the strike on 4 December was a success, according to an account by Wall to the FO. Indeed it

²⁵⁴ *Sir Charles Dalrymple Belgrave's Personal Diaries*, 2 December 1954.

²⁵⁵ Al-Bakir, *From Bahrain to Exile*, 69-72.

was so successful that it was estimated to have paralysed ninety per cent of Bahrain.²⁵⁶

The HEC issued a pamphlet that congratulated the public on the strike's success, informing them to report 'without delay' any incident to the Party's First Aid Scout members. This was the first mention in HEC statements of a Scouts' movement in their organisation acting in a security role.²⁵⁷ During the strike the Bahraini Government issued an order forcing the closure of *Al-Qafilah* on 5 December and the newspaper's last issue was dated 26 November.²⁵⁸

The Times of London reported the strike on 6 December. No further details on the strike were given, other than it was in support of demands some of which had already been met by the Bahraini Government.²⁵⁹ The strike ended on 10 December and no major disturbances were reported. On the following day, the Ruler publically announced the establishment of a Commission consisting of six men to examine educational, health, judiciary, and local security facilities: three were to be members of the royal family together with a Shi'ite, a merchant (probably Sunni), and the British Director of Customs. Although Burrows considered the announcement to be 'satisfactory' he wished to see a wider variety of people chosen from more diverse backgrounds.²⁶⁰ The six appointed members were: Sheikh Abdulla bin Isa Al-Khalifa, Sheikh Mubarak bin Hamad Al-Khalifa, Sheikh Ebrahim bin Mohammed Al-Khalifa, Salim Al-Arrayed, Ahmed Fakhroo, and GWR Smith. The

²⁵⁶ TNA, FO 371/109813, Wall to FO on the Effectiveness of the Strike, 4 December 1954; and TNA, FO 371/109813, Higher Executive Committee, Proclamation No. 9, 4 December 1954.

²⁵⁷ TNA, FO 371/109813, The Higher Executive Committee, Proclamation No. 9, 4 December 1954.

²⁵⁸ S.A. Al-Maawda, *Al-Sahaafah Al-Bahrainiyah Tarikh wa Atta'a* [Bahrain's Press, a History and Contribution], 85, hereafter *Bahrain's Press*.

²⁵⁹ 'Bahrein Strike Movement', *The Times*, 6 December 1954, 7.

²⁶⁰ TNA, FO 371/109813, Burrows to FO Burrows, 11 December 1954.

proclamation also declared that a Penal Code for Bahrain was to be drafted. In addition the Ruler proclaimed that elections for the Manama Municipality would take place 'in a month's time'.²⁶¹

Al-Bakir contacted Saudi Arabia's King Saud bin Abdul-Aziz Al-Saud and asked the Saudi monarch to mediate between the HEC and the Bahraini Government. The King replied to the Secretary of the HEC advising him 'that the path you have followed is not in the interests of yourselves, your country or your ruler'. He cited an old *Nejdi* proverb, saying 'a dispute between two is only in the interests of a third'. He then advised Al-Bakir to seek reconciliation with the local Administration.²⁶²

During the rise of the HEC, British policy in Bahrain was designed to reduce tensions between the Administration and the nationalist movement. The British forced their opinions on the Ruler when they believed it was necessary fearing that a deadlock could have led to violent disturbances. In Al-Bakir's view British policy seemed confused and indecisive. He believed that that was due in part to Britain's ruling Labour Party and its preoccupation with upcoming elections in Britain.²⁶³ The Bahraini nationalist leader was displaying his lack of knowledge of British politics, clearly believing (wrongly) that the Labour Party was in power in 1954.

A possible explanation for Britain's approach to the situation in Bahrain was that they were trying to strike a balance between the Administration and the

²⁶¹ TNA, FO 371/109813, Government of Bahrain: Notice, Sulman bin Hamad Al-Khalifa, 11 December 1954.

²⁶² TNA, FO 371/114586, Saud bin Abdul-Aziz Al-Saud, 'Letter to Abdul-Rahman Al-Bakir', 11 December 1954.

²⁶³ Al-Bakir, *From Bahrain to Exile*, 69.

nationalists. Britain had just completed the long-awaited evacuation treaty with Egypt and was not prepared to antagonise Nasser, knowing of his possible support of nationalist movements abroad. The British still hoped that Nasser was the missing piece of the puzzle needed for making peace in the region and participation in anti-Communist alliances. However Nasser's honeymoon with the West was reaching its conclusion and competition with Iraq over Arab supremacy would cause Cairo to gradually move its attention eastwards.

Part II: Turning East

Chapter Four

Pacts and Committees

January to June 1955

If the mid-twentieth century could be described as the age that saw the rise of global pacts and alliances, then the year 1955 in Bahrain could best be described as ‘The Year of the Committees’. This is because of the large number of committees which were established to oversee various departments and aspects of Bahraini life in response to confidential reports presented by the Commission of Enquiry. It could also be said that the events that unfolded in the Middle East and in Bahrain from January to June 1955 solidified existing divisions. The region became, as Lord Butler, the Chancellor of Exchequer and later the Leader of the House of Commons, described it, ‘the predestined scene of the Cold War for 1955 and 1956’.²⁶⁴ While large political battles were raging in the wider world, Bahrain was occupied with its own unique conflict. This brought the British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden into direct contact with the crisis for the first time and showed how British policy adapted to developments. This time also saw Nasser adopt a new strategy as strengthening ties with the Eastern Soviet sphere moved the Egyptians gradually away from Western dominance.

²⁶⁴ R. Butler, *The Art of the Possible: The Memoirs of Lord Butler* (London: 1971), 184.

In early 1955 a COS Committee memorandum re-emphasised the importance of the Middle East as an-air-and-sea communications crossroads linking three of the world's continents: Asia, Africa, and Europe. It was imperative seen as to block any Soviet incursion into the Middle East thus allowing them access to the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Gulf. The paper cited Iraq as being pivotal 'in trying to draw together the Arab States'.²⁶⁵

Iraq's intentions on taking the Western initiative 'in defence' of the Middle East were not left unchallenged. Tensions between Egypt and Iraq grew when the latter declared its intent to sign a mutual defensive alliance with Turkey. The announcement was countered by Egyptian propaganda attacks. The Egyptians called for an emergency prime ministerial meeting to discuss recent developments in the Arab League on 22 January.²⁶⁶ In the meeting Egypt declared that it was 'not yet ready to accept open alignment between the Arab States and the West', although Egypt's motives were not clear, Stevenson, the British Ambassador to Egypt at the time, believed it might have been associated with Egypt's 'anxiety to maintain her hegemony of the Arab League and in that way to secure the lion's share of Western aid'.²⁶⁷

In Bahrain, following its successes of 1954, the HEC continued to press the Administration to accept further demands. The frontline and senior members of the

²⁶⁵ BDEEP, Series B, Part III, vol. 4, 'Egypt and the Defence of the Middle East' 1953-1956. Doc. 566: DEFE 5/56, COS (55)10 'Defence questions in the Middle East area': COS Committee memorandum revising JP(54)101, 7 Jan 1955.

²⁶⁶ BDEEP, Series B, Part III, vol. 4, 'Egypt and the Defence of the Middle East' 1953-1956. Doc. 571: FO 371/115485, [Turco-Iraqi pact]: inward telegram no 92 from Sir R Stevenson to FO on Egyptian opposition to the proposed pact, 20 Jan 1955.

²⁶⁷ BDEEP, Series B, Part III, vol. 4, 'Egypt and the Defence of the Middle East' 1953-1956. Doc. 574: FO 371/115491, Arab Prime Ministers' summit]: inward dispatch no 24 from Sir R Steveson to FO on the Egyptian opposition to the proposed Turco-Iraqi pact, 10 Feb 1955.

Party met on a regular basis to discuss their approach and the methods they would use to tackle obstacles as they appeared. The Cooperative Compensation Fund's headquarters was initially used as the Party's offices. Meetings were also held at Al-Alaiwat and E Fakhroo's residences.²⁶⁸

Sir Leslie Fry, of the Eastern Department on behalf of the British Foreign Secretary, forwarded one of the earliest instructions from the FO to the Residency in the Gulf on how to handle the internal Bahraini conflict on 25 January 1955. The Residency was told to adopt a policy in Bahrain that was dependent

upon how the situation develop[ed], in particular, upon the degree to which the appointment of the Ruler's Committee [Commission of Enquiry] reduces the pressure from the reformers.

Moreover the Residency was instructed to persuade the Ruler to satisfy 'local aspirations and [to] give his administration a more modern look'. However caution was to be exercised by British officials in avoiding undermining the Ruler or 'causing him to abdicate' as a result. The amount of pressure exerted on the Ruler was left to Burrows' own judgment.²⁶⁹

In an effort to counter the opposition's attacks against the Administration and to publicise its work, the Government of Bahrain announced in February the creation of a Public Relations Department, the management of which was awarded to Belgrave's son JH Belgrave.²⁷⁰ As for the HEC, the Party aimed to fulfill one of Al-Bakir's long-held visions when it announced in its circular numbered fifteen of 8

²⁶⁸ Al-Bakir, *From Bahrain to Exile*, 73; and 'Akhar Uthu Qiyadi ala Qayid Al-Hayat min "Hayet Al-Itihad Al-Watani"' [The Last Alive Member of the 'National Union Committee'], *Al-Wasat*, 12 October 2002, 2.

²⁶⁹ TNA, FO 371/114586, Fry to Burrows, 25 January 1955.

²⁷⁰ TNA, FO 1016/443, Annual Review of Bahrain's Affairs for 1955, HM Political Agency, 31 December 1955; and Belgrave, *Personal Column*, 217.

February its intention to establish a trade union without government consent. A fund was created to support the union. The Party also announced its boycott of all government councils and committees, ordering citizens (both appointed and elected) to withdraw from them immediately. The measure included committees created previously by the Administration for *Waqf* purposes, minors, municipalities, trade, courts, and all other such entities. The HEC warned that those who failed to resign 'will be considered as a traitor', thus solidifying internal polarisation.

In the same circular the Movement introduced its policy for the coming months. It first called for the formation of committees in Bahrain's cities and villages to oversee local disputes as an alternative to the Government's own judicial system. Second, it gave the Government of Bahrain an ultimatum of two months to respond to its demands. If the Government failed to answer positively to the demands, the Party would then launch demonstrations throughout Bahrain's major urban centres. The Movement also called for a boycott of the Manama Municipal elections. The *casus belli* was that the Municipal Council should fall under the jurisdiction of 'the people' and not the Administration.²⁷¹ The circular was followed by an official letter to the Ruler of Bahrain dated 9 February from the HEC urging him to 'accept the people's demands' without further delay.²⁷² The announcement displayed a new tone by the HEC when confronting the Administration -- both

²⁷¹ TNA, FO 1016/386, The Higher Executive Committee, Circular No. 15, 8 February 1955; and TNA, FO 371/114587, Gault to Burrows, 30 March 1955.

²⁷² TNA, FO 371/114586, The High Executive Committee to the Ruler of Bahrain, 9 February 1955.

overconfident and daring. The Party forwarded a letter to the Political Agency in March announcing its intention to establish a trade union.²⁷³

Early 1955 saw the appointment of a new Political Agent in Bahrain, upon the completion of Wall's services, Charles Gault. In February and after approximately two months of service in Bahrain, Gault sent the Resident his views regarding local developments for the first time since arriving in post. The Agent viewed nationalists, like every Arab 'a volatile creature and when his interest or enthusiasm is aroused, wants the whole loaf at once, without pausing to think'. From Gault's perspective as a new diplomat in Bahrain he acknowledged the Bahraini Administration's work and progress over the decades but had also affirmed that it was flawed. In Gault's opinion the worst department operating in Bahrain was the Police Force because of the poor training of its officers and men who lacked professional crowd-control techniques. He also pointed to the new and growing oil wealth of neighbouring countries (Kuwait, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia) that was attracting Bahrainis to work there for better wages and further adding to local grievances. With these conditions according to Gault, 'Bahrain has I feel reached a turning point in its history'. In Gault's opinion the driving force behind the recent struggles in Bahrain was 'nationalism, which has permeated Bahrain' resulting in the current political deadlock. The Agent believed that the time had come to pressure the Administration into making even further reforms.²⁷⁴ One of the first suggestions Gault provided the Bahraini Administration with was the development

²⁷³ 'Bernard Burrows, Residency's Monthly Report for March 1955', in *Political Diaries of the Persian Gulf*, vol. 20 1955-1958, ed. R.L. Jarman (London: 1990), 1-4 (2).

²⁷⁴ TNA, FO 1016/386, Gault to Burrows, 10 February 1955.

of its own Labour Law to divert the HEC from establishing a trade union. The Labour Law should aim, he said, to better manage the conditions of workers in Bahrain and to enable the setting up of trade unions.²⁷⁵

The HEC's boycott of the Manama Municipality's elections proved yet another successful undertaking. From the twelve elected seats, of a total of twenty-four, as the other twelve were to be appointed by the Ruler, none ran for the elections.²⁷⁶ The alarming success of the boycott was based on the Party's tactics of denouncing those who wished to run as traitors. The event further boosted the Party's egomania as it now seemed virtually invincible.

Following the election *debacle*, Gault conducted a private meeting on 17 February with the Adviser in which he rebuked him over certain policies his Administration exercised that had played its part in the recent political congestion. Gault said that the Ruler should undertake further reforms in order to appease the HEC. He pointed to the unsatisfactory and inadequate condition of the police. The Agent felt that the abysmal state of the public security forces might bring about direct British intervention with troops on the ground if a major disturbance occurred, a situation he wished to avoid at all costs. Gault criticised Belgrave over the closure of the two publications, *Sawut Al-Bahrain* and *Al-Qafilah*, as this was seen as being in conflict with Western principles of press freedom. The Agent also outlined to Belgrave his views that several government departments were in need of

²⁷⁵ TNA, FO 371/120540, Burrows, the Resident's Annual Report for the Year 1955.

²⁷⁶ 'Bernard Burrows, Residency's Monthly Report for March 1955', 1-4 (2).

more British staff to ensure greater efficiency. In concluding the meeting, Gault said that he assumed that 'the Adviser realises now that things are serious here'.²⁷⁷

Eden was due to meet for the first and last time his future nemesis, Egypt's leader Colonel Nasser, in Cairo on 20 February. The visit was part of his trip to attend SEATO's first council meeting due to be held in Bangkok. At the time the Alpha Plan was alive and continued to seek to 'cast Colonel Nasser in a leading role', working towards a long-standing settlement with the Israelis. It was up to the Foreign Secretary in his short visit to Cairo to play his part in encouraging the Egyptians to work towards a resolution without seeming to impose his will on the issue. A list of arguments and counter arguments were created for Eden to confront Nasser with.²⁷⁸

Upon Eden's arrival a dinner was organised with Nasser at the British Embassy in Cairo. The topic of an Arab-Israeli settlement was brought up. According to Eden, the Egyptian leader was not 'entirely negative on the question' but had 'emphasised the importance of timing and the need for a comprehensive settlement'. However the main topic of dispute raised was regarding Iraq's new alliance with Turkey. Nasser stated his objection of the Pact between the two states as it 'had seriously set back the development of effective collaboration with the West by the Arab States'. Eden believed that the Egyptian leader's hostility to the Turco-Iraqi Pact was due to jealousy 'and a frustrated desire to lead the Arab

²⁷⁷ TNA, FO 1016/386, Gault's Minutes with Belgrave, 19 February 1955.

²⁷⁸ TNA, FO 371/115865, Ralph Stevenson's Brief for the Secretary of State's Visit to Cairo, 15 February 1955.

World'.²⁷⁹ The Foreign Secretary's thoughts on Nasser's stance towards the Pact were also shared by Lloyd, who believed that Nasser 'was extremely jealous of Nuri and afraid that Iraq would challenge Egypt for leadership of the Arab states'.²⁸⁰ Eden's next stop, after Cairo, was the islands of Bahrain.

Al-Bakir claimed in his memoir that, following the success of the strike of December 1954, the British were determined to communicate with the HEC.²⁸¹ However Al-Bakir, as the Residency's monthly report of March 1955 confirmed, had personally requested the opportunity to meet any British personalities stopping in or visiting Bahrain. Indeed the Residency saw him to be keener to approach the British than *vice versa*. He asked the Political Agent for an opportunity to meet Dr Bennett, the Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Minister of Fuel and Power and Sir John Sterndale-Bennett, the Deputy Commissioner General for South East Asia, who both visited Bahrain in 1955. Unfortunately for Al-Bakir the meetings were not possible since the guests had already left when he made the request. The HEC's Secretary later requested to personally meet Eden during his stop in Bahrain on 21 February en route to the SEATO meeting in Bangkok. Gault informed Al-Bakir that such a meeting was not possible as Eden was only staying to meet the Ruler of Bahrain for approximately one hour. He, however, agreed to forward any letters presented to Eden by the HEC.²⁸² In another *pro forma* from the Political Agency that consisted of the minutes between Al-Bakir and Gault, the latter documented the

²⁷⁹ BDEEP, Series B, Part III, vol. 4, 'Egypt and the Defence of the Middle East' 1953-1956. Doc. 578: FO 371/115492, [Anglo-Egyptian meeting]: inward telegram no 269 from Mr Eden (Cairo) to Mr Churchill giving an account of a meeting with Colonel Nasser and Egyptian leaders, 21 February 1955; and Eden, *Full Circle*, 221.

²⁸⁰ S. Lloyd, *Suez 1956: A Personal Account* (London: 1978), 26, hereafter *Suez 1956*.

²⁸¹ Al-Bakir, *From Bahrain to Exile*, 81.

²⁸² 'Bernard Burrows, Residency's Monthly Report for March 1955', 1-4 (3).

Party Secretary's threat that, if he was unable to meet Eden, he would then declare a demonstration on the day of Eden's visit.²⁸³

During Eden's visit to Bahrain, the HEC presented a seven-page memorandum to him listing their demands via the Political Agent. In the memorandum the Party stated that HMG are 'our natural allies and in whom the people of Bahrain have faith' in improving local conditions and rights. It offered a brief background of the Movement and warned that further delays to agreeing to their demands might push Bahrainis into an uncontrollable state. The HEC additionally informed Eden that the Administration resorted to deducting a week's wage from its employees during the strike of December 1954 and closed down two nationalist publications. The memorandum, moreover, described Belgrave as a 'dictator' and called for democratic processes to be implemented. To the HEC, Belgrave seemed to be destined to remain in post for ever and the Ruler appeared content on continuing with the Adviser's services. The Party also urged HMG to strengthen its ties with the people of Bahrain and not with the Ruler.²⁸⁴

At this stage the HEC seemed to have adopted a policy of double-dealing between its nationalistic calls and clandestine direct-dealing with the British Political Agency in order to maximise its political gains. From one perspective they seemed to the public to be anti-British and from another through their approaches to British officials in Bahrain they were persistent in gaining British support for their demands.

²⁸³ TNA, FO 1016/386, Gault's Minutes with Al-Bakir, 17 February 1955.

²⁸⁴ TNA, FO 371/114586, Committee to Secretary of State, 21 February 1955.

On the same day the demands were presented to Eden, the Foreign Secretary met the Ruler of Bahrain. Eden informed the Ruler that HMG was paying close attention to developments in Bahrain and urged him to openly declare his policies to his people. Eden pointed to his 'appreciation' of the steps made by the Government but also cautioned the Ruler 'that just because people now were better educated and had time to look round it was impossible to stand still'.²⁸⁵

Clarissa Eden, the Foreign Secretary's wife, accompanied him on his trip. Details from her account of the visit were slight, but she did reportedly say that she left her husband with the Sheikh, so he 'can tick him off for something or other'.²⁸⁶ To Belgrave, the Ruler was 'delighted' with the result of this, albeit short, meeting and he took on board Eden's advice which he understood to be along the lines that the Government must improve its public relations activities. He urged the Adviser to look into producing a daily newspaper on behalf of the Administration. The Adviser, due to his habit of micromanaging the Government, criticised the Ruler for thinking that such an assignment 'could be done in the office in spare time'.²⁸⁷ However, it must be said that, had the Government adopted this approach earlier and had allocated a specialist to the task, it could have developed into an instrument for voicing the Administration's vision and works and, thereby, greatly eased the situation. Eden instructed Gault to reply to the HEC memorandum by making it clear that 'constitutional methods' must be utilised in expressing views and there

²⁸⁵ TNA, FO 371/114586, Record of Conversation between the Foreign Secretary and the Ruler of Bahrain on 21 February 1955, 28 February 1955.

²⁸⁶ C. Haste (ed.), *Clarissa Eden: A Memoir from Churchill to Eden* (London: 2007), entry from 21 February 1955, 186-87.

²⁸⁷ *Sir Charles Dalrymple Belgrave's Personal Diaries*, 22 February 1955.

should not be 'rival organisations' to the Government causing confusion to the general public. On the details of the response, the Foreign Secretary gave the Political Agency and Residency a *carte blanche* to answer the HEC in accordance with the points he had dictated.²⁸⁸

The Political Agent discussed with Burrows the pros and cons for the most appropriate policy to take in responding to the HEC on behalf of Eden. Gault feared that, if Eden's overall response sounded positive it might encourage the HEC, further resulting 'in the government machine coming to a standstill'. Gault suggested another approach to the predicament which was to point out the Bahraini Administration's accomplishments and steps it had taken towards further reform. The risk of this response would then be, according to the Agent, for the HEC to launch demonstrations, strikes, and violence. The Agent also thought that if a positive response was granted to the HEC that other Gulf States might look at developments in Bahrain unfavourably. Therefore, according to Gault, the approach to take with Al-Bakir and his followers was to 'return a somewhat damping reply to the High Executive Committee, even if this risks producing a relatively violent reaction'. In the Political Agent's view a functioning government with a portion of its population in opposition is by far a better approach than a government malfunctioning due to instability.²⁸⁹

The official British reply to the nationalists was submitted by the Political Agent on 17 March to the HEC and it underlined the reforms that had been recently adopted by the Government, among which was the draft of a new Penal Code, the

²⁸⁸ TNA, FO 371/114586, Letter via Agency as to British Policy, 17 March 1955.

²⁸⁹ TNA, FO 1016/386, Gault to Burrows, 2 March 1955.

hiring of a Judicial Adviser, the hiring of an Assistant to the Commandant of the Police, the Ruler's promise of developing the constitution governing the municipal councils, the hiring of a British doctor as an Assistant to the State's Medical Officer, the installation of new electricity plants, and the construction of new schools for boys and girls. The letter took the HEC to task for its stubbornness in not cooperating with the Administration and it further warned the Party that 'you must not try to run before you can walk'. It stated, additionally, its refusal to acknowledge the HEC, since there were no constitutional means that legitimised it. The letter also highlighted the channels of communication that were available to them but which they had boycotted. The latter was in reference to February's municipal elections.²⁹⁰ The Adviser did not hide in his diary his pleasure at the British response to the HEC as he considered it 'a smack in the eye to them by others'.²⁹¹

The reply was personally read out and handed to Al-Bakir by Gault. Al-Bakir's initial verbal response to the letter 'reiterated that his Committee was not prepared in any circumstances to co-operate with the Bahraini Government since they had lost faith in it'. He also attacked Belgrave, suspecting that he had 'too much influence with the Ruler'.²⁹²

The HEC responded to the British reply in a letter dated 29 March, in which the Party emphasised the topic of the centralisation of power by the British Adviser. In addition they criticised the steps taken by the Government towards reform as

²⁹⁰ TNA, FO 371/114586, Letter via Agency as to British policy, 17 March 1955.

²⁹¹ *Sir Charles Dalrymple Belgrave's Personal Diaries*, 19 March 1955.

²⁹² TNA, FO 371/114586, Burrows to Eden on the HEC's Response to British Policies, 22 March 1955.

being not enough. The Party also went on to explain its stance on every issue in minute detail, repeating the same ideas it had outlined in its earlier memorandum, in a letter spread over ten pages.²⁹³ Gault offered his opinion to the Residency on the HEC's response, saying that it 'brings forward no new argument which would warrant our answering it on the Foreign Secretary's behalf'.²⁹⁴ Burrows further believed that the entire and only point of the HEC's response was to 'have the last word'.²⁹⁵

On the regional scene the Turco-Iraqi Pact finally saw light on 24 February when it was signed by both parties. Nuri represented the Iraqis and Adnan Menderes, the Prime Minister of Turkey, represented the Turks. The Pact officially linked an Arab State, (Iraq) to NATO via Turkey.²⁹⁶ The signing of the Pact was seen as the first step towards formulating the Northern Tier defence alliance.

Meanwhile in late February in Bahrain Edward Skinner of BAPCO's management informed the Residency that Al-Bakir's (unnamed) cousin had told the company's Security Department in Awali of a plot to mount demonstrations starting on 1 April. The demonstrations would run for three consecutive days. If the demonstrations failed to produce the nationalists' desired outcomes, the assassination of a member of the ruling family and a European was to be carried out. The reason as to why the cousin had uncovered the alleged plot was his disapproval

²⁹³ TNA, FO 371/114586, The High Executive Committee, Bahrain, Reference no. 137/55m, 29 March 1955.

²⁹⁴ TNA, FO 10165/386, Gault to Burrows, 28 April 1955.

²⁹⁵ 'Bernard Burrows, Residency's Monthly Report for May 1955', in *Political Diaries of the Persian Gulf*, vol. 20 1955-1958, ed. R.L. Jarman (London: 1990), 1-5 (2).

²⁹⁶ BDEEP, Series B, Part III, vol. 4, 'Egypt and the Defence of the Middle East' 1953-1956. Doc. 583: FO 371/115497, [Turco-Iraqi pact]: inward dispatch no 69 from R A Beaumont to FO on the history of the pact's creation, 9 March 1955.

of it. Burrows did not believe that there was any evidence to prove that the idea was approved by Al-Bakir.²⁹⁷

Plans to reach a peace settlement in the Middle East between the Arabs and Israelis suffered a serious setback on 28 February. Ongoing border tensions between the Egyptians and Israelis were reported on that date, only days following David Ben-Gurion's (a known hawk in his dealings with the Egyptians) re-appointment as the Israeli Minister of Defence. This was a so-called 'reprisal' raid by the Israelis against Egyptian military units in Gaza resulting in the deaths of forty-two Egyptian soldiers.²⁹⁸ In Nutting's perspective the Egyptians saw the raid as part of a plot by the West to undermine their revolution.²⁹⁹ Dr Murad Ghaleb, a former Egyptian diplomat to the USSR, took a similar approach to Nutting's, as he claimed that the then Egyptian leadership saw it as a message to persuade Egypt into a defensive pact with the West. But, if this was the case, it backfired because the event triggered Nasser to shop for arms outside of the Western sphere.³⁰⁰ Nasser had earlier promised the army new American-made arms. But they never arrived. Heikal blamed Churchill for blocking the Americans from arming Egypt out of fear that they might be used against the British in the Suez Canal Zone.³⁰¹ In the summer of 1954 and during the Suez Canal Zone evacuation talks, Churchill thanked President Eisenhower for withholding, 'arms and money from the Egyptian

²⁹⁷ TNA, FO 1016/386, Residency Minutes of E. Skinner, 28 February 1955.

²⁹⁸ J.B. Glubb, *A Soldier with the Arabs* (London: 1957), 381.

²⁹⁹ A. Nutting, *Nasser* (London: 1972), 90.

³⁰⁰ 'Interview with Murad Ghaleb', *Shahid ala Al-Asar* [Witness onto an Era], *Al-Jazeera*, 2008. Part 2.

³⁰¹ M.H. Heikal, *Nasser: The Cairo Documents* (London: 1972), 47-48.

dictatorship'.³⁰² Nasser's own position at the top of the Egyptian regime was at stake and he had to find a solution before a crisis of confidence in him developed within Egypt's military ranks. At this point Trevelyan understood that Nasser was 'prepared to take major political risks in order to obtain a decisive superiority in armament over Israel'.³⁰³

The Egyptians were quick in their response to the events and Nasser set out to form his own 'Southern Tier' alliance that included Syria and Saudi Arabia to stand against the Turco-Iraqi Pact. Nasser's pact would also restrain Jordan from attempting to join the Iraqis and would re-emphasise Egypt's position in the Arab World.³⁰⁴

On 1 March, the day after the escalated border tension between Egypt and Israel, Gault held a pre-arranged meeting with the Ruler of Bahrain. The Agent was criticised by the Ruler for offering an audience on a number of occasions to Al-Bakir. The Ruler feared that by providing Al-Bakir and his followers with an open door to the British it had 'encouraged them' further with their movement. Sheikh Salman brought to Gault's awareness the limited finances the country received from oil revenues in comparison with other states, such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Qatar and its inability to compete with other regional states. In return, Gault demonstrated the necessity for the Bahraini Administration to further publicise its vision and works to the general public. In defending his meetings with Al-Bakir, the

³⁰² Churchill to Eisenhower, 21 June 1954 in *The Churchill-Eisenhower Correspondence, 1953-1955*, edited by P.G. Boyle (Chapel Hill, NC: 1990), 147-49.

³⁰³ Trevelyan, *The Middle East in Revolution*, 6.

³⁰⁴ BDEEP, Series B, Part III, vol. 4, 'Egypt and the Defence of the Middle East' 1953-1956. Doc. 582: FO 371/115496, [Egyptian-Syrian-Saudi defence association]: inward telegram no 368 from Sir R Stevenson to FO on the response to Colonel Nasser's defence initiative, 9 March 1955; and Wheelock, *Nasser's New Egypt*, 224.

Agent remarked to the Ruler that he felt obliged to receive complaints from the general public, even from 'troublemakers'.³⁰⁵

By early March the HEC formulated a draft scheme to establish a trade union. To counter this, and as advised by Gault, the Administration announced a project to set up a labour law code and a Government Labour Committee. So, on 3 March, Burrows invited Matthew T Audsley, the Labour Counselor in Cairo, to Bahrain for a few days to offer his expertise in this field. Audsley met with Al-Bakir and managed to successfully convince him to put off the establishment of his union until his next (unspecified) visit to Bahrain.

Burrows summarised the policy that was to be adopted by the Residency in a message to the FO on 5 March. Regarding recent internal developments the Resident said:

In the light of our interest in its welfare, we would continue to watch the progress of political developments here with sympathy and would give advice if required. But we could not recognize, or have dealings with, a committee which had set itself up without any constitutional basis and which boycotted the democratic processes which had been made available.

He also cautioned that any resort to violence by the HEC would result in the loss of British and international sympathy for its cause.³⁰⁶

The new proposed Government Labour Committee announced by the Administration in March consisted of three government representatives, two members of the ruling family, a British officer, three BAPCO employees of which one would be a British or an American, the second an employee of a local Bahraini firm

³⁰⁵ TNA, FO 1016/386, Gault to Burrows, 2 March 1955.

³⁰⁶ TNA, FO 371/114586, Burrows to FO, 5 March 1955.

and an Arab, three workers one representing BAPCO, another a government employee, and finally one was to be chosen from four candidates nominated by the HEC. Audsley personally met with Al-Bakir and urged him to accept the proposal as the HEC's plans for a single trade union was not realistic, according to the British labour adviser. After consultation, the HEC accepted the idea but later withdrew their support. This change of mind came in the form of three demands. Firstly, that the HEC put forward a nominee of its own choice and that the Government had no say in the Party's decision. Secondly, the official acknowledgement of the HEC by the Government of Bahrain. Thirdly, the insistence on forming an 'Assembly' to discuss issues other than labour.

With the HEC's refusal to accept the Government Labour Committee, the Administration decided that the last three posts were to be filled by elections in April. As well as its attempt to form a Labour Committee, the Bahraini Administration had taken the initiative independently to set up two other appointed committees responsible for overseeing the Departments of Health and of Education based on the Commission of Enquiry's recommendations, which had yet to be published in full. The Ruler then declared his intention to personally contribute £157,500 towards new health and educational projects to be directed by the two new committees.³⁰⁷

Regarding the Commission of Enquiry's findings, reports on each department were sent to the Ruler, to the Adviser, and to the Political Agent as each department

³⁰⁷ TNA, FO 371/114586, Burrows to FO, 14 March 1955; and 'Richard, Residency's Monthly Report April 1955', in *Political Diaries of the Persian Gulf*, vol. 20 1955-1958, ed. R.L. Jarman (London: 1990), 1-5 (2-3); and TNA, FO 371/114770, Burrows to FO, 16 April 1955.

was surveyed. No major issues were raised according to Gault. However there were many 'individual criticisms' in the reports which could not be ignored and should be acted upon by the Administration in due course.³⁰⁸

A circular (number sixteen) published by the HEC on 15 March criticised the Government on its intention to establish health and education committees with appointed members. The Party reinstated its demands to form a Legislative Council elected by the people. It also criticised the councils to be established with merely advisory powers and noted that their decisions could be overruled by the Government. The HEC called on the rejection of the health and education committees and for those nominated not to accept their nominations.³⁰⁹

The Political Agent informed Burrows of a meeting that had taken place between him and Al-Bakir, upon the initiative of the latter, on 6 April. The HEC's Secretary came to inquire about Audsley who, due to his commitments elsewhere, had promised to return to Bahrain to continue his work on the country's labour issues. He had heard a rumour that Audsley would not be returning to Bahrain. Al-Bakir had promised Audsley not to proclaim his own trade union until the British Labour Adviser had returned. He spoke of his fear of delaying the matter further as his supporters 'were difficult to restrain'. Gault viewed Al-Bakir's words as a threat and informed him that neither the Resident nor himself

approve his tactics of attacking the Bahrain Government from all sides while refusing, and inciting others to refuse, to cooperate with that government when invited to do so.³¹⁰

³⁰⁸ TNA, FO 371/114587, Gault to Burrows, 28 April 1955.

³⁰⁹ TNA, FO 1016/386, The Higher Executive Committee, Circular No. 16, 15 March 1955.

³¹⁰ TNA, FO 371/114587, Gault to Burrows, 28 April 1955.

So the HEC officially formed its own trade union in early April.³¹¹ The organisation came to be known as the Bahra'ni Trade Union.³¹²

Gault also criticised the Bahraini Administration for its slowness in responding to political developments. The Agent blamed the slow reactions of the Adviser on his insistence 'in trying to do everything himself – as he was able easily to do years ago when government was simpler'. He was also critical of the HEC's policy in handling the internal political situation, as 'Whatever the Bahrain Government do will be found wanting by them'. Gault suggested to Burrows the appointment of an assistant to Belgrave to aid the Government in its work, although he doubted that Belgrave would accept the idea.³¹³

On 6 April Eden took over the British Premiership from Churchill.³¹⁴ On Churchill's last day in office, Britain officially joined the Turco-Iraqi Pact which would soon come to be known as the Baghdad Pact.³¹⁵ The decision to join the Pact was proclaimed by Eden earlier in the House of Commons on 30 March.³¹⁶ The US did not join the Pact as it feared that its membership of the alliance would hinder its relations with Nasser. Furthermore, the American Jewish lobby disapproved of the US partaking in the coalition as long as Iraq was part of it and Israel was not a member.³¹⁷

On the same day that the Government Labour Committee's elections were due, on 19 April, an article attacking the Adviser in Bahrain was published in Egypt's

³¹¹ TNA, FO 371/114770, Burrows to FO, 7 April 1955.

³¹² 'Itihad Al-A'mal Al-Bahra'ni' [The Bahra'ni Trade Union], *Al-Watan*, 26 August 1955, 12.

³¹³ TNA, FO 371/114587, Gault to Burrows, 30 March 1955.

³¹⁴ *Descent to Suez*, 6 April 1955, 254-55; and 'Eden at the Helm', *New York Times*, 7 April 1955, 26.

³¹⁵ 'New Anglo-Iraqi Treaty', *The Manchester Guardian*, 5 April 1955, 7.

³¹⁶ Eden, *Full Circle*, 222-23.

³¹⁷ *The Eden-Eisenhower Correspondence, 1955-1957*, Boyle, 'The Issues', 53-78 (71).

Akher Sa'ah (The Last Hour) Magazine. The article was headlined 'Revolution Sweeps Bahrain'. It stated that 'The people of Bahrain are on the move. The secret national movement is growing stronger and for several weeks this country has been living on the edge of a volcano'. It also reported that the Secretary General of the Arab League, Abdul-Khaleq Hassouna, had received 'a grave report' regarding affairs in Bahrain forwarded to him by 'a special messenger'. The article saw the Movement as one struggling to free Bahrain from 'British Imperialism' and to liberate it from the hands of Belgrave, who was labelled 'the British High Commissioner in Bahrain'. The article also suggested that Belgrave saw himself in Bahrain as 'the Guardian of Islam'. The article portrayed the Adviser to be the actual Ruler of Bahrain on behalf of the British. The magazine went on to provide an overview of Belgrave's career prior to becoming the 'High Commissioner of Bahrain', and it declared that he had been dismissed from his post at Siwa Oasis and that only through his 'aristocratic' wife did he manage to land the post of Commissioner in Bahrain. The magazine also alleged that Belgrave had successfully 'acquired for himself a huge fortune' and had used his powers to appoint his wife as an educational director for girls' schools. Other attacks were made on the British Director of Health in Bahrain, RHB Snow, who it said had performed negligent surgery after he had operated on a patient's healthy eye instead of the one which had glass in it for two years. The report, however, did not state how the patient managed to live comfortably for two years with glass in his eye.³¹⁸ Belgrave was

³¹⁸ TNA, FO 1016/386, Translation of an Article by *Akher Sa'ah*, 20 April 1955.

informed of the article by the Ruler's uncle, who as Belgrave noted, was upset at its content.³¹⁹

Akher Sa'ah, like other media outlets in Egypt following the fall of King Farouk, was heavily monitored by the Egyptian regime. The press became an instrument of influence and propaganda echoing Egypt's own policy. For each print publication a government representative was assigned so that nothing was to be published outside set boundaries.³²⁰ The timing of the attack on British interests in the Gulf followed Egypt's protest at the formation of the Baghdad Pact was critical and was part of the regime's policy of undermining British interests in the Arab World.

The allegation of Belgrave being dismissed from his role in Egypt and later aided by his wife in landing the new post in Bahrain was not accompanied by any proof. But it was repeated by Al-Bakir in his speech to the Kuwaiti Studentship Union in Cairo in 1956.³²¹ Al-Bakir's repetition of the claims points to two possibilities: either he reiterated what *Akher Sa'ah* had stated regarding Belgrave or he was that 'special messenger' who passed on to the Arab League's General Secretary the claims the magazine had published.

The Government Labour Committee's elections for the three elected seats took place as scheduled and there was no call to boycott them. The results were announced on 24 April and included the names appointed by the Government to the Committee. It consisted of the following persons from the Government of Bahrain:

³¹⁹ *Sir Charles Dalrymple Belgrave's Personal Diaries*, 19 April 1955.

³²⁰ Nutting, *Nasser*, 297-98.

³²¹ Al-Bakir, *The Political Situation in Bahrain*, 47.

Sheikh Ali bin Ahmed Al-Khalifa, Sheikh Ali bin Mohammed Al-Khalifa, and the Director of Customs GWR Smith. Representing the employers were: LA Smith Personnel Manager of BAPCO holding British citizenship, Mohammed Kanoo a leading merchant, and SM Uchi, a building contractor. From the elected workers were Mahmood Al-Alawi, an accounts officer at the Adviserhip (or Adviserate – Belgrave’s headquarters), Ali bin Sayid Hussein from BAPCO, and Mohammed Qassim Al-Shirawi.³²² The first meeting of the Bahrain Government Labour Committee was held on 30 April with Audsley’s presence as work began on the setting up of a labour code in Bahrain. Burrows requested the FO to send experts to assist the Committee with its work.³²³

Following the establishment of the Labour Committee (and to Burrows’ own surprise) the HEC ‘gave up its demand for recognition by the Government in return for being allowed unofficially to nominate the workers’ representatives on the committee, who were then “elected”’.³²⁴ The latest demand was not met by the Administration.

On 2 May, Bahrain was due to receive an unexpected visitor from Egypt. Nasser had recently completed his tour of Asia and to attend the Afro-Asian Conference, also known as the Bandung Conference, in Indonesia between 18 to 24 April. The Conference was the Egyptian Prime Minister’s first visit abroad.³²⁵ The Bandung Conference aimed ‘to demonstrate the solidarity of the neutral, non-

³²² TNA, FO 371/114587, Gault to Burrows, 28 April 1955.

³²³ TNA, FO 1016/386, Residency to FO, 27 April 1955.

³²⁴ TNA, FO 371/120540, Burrows, The Resident’s Annual Report for the Year 1955.

³²⁵ Laqueur, *The Soviet Union and the Middle East*, 214; and ‘Start of Bandung Conference: An International Fashion Show’, *The Manchester Guardian*, 19 April 1955, 1.

aligned states of Africa and Asia', as Nutting commented. Nasser managed to convince the conference to have its headquarters in Cairo. The movement that emerged later came to be known as the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Movement.³²⁶

En route to the conference Nasser, in an Air India plane that was provided for his journey, had stopped in Rangoon, Burma where he met with People's Republic of China's Premier Chou En Lai. The Chinese understood the need for Egypt to arm itself and both sides considered the possibility of the Soviets being the suppliers. The Chinese Premier promised Nasser to look into the matter with the Russians. Following Nasser's return to Cairo, China confirmed to the Egyptians Russia's willingness to sell arms to Nasser.³²⁷ Previous attempts during Stalin's era had been made by the Egyptians to purchase arms from the Soviets but these efforts fell short. According to Anwar Al-Sadat it was Stalin's own 'principles [that] prevented him from supplying weapons to non-Communist states'.³²⁸ Stalin distrusted countries outside of the Soviet orbit as Dulles had observed. That approach changed in the new Soviet Union and a policy of greater tolerance was adopted.³²⁹ The event was a key turning point in the Cold War politics of the Middle East as Nasser and his followers outside Egypt began their migration to the Eastern sphere under the Soviet umbrella.³³⁰ Furthermore, the conference led Nasser to adopt a policy of so-

³²⁶ Nutting, *Nasser*, 100 and 106.

³²⁷ Heikal, *Sphinx and Commissar: The Rise and Fall of Soviet Influence in the Arab World*, 57; Heikal, *Nasser: The Cairo Documents*, 54-55; Heikal, *Cutting the Lion's Tail*, 69; and Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the Middle East 1914-1956*, 185.

³²⁸ A. El-Sadat, *In Search of Identity* (London: 1978), 128.

³²⁹ BDEEP, Series B, Part III, vol. 4, 'Egypt and the Defence of the Middle East' 1953-1956. Doc. 602: FO 371/113676, [Problems raised by the Egyptian purchase of Soviet arms]: FO record of a conversation in the State Department between British and US representatives, 3 October 1955.

³³⁰ Glubb, *A Soldier with the Arabs*, 379.

called 'positive neutrality' within the context of the greater Cold War scenario.³³¹

Nasser's hostility to the Baghdad Pact must have attracted the Soviets to him, as the Pact was aimed primarily against them. Turning Egypt into a satellite state by winning over Nasser, even if he did not adhere to Communist ideology, was a major *coup* in the new Great Game.³³²

Belgrave wrote in his diary of 2 May of being woken up at 3.30 am with the news that Nasser, upon returning to Cairo from the Bandung Conference and tour of Asia, had requested to refuel in Bahrain after fog had diverted his plane from its planned stop in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. The Egyptian Prime Minister was due to arrive at 8.00 am accompanied by Major Salah Salem, the Secretary General of the Arab League, and two newspaper editors. The Egyptians were greeted by the Resident, Political Agent, and the Adviser, who the Ruler had sent on his behalf. Burrows' fear of a certain request by Nasser came true when the Egyptian leader asked the Resident for the opportunity to drive around Bahrain. The Resident feared that this would lead to unwanted demonstrations. He considered two possible alternatives to prevent any unforeseen public reaction. The first was to order a Royal Air Force (RAF) officer at the airport to intentionally create a car

³³¹ Wheelock, *Nasser's New Egypt*, 282; Galpern, *Money, Oil and Empire in the Middle East*, 153; Carlton, *Britain and the Suez Crisis*, 7; and Laqueur, *The Soviet Union and the Middle East*, 319.

³³² The Pact was viewed as a threat to the Egyptian leadership. First it threatened Egypt's status as a leader in the Arab World since Iraq seemed to act as its competitor. Second the Pact hindered Nasser's newly adopted vision of neutrality in the Cold War and threatened his popularity among Arabs. Although Egypt played a role in the Afro-Asian Conference Movement that declared neutrality, the Soviets were quick to reach out to Egypt's Nasser to the extent that during a meeting held by the Conference in Egypt in late 1957, the Movement was viewed to be coming under the heavy influence of the USSR regardless of the Conference's claims. Moreover, in support of the argument, the FO's Permanent Undersecretary Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick believed that the Soviets had pursued to divide the Baghdad Pact and that Nasser based on his own agenda was aiding them in that task. See McNamara, *Britain, Nasser and the Balance of Power in the Middle East 1952-1967*, 41; Nutting, *Nasser*, 106; and TNA, FO 371/121541, Kirkpatrick Minutes, 5 March 1956.

accident at the gate of the airport, thus temporarily blocking it. The second option was to have Nasser driven in the Residency's car with a British flag flown on the car's front side. But before any of the possible solutions could be acted upon the process of refueling the plane was completed and the Egyptians were ready to board. Nasser remained in Bahrain for a total of approximately thirty minutes, according to Belgrave. Al-Bakir arrived late and managed to have a few words with the Egyptian leader. He apologised to Nasser in the name of the people of Bahrain for not knowing earlier about his arrival. As a consequence of this curtailed visit Egyptian media outlets attacked the British in Bahrain for their failure to publicise Nasser's visit although British officials were only informed of it a few hours before to his brief stopover.³³³

In a letter to Harold Macmillan, the then new Foreign Secretary in Eden's Cabinet dated 9 May from Burrows, he explained the Residency's objective in aiding the Administration in its process of setting up the new Government Labour Committee. The Resident said:

We are in fact making the rather curious experiment of introducing industrial democratic processes in a society in which political democracy is almost entirely absent and in which it continues to appear most unwise to tamper too rapidly with the existing constitutional position.

Burrows also made the point that although the frontline members of the HEC were pushing strongly for a trade union, none of them were labourers. It was hoped that

³³³ *Sir Charles Dalrymple Belgrave's Personal Diaries*, 2 May 1955; 'Bernard Burrows, Monthly Report for June 1955', in *Political Diaries of the Persian Gulf*, vol. 20 1955-1958, ed. R.L. Jarman (London: 1990), 1-7 (2); B. Burrows, *Footnotes in the Sand: The Gulf in Transition 1953-1958* (Wiltshire: 1990) 38-39, hereafter *Footnotes in the Sand*; and Al-Bakir, *From Bahrain to Exile*, 106.

with a new and strong labour legislation, Bahraini workers will 'be swayed less by a handful of ambitious would-be politicians'.³³⁴

During the month of May Al-Bakir and Belgrave exchanged correspondence and copies of those letters can be found at TNA. Al-Bakir had first forwarded a request to Belgrave that his passport suspension be revoked. Al-Bakir told the Adviser of his wish to travel abroad, particularly to Cyprus as he sought medical treatment for an unidentified ailment and for two weeks of recuperation.³³⁵ Belgrave replied to Al-Bakir's request by saying that, as he had previously obtained a Qatari passport before he had sought asylum in Bahrain and that the Ruler had granted him a Bahraini passport instead. But since the Ruler had withdrawn it, 'he is not prepared to reconsider the matter'. Belgrave, nonetheless, offered Al-Bakir a travel document but that did not grant him Bahraini citizenship. Belgrave sent a copy of the letters to the Political Agency.³³⁶ It was odd for Al-Bakir to request, without a prior indication of an illness, permission suddenly to travel abroad. His wish to visit to Cyprus was also a peculiar one. There are two possible explanations regarding Al-Bakir's sudden wish to travel. The first was his desire to use Cyprus as an initial point that would enable him to travel later to Egypt, on the assumption that if his original request was to go to Egypt it would be rejected. The second possibility was that Al-Bakir desired to see at first hand the Greek-Cypriot armed resistance movement that rose against British on the island. The resistance movement behind the activities was an organisation named the National

³³⁴ TNA, FO 371/114587, Burrows to FO, 9 May 1955.

³³⁵ TNA, FO 1016/441, Copy of letter from Mr. Abdulrahman Al Baker, Bahrain, to the Adviser to the Government of Bahrain, 11 May 1955.

³³⁶ TNA, FO 1016/441, Belgrave to Al-Bakir, 21 May 1955.

Organisation of Cypriot Fighters (EOKA). In April, EOKA had launched its terrorist campaign against British troops aimed at ending Britain's hold on the island and unification with Greece.³³⁷

On an international level the Soviets looked to counter the influence of Western alliances and in particular NATO, and they announced on 14 May the formation of The Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation and Mutual Assistance (WTO) -- known in short as the Warsaw Pact. This consisted of the Soviet Union, East Germany, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, Romania, and Albania.³³⁸

The HEC conducted a meeting with its supporters in A'ali village on 20 May during which the Party echoed its determination to achieve its demands in full. Regarding the anticipated Penal Code the HEC warned that such a code must be first approved by 'the people' before its implementation. Although it was not clear whether the approval sought was through a general public vote or through the Party's involvement in its formulation. Closer ties with the Egyptians were being struck when the HEC announced that it was sending eight students to further their studies in Egypt. The scholarships were awarded by Egypt and the HEC would pay for the eight students' travel expenses. Interestingly, the Movement during its last gathering confessed to having deserters amongst its ranks. But no further information was provided as to the reason why these members decided to abandon the Party.³³⁹

³³⁷ For more information see, R.G.M. Stiles, *Mayhem in the Med: A Chronicle of the Cyprus Emergency 1955-1960* (London: 2005); and N.V.D. Bijl, *The Cyprus Emergency: The Divided Island 1955-1974* (London: 2010).

³³⁸ For more information see G. Holden, *The Warsaw Pact: Soviet Security and Bloc Politics* (Oxford: 1989).

³³⁹ 'Bernard Burrows, Residency's Monthly Report for June 1955', 1-7 (3).

In June the Bahraini Administration issued a set of announcements. It first declared the creation of a committee specialising in reviewing Bahraini traffic law. The second announcement was regarding the Penal Code, which was first set to be written following the events of 1954, was now to be introduced on 1 August. The Government also announced the formation of a press censorship committee. Finally -- and for the first time in the Adviser's career -- the Adviser's duties during his absence in the summer of 1955 while on leave were to be taken over by GWR Smith, the Director of Customs.³⁴⁰

A new nationalist biweekly newspaper appeared for the first time in early June since the closure of *Al-Qafilah*. The new newspaper was to be managed by the same team that supervised the former paper and was named as *Al-Watan* (The Nation).³⁴¹ The newspaper was quick in launching attacks on Britain's regional allies and in particular on Nuri, who it claimed conducted secret meetings with Israeli diplomats in Turkey.³⁴²

Belgrave left Bahrain on 22 June heading for Britain and the US. He did not return to Bahrain until 26 September.³⁴³ On the same day of Belgrave's departure, the HEC held a public meeting at the Mu'min Mosque. The event was attended by approximately three thousand. The HEC was marking the first anniversary of the death of the four demonstrators who had fallen during the attack on the fort in the

³⁴⁰ TNA, FO 1016/387, Bahrain Government Gazette Announcement, No. 113, 30 June 1955.

³⁴¹ *Sir Charles Dalrymple Belgrave's Personal Diaries*, 4 June 1955; and 'Charles Gault, Residency's Monthly Report for July 1955', in *Political Diaries of the Persian Gulf*, vol. 20 1955-1958, ed. R.L. Jarman (London: 1990), 1-6 (3).

³⁴² '*Al-Qafilah Taseer*' [The Caravan Marches On], *Al-Watan*, 17 June 1955, 1.

³⁴³ *Sir Charles Dalrymple Belgrave's Personal Diaries*, 22 June and 26 September 1955.

summer of 1954.³⁴⁴ On 27 June, Bahrain's Public Relations Department launched its first major project by inaugurating the Bahrain Radio Station in Arabic, as the voice of the Administration.³⁴⁵ The Bahraini Government then introduced the State's new Penal Code with the intention of it coming into effect by the beginning of September.³⁴⁶

By the summer of 1955, British policy was based on taking slow yet significant steps towards reform in Bahrain. Labour reform seemed to be an experiment and a step towards further modernising the Government. The HEC's response to the Administration's steps was rather disappointing to the British as it had called for boycotts of democratic opportunities such as the Municipal Council elections. In the coming six months the Movement would witness a new crisis with the Administration in protest at the introduction of the Penal Code. In addition to the radicalisation of some of its members, strengthened ties with the Egyptians, and a call to support Egypt's Soviet arms deal would become the highlight of the second-half of 1955.

³⁴⁴ TNA, FO 1016/387, Residency Report on the Meeting held Yesterday 22nd June 1955 at Masjid Moamin by the H.E.C., 23 June 1955.

³⁴⁵ 'Charles Gault, Residency's Monthly Report for July 1955', 1-6 (4).

³⁴⁶ TNA, FO 371/114587, Burrows to FO, 2 September 1955.

Chapter Five

The Nationalists' cry 'Arms for Egypt'

July to December 1955

In Shuckburgh's view the summer of 1955 exhibited a gloomy scene, as events throughout the Middle East, including 'strikes in Bahrain' as he noted in his diary, were all a testimony to a state of anarchy infecting the region. Meanwhile, Plan Alpha seemed to him 'like a beautiful dream'.³⁴⁷ On the international level the second-half of the year saw Nasser's stock rise once more within the Arab World as he concluded Egypt's arms deal with the Soviets. The Baghdad Pact took a step forward with the adherence of two new states: Pakistan and Iran, but suffered a major setback when Jordan refused to join because of domestic opposition. The price of failure in Jordan would later cast its shadow on Bahrain's own internal affairs. In Bahrain conditions did not improve in the second-half of the year as objection to the Penal Code developed and for the first time, were specifically anti-British. Conflict between the Administration and the HEC resurfaced as negotiations between the two sides got underway. A call to help fund Egyptian arms purchases was made and a visit to Bahrain by Anwar Al-Sadat, then a Minister of State in Egypt, will all be highlighted in this Chapter.

The second-half of the year saw a summit held in Geneva and attended by heads of state from the US, Britain, France, and the Soviet Union (the 'Big Four'). The four discussed various matters of interest that included, *inter alia*, the

³⁴⁷ *Descent to Suez*, 30 August 1955, 275.

unification of Germany, security in Europe, and trade between the two Cold War protagonists. Eisenhower also, informally, raised the topic of 'open skies', a matter rejected by the Soviets. In the conference Eden invited the Soviet Union's leaders (Nikolai Bulganin and Nikita Khrushchev) to visit Britain.³⁴⁸ The Middle East would become one of the main topics for discussion between the two sides during the Soviets' visit in April of the following year, and will be discussed in Chapter Seven.

In Bahrain, the earliest official reaction to the Penal Code by the HEC was published through a Party circular on 7 July. The circular heavily condemned the proposed code, based on the premise that it contradicted Islamic teachings. It also pointed to a law featured in the code that made unauthorized groupings illegal, which the HEC felt it was directed straight at it.³⁴⁹ *Al-Watan* launched a campaign attacking the code, it proclaimed in one of its headlines printed in bold letters that 'The Penal Code is more lethal than a bomb, so resist it!'³⁵⁰ Burrows believed that the HEC's opposition to the code on religious grounds was only an excuse used by the Party 'to inflame opinion among the unlettered in the villages as well as in Manama'.³⁵¹ The code was originally drafted by the FO with the intention of not only introducing it in Bahrain but throughout the Arabian Gulf.³⁵² The Political

³⁴⁸ 'What happened at Geneva', *New York Times*, 24 July 1955, E8; and *The Eden-Eisenhower Correspondence, 1955-1957*, Boyle, 'The Geneva Summit Meeting', 91-92.

³⁴⁹ TNA, FO 1016/441, The Higher Executive Committee, Circular No. 23, 7 July 1955.

³⁵⁰ '*Qanoon Al-Uqubat Ashad min Qunbulat (Al-Kabulat) Faqwimuh*' [The Penal Code is more lethal than a bomb, so resist it], *Al-Watan*, 29 July 1955, 1.

³⁵¹ TNA, FO 371/114587, Burrows to FO, 2 September 1955.

³⁵² 'Bernard Burrows, Residency's Report for the Month of November 1955', in *Political Diaries of the Persian Gulf*, vol. 20 1955-1958, ed. R.L. Jarman (London: 1990), 1-7 (2).

Agent viewed the opposition to the code to be an attack against the British since they were its authors.³⁵³

Ties between Bahrain's growing nationalist movement and Egypt were further enhanced during the second half of 1955. One of the steps taken towards that goal was the Party's participation on behalf of Bahrain in a conference held by the World Islamic Youth Conference (WIYC) in Egypt on which *Al-Watan* reported in a series of articles. The WIYC's General Secretary at the time was the Minister of State and Free Officers' member Anwar Al-Sadat.³⁵⁴ Al-Shamlan, a frontline member of the Movement and other senior members attended the conference. Al-Shamlan had left Bahrain on 17 June on an unspecified visit to Egypt and Europe for a period of three months.³⁵⁵ At the WIYC's event Al-Shamlan delivered a speech and Ali Sayyar, the Editor-in-Chief of *Al-Watan* gave a talk. The Bahraini delegation urged them to include the 'Bahraini case' with other topics of discussion on the conference agenda and the WIYC organisers accepted their proposal.³⁵⁶

In Al-Bakir's memoir, it was the Egyptian Kamal Yaqub, whose position was not specified by him, who had played an instrumental role in the HEC's participation in the WIYC event.³⁵⁷ Jassim Murad, an associate of the HEC, revealed in an interview published by Bahrain's *Al-Wasat* (The Centre) newspaper in 2004, that the linking point between the Party and the Egyptian regime was Yaqub, who

³⁵³ 'Charles Gault, Residency's Report for the Month of September 1955', in *Political Diaries of the Persian Gulf*, vol. 20 1955-1958, ed. R.L. Jarman (London: 1990), 1-9 (3).

³⁵⁴ 'Mutamar Shabab Al-Alam Al-Islami' [World Islamic Youth Conference], *Al-Watan*, 1 July 1955, 1.

³⁵⁵ 'Khabar A'an Al-Shamlan' [A News Report on Al-Shamlan], *Al-Watan*, 17 June 1955, 1.

³⁵⁶ 'Nashat Wafdana fi Mu'tamar Shabab Al-Alam Al-Islami' [The Activities of our Delegation to the World Islamic Youth Conference], *Al-Watan*, 29 July 1955, 1 and 5.

³⁵⁷ Al-Bakir, *From Bahrain to Exile*, 105.

worked at the time as a representative for the WIYC.³⁵⁸ Murad did not specify the nature of the ties that existed between the Party and Yaqub. No known writings of the members of the Free Officers' Movement or Egyptian diplomats at the time reference Yaqub, except in the Free Officer Khalid Mohieddin's memoir *Now I Speak*.³⁵⁹

In addition to *Al-Watan*, a second Bahraini nationalist weekly newspaper, *Al-Mizan* (The Scale), was launched on 22 July. Bahraini students in Iraq wrote the newspaper's editorials and its Editor-in-Chief was Abdulla Al-Wazzan.³⁶⁰ Unfortunately only one reproduced copy of the newspaper exists for public viewing at the ICC, although there are some selected translated articles from the newspaper found at TNA in relation to the conflict.³⁶¹ However it would be logical to conclude that, since Bahrainis in Iraq wrote the newspaper, its content would parallel Iraqi policy. The only issue available at the ICC proved the opposite with an article attacking Nuri entitled, 'An Iraqi Poet Challenges Nuri Al-Saeed' and another praising Nasser entitled, 'A Man who knows what he wants'.³⁶²

³⁵⁸ G. Al-Shehabi, 'Jassim Murad wa "Nishwar" Al-Sineen Al-Khamseen' [Jassim and the 'Elegant Words' of Fifty Years], *Abwab Al-Wasat*, 13 October 2004, 9.

³⁵⁹ Kamal Yaqub's name is stated in the memoir of Khalid Mohieddin who failed to mention any background information on him. The reason as to why Mohieddin mentioned Yaqub was that the latter was a relative of his who had arranged for him to meet a prominent Egyptian army commander at the time known as Aziz Al-Masry. The specific date of the meeting was not mentioned but it is assumed to be in the 1940s as the author was describing that era. See Mohieddin, *Now I Speak*, 64-65.

³⁶⁰ 'Charles Gault, Residency's Report for the Month of August 1955', in *Political Diaries of the Persian Gulf*, vol. 20 1955-1958, ed. R.L. Jarman (London: 1990), 1-9 (4).

³⁶¹ The only issue available of *Al-Mizan* at the ICC is the issue published on 20 July 1956.

³⁶² 'Shaer Iraqi Yatahada Nuri Al-Said' [An Iraqi Poet Challenges Nuri Al-Said], *Al-Mizan*, 20 July 1956, 1; and 'Rajul Ya'rif Mayurid' [A Man who knows what he wants], *Al-Mizan*, 20 July 1956, 1.

The eight students on scholarships sent on behalf of the HEC to Egypt left Bahrain on 22 August.³⁶³ Four studied law, three specialised in engineering, and one wanted to further his studies in agriculture. As a goodwill gesture to Bahrain, Egypt had also sent a number of teachers and doctors to the islands without pay.³⁶⁴

Egyptian teachers and educational missions to the Arab World, and particularly those sent to the Gulf and Bahrain, had contributed to the growing nationalist sentiment. In the second-half of 1955, as Macmillan observed in a paper he submitted to the British Cabinet on Middle East Oil, these were [the educational missions] the 'main weapons' used by the Egyptians in the area. Also in the Foreign Secretary's opinion the Egyptians based their attacks by using three categories: the press, radio, and education. He compared the sponsorship of Egyptian teachers abroad to a similar method used by the Greeks in Cyprus.³⁶⁵ The Residency, for its part, despatched a message by Burrows to the FO in 1955 on the 'significance of Egyptian influence' in the Arabian Gulf region and in particular in the field of education.

In Bahrain, the Resident wrote, there was growing Egyptian influence and the local administration did not wish to associate itself with the process of recruiting Egyptian teachers. Although the teachers and 'experts' had only basic qualifications, in Burrows' view, they were the only accessible source of Arabic-speaking staff available. The Resident also informed the FO that the Bahraini Director of Education, Ahmed Al-Umran had remarked during an official visit to

³⁶³ TNA, FO 1016/387, The Higher Executive Committee, Circular no. 25, 22 August 1955.

³⁶⁴ TNA, FO 1016/388, Residency's Report of a Public Meeting called by the Committee, 7 October 1955.

³⁶⁵ TNA, CAB 129/78, C.P. (55) 152, Cabinet: Middle East Oil, 14 October 1955.

Egypt that he was greeted 'for the first time [with] an atmosphere of hostility and suspicion'.³⁶⁶ In a conversation between Nutting and Al-Umran, in one of the former's memoirs, the Bahraini official took measures to halt Egyptian influence in Bahrain through education. Some of those measures included the reduction of the number of Egyptian education staff in Bahrain. The Administration also sponsored students being sent abroad to further their studies at the American University of Beirut instead of Egypt.³⁶⁷ Bahrain did not only just recruit Egyptian teachers and 'experts' but Arabs from other countries that had just escaped from colonial rule were also employed.³⁶⁸ In 1955 there was an estimated 33 per cent of foreign Arab teachers to Bahrainis of all the educational staff in local government boys' schools.³⁶⁹

Objection to the Penal Code became more evident to the Resident in August. He advised the Ruler to postpone its introduction until November and to set up a committee to review the elements in dispute. A committee was duly appointed by the Government on 20 August. In response, the HEC issued a circular further attacking the Penal Code and advising those appointed not to participate in its affairs.

The first meeting of the committee to review the code was a disappointment to the Administration as only three members attended; they were: Sheikh Mubarak Al-Khalifa (the Ruler's brother), Smith (the Acting Adviser), and a Muslim Shi'ite

³⁶⁶ TNA, FO 371/120561, Burrows to FO, 24 December 1955.

³⁶⁷ Nutting, *The Aftermath of Suez*, 72.

³⁶⁸ Qubain, 'Social Classes and Tensions in Bahrain', 269-80 (278-79).

³⁶⁹ See Appendix III of 'Teachers sources in Government Boys' Schools' in R.B. Winder, 'Education in Al-Bahrayn', in *The World of Islam: Studies in Honour of Philip K. Hitti*, edited by J. Kritzeck and R.B. Winder (London: 1960), 283-335 (327).

Judge by the name of Baqir Al-Asfour. Al-Asfour was at the first meeting merely to explain his decision to withdraw. The cleric claimed that the code had been presented to highly learned Shi'ite religious figures in Iraq who decreed that the code contradicted Islamic law. Subsequently information reached the Residency that some Bahrainis were calling for the intervention of a prominent Egyptian legal expert, Abdul-Razeq Al-Sanhouri, who had previously assisted the Libyans and Iraqis in drawing up their own Penal Codes.³⁷⁰

With the Shi'ite religious festival of *Muharram* fast approaching on 28 and 29 August, celebrating the martyrdom of Hussein, the Political Agency feared that the occasion might end in unwanted disturbances. News had already reached the Agency which suggested that the HEC was attempting to organise an anti-British demonstration on 3 September. The Political Agent feared that this demonstration might turn violent and would target British property and persons. The Agent noted that, for the first time, Egypt was mentioned by name in HEC notices. Gault also observed a rise in the Party's tone when railing against British interests. An unnamed member of the Residency, according to Gault's account to the FO, met with Al-Bakir. The Bahraini nationalist informed him that he had failed to persuade his fellow party members to avoid attacking Britain through their published notices. Gault's informant further claimed that Al-Bakir had threatened to resign as a result of his disapproval of this policy adopted by the HEC. Gault added that Bahraini Shi'ite agitation was rising *ad infinitum* against the Administration due to their disapproval of marriage regulations introduced in the Penal Code. Others (both

³⁷⁰ TNA, FO 371/114587, Burrows to FO, 2 September 1955.

Sunni and Shi'ite) were united in their disapproval of the Administration's policies as they viewed them to be highly influenced by Britain.³⁷¹

The Political Agent suggested to the Resident that he should meet with the Ruler in order to recommend British naval reinforcements be landed from Her Majesty's Ship (HMS) Flamingo. Gault reiterated that Britain would not permit the 'disruption of Government in a British-protected State'.³⁷²

Regarding Al-Bakir's threat to resign, Burrows forwarded further information on the matter to the FO. According to the Resident, Al-Bakir visited the Residency in Juffair on 24 August. The nationalist leader met with an unidentified Residency staff member, he pointed to his failed efforts in deterring his fellow members of the HEC from attacking Britain in their last published circular. He blamed two of the Party members for adopting that line and he named them as Al-Mardi and Sayyar. In Al-Bakir's view the two had 'just returned from Egypt and were full of "new ideas" about the national movement'. Al-Bakir, moreover, revealed that his resignation was withheld for two weeks by the HEC. He also informed the British that he had lost control over the Movement and its pursuit of peaceful means to bring about reform.³⁷³ In Burrows' opinion the Party's radicalisation came following the return of Al-Shamlan, one of the frontline members of the HEC, to Bahrain from Cairo in the summer.³⁷⁴

³⁷¹ TNA, FO 371/114587, Gault to FO, 25 August 1955.

³⁷² TNA, FO 1016/387, Gault to FO, 27 August 1955.

³⁷³ TNA, FO 371/114587, Burrows to FO, 2 September 1955.

³⁷⁴ TNA, FO 371/120561, Burrows to FO, 24 December 1955; and TNA, FO 371/114587, Burrows to FO, 25 October 1955.

Al-Bakir's visit to the Residency presented a new perspective on his attitude concerning his Movement and its members. The incident was not recorded by Al-Bakir in his memoir. It is possible that the HEC as a whole were not aware of Al-Bakir's meetings with the British. If it had been made public at the time it would have either split the HEC or would have led to Al-Bakir's removal from office. The possible motive behind Al-Bakir's recent approach was his knowledge that major anti-British disorders might occur and by so doing he might clear his name and avoid arrest.

Burrows met with the Ruler on 27 August and proposed Britain's direct intervention if problems were to arise in Bahrain during the anticipated demonstrations. The Ruler gave Burrows his approval to take all necessary measures to protect the islands. Burrows did not doubt as he addressed the FO that,

Egypt will want to make the most of this opportunity to pose, using the High Executive Committee as a tool, as the champion of the sheikhdoms of the Persian Gulf against the British imperialists, an area in which she has not hitherto been able to exercise much influence.³⁷⁵

Al-Watan's increased tone in attacking British policy corresponded to the rise of tensions in August. Al-Mardi made it clear in the headline to his article that 'The English are our real enemies'. The title continued, "*Al-Watan*" unveils English Colonialism in Bahrain', which was just as well because the text was completely deleted by the censor.³⁷⁶ Egypt's *Tahrir* (Independence) publication in August also aimed to set the stage for 'The Volcano which will erupt next month' in Bahrain as it

³⁷⁵ TNA, FO 371/114587, Burrows to FO, 2 September 1955.

³⁷⁶ M. Al-Mardi, '*Al-Injaliz hum Adauna Al-Haquioun, "Al-Watan" Takshuf Al-Sitar an Al-Istimar Al-Injalizi fi Al-Bahrain*' [The English are our real enemies, '*Al-Watan*' unveils English Colonialism in Bahrain], *Al-Watan*, 26 August 1955, 1.

reported events on the islands. The article looked forward to the coming of a revolution driven by the anger generated by Bahrain's new Penal Code. *Tahrir* further criticised the Administration because it had 'behaved badly' during its reception of Nasser in May, but gave no further details.³⁷⁷ Gault made ready all necessary defense arrangements following the Administration's consent in case violence occurred during the Shi'ite festival or in the anti-British demonstration. HMS Flamingo anchored offshore Bahrain and HMS Loch Lomond sailed from Basra in southern Iraq to Bahrain.³⁷⁸ However the much-anticipated Shi'ite festival passed without any major disturbances.³⁷⁹

In order to lessen further tensions and with anti-British demonstrations rumoured for 3 September, the Administration announced on 30 August the suspension of the Penal Code until further notice. This, according to Gault, helped to ease tensions and no disturbances were reported. However intelligence reports that reached the Agency testified to the possibility of the HEC issuing a new circular calling upon the Ruler once again to meet their demands. Gault also predicted the possibility of demonstrations erupting following Belgrave's return in late September.³⁸⁰

After matters settled in Bahrain, Burrows analysed the situation and wrote: 'In effect we are now paying for the thirty odd years of Sir Charles Belgrave's benevolent despotism in Bahrain'. He continued:

³⁷⁷ TNA, FO 371/114587, British Embassy in Cairo to Residency, 27 August 1955.

³⁷⁸ TNA, FO 371/114587, Gault to FO, 27 August 1955.

³⁷⁹ TNA, FO 1016/387, Gault to FO, 29 August 1955.

³⁸⁰ TNA, FO 1016/387, Gault to FO, 1 September 1955.

Sir Charles's system of one man administration in which he has concentrated everything of importance into his own hands, even to the extent of signing cheques for 10 rupees, is daily showing its inadequacy to contend with the increasing number and widening scope of the problems which now affect Bahrain.³⁸¹

To the Political Agent the situation in Bahrain seemed complex and difficult to manage and it had become an 'intractable problem'.³⁸²

Division in Bahrain's society was apparent as not all locals were in favour of all the HEC's demands. A petition dated 5 September was despatched to the Ruler signed by prominent Bahraini Shi'ite families.³⁸³ Another petition, also sent to the Ruler, represented the views of various leading Sunnis in Bahrain emphasising their opposition of the HEC. This petition claimed (in part) that the HEC's constant threats in its circulars had caused 'a state of panic and fear'.³⁸⁴

In his memoir Al-Bakir highlighted the Party's loss of popularity among its supporters noting that some had abandoned the HEC by the end of 1955 and in early 1956. In his view the biggest number of dissidents was to be found among the Shi'ite community. The HEC's Secretary did not offer his views as to why those supporters decided to leave except to say that they had complained about the actions of some of the Party's members.³⁸⁵ The exodus could have been related to the deserters' disappointment in the Movement as a result of their initial understanding that the HEC would defend Shi'ite 'Hussieni rituals',³⁸⁶ and not just as

³⁸¹ TNA, FO 371/114587, Burrows to FO, 5 September 1955.

³⁸² TNA, FO 371/114587, Gault to FO, 13 September 1955.

³⁸³ TNA, FO 1016/387, Petition to the Ruler of Bahrain, 5 September 1955.

³⁸⁴ TNA, FO 1016/387, Petition to the Ruler of Bahrain, 7 September 1955.

³⁸⁵ Al-Bakir, *From Bahrain to Exile*, 106.

³⁸⁶ *Husseini Rituals*: is another name used to describe the rituals that accompany Shi'ite festivals especially those practiced during *Muharram*.

a political movement in opposition to the Government.³⁸⁷ The HEC's gatherings at Shi'ite mosques and *Ma'tems* during religious festivals could have given the false impression that the Movement was all for that cause. To Mapp, Al-Bakir's friend before the formation of the HEC, one of the visions shared by the Sunni Bahraini nationalist was to abandon the rituals associated with the month of *Muharram*.³⁸⁸

Al-Bakir's secret communications with the Political Agent in Bahrain and his approaches to the Residency were conducted using a mysterious contact developed through the Residency. The contact point with the Residency (as revealed in papers found at TNA) was that of a British diplomat First Secretary, Ivor Thomas Mark Lucas. In a minute written by Lucas on 8 September, he stated through an unidentified member of the HEC, the Party's desire to form a 'Shadow Government' with which to confront the local Administration. This suggests that Lucas was the contact point.³⁸⁹ Lucas was interviewed on 25 January 2005 by Malcolm McBain, a former British diplomat as part of the Churchill College Cambridge's *The British Diplomatic Oral History Programme*. He confirmed in the interview that he was the contact point between the Residency and the opposition. Lucas did not specify whether there were other British officials in contact with the opposition or that this role was solely his at the time. Nor did he specify who in the opposition they were in contact with, nor the time period over which these contacts were made.

³⁸⁷ The theory relating to Shi'ites' exiting the HEC as they had hoped the Movement would stand for their rituals was proposed by Bahraini historian Naguib Abdul-Mohsin Al-Makhraq in an interview by Haider Mohammed in Bahrain's *Al-Wasat* newspaper. See H. Mohammed, 'Ba'da Khamseen A'man... *Al-Watan Yabqa Lljamie*' [After Fifty Years... The Nation Remains for All], *Abwab Al-Wasat*, 13 October 2004, 5.

³⁸⁸ Mapp, *Leave Well Alone*, 221.

³⁸⁹ TNA, FO 1016/387, Minutes with a HEC Member Drafted by I.T.M. Lucas, 8 September 1955.

Lucas claimed that Burrows was the one who requested him to reach out to the HEC to keep 'certainly not an open, but not a particularly clandestine relationship with them'. The First Secretary recalled that the contacts went smoothly between the two until the Ruler discovered them. Upon the Ruler's discovery, Burrows was summoned and told by the Ruler, according to Lucas, 'I hear that the young men in your Residency are hob-nobbing with my opposition. I won't have it! If you want to know what's going on in my island, you come and ask me!' From that point onwards the 'beautiful friendship' as described by Lucas between him and the nationalists ended. The British diplomat, however, did not specify the date from which contact was broken.³⁹⁰

Belgrave's diary entry of 18 October, following his recent return from leave, might indicate the time period of the Ruler's discovery of Lucas' involvement. Belgrave revealed on that date that the Ruler complained first to Gault regarding Lucas' activities and saw him to be 'equally responsible for the trouble here as A.R. Bakr and the rest' as Belgrave noted. Later Belgrave confirmed the meeting between the Ruler and Burrows as the former had suddenly asked to meet the Resident on 22 October. The Ruler complained to him regarding the actions of Lucas, which 'had caused people to suppose the British were supporting the other[s] against the Shaikhs'. The Adviser did not mention Burrows' response or any action taken following the meeting.³⁹¹

³⁹⁰ Quoted in Ivor Thomas Mark Lucas, interviewed by Malcolm McBain, *The British Diplomatic Oral History Programme*, 25 January 2005, 7.

<<https://www.chu.cam.ac.uk/media/uploads/files/Lucas.pdf>> [accessed 28 November 2015].

³⁹¹ *Sir Charles Dalrymple Belgrave's Personal Diaries*, 18 and 22 October 1955.

Bahrain had escaped serious conflict and *sub rosa* meetings were then held between the HEC and the Ruler to see whether a compromise could be reached. Although at first neither the Political Agency nor the Residency were informed of the meetings by the Administration, Al-Bakir made the British aware of them as minutes by an unnamed British official from the Residency reveal.³⁹² In the meetings two draft agreements drawn up by the HEC were presented to the Ruler. Further an unsigned note attached to the letters offered information as to the proceedings of the meetings. The first meeting between the two sides was conducted on 10 September. Al-Shamlan and Kamal-el-Deen represented the HEC in the meeting, in which demands by the Party were presented to the Ruler. Sheikh Salman displayed his willingness to accept all of the demands by the HEC, except those regarding the formation of a Legislative Council and he also requested the omission of the address to the HEC. Another draft of the demands dated 24 September was presented by the HEC and was also rejected by the Ruler mainly due to written assurances the Sheikh had sought from the HEC.

According to a note attached to the drafts the source that had provided the Agency with copies of the letters was Al-Bakir and the message being conveyed in the note was that the Ruler was explaining to the HEC that the British who were the ones obstructing reform in Bahrain. The last claim cannot be verified, especially since the Ruler already had knowledge of the Political Agency and the Residency's open door policy with the HEC and would have known that such a statement might reach British officials' ears. The note also included a single comment by two British

³⁹² TNA, FO 1016/387, Residency Minutes with Al-Bakir, 29 September 1955.

Residency officers and First Secretaries (Lucas and FB Richards) who both exclaimed 'Very interesting indeed'. Details of the first letter from the HEC dated 10 September to the Ruler, from the copies provided by Al-Bakir, criticised the Sheikh for not heeding to the Party's demands and urged the establishment of a Legislative Council. Moreover, the *pro forma* voiced its concern about the work of the Commission of Enquiry, the Penal Code, and offered general criticisms of various government departments. The second letter dated on 24 September alluded to a discussion that took place between the HEC and the Ruler. This centered on the Ruler's approval of holding elections for the committees/councils of health, education, and municipal affairs. The letter further urged for reform in the public security and judicial sector. Most importantly the *pro forma* declared its agreement with the Ruler to postpone any further talks regarding the establishment of a Legislative Council.³⁹³

Britain continued with its intention to expand the Baghdad Pact and it was announced that Pakistan intended to join the alliance. Since Pakistan was also a member of SEATO, the Baghdad Pact would successfully link NATO with Turkey being a member to SEATO through Iraq.³⁹⁴ Pakistan's official adherence to the Pact was followed by Iran's ascension to the alliance. An Iraqi diplomat, Awni Khalidy, was chosen as the General Secretary of the Pact.³⁹⁵

³⁹³ TNA, FO 1016/387, Enclosing two letters (English and Arabic) from the Committee to the Ruler of Bahrain, 10 and 24 September 1955.

³⁹⁴ 'Pakistan to Join Pact', *New York Times*, 1 July 1955, 3; and Devereux, *Formulation of British Defence Policy*, 169.

³⁹⁵ 'Iran will adhere to Mid-East Pact: To Join Turkey, Iraq, Britain and Pakistan in Defense Accord Soviet Opposes', *New York Times*, 12 October 1955, 1; and 'Iraqi is made Secretary of Baghdad Pact Group', *New York Times*, 15 December 1955, 5.

On 27 September Nasser publically announced his Soviet arms deal by saying that the Czechs had actually delivered military supplies and equipment.³⁹⁶ The deal involved the Egyptians supply to the Russians with staggered payments of cotton and rice in return.³⁹⁷ The agreement was estimated to be worth between ninety and two hundred million US dollars, according to Eisenhower. The US President also asserted that following the conclusion of the arms arrangement, the Soviets offered the Israelis their own arms deal. The Israelis had rejected the Soviet offer, he said.³⁹⁸

Britain's initial reaction was to call this 'Egyptian blackmail'. In a minute by Sir Robert Hadow and Sir Harold Caccia the two noted that 'Whatever policy we adopt must avoid giving the other Arab States the impression that blackmail and neutralism pay'.³⁹⁹

Ghaleb, in an interview with *Al-Jazeera* in 2008, recalled a discussion with Ali Sabry, Nasser's aide, who said that he believed that the arms supplied by the Soviets would enable Egypt to defeat Israel in military confrontation. Ghaleb, in return expressed to Sabry, his belief that the objective of the arms supplied was not to initiate a conflict with the Israelis as such an escapade would result in strong and dire consequences for Egypt from the West, a matter the Soviets well understood. In

³⁹⁶ As the process of Soviet arms to Egypt reached its conclusion Copeland reported that K Roosevelt met with Nasser. The Egyptian Prime Minister informed him of the Soviet offer and his acceptance. To Nasser's surprise K Roosevelt's reaction was positive as he saw it as a way to increase the Egyptian leader's popularity and by doing so a peace settlement with Israel could be reached through Nasser. Both K Roosevelt and Copeland assisted Nasser in drafting the speech in which he would announce in it his arms deal. K Roosevelt went further as he suggested to Nasser to claim that the arms were brought from Czechoslovakia. See Copeland, *The Game of Nations*, 156-60.

³⁹⁷ Nutting, *Nasser*, 101.

³⁹⁸ D.D. Eisenhower, *The White House Years 1956-61: Waging Peace* (London: 1966), 25.

³⁹⁹ BDEEP, Series B, Part III, vol. 4, 'Egypt and the Defence of the Middle East' 1953-1956. Doc. 600: FO 371/113675, 'Egypt and Russian arms': minutes by Sir Robert Hadow and Sir Harold Caccia on the importance of designing a common response with the Americans, 23 September 1955.

fact the Soviet arms deal was made to protect the Egyptian revolution from within.⁴⁰⁰ Ghaleb's claims corresponded with Trevelyan's views' as portrayed by Henry Byroade the US Ambassador to Egypt; Trevelyan believed that it was not in the interest of the Soviets for an Egyptian-Israeli war to break out. The Soviets feared such a war would cause the re-installation of a Western military presence in the Middle East and that takeover of the Suez Canal Base would follow. The conflict would then disrupt Soviet penetration into the region and Africa.⁴⁰¹ Trevelyan, moreover, saw that the arms deal with the Soviet bloc had 'added to Nasser's prestige' and increased his popularity.⁴⁰²

Likewise in confirmation with Ghaleb's statement according to Macmillan the Egyptian regime was 'maintained by the Egyptian army and depended on its success in providing the army with weapons'. Eden feared that the news might disturb British 'interests in the Middle East as a whole'. He echoed Britain's reliance on Middle Eastern oil to maintain the Empire. The Prime Minister believed that the policy to be adopted was to assist Britain's friends in the region and to isolate Nasser.⁴⁰³ He also sought to adopt a policy of enlarging the Baghdad Pact, and Nasser's attitude towards it was less important. Eden, furthermore, understood Nasser's need for arms as it strengthened his position internally, so to the Prime

⁴⁰⁰ 'Interview with Murad Ghaleb', part 2.

⁴⁰¹ FRUS, vol. XV, 'Arab-Israeli Dispute January 1-July 26, 1956'. Doc. 427: Telegram from the Embassy in Egypt to the Department of State, 6 July 1956.

⁴⁰² BDEEP, Series B, Part III, vol. 4, 'Egypt and the Defence of the Middle East' 1953-1956. Doc. 606: PREM 11/859, [Colonel Nasser's position]: inward telegram no 1437 from Sir H Trevelyan to FO on the strength of the Egyptian regime, 13 October 1955.

⁴⁰³ BDEEP, Series B, Part III, vol. 4, 'Egypt and the Defence of the Middle East' 1953-1956. Doc. 603: CAB 128/29, CM 34 (55)8, 'Middle East': Cabinet conclusions on responding to the supply of Soviet arms to Egypt, 4 October 1955.

Minister the 'decision to accept the Soviet offer was understandable if regrettable'.⁴⁰⁴

The sale of Soviet arms to Egypt opened the possibility of financial aid. In the summer of 1955 the Egyptian regime announced a plan to build an ambitious project known as the Aswan High Dam.⁴⁰⁵ Trevelyan saw the project to 'be the focal point of Egyptian development over the next twenty years'. It aimed to develop and irrigate more land to keep pace with Egypt's growing population.⁴⁰⁶ The project was also designed to 'develop hydro-electricity'.⁴⁰⁷ It was hoped that the World Bank would finance most of the project with the balance coming from the US and Britain.⁴⁰⁸ Dulles received information from Egypt that the Soviets might follow-up their arms deal by offering economic aid that included finance for the dam.⁴⁰⁹ Commenting on that prospect Shuckburgh saw Nasser to be totally 'unreliable' and accused him of 'consciously handing over his country to Communism'.⁴¹⁰ The whole High Dam *demarche* would add to the conflict between Nasser and Britain later in 1956 in another step towards the eventual Suez *debacle*.

In Bahrain new confidential minutes on 3 October forwarded to the Resident by an unnamed official described Al-Bakir's account of the latest developments between the HEC and the Administration. Al-Bakir informed the official that a

⁴⁰⁴ BDEEP, Series B, Part III, vol. 4, 'Egypt and the Defence of the Middle East' 1953-1956. Doc. 608: CAB 128/29, CM 36 (55)1, 'Middle East': Cabinet conclusions on responding to Soviet policy in the Middle East, 20 October 1955.

⁴⁰⁵ For more information on the High Aswan Dam project see T. Little, *High Dam at Aswan* (Fakenham: 1965).

⁴⁰⁶ Trevelyan, *The Middle East in Revolution*, 49.

⁴⁰⁷ Eden, *Full Circle*, 375.

⁴⁰⁸ Nutting, *Nasser*, 131.

⁴⁰⁹ BDEEP, Series B, Part III, vol. 4, 'Egypt and the Defence of the Middle East' 1953-1956. Doc. 602: FO 371/113676, [Problems raised by the Egyptian purchase of Soviet arms]: FO record of a conversation in the State Department between British and US representatives, 3 October 1955.

⁴¹⁰ *Descent to Suez*, 28 November 1955, 305.

gathering would be held on Friday 7 October, a Shi'ite religious holiday. Al-Bakir specified that the HEC intended to announce that if the Government did not allow for the establishment of health, education, and municipal councils to be either elected in full or half-elected, then it would publicly declare the details of its meetings with the Ruler.⁴¹¹ Following the meeting between Al-Bakir and the anonymous official on behalf of the British, and on 4 October an announcement by the HEC was made inviting the general public to an assembly on 7 October at the Mu'min Mosque.⁴¹²

In an effort to discover public opinion of the conflict in Bahrain, British officials, such as Malcolm Gale met casually with local Sunni merchants to seek their views on current affairs. Yusuf K Al-Moayyed thought that both the Ruler and the British were well respected in Bahrain, 'but that Belgrave was universally hated'. Ahmed Kanoo told Gale: 'We shall never have peace in Bahrain until the Adviser goes'.⁴¹³

A new attitude adopted by the Ruler rekindled the hope of a political breakthrough locally. Upon the request of the Ruler, and accompanied by his Adviser, a meeting with the Political Agent was held on 6 October. Gault expressed his surprise to the FO at the Ruler's recognition to the formation of committees dedicated to health, education, and municipal affairs, half its members appointed

⁴¹¹ TNA, FO 1016/388, Confidential Minutes with Al-Bakir, 3 October 1955.

⁴¹² TNA, FO 1016/388, The Higher Executive Committee Announcement, 4 October 1955.

⁴¹³ TNA, FO 1016/388, Minutes of Meetings with Merchants drafted by Malcolm Gale, 5 October 1955.

and the other elected. The Ruler sought the Agent's approval of these measures and, without hesitation, the Agent agreed.⁴¹⁴

The new policy by the Ruler eased political tensions once again. The HEC's gathering took place as scheduled on 7 October and was attended by approximately four thousand people. The HEC's Secretary indicated at the meeting that discussions had been conducted with the Ruler but resulted in his agreeing to only a few of the demands presented to him.⁴¹⁵

Sheikh Salman published a proclamation on 15 October which confirmed the establishment of half-appointed, half-elected councils for health, education, and municipal affairs. As for the Penal Code, the Ruler declared that the Administration had 'asked for an expert in Law to study it and to report to us on what it is contravening the *Sharia*' (Islamic Law).⁴¹⁶ Burrows considered this to be 'a big step forward in the development of the elective principle in Bahrain, and indeed in Persian Gulf affairs'. Although he seemed dubious about the outcome.⁴¹⁷

Regrettably the political breakthrough was short-lived. The HEC published a circular on 20 October that highlighted its disappointment with the recent reforms undertaken. The Party also demanded 'reforms' in the departments of public security and the Administration's judiciary system, two points it believed to have been overlooked by the Ruler. The circular warned that 'The authorities should bear the consequences of what is happening as a result of these excesses and this

⁴¹⁴ TNA, FO 371/114587, Gault to FO, 6 October 1955.

⁴¹⁵ TNA, FO 1016/442, Report on the H.E.C. Meeting Held Yesterday 7th October in Masjid Moamin in Memory of Al Hussain bin Ali.

⁴¹⁶ TNA, FO 1016/388, Proclamation by the Ruler of Bahrain, 15 October 1955.

⁴¹⁷ TNA, FO 371/120540, Bernard Burrows, The Resident's Annual Report for the Year 1955.

open challenge to the desires and hopes of the people'. The Party reiterated its previous demand that the only way to move forward was by the formation of a Legislative Council. The HEC also announced its plan to boycott the proposed councils.⁴¹⁸

Burrows believed that a misunderstanding had occurred between the two sides. The Ruler thought that the reforms in the police and in his judiciary system had already been met by his proclamation in July 1954 and that there was no need to announce reform in these departments once again.⁴¹⁹ As a result of these developments the HEC declared a general meeting on 28 October and rumours of strikes resurfaced. Burrows conveyed to the FO that information had reached him that the HEC's Assembly would then head towards either the Political Agency's headquarters in Manama or the Residency in Juffair. The HEC aimed with this gesture to demand the removal of Belgrave from office, as they believed that he had influenced the Ruler into omitting the points they believed were agreed upon regarding police reform. The Resident thought that the HEC had mistakenly blamed Belgrave for the decision. Burrows was also critical of the HEC's increased anti-Western tone.

Furthermore the Residency was made aware of the HEC's efforts to collect money to help finance Egyptian arms purchases from the Soviets. The Resident alluded to the Ruler's guess that the HEC's sudden 'switch in policy was dictate direct from Egypt', a matter Burrows did not rule out. The theory would be for the Egyptians to push the Bahraini Administration into further concessions in the form

⁴¹⁸ TNA, FO 1016/442, The Higher Executive Committee Circular, No. 31, 20 October 1955.

⁴¹⁹ 'Bernard Burrows, Residency's Report for the Month of November 1955', 1-7 (2).

of parliamentary government turning the Administration later into a seemingly anti-British one.⁴²⁰ Gault also believed that the HEC aimed through this new dispute to gain 'maximum profit from the Ruler's refusal by accusing him of breaking his promises and by threatening retaliation by way of strikes and demonstrations'.⁴²¹

With matters still in deadlock, the HEC unexpectedly forwarded to the Adviser its intention to continue negotiations with the Ruler and also retreated from its earlier decision that insisted on the two points they believed were omitted by the Ruler. Sheikh Salman agreed to continue discussions and went a step further when he decided to have all three councils completely independent of Government. He further promised to appoint 'trained legal men' to advise local judges and direct them on how to implement the new Penal Code, once it was authorised. The Residency welcomed the HEC's decision to end the deadlock and withdraw its insistence on the two points of dispute.⁴²² A possible explanation of the HEC's sudden change of heart was that the Party realised that their stubbornness could lead to a loss of all political gains in the long run.

Although tensions had reduced following the recent agreement between the two sides, the Residency feared that the independence of the councils would allow for the eventual replacement of British experts and professionals by Egyptians.⁴²³ The Residency's fear was not altogether unfounded; on 21 October *Al-Watan* published an article about an Egyptian medical doctor who was banned from practicing in Bahrain. The newspaper exclaimed, 'What will the position of the

⁴²⁰ TNA, FO 371/114587, Burrows to FO, 25 October 1955.

⁴²¹ TNA, FO 371/114587, Gault to Burrows, 20 November 1955.

⁴²² 'Bernard Burrows, Residency's Report for the Month of November 1955', 1-7 (2).

⁴²³ TNA, FO 371/114587, Burrows to FO, 28 October 1955.

Government and people of Egypt be when they know that we are standing idle and powerless towards [supporting] one of its sons'.⁴²⁴ The reason provided for the banning of the Egyptian's practice was not stated. Nevertheless, it pointed to the possibility of Egyptian experts gradually taking over jobs held mostly by British or Western specialists.⁴²⁵

A proclamation by the Ruler issued on 28 October included a set of reforms to be undertaken by the Administration with the HEC's consent. The first was the hiring of an expert to oversee the reconstruction of the civil and criminal courts. A committee would be created to assist the expert in his work. The second proclamation was the hiring of a judge at each court to assist the local judges. Third was the organisation of security in harmony with acknowledged worldwide regulations. Fourth the time frame given for health and education councils to operate was two years. Finally, the reform of Bahrain's prisons was to be undertaken.⁴²⁶

Gault approved of the Ruler's announcement and actions as they 'took the wind out of the sails of the nationalist representatives'.⁴²⁷ In regards to the merchant community's view of recent developments in Bahrain the 'general attitude

⁴²⁴ 'Tabib Yumna'a min Mumarast Al-Tib fi Al-Bahrain' [A Medical Doctor is banned from practicing medicine in Bahrain], *Al-Watan*, 21 October 1955, 2.

⁴²⁵ In Belgrave's diary and around that time period he mentioned in a repulsive manner the presence of 'an Egyptian doctor'. However the Adviser believed the doctor's goals was to 'practice and to study sex life' comparing his work to Kinsey Reports' investigating male and female sexual behaviour. See *Sir Charles Dalrymple Belgrave's Personal Diaries*, 11 October 1955.

⁴²⁶ TNA, FO 1016/388, Proclamation by the Ruler of Bahrain, 28 October 1955.

⁴²⁷ TNA, FO 371/114587, Gault to Burrows, 20 November 1955.

is that the reformists have now been given enough rope and it is to be hoped that they will hang themselves', according to Gault.⁴²⁸

An account by the Political Agency to the Residency on the latest developments in Bahrain provided some detail (not made public) of the negotiations that had taken place between the Administration and the HEC. Although nationalist papers such as *Al-Watan* had adopted a call for women's rights as it had published articles in this field like 'On the Issue of Women's Freedom in Bahrain' by Shala Khalfan and 'We must Equip Women for Freedom' by Abdul-Rahman Al-Shamlan,⁴²⁹ remarkably the HEC objected to the Administration's wish to allow women the right to vote for the three councils. Oddly the Party only insisted on men voting and for the minimum age of voting to be set at eighteen. The Bahraini Government on the other hand thought that the minimum age put forward by the HEC was too low. Furthermore, Gault revealed that Al-Bakir believed in private that 'Bahrain would not be ready for a Legislative Council for another five or seven years', contradicting the main objective set by his Movement.⁴³⁰

In November the HEC publically announced its intention of organising a *cris de coeur* to assist Nasser financially for the purchase of Soviet weapons. *Al-Watan* published a series of articles in relation to the matter that provided details of the event and its sponsors. A committee to raise and deliver the funds was established and consisted of Yusuf bin Isa BuHiji, Ebrahim Al-Maskati, Al-Alaiwat, Al-Shamlan,

⁴²⁸ TNA, FO 371/114587, Gault to FO, 28 November 1955.

⁴²⁹ S. Khalfan, 'Hawla Tahrir Al-Mar'a fi Al-Bahrain' [On the Issue of Women's Freedom in Bahrain] *Al-Watan*, 26 August 1955, 5; and 'Yajib and Nu'ahil Al-Mar'a ila Al-Huriyah' [We must Equip Women for Freedom], *Al-Watan*, 12 August 1955, 12.

⁴³⁰ TNA, FO 371/114587, Gault to Burrows, 20 November 1955.

and Ebrahim Kamal; all were founding members of the HEC.⁴³¹ The first fundraiser took place on Friday 11 November during a friendly football match between teams that represented the city of Manama and others of Muharraq. The three sons of the Ruler, Sheikh Isa, Sheikh Khalifa, and Sheikh Mohammed contributed to the fund with 15,000 Rupees from Sheikh Isa and 10,000 Rupees from Sheikh Khalifa and Sheikh Mohammed.⁴³² Sheikh Isa also bought a portrait of Nasser in an auction for 3,100 Rupees. The total amount collected was estimated by the Residency to be around 200,000 Rupees.⁴³³

Al-Watan headlined the news of the fundraiser on its front page saying 'Bahrain is fighting a back battle for the sake of Egypt's Army'. The opening sentences of the feature that covered the fundraiser saw the event as a call in support of the Palestinian cause. It also claimed that during the event an unnamed Egyptian from Egypt's educational mission gave a speech thanking Bahrainis for organising the event. The newspaper indicated that the first fundraiser raised 107,300 Rupees from around thirty-eight donors.⁴³⁴ A second fundraiser consisted of eighty-nine donations totaling to 77,099.15 Rupees.⁴³⁵ The total amount of donations of the first and second fundraiser was 184,399.15 Rupees, making the final figure close to the approximate figure of the total funds the Residency believed

⁴³¹ 'Bayan min Lajnat Musa'adat Taslih Al-Jayish Al-Masri' [A Statement from the Committee Assisting in Arming Egypt's Military], *Al-Watan*, 18 November 1955, 7.

⁴³² 'Al-Bahrain Takhouth Ma'rakah Khalfiyah min Ajil Al-Jayish Al-Misri' [Bahrain is fighting a battle behind the scenes for Egypt's Army], *Al-Watan*, 18 November 1955, 1 and 12.

⁴³³ 'Bernard Burrows, Residency's Report for the Month of December 1955', in *Political Diaries of the Persian Gulf*, vol. 20 1955-1958, ed. R.L. Jarman (London: 1990), 1-8 (3).

⁴³⁴ 'Al-Bahrain Takhouth Ma'rakah Khalfiyah min Ajil Al-Jayish Al-Misri' [Bahrain is fighting a battle behind the scenes for Egypt's Army], *Al-Watan*, 18 November 1955, 1 and 7.

⁴³⁵ 'Bayan Tasleeh Al-Jayish Al-Masri' [A Statement on Arming the Egyptian Military], *Al-Watan*, 22 December 1955, 6.

had been collected. The idea of collecting funds for Egypt, as Burrows noted, was first practiced in the Gulf by Kuwait and only later adopted by Bahrain. However the Bahraini involvement in fund-raising was grander. The concept later spread to other Gulf States, such as Qatar.⁴³⁶

A thank-you letter by Nasser was published to the people of Bahrain in *Al-Watan* as acknowledging their support in financing Egypt's quest for Soviet arms.

The letter, dated on 4 January 1956 said:

You had presented an amount of 44,366 Dollars as a contribution from you to arm the military, in order to complete the means of defence for the beloved homeland. Please accept my sincere gratitude to your honorable feelings and true nationalism.⁴³⁷

In the end it was Israel that benefited the most from Egypt's arms deal with the Soviets since most of the weapons purchased were cited in the Sinai Peninsula and were captured by the Israelis during their sweep of Sinai later in the Suez War. Other military vehicles also became easy practice targets, because Egyptian soldiers were 'riddled with disease and undernourished' and incapable of properly defending their positions. Thus Nasser's mortgage to the Soviets of three years' cotton harvest and external aid to purchase the arms benefitted the Israelis more than it did the Egyptians as French journalists during the war Merry Bromberger and Serge Bromberger testified in one of the earliest accounts of the Suez War.⁴³⁸

Following the fundraisers by nationalists in Bahrain the Political Agent considered the Movement now to be 'encouraged by Egyptian precept to regard

⁴³⁶ TNA, FO 371/120561, Burrows to FO, 24 December 1955.

⁴³⁷ G. Abdel-Nasser, '*Risalah min Al-Ra'ies Gamal Abdel-Nasser*' [A Letter from President Gamal Abdel-Nasser], *Al-Watan*, 13 January 1956, 1.

⁴³⁸ M. Bromberger and S. Bromberger, *Secrets of Suez*, trans. by J. Cameron (London: 1957), 97-99 and 136.

themselves, as revolutionaries'. To Gault the process of internal reform 'has gone as far as it should for the time being'. The Agent viewed that it was now time for the politicians to prove themselves in the space so far allotted to them before further political concessions were awarded.⁴³⁹ The FO in response to Gault's views set their policy regarding developments in Bahrain via a letter signed by Sir Derek Riches, the newly appointed Head of the Eastern Department at the FO,⁴⁴⁰ on behalf of the Foreign Secretary. The FO believed that a wait-and-see approach should be taken in light of developments. Further, the FO agreed with Gault's proposal to see how the new channels of expression were utilised by the reformers before other changes took place.⁴⁴¹

The HEC introduced the new post of President of the HEC in December. The Party awarded the post to Kamal-el-Deen, a Shi'ite cleric and frontline member.⁴⁴² It is not clear whether the position of President was superior or inferior to that of Al-Bakir's post as Secretary. It was more likely a move by the HEC to regain some of its Shi'ite members who had abandoned the Party earlier than a radical change in the Party's structure.

Britain continued to try expanding the Baghdad Pact and it attempted to bring into the alliance the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. King Hussein bin Talal of

⁴³⁹ TNA, FO 371/114587, Gault to FO, 28 November 1955.

⁴⁴⁰ Sir Derek Riches was born in 1912. He served Britain as a diplomat chiefly in the Middle Eastern region. He earned his education from University College London and University College School. He was appointed in Lebanon in 1934 and had since served in a number of countries that included Egypt, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, and Afghanistan. He was made in 1955 the FO's Head of the Eastern Department. He remained in that position for four years and was later assigned as an Ambassador to Libya, Congo, and Lebanon. Riches passed away on 1 October 1997. See I. Lucas, 'Obituary: Sir Derek Riches', *Asian Affairs*, 29:1, (1998), 127.

⁴⁴¹ TNA, FO 371/114587, D.M.H. Riches at FO to Residency, 23 December 1955.

⁴⁴² 'Bernard Burrows, Residency's Report for the Month of December 1955', 1-8 (3).

Jordan hinted to the British his inclinations for his country to be part of the Baghdad Pact on 9 November. The mission to allow Jordan entry into the Pact was assigned to Britain's Chief of Staff, Field Marshal Sir Gerald Templer. Dulles had earlier warned that any 'move to expand the Baghdad Pact would probably deny us Nasser's cooperation', but his advice had fallen on deaf ears.⁴⁴³ The undertaking proved disastrous to Jordan and the region and accelerated the departure of John Bagot Glubb Pasha from the Arab Legion with its consequences for Bahrain as it hastened Belgrave's exit as Part Three and Four of this thesis examines.

Templer's mission to Jordan lasted from 6 to 14 December and was met with aggressive public scorn and resentment. A number of Ministers from the Jordanian Cabinet protested at Jordan's involvement in the Pact.⁴⁴⁴ It was hoped that through Jordan's inclusion that the then current British-Jordanian Treaty be substituted with the Pact.⁴⁴⁵ Egypt did its part in attacking Jordan's entry into the Pact, Glubb recalled the *Voice of the Arabs* claimed to Jordanians that joining the Pact was 'a trick to help Israel', as Israel would later join the alliance and thus be forced onto Jordan as an ally. Templer tried in vain to counter that argument by stressing that the Pact's charter did not allow other states' entry unless it was unanimously approved by all members.⁴⁴⁶

⁴⁴³ BDEEP, Series B, Part III, vol. 4, 'Egypt and the Defence of the Middle East' 1953-1956. Doc. 614: FO 371/115469, [Alpha and the Baghdad Pact]: letter from Mr Dulles to Mr Macmillan opposing moves to expand the Baghdad Pact. *Minutes* by C A E Shuckburgh and Sir I Kirkpatrick, 6 December 1955.

⁴⁴⁴ J. Lunt, *Glubb Pasha: A Biography* (London: 1984), 191.

⁴⁴⁵ 'Jordan Reported Set to Join Baghdad Pact', *New York Times*, 14 December 1955, 15.

⁴⁴⁶ Glubb, *A Soldier with the Arabs*, 395.

On 13 December four Jordanian Ministers of Palestinian origin resigned and chaos reigned on the streets of Jordan.⁴⁴⁷ King Hussein believed in his memoir that the protesters were financed by 'Egyptian money' as they 'stormed buildings from one end of Jordan to another'.⁴⁴⁸ Nasser had previously made it clear to Byroade, the US Ambassador to Egypt, who informed in return Trevelyan that he would not obstruct Britain's Northern Tier defence arrangements manifested in the Baghdad Pact if no other Arab State and/or the US joined.⁴⁴⁹ Nasser, following the Suez Crisis, recalled that Britain's Ambassador to Egypt had promised him not to have other Arab States join the Baghdad Pact. He expressed his surprise concerning Templer's mission to Jordan as a result and Egypt's 'reaction was very hard', the Egyptian leader declared.⁴⁵⁰

Heikal noted that the Templer mission set the stage for an intensive propaganda war in the Middle East by the Egyptians who attacked British interests and the Baghdad Pact itself.⁴⁵¹ During this crisis Bahrain received its share of attacks as Egyptian radio falsely claimed that Bahrain allowed Israeli goods entry into the islands, breaking boycott regulations imposed by the Arab League.⁴⁵² The Administration quickly issued a public notice by the Ruler on 11 December banning the import of Israeli goods and dealings from Bahrain as a counter step.⁴⁵³

⁴⁴⁷ P. Snow, *Hussein* (London: 1972), 77-78.

⁴⁴⁸ H. Talal, *Uneasy Lies the Head: the Autobiography of His Majesty King Hussein I of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan* (London: 1962), 92, hereafter *Uneasy Lies the Head*.

⁴⁴⁹ TNA, PREM 11/859, Trevelyan to FO, 3 November 1955.

⁴⁵⁰ P. Calvocoressi, 'Egyptian Outlook', in *Suez Ten Years After*, edited by A. Moncrieff (London: 1967), 31-58 (33-34).

⁴⁵¹ Heikal, *Nasser: The Cairo Documents*, 81.

⁴⁵² 'Bernard Burrows, Residency's Report for the Month of January 1956', in *Political Diaries of the Persian Gulf*, vol. 20 1955-1958, ed. R.L. Jarman (London: 1990), 1-8 (3).

⁴⁵³ TNA, FO 1016/442, Translation of Bahrain Ruler's Notice, No: 83/1375, 11 December 1955.

The Residency also noted in its account for the month of December a sharp rise in attacks on European workers in Bahrain. Some of those were British and suffered serious injuries. The report blamed the cause of the incidents on the 'lack of respect for law and order which has become noticeable in Bahrain'.⁴⁵⁴ However external factors must have had an impact on emotions in Bahrain leading people to act so forcefully. Belgrave's attitude towards these events from his diary was similar to that of the Residency. As a method to combat this growing trend the Adviser simply noted, 'we have the cars [police vehicles] to deal with [this] and court'.⁴⁵⁵

Nasser saw the Baghdad Pact as an anti-Soviet alliance and by obstructing its expansion he was supporting the Soviet Union, the power in opposition to the West in the Cold War. Bahraini nationalist leaning towards the East was recognised in a pro-Soviet short article published in *Al-Watan's* front page on 16 December which declared that 'Khrushchev, the Communist Party Secretary, said during a visit to Burma that the English were robbing their colonies up to their last piece of bread'.⁴⁵⁶ Eden was critical of Khrushchev's statements in Burma in his memoir as he viewed him to have used 'abusive rhetoric of the colonial system, ignoring their own extensive empire over subject peoples from Samarkand to Hungary'.⁴⁵⁷

With the collapse of the Templer mission, Bahrain was due for a one-day visit on 17 December by Al-Sadat. He arrived to Bahrain from Qatar as part of his tour of

⁴⁵⁴ 'Bernard Burrows, Residency's Report for the Month of December 1955', 1-8 (2).

⁴⁵⁵ *Sir Charles Dalrymple Belgrave's Personal Diaries*, 3 October 1955.

⁴⁵⁶ 'Al-Qafilah Taseer' [The Caravan Marches On], *Al-Watan*, 16 December 1955, 1.

⁴⁵⁷ Eden, *Full Circle*, 354.

the Gulf that included Kuwait as his next stop.⁴⁵⁸ The Adviser noted that during Al-Sadat's visit, the Egyptian Minister suffered an embarrassing moment when he was carried on the shoulders by Bahraini supporters and accidentally dropped into a puddle of mud. He then lunched with the Ruler in his palace in Riffa and departed. The Ruler informed the Adviser that Al-Sadat requested a brush and water to remove the mud stains. Unfortunately, no brushes were available, only a broom. The Adviser considered the visit to be a complete 'flop for the Committee' because of the embarrassing incident of dropping Al-Sadat.⁴⁵⁹ Burrows commented on the visit saying that Al-Sadat 'disappointed the "High Executive Committee" and the more enthusiastic pro-Egyptian elements'. But he did not elaborate further on the reasons for that disappointment.⁴⁶⁰

At the conclusion of the year Bahrain prepared itself for its epoch-making elections for the councils. Events in Jordan in 1956 led Bahrain into further disturbances that included an attack on the British Foreign Secretary's car procession. Both states would cast their shadows on the process of decision-making in Whitehall.

⁴⁵⁸ *Sir Charles Dalrymple Belgrave's Personal Diaries*, 17 October 1955; and 'Bernard Burrows, Residency's Report for the Month of January 1956', 1-8 (1).

⁴⁵⁹ *Sir Charles Dalrymple Belgrave's Personal Diaries*, 18 and 24 December 1955; and Belgrave, *Personal Column*, 217-18.

⁴⁶⁰ TNA, FO 371/120561, Burrows to FO, 24 December 1955.

Part III: The Nationalists' Strike

Chapter Six

Local Elections, the Glubb Affair, and Selwyn Lloyd's Corner

1 January to 10 March 1956

The first three months of 1956 were eventful in Bahrain as they included an election for the Education Council, the re-emergence of tensions between the Administration and the HEC, and the effect of regional developments that intruded into Bahrain's political scene. It culminated with the stoning of the recently-appointed British Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd's car convoy during his visit to Bahrain.

In 1956 Bahrainis were waiting for the elections of the three councils (health, education, and municipal affairs) that had been agreed on by the Administration and the HEC in the previous year. *Al-Watan's* issue of 13 January announced the Government's plan to conduct the Education Council's elections first; six seats of the total of twelve were up for election. A committee of Bahrainis was formed to work with the Public Relations Department to oversee the electoral process. A period of ten days was allocated for candidates who wished to run in order to register their names and information. As for the delay in the process of electing the councils, the newspaper believed that that was due to the process involved in preparing the list

of eligible voters (the electoral roll) by the Administration.⁴⁶¹ *The Times* of London covered in a short report preparations for the upcoming elections in Bahrain, seeing these elections as 'the logical outcome of political activity arising from demands for more popular representation in the Government'.⁴⁶²

A new biweekly publication named *Al-Bahrain* (Bahrain) appeared for the first time on 6 February. It was to be a pro-government newspaper.⁴⁶³ It only published a few issues and closed in the same year.⁴⁶⁴ There are no original or reproduced copies of the newspaper available for public viewing in Bahrain.

Lucas provided the Residency in Bahrain with a comprehensive account on the preparations and proceedings of the Education Council's elections. The elections, according to Lucas, were to take place on 10 February. Arrangements included the erection of tents by the Government at various polling stations since there were no buildings appropriate to the occasion. Fifty-two ballot boxes were distributed throughout the islands; each box was to be accompanied by four officials and a policeman. Voting was to start at 7.00 am and end at 7.00 pm. The voting process took place smoothly and no major incidents were recorded.

On the following day at 8.00 am the ballot boxes were opened and the votes were counted. The results were ready by 7.00 pm and scored a massive victory for the HEC's candidates as they won all six seats. The total number of people who were entitled to vote were 23,479 and the actual number of voters reached a very healthy

⁴⁶¹ 'Ayuha Al-Muwatin Al-Kareem... Anta ala Mawaid ma'a Sanadiq Al-Iqtira'a' [O Honourable Citizen... You are due for an Appointment with the Voting Boxes!], *Al-Watan*, 13 January 1956, 1 and 16.

⁴⁶² 'First Elections for Bahrein: A Compromise with Reformists', *The Times*, 16 January 1956, 7.

⁴⁶³ 'Bernard Burrows, Residency's Report for the Month of February 1956', in *Political Diaries of the Persian Gulf*, vol. 20 1955-1958, ed. R.L. Jarman (London: 1990), 1-8 (3).

⁴⁶⁴ Al-Maawda, *Bahrain's Press*, 102-03.

18,981, or some 81 per cent of the electoral roll. The winning candidates included Khalil Al-Moayyed (Sunni) 17,991 votes, Taqi Al-Baharna (Shi'ite) 17,862 votes, Ali Al-Tajir (Shi'ite) 17,852 votes, Qassim Fakhroo (Sunni) 17,846 votes, Mohammed Q Al-Shirawi (Sunni) 17,816 votes, and Ali Abd-Ali Al-Biladi (Shi'ite) 17,794 votes. Those who ran in opposition to the winning candidates were viewed as pro-Government and had called themselves the National Front. Their candidates were all Sunnis and included Hamad Al-Fadhel who received 1,410 votes, Salim Al-Absy 1,120 votes, and Ahmed Al-Binali 1,112 votes. Lucas believed that the National Front fielded three Sunni candidates in an attempt to divert the Sunni vote from the HEC.

One of Lucas' criticisms of the voting process was that only about thirty per cent of voters were able to mark the ballot papers themselves. The rest seemed illiterate and requested the aid of officials in the process of choosing their candidates. It was announced by the Administration that the Health Council's elections would take place on 16 March.⁴⁶⁵

Burrows' initial reaction to the election results was that the figures of the six winners, which ranged from 17,000 to 18,000, seemed 'suspiciously similar'.⁴⁶⁶ There is no information provided through the Administration, Political Agency, nor by the Residency that implied foul play. Following the Council's elections the HEC

⁴⁶⁵ TNA, FO 1016/465, I.T.M. Lucas' Report on the Bahrain Election for the Council of Education, February 10, 1956, 12 February 1956.

⁴⁶⁶ 'Bernard Burrows, Residency's Report for the Month of March 1956', in *Political Diaries of the Persian Gulf*, vol. 20 1955-1958, ed. R.L. Jarman (London: 1990), 1-10 (3).

issued a bulletin numbered thirty-nine in which it congratulated its followers claiming 'a crushing victory'.⁴⁶⁷

In 1956 the Bahraini Administration prepared to strengthen its Police Force in light of the previous unrest. A proposal was adopted to recruit skilled and experienced Iraqi officers to enlist locally. In Belgrave's diary the earliest mention of recruiting Iraqis to the Police Force was between himself and Sheikh Khalifa bin Mohammed bin Isa Al-Khalifa, the Public Security Chief in Bahrain, when they discussed the matter on 30 October 1955. In a later diary entry on 2 November Belgrave claimed that the idea to get recruits from Iraq was originally Sheikh Khalifa's. No further information was provided by Belgrave on the matter until 15 January 1956, when he said he had held discussions on a possible location to accommodate the new Iraqi recruits.⁴⁶⁸

The Residency's Annual Report for 1956 on the Gulf region confirmed that the Administration had adopted the idea of recruiting Iraqis in November 1955. However when news of this spread locally in 1956 the nationalists made clear their opposition to the idea. According to Burrows the nationalists based their opposition on two grounds. Firstly was the fear that the development of the local Police Force would result in unfavourable consequences to the opposition itself allowing for greater government control of the streets. Secondly, the resentment generated by the Baghdad Pact had fallen onto Iraqis who were seen as an integral part of that

⁴⁶⁷ TNA, FO 1016/465, The Higher Executive Committee, Bulletin No. 39, 11 February 1956.

⁴⁶⁸ *Sir Charles Dalrymple Belgrave's Personal Diaries*, 30 October, 2 November 1955, and 15 January 1956.

alliance in opposition to the Egyptians,⁴⁶⁹ and this move would see Bahrain 'drawn into the orbit of the Pact'.⁴⁷⁰

By the second-half of February discontent amongst members of the HEC against the Administration resurfaced. A new circular was issued warning the Government on three issues. First, was the delay in hiring a legal expert to examine the Penal Code. Second, was the decision to recruit Iraqi officers to the Police Force. Third, was the Government's delay in electing the remaining members of the Education Council. The circular accused the Administration of 'trying to escape from recognising the Committee which has been proved undoubtedly that it is the only representative of the people'. Furthermore, the Party warned the Government of 'bad consequences' that would occur if their demands were not met within a week.⁴⁷¹

The Administration's delay in announcing its candidates for the Education Council, according to the Resident, was due to an internal government debate of whether to add an extra Chairman to the twelve members of the Council or have him chosen from among the twelve members of the Council. The issue was still unresolved at the end of February. In regards to the delay of acquiring an expert to review the Penal Code, Burrows had been told by the Administration that Al-Sanhouri, the Egyptian legal expert, had been chosen for the position. The Administration had opened negotiations with Al-Sanhouri to acquire his services in

⁴⁶⁹ TNA, FO 371/126869, Bernard Burrows Residency's the Persian Gulf Administration Reports for the Year 1956.

⁴⁷⁰ 'Bernard Burrows, Residency's Report for the Month of March 1956', 1-10 (3).

⁴⁷¹ TNA, FO 1016/465, The Higher Executive Committee, Circular No. 40, 21 February 1955.

November 1955, but it had taken until early 1956 for both parties to reach a deal.⁴⁷²

The Adviser's diary note of 22 February indicated that Al-Sanhouri was due to (finally) arrive in May.⁴⁷³

Taking the HEC's threat seriously, the Residency called on Belgrave according to his diary entry of 23 February. They advised him to hold back the recruitment of Iraqi officers, fearing that this might result in tensions locally.⁴⁷⁴ Initially it was arranged that Bahrain would employ one hundred and fifty Iraqis into the Force. The local Administration accepted the advice delivered by the Residency and the appointment of the officers was postponed.⁴⁷⁵ The Foreign Secretary informed the FO that, as a result of the HEC's declared threat, British officials in the Gulf were to stand by the Ruler with armed forces if necessary if the Bahraini opposition resorted to disorder and violence.⁴⁷⁶

The Resident discussed with the FO details of the anticipated Foreign Secretary's visit to Bahrain as he was due to stop over from Cairo on 2 March en route to New Delhi and later Karachi to attend SEATO's Council of Ministers meeting. According to a tentative schedule agreed by the FO and the Residency, the Minister was due to arrive at 7.00 pm local time. He would then be escorted to the Residency in Juffair where he was due to give a short press conference. Following the conference Lloyd would be escorted to the Ruler's palace in Gudaibiya in Manama, for a ceremonial dinner with the Ruler and dignitaries. Finally the Foreign

⁴⁷² 'Bernard Burrows, Residency's Report for the Month of March 1956', 1-10 (2-3).

⁴⁷³ *Sir Charles Dalrymple Belgrave's Personal Diaries*, 22 February 1956.

⁴⁷⁴ *Sir Charles Dalrymple Belgrave's Personal Diaries*, 23 February 1956.

⁴⁷⁵ TNA, FO 1016/465, Burrows to Baghdad, 4 March 1956.

⁴⁷⁶ TNA, FO 1016/465, Lloyd to FO, 29 February 1956.

Secretary was scheduled to hold a private discussion with the Sheikh to deliberate local affairs and then he would head back to the airport in Muharraq. Burrows expressed to the FO his concern that the issue of Bahrain's acquisition of Iraqi officers would be stoked up by Egyptian propaganda and that this might result in internal problems during the Secretary's visit.⁴⁷⁷

The Resident's fears were not groundless as a minute by an unidentified British official in Bahrain found at TNA suggested the knowledge that by late February the HEC was studying the possibility of staging a public demonstration during Lloyd's visit to Bahrain. The demonstration's objective was to force the Minister into pressing the Bahraini Administration to resolve the current standstill between it and the HEC.⁴⁷⁸ A communiqué from Gault to the Residency revealed a possible new communications link between the British and the HEC, as Burrows had instructed Lieutenant Colonel Anderson (the Information Officer at the Residency) to negotiate personally with Al-Bakir. The negotiations aimed to produce means that would end political stalemate in Bahrain and have the Administration acknowledge the HEC. With this acknowledgement the HEC would then be able to directly approach the Bahraini Government and the need for an intermediary would cease to exist. On the issue of staging demonstrations during Lloyd's visit, Anderson managed to receive verbal assurances from Al-Bakir that no protests would take place on the day of the Foreign Secretary's arrival.⁴⁷⁹ Subsequent to these assurances, the Office of the Senior Naval Officer, VA Wight-Boycott in the Gulf

⁴⁷⁷ TNA, FO 1016/465, Burrows to FO, 24 February 1956.

⁴⁷⁸ TNA, FO 1016/465, Residency Minutes, 27 February 1956.

⁴⁷⁹ TNA, FO 371/120544, Gault to Burrows, 22 March 1956.

region in his *tour d'horizon* of events in March, believed that the HEC had intended on presenting the Foreign Secretary with a petition. However the Residency encouraged the HEC to express its opinion to Lloyd publically in a press conference which the Minister was scheduled to give at the Residency.⁴⁸⁰

Unexpectedly for the Foreign Secretary events in Jordan during his overseas trip cast a shadow first on his visit to Cairo and later manifested itself upon his arrival in Bahrain. Twenty-year-old King Hussein suddenly dismissed the British-born Commander of the Jordanian Arab Legion, Lieutenant-General Sir John Bagot Glubb Pasha, on 1 March. Glubb was given only a few hours to leave the country as the King feared rebellion in the army if he remained.⁴⁸¹ The Pasha departed from Jordan to Cyprus following his dismissal. He had served in Arab states for thirty-six years and commanded Jordan's Arab Legion for seventeen years since 1939.⁴⁸² The Arab Legion under Glubb supervised Jordan's army, police, National Guard, and navy.⁴⁸³ King Hussein in his memoir explained his decision to sack Glubb. He based some of his conclusions on his frustration towards having the police linked to the Arab Legion. Furthermore, Glubb had angered the King as the latter refused to accept the dismissal of a number of soldiers from the Legion because of their nationalist ideals. The Jordanian King additionally viewed the fifty-nine year-old Glubb at the time to be 'old-fashioned' and lacking in modern military strategic planning.⁴⁸⁴ Another possible explanation for King Hussein's dismissal of Glubb was

⁴⁸⁰ TNA, FO 371/120545, V.A. Wight-Boycott: Disturbance in Bahrain, 6 March 1956.

⁴⁸¹ Lunt, *Glubb Pasha: A Biography*, 212.

⁴⁸² K. Morfett, 'I Talk to Glubb Pasha: "After 36 years THIS..."', *Daily Express*, 3 March 1956, 1.

⁴⁸³ P.J. Vatikiotis, *Politics and the Military in Jordan: A Study of the Arab Legion 1921-1957* (London: 1967), 82.

⁴⁸⁴ Talal, *Uneasy Lies the Head*, 116 and 111.

a very personal one. The King had developed strong friendship with the Head of Jordan's Air Force John Dagleish who taught the young King how to fly. In late 1955 the Pasha decided to have Dagleish replaced by February 1956. Dagleish left Jordan on 28 February only hours prior to Glubb's sacking. Glubb's decision might have affected Hussein's general attitude towards the Pasha.⁴⁸⁵ The British Cabinet alluded to a telegram from Sir Charles Duke, the British Ambassador to Jordan, who proposed that Glubb's dismissal might have been a personal affair and not one aimed against Britain's influence in the region. However the Ambassador was also concerned that British personnel could no longer effectively regulate the Legion and, as a result, Jordan would fall under the influence of a 'neighbouring state'.⁴⁸⁶

Glubb's dismissal was celebrated by Jordanians and demonstrators thronged the streets chanting anti-colonial slogans.⁴⁸⁷ Keith Morfett of the London newspaper the *Daily Express* reported demonstrators to have shouted 'Down with Glubb! Out with Glubb the imperialist!', similar chants would be echoed later in Bahrain. Adding insult to British injury, Morfett also reported rumours that involved Jordan joining Egypt's Southern Tier alliance and that the Legion would be put under the direct command of Egypt's Commander-in-Chief, General Abdel-Hakim Amer.⁴⁸⁸

To Glubb, the decision to dismiss him was partly due to efforts by Lieutenant-Colonel Ali Abu Nuwar a close friend of Hussein. The friendship between the two developed first in France when the former served as a military attaché at the

⁴⁸⁵ R. Lamb, *The Failure of the Eden Government* (London: 1987), 187-88.

⁴⁸⁶ TNA, CAB 128/30, C.M. (56) 18th conclusions, 5 March 1956.

⁴⁸⁷ Nutting, *No End of a Lesson: The Story of Suez* (London: 1967), 28, hereafter *No End of a Lesson*.

⁴⁸⁸ K. Morfett, 'What Glubb told me in Amman did not add up in Cairo', *Daily Express*, 3 March 1956, 1.

Embassy in Paris.⁴⁸⁹ Indeed, after Glubb's dismissal Nuwar was promoted by the King to become the head Jordan's armed forces.⁴⁹⁰ The American intelligence officer Archie Roosevelt documented that Nuwar later launched a failed *coup d'état* against the Jordanian monarchy.⁴⁹¹

When news of Glubb's dismissal reached London, Nutting recalled arguing the entire evening and through the night with Eden *vis-à-vis* the current developments. To Nutting, Eden 'put all the blame on Nasser' and said that 'the world was not big enough to hold both him and Nasser'. Eden was fearful that Nasser would succeed in obliterating Britain's position in the Middle East and thereby undermine the Prime Minister's own status.⁴⁹² In his memoir Eden linked the events in Jordan to Cairo's radio propaganda campaign against Glubb Pasha that opened on 15 February. He perceived the event to be a '*coup* against Glubb'. Moreover, the Prime Minister believed that the decision by the Jordanian monarch to sack Glubb was due to 'constant articles in the press' including British media, that portrayed the Pasha as the real leader in Jordan.⁴⁹³

The Manchester Guardian said that the move had 'taken London completely by surprise'. Glubb's dismissal also included the sacking of two other Britons employed by the Legion: Brigadier William Hutton and Colonel Sir Patrick Coghill.⁴⁹⁴ *The New York Times* said the move had 'stunned and mortified' politicians in Britain.

⁴⁸⁹ Glubb, *A Soldier with the Arabs*, 421; and Lunt, *Glubb Pasha: A Biography*, 198.

⁴⁹⁰ S.P. Brewer, 'Jordan Expands the Arab Legion: New Army Chief in Amman Reports Set-up of Forces', *New York Times*, 26 May 1956, 3.

⁴⁹¹ Roosevelt, *For Lust of Knowing*, 366.

⁴⁹² Nutting, *No End of a Lesson*, 18.

⁴⁹³ Eden, *Full Circle*, 347-48.

⁴⁹⁴ 'British Reverse in Jordan: Gen. Glubb Dismissed: Future of Forces in Doubt Amman's Abrupt Action', *The Manchester Guardian*, 3 Mar 1956, 1.

It viewed the sacking as 'a fresh blow to British prestige in the Middle East'. The newspaper added that British aid and loans to Jordan since 1946 totalled £75,000,000, running at £9,200,000 annually.⁴⁹⁵ For his services, HM Queen Elizabeth II knighted Glubb on 9 March.⁴⁹⁶

As events in Jordan were taking shape Lloyd was in Egypt on 1 March, on a short stop en route to Karachi. The Foreign Secretary was due to meet the Egyptian Prime Minister at a dinner at the Tahera Palace. During the meeting, according to Lloyd, the Baghdad Pact was discussed. Nasser required assurances from Britain that it would not expand the Pact by enlisting new Arab States. This, he said, would improve Anglo-Egyptian ties and he agreed in return to halt Egyptian propaganda aimed at British interests in the Middle East.⁴⁹⁷ The news of Glubb's dismissal arrived during the meeting but Lloyd was not informed about this until after its conclusion. The following day the Foreign Secretary met again with Nasser, the latter congratulated him on the news of Glubb's dismissal as he saw it as a move done to improve British relations with Egypt.⁴⁹⁸ In Heikal's account, Lloyd's face during the second meeting with Nasser turned red when the Egyptian Prime Minister asked if Glubb's exoneration was a good decision. Heikal further asserted that Nasser had only known of the news at around 9.00 am on 2 March when British journalist Tom Little covering the Foreign Secretary's visit informed Heikal of the news and in turn Heikal informed Nasser, just before his second meeting with

⁴⁹⁵ B. Welles, 'Ousting of Glubb Affronts Britain: Lack of Notice Held Rude', *New York Times*, 3 March 1956, 2.

⁴⁹⁶ 'Glubb Knighted by Queen Elizabeth', *New York Times*, 10 March 1956, 3.

⁴⁹⁷ BDEEP, Series B, Part III, vol. 4, 'Egypt and the Defence of the Middle East' 1953-1956. Doc. 632: FO 371/121243, [Alpha and the Baghdad Pact]: inward telegram no 413 from Mr Selwyn Lloyd (Cairo) to Mr Eden reporting on a meeting with Colonel Nasser, 2 March 1956.

⁴⁹⁸ Lloyd, *Suez 1956*, 44-47.

Lloyd.⁴⁹⁹ Although Heikal's claim should not be ruled out, it is hard to believe that it took Nasser approximately twenty-four hours to discover the news of Glubb's dismissal. Trevelyan maintained in his memoir that Lloyd 'was convinced that Nasser had known of General Glubb's dismissal' beforehand and there was a possibility that he intended it to coincide with his meeting with the Egyptians.⁵⁰⁰ The developments surrounding Glubb's dismissal would also be felt by Lloyd during his subsequent stop to Bahrain.

News of Glubb's sacking spread throughout Bahrain and, according to Belgrave, it 'was widely discussed in the bazaars'.⁵⁰¹ In Wight-Boycott's account, with Lloyd due to arrive in Bahrain, all British military services that included the Royal Navy, Army, and RAF were notified that a possible demonstration might take place during his visit. However public security was left in the hands of Bahrain's Police Force. Lloyd arrived on schedule at Bahrain's Muharraq airport at 7.00 pm and was personally met by the Ruler, the Resident, the Political Agent, senior British officials, and the Residency and Agency's staff. The Minister's accompanying delegation included twenty-eight members of which thirteen were women employed as personal assistants and secretaries. A convoy of cars taking the Minister and his delegation proceeded from the airport to the Residency's headquarters in Juffair. Ladies among the delegation followed the procession in taxis accompanied by female employees from the Residency. When the Resident's car that contained the Foreign Secretary advanced to the causeway linking

⁴⁹⁹ Heikal, *Cutting the Lion's Tail*, 83.

⁵⁰⁰ Trevelyan, *The Middle East in Revolution*, 63-66.

⁵⁰¹ Belgrave, *Personal Column*, 218.

Muharraq Island with Manama crowds appeared on both sides of the road resulting in the procession coming to a standstill.⁵⁰²

In Gault's description the car convoy had passed by a crowd at 7.15 pm which had just gathered to watch a local football match. Upon realising that the convoy was clearly conveying a VIP and very likely to be Britain's much-anticipated Foreign Secretary, the crowds gathered by the roadside and shouted in Arabic, 'down with Belgrave', 'down with the imperialists', and 'down with the colonisers'. Then the assembled throng got 'completely carried away by its own hysteria'.⁵⁰³ Lucas recollected in his memoir that the verbal attacks did not only target Belgrave but Lloyd too.⁵⁰⁴ Lloyd's memoir suggested that he was unable to recognise what the crowds were actually shouting at the convoy as the 'mob' was 'yelling' in Arabic. He was later informed that demonstrators shouted 'Go home, Belgrave'.⁵⁰⁵ The Resident's memoir recalled that the demand he heard from protestors was that 'Belgrave should go'.⁵⁰⁶ Heikal on the other hand asserted, (although he was not an eyewitness to the event) that demonstrators also chanted Nasser's name.⁵⁰⁷

The British traveller Roderic Owen provided a rare account from a neutral point-of-view, as he did not represent his Government nor was he employed by the Administration. He claimed to have been an eyewitness to the stoning of Lloyd's car as he lived in Muharraq where the incident had taken place. He claimed that crowds of Bahrainis had gathered in close proximity to Muharraq's police station and at a

⁵⁰² TNA, FO 371/120545, V.A. Wight-Boycott: Disturbance in Bahrain, 6 March 1956.

⁵⁰³ TNA, FO 371/120544, Gault to Burrows, 22 March 1956.

⁵⁰⁴ I. Lucas, *A Road to Damascus: Mainly Diplomatic Memoirs from the Middle East* (London: 1997), 34.

⁵⁰⁵ Lloyd, *Suez 1956*, 49.

⁵⁰⁶ Burrows, *Footnotes in the Sand*, 67.

⁵⁰⁷ Heikal, *Nasser: The Cairo Documents*, 84-85.

restaurant known as Oriental Restaurant that led to the causeway leading to Manama. Contradicting Gault's testimony, Owen reported that the mob that had attacked the car had shouted in English and not Arabic. He recounted that protestors said in rhythmic fashion, 'Selwyn Lloyd, Bell-er-grave must go! Selwyn Lloyd, Bell-er-grave must go!' The crowds later 'began stamping on the ground, then the stamping turned into a kind of dance. This was the dam bursting; this was Arab hysteria' as Owen observed.⁵⁰⁸

Wight-Boycott's account revealed that although the police were present, they were helpless to defend the car convoy from the gathered crowd. Although the Resident's car that had carried Lloyd escaped without serious damage, the crowd of protestors managed to throw sand into the car landing on the lap of Deputy Under Secretary of State, Sir Harold Caccia. The procession of cars managed to continue, but with constant 'stops and starts'. The car carrying the Senior Naval Officer suffered damage to its bodywork as the mob attacked it. Another car saw a brick fly into it from a demonstrator, but no injuries were documented. The convoy finally managed to slip through the demonstrators and cross the causeway to Manama. Unfortunately the BOAC's buses that accompanied the convoy were destroyed by the demonstrators and a failed attempt was made to burn a bus owned by BAPCO. A Bahraini fire engine was despatched to the scene but was also stoned by the mob. The demonstrators refused to abandon the scene until police reinforcements arrived and a confrontation erupted between the two sides with rifle butts used to

⁵⁰⁸ Owen, *The Golden Bubble*, 228-29.

disperse the angry mob.⁵⁰⁹ The Ruler's car was also reported by Gault to have suffered severe dents.⁵¹⁰ The location where the incident took place in Muharraq came to be known in Bahraini folklore as 'Selwyn Lloyd's Corner'.⁵¹¹

The convoy managed to finally reach safely the Residency and the situation seemed to have quietened down by 8.20 pm when the Foreign Secretary gave a short press conference in the Residency.⁵¹² An unnamed journalist from *Al-Watan* questioned Lloyd; the answers were published approximately a month following the incident in Bahrain. One of the questions asked of Lloyd was about the desire according to the journalist of people under British protection to gain freedom in selecting the form of rule they wished to be governed by. The Minister responded by stating his belief of gradual evolution of government without speeding up the process therefore causing public disorder. Another question was raised regarding Britain's stance on the public demands in Bahrain for reform. Lloyd responded in a similar fashion to the first question, calling for a process of political development to take place and evolve by itself.

Lloyd was also asked about rumours that Britain wanted to establish a number of military bases in Bahrain, which the Minister denied. Finally a question was put forward to Lloyd on Britain's stance regarding the Baghdad Pact. The journalist questioned whether it was in the interest of HMG to support the Egyptian-Indian non-aligned movement that emerged from the Bandung Conference instead

⁵⁰⁹ TNA, FO 371/120545, V.A. Wight-Boycott: Disturbance in Bahrain, 6 March 1956.

⁵¹⁰ TNA, FO 371/120544, Gault to Burrows, 22 March 1956.

⁵¹¹ Belgrave, *Personal Column*, 219.

⁵¹² 'Bernard Burrows, Residency's Report for the Month of April 1956', in *Political Diaries of the Persian Gulf*, vol. 20 1955-1958, ed. R.L. Jarman (London: 1990), 1-10 (2).

of the Baghdad Pact for the cause of greater global peace. In Lloyd's answer he referred to the creation of NATO and how it aided the West in countering the Soviets. He believed that the countries in close proximity to the Soviet Union in the Middle East did well by forging their own alliance and it was in HMG's own interest to take part in such an alliance. He concluded that the Pact's objectives were purely defensive.⁵¹³

The Foreign Secretary was then escorted to the Ruler's palace in Gudaibiya for a formal banquet. Although it was previously proposed by Burrows that a private meeting with Sheikh Salman and the British Minister would follow the dinner reception, recent developments intruded on the evening's conversation and the topic of Britain's stance towards the HEC was openly reviewed. Burrows recorded the points discussed between the two parties during the banquet. In the Resident's account, the Ruler informed the Foreign Secretary of information he believed that connected the HEC with British officials in Bahrain. On his part Lloyd expressed Britain's confidence in the Ruler's statesmanship. Lloyd later suggested to the Ruler that he set up an Advisory Council that would become a means by which 'reasonable elements from Bahraini society' could offer advice. Regarding HMG's dealings with 'insensible and ignorant elements of society' Lloyd explained to the Ruler that 'We found that by giving them an opportunity to talk they became much less dangerous. The same should be tried in Bahrain'.⁵¹⁴ The reception at the palace

⁵¹³ 'Biritaniyah alti Waqat Meethaq Huquq Al-Insan hal tafi Biltizamatiha?' [Britain, who signed on the Human Rights Charter does it abide by its Responsibilities?], *Al-Watan*, 6 April 1956, 1 and 5.

⁵¹⁴ TNA, FO 1016/465, Burrows to *Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (SOSFA)*, 3 March 1956.

included the presentation of a decorated sword by Sheikh Salman to Lloyd.⁵¹⁵ As for the Adviser, he declared in his memoir that an anteroom at the palace was used as a place from which to communicate with the police. Belgrave continuously updated the Ruler on the situation in Muharraq. To the Adviser it 'was the most trying social function that I have ever attended'.⁵¹⁶

During the Foreign Secretary's stay at the palace, news arrived that the demonstrators had regrouped and were blocking the roads, had planted devices to puncture car tyres, and had gathered to await the return of the Minister to Muharraq airport, according to Wight-Boycott's account of the affair. Upon receiving this news the Resident requested the Senior Naval Officer to keep HMS Loch Foda on stand-by. The officer requested that the ship keep part of its complement ready to land should orders come to do so.⁵¹⁷ According to Burrows' own account the mob returned to the scene at 10.30 pm.⁵¹⁸

With the dinner over, Lloyd was escorted after 11.00 pm to the Residency building in Juffair. The ship's shore party was ready to disembark at 11.38 pm. The Senior Naval Officer signalled for thirty men of HMS Loch Foda to land at 11.52 pm. They landed at 12.35 am aided by BAPCO's tugboat and were escorted by troop carriers from Sitra to Juffair, ready for action, if needed. The party of women who had accompanied the Minister did not attend the palace banquet and were taken to the Residency where they remained. They returned by taxi and on schedule to the airport. No one was injured but the mob managed to break one of the cars'

⁵¹⁵ 'Arrival in Bahrein', *The Times*, 3 March 1956, 6.

⁵¹⁶ Belgrave, *Personal Column*, 219-20.

⁵¹⁷ TNA, FO 371/120545, V.A. Wight-Boycott: Disturbance in Bahrain, 6 March 1956.

⁵¹⁸ 'Bernard Burrows, Residency's Report for the Month of April 1956', 1-10 (2).

windows. Fortunately for Lloyd the mob that had eagerly awaited his return abandoned its vigil in the very early morning of 3 March and he was finally escorted out of the Residency at 1.30 am for his flight to New Delhi at 2.45 am, having suffered a mere four-hour hiatus to his schedule.⁵¹⁹

In a private letter from Wight-Boycott to his mother, now kept at the Imperial War Museums in London, he added some further details about the event. He noted that he had accompanied Lloyd's car parade in a separate vehicle. He was sure that the protestors 'were not after blood at that time'. He also noted that the two trucks that drove the thirty military personnel from Sitra to Juffair were driven by 'unauthorised drivers'. Inside the British Naval Base during the height of the crisis that night, he had the men 'armed to the teeth' and equipped with tear gas. He confirmed that they were not needed as the crowd that had waited for Lloyd's return had dispersed before he drove by. He also made it plain to his mother that he had no wish for a confrontation with the demonstrators as he feared that grave consequences would follow.⁵²⁰

Belgrave sent a letter dated 8 March to his friend Colonel Charles Fredrick Howard Gough, the British MP for Horsham, in which he justified his attitude to the stoning of Lloyd's car convoy. The letter's content was passed to the FO through Sir AD Dodds-Parker, the Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, as Gough had handed it to him. After the Adviser provided the MP with an overview of the HEC that involved personal attacks against the nationalists' leaders, the letter revealed new

⁵¹⁹ TNA, FO 371/120545, V.A. Wight-Boycott: Disturbance in Bahrain, 6 March 1956.

⁵²⁰ Imperial War Museums in London, Collections, Private Papers of Captain V.A. Wight-Boycott, OBE DSC RN, 'Letter from Wight-Boycott to his Mother'.

details on the police's handling of the crisis from his point-of-view. Belgrave blamed the police for their failure to arrest any of the rioters and believed that they deserved 'to be sacked'. The reason for their failure to arrest those involved was their belief that firearms would have been used in the process causing injuries and loss of life. The Adviser further revealed that on the morning of 2 March the police had unpacked packages of tear gas and had practiced using it. However during the drill the wind had blown in the wrong direction.⁵²¹ Gough's interest in Bahrain's affairs was apparently tied to his role in the insurance industry, for which he had travelled to Bahrain on a number of occasions.⁵²²

The British newspaper *The Observer* debated whether the riot was intentionally staged during Lloyd's visit or was 'an unlucky coincidence'. The newspaper leaned towards the second possibility, saying that 'The supporters of this movement [HEC] are also doubtless not immune from the general current of political nationalism and "anti-imperialism" in the Arab World'.⁵²³

Lloyd's papers, located at Churchill Archives Centre in Cambridge, surprisingly had more documents about valuing and insuring the ornamental sword presented to him by the Ruler than about the riot and near disaster that he had experienced. He had conducted detailed correspondence with the Alliance Assurance Company and Spink and Son.⁵²⁴

⁵²¹ TNA, FO 371/120545, Belgrave to Freddie Gough by Belgrave, 8 March 1956.

⁵²² TNA, FO 371/120545, Minutes on Bahrain drafted by C.T.E. Ewart-Biggs, 19 March 1956.

⁵²³ 'Selwyn Lloyd Defends Regional Pacts', *The Observer* 4 March 1956, 1.

⁵²⁴ Churchill College Cambridge, Churchill Archives Centre, Selwyn Lloyd's Personal Papers and Diaries, Letter from Spink and Son Ltd. to Lloyd, 10 April 1956, and Letter from Alliance Assurance Company Limited to Lloyd, 18 April 1956.

The *Suez Oral History Project* aimed to interview various personalities *vis-à-vis* the Suez War whose transcripts are found at King's College London. Historians Anthony Gorst and WS Lucas interviewed Sir Donald Logan who had accompanied Lloyd in Bahrain and was an eyewitness to the event, as he was then his Assistant Private Secretary. He recalled that the incident was not for him a life-threatening ordeal, as he was in either the second or third car of the procession when the attack took place. In Logan's account, Lloyd was in the first car accompanied by Caccia. Logan mistakenly called the attacking mob supporters of the 'Committee of Education' and not the HEC. The news of the HEC winning all seats up for election earlier in February for the Education Council might have resulted in his confusion. Logan firmly believed 'that there was great suspicion that the Egyptians were behind everything in the Gulf'.⁵²⁵

Lucas, then the Residency's employee, when interviewed as part of *The British Diplomatic Oral History Programme* at Churchill College Cambridge, suspected that the incident of stoning Lloyd's car had 'affected his judgment at the time of Suez a few months later'. In Lucas' opinion, Lloyd arrived in Bahrain feeling that Nasser had personally ridiculed him over the issue of Glubb's dismissal. Lloyd, Lucas suggested, carried a 'chip on his shoulder in Bahrain' and when he was met face-to-face with rioters he thought it to be 'all part of this Nasser-inspired plot'.⁵²⁶ Heikal also made the same point, believing that Lloyd (following the Bahraini

⁵²⁵ Donald Logan, interviewed by Anthony Gorst and W.S. Lucas, *Suez Oral History Project, 1956*, GB0099 *Suez OHP*, 1-18.

⁵²⁶ Ivor Thomas Mark Lucas, interviewed by Malcolm McBain, *The British Diplomatic Oral History Programme*, 25 January 2005, 7.
<<https://www.chu.cam.ac.uk/media/uploads/files/Lucas.pdf>> [accessed 28 November 2015].

incident) 'thought that Nasser was playing a cat and mouse game with him and that Bahrain was the final act of the cat attacking the mouse'.⁵²⁷

In Shuckburgh's diary entry of 3 March he claimed to have been approached by Eden who asked him to contemplate earnestly the idea of reoccupying Suez as a move to respond to Glubb Pasha's sacking. As the issue was being discussed news arrived of Lloyd's stoning in Bahrain. Shuckburgh felt that everything was in a state of a mess, 'and the Arabs [were] hating us more and more'. Eden's excitement at recent developments later prompted him to ask Shuckburgh to arrange a 'weekend [of] meetings at Chequers' on the situation in Bahrain and a *tour d'horizon* of the overall defence of the Gulf region. Shuckburgh thought that the weekend meetings were most unnecessary.⁵²⁸ Nutting described Eden at that time as behaving 'like an enraged elephant charging senselessly at invisible and imaginary enemies in the international jungle'.⁵²⁹

Conservative MP Julian Amery voiced his opinion on recent developments in Bahrain and the Middle East. Amery was joint leader with Captain Charles Waterhouse of the Suez Group informal body consisting of about fifty MPs aimed to counter policies of appeasement towards Nasser and reversing what they saw as diminishing British influence in the region.⁵³⁰ Amery's letter to *The Times* on 5 March viewed the dismissal of Glubb and stoning of Lloyd's car in Bahrain as signs of 'the bankruptcy of the policy of appeasement in the Middle East'. He linked these

⁵²⁷ Heikal, *Nasser: The Cairo Documents*, 84-85.

⁵²⁸ *Descent to Suez*, 3 March 1956, 345.

⁵²⁹ Nutting, *No End of a Lesson*, 32.

⁵³⁰ Lucas, *Britain and Suez: the Lion's Last Roar*, 59; V. Rothwell, *Anthony Eden: A Political Biography 1931-57* (Manchester: 1992), 209; and Carlton, *Britain and the Suez Crisis*, 13.

developments, *inter alia*, to Britain's withdrawal from Palestine and the Suez Canal Zone. Amery's letter continued:

We are now very close to the final disaster. The challenge to our influence in Jordan and on the Persian Gulf, if left unchecked, must lead to the breakup of the Baghdad Pact. Our oil supplies, without which we cannot live, would then be in immediate danger; our communications with other Commonwealth countries would be threatened; and all Africa would be opened to Communist advance.

Amery blamed the British Government, saying that it had failed to offer the leadership necessary to tackle unrest and disruption in the region. But he said that all was not lost, if a mission to save British influence in the Middle East could be mounted.⁵³¹

The Lord Lloyd, the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies (1951-57) had been received with similar anger when he visited Aden in May. Yemeni protestors had surrounded The Lord Lloyd's car as he arrived in Yemen for a ten-day visit. Demonstrators were reported to have chanted 'Down with Imperialism'. His car was also attacked by kicks and sticks from protestors as *The Glasgow Herald* revealed.⁵³² The *Daily Express* added to the report that approximately a thousand Yemenis had surrounded the procession. They had hired buses to get the demonstrators to the scene.⁵³³ The organisation of the demonstration was probably inspired by Bahrain.

Burrows tried to understand the reasons that led to such an unexpected welcome from Bahrainis to the Foreign Secretary. He acknowledged that Belgrave's

⁵³¹ J. Amery, 'British Influence in Middle East: to the Editor of *The Times*', *The Times*, 5 March 1956, 9.

⁵³² 'Lord Lloyd's Car Surrounded: Aden Demonstration', *The Glasgow Herald*, 12 May 1956, 7.

⁵³³ C. Lawson, 'Frenzied Arabs Mob Minister: Charter buses bring no-fare rioters to the airport', *Daily Express*, 12 May 1956, 2.

centralisation, outdated methods of governing, and three decades in office had played a role in recent events. He, nevertheless, thought that some of the criticism of the Adviser was fuelled by people's 'personal grudges' against the Administration as some had failed to get what they wanted 'in individual matters'. In addition the Resident believed that recent developments in Jordan and the dismissal of Glubb Pasha had infected attitudes locally. Burrows also doubted that Belgrave wanted to leave his post anytime in the near future.⁵³⁴

The Resident later reflected in his memoir on the comparisons that could be made between Glubb and Belgrave. He maintained that the position of both 'were in some ways similar but in other ways different'. The most common feature between both 'was that they both stayed too long in their positions' and concluded:

The admirable work which they had carried out in the past could no longer be performed in the same manner and a degree of British tutelage which their presence implied was no longer acceptable in the growing spirit of nationalism which was then pervading the whole of the Middle East.

He viewed the problem as a common trait among other British politicians in occupying a position for too long, 'from Winston Churchill down'.⁵³⁵

The Resident met with Belgrave the day following the riot and told the Adviser that the first lesson to grasp from the event of stoning the Foreign Secretary's convoy was the need to improve Bahrain's public security forces. The Resident further suggested that the idea of appointing Iraqi officers to strengthen the local Force be revisited, but reduced in number to thirty.⁵³⁶

⁵³⁴ TNA, FO 1016/465, 1011/1/27/56, Burrows to FO, 3 March 1956.

⁵³⁵ Burrows, *Footnotes in the Sand*, 65.

⁵³⁶ TNA, FO 1016/465, 1011/1/26/56, Burrows to FO, 3 March 1956.

Reviewing the attack on the Foreign Secretary, Burrows proposed three theories. First, that the HEC intentionally organised the demonstration. Second, that a single member or a small group of the HEC was behind the demonstration. Third, that *agents provocateurs* opposing the HEC staged the demonstration. The Resident then went on to doubt the theory that implied that the HEC organised the event as they had expressed on 3 March to the Residency their 'sincere expression of deepest regret at what occurred'. Burrows leaned towards the second theory as information had reached him that Al-Shamlan had been addressing the crowd following the football match. The Residency believed that, due to Al-Shamlan's action, he was to be 'court-martialed' by the HEC.

Burrows also informed the FO that he had learned from Belgrave that the Ruler had told the Adviser that he was fully responsible for order in Bahrain and that he had the freedom to arrest the frontline members of the HEC. Belgrave in return informed the Resident that the Administration was not capable of carrying out that move on its own, fearing a violent backlash. The grounds for arresting HEC members would cite the contents of a circular issued by the Party on 21 February in which it had warned the Administration about ignoring its demands. But Belgrave indicated that there was not sufficient evidence to convict them in a court of law.

Burrows warned the Adviser that major disturbances might follow the suggested arrests. He then recommended to the Ruler that he form a Privy Council to receive public comments and recommendations and he promised to gain the support of HMG for this idea. Burrows reiterated the need for the Adviser to strengthen the Police Force. The Resident further urged Belgrave that the Bahraini

Government should announce without delay an enquiry into recent events.

Burrows also asked the FO whether they would allow British forces to be deployed in Bahrain should the HEC arrests take place.⁵³⁷

Sheikh Salman expressed his earnest apology on 4 March to the Resident about the *imbroglio* of the attack on Lloyd and laid the blame on the HEC's agitation. In response, the Resident suggested to the Ruler awarding the HEC its demand for official recognition, provided it changed its name. To Burrows' surprise, the Ruler accepted his suggestion, adding his own *quid pro quo* – that Al-Bakir leaves Bahrain for a fixed period of time.⁵³⁸

Bahrainis at the time were probably unaware of the gravity of the situation and that serious action was being considered by high-ranking British policy makers. Shuckburgh noted in his diary on 5 March that,

The Ministers – led by the PM [Eden] – were made keen to land British troops somewhere, to show that we are still alive and kicking; and they thought Bahrain a good place because of the recent stoning of Selwyn Lloyd.

During the same meeting plans were also discussed to deport Cyprus's Greek-Cypriot nationalist leader Archbishop Makarios.⁵³⁹ British authorities showed their determination in Cyprus on 9 March when Makarios and three others were arrested and deported from the island. The Governor of Cyprus, Field Marshall Sir John Harding, CIGS, made a statement saying that Makarios was suspected of supporting EOKA's radical elements.⁵⁴⁰

⁵³⁷ TNA, FO 371/120544, Burrows to FO, 4 March 1956.

⁵³⁸ TNA, FO 371/120544, Burrows to FO, 5 March 1956.

⁵³⁹ *Descent to Suez*, 5 March 1956, 343-44.

⁵⁴⁰ 'Archbishop Makarios Deported', *The Times*, 10 March 1956, 6.

It could be argued that the deliberations between the Resident and the Eastern Department at the FO, headed by Riches, in addition to Burrows' work between the Ruler and the HEC to reach a level of understanding between the two sides, had saved Bahrain from an almost-inevitable disaster. Riches thought that Burrows had acted sensibly during the crisis a matter on which he commended him. Based on a written discussion between the two, Riches conceded that Britain must not take any action against the HEC basing his decision on three arguments. The first affirmed that there was no concrete evidence to believe that the HEC staged the recent disturbance. The second was that individuals cannot be arrested based on their ideas. The third underlined that direct British intervention would commit Britain and would be seen as depriving the Ruler of his own authority.⁵⁴¹

Al-Bakir claimed in his memoir that the stoning of Lloyd's car convoy was a turning point in Britain's policy towards the HEC, as Britain then conspired to 'execute its plans to eliminate the Committee'.⁵⁴² The British Cabinet's attitude towards developments in Bahrain were never shared at the time with the HEC nor were they made public. The attitude of the Residency seemed, on the contrary, genuinely sincere in its attempt to end local hostilities, urging both sides to reach a level of understanding. Therefore Al-Bakir's comment on British policy after the Lloyd incident was incorrect as it failed to reflect the reality on the ground and the *status quo*.

Eden was to face a disgruntled House of Commons on 7 March with events in Jordan and Bahrain dominating the debate. Eden, with the short time he had,

⁵⁴¹ TNA, FO 371/120544, D.M.H. Riches on Bahrain, 5 March 1956.

⁵⁴² Al-Bakir, *From Bahrain to Exile*, 106.

prepared a speech for the Commons which was to be 'regarded as one of the worst' of his career, as he later confessed. Eden was 'well lectured in the House of Commons' by critics.⁵⁴³ The efficiency of the Baghdad Pact was also debated and in that context Nutting argued that the Soviet menace in the Middle East was 'calculated and carefully planned' and that the Pact was 'proving an effective instrument for the defence of the Middle East'. As for the Gulf region, Nutting promised to take all necessary steps to maintain Britain's position and friendship with the rulers of Arab Gulf States. In relation to Bahrain, Lieutenant-Colonel Neil McLean, said in the House of Commons that he saw Glubb's dismissal to have 'been underlined by events that followed in the Bahrein area which we thought we had under complete control'.⁵⁴⁴

Brigadier Terence Clarke proposed that Britain should send more ships to the Gulf to ensure the protection of sheikhdoms there and the flow of oil.⁵⁴⁵ Even Hugh Gaitskell, the leader of Britain's opposition Labour Party, believed that the country should maintain its position in the Middle East in light of recent developments. He highlighted the importance of oil in sustaining Britain, expressed his fear that the Middle East would be overtaken by the Soviets, and criticised the Government for failing to recognise the growth of Arab nationalism.⁵⁴⁶

Humphrey Mynors, the Bank of England's Deputy Governor, sent a letter to Shuckburgh on 8 March in which he warned him of conditions in Bahrain. He passed information from a British banker he knew in Jordan who believed that

⁵⁴³ Eden, *Full Circle*, 352-53.

⁵⁴⁴ *House of Commons (HC)* Deb 7 March 1956, vol 549, cols 2111-238.

⁵⁴⁵ HC Deb 8 March 1956, vol 549, cols 2378-476.

⁵⁴⁶ 'We Must Guard the Oil Says Gaitskell', *Daily Express*, 8 March 1956, 2.

trouble in Bahrain was imminent based on his experience of Jordanian affairs. On the Adviser's position the letter called for change or 'an explosion will come'.⁵⁴⁷ On the Belgrave question (although he was not an employee of the British Government as Riches asserted) his analysis of the situation was that:

nothing which would diminish British prestige more in Bahrain and in the whole of the Gulf than if the success of the rowdy Egyptian campaign for the removal of Glubb was immediately followed up by a similar success in Bahrain.

Nonetheless Riches also asserted that a plan to 'ease Belgrave out' by the end of the year must be implemented. Riches dreaded the idea of Belgrave being possibly replaced by an Egyptian Adviser. He proposed three alternative courses to adopt. First was the hiring of a British assistant to the Adviser who would eventually take over Belgrave's duties. Second, was to hire either an Iraqi or Pakistani citizen, both countries being members of the Baghdad Pact, as a substitute for Belgrave. Third was to divide Belgrave's work into two: an 'Occidental Secretary' to Bahrain's Ruler, and another as a 'Chief Secretary to the Administration'.⁵⁴⁸

Peace may have been restored to Bahrain, but tensions remained high throughout the first ten days of March. The HEC had planned to hold an event on the day of Prophet Mohammed's *Al-Isra wa Al-Mi'raj* anniversary due on 9 March.⁵⁴⁹ The function was called off by the Party as it feared it might lead to the event getting out of hand, as minutes by an unidentified person from the Residency noted. The

⁵⁴⁷ TNA, FO 371/120544, Mynors to Shuckburgh, 8 March 1956.

⁵⁴⁸ TNA, FO 371/120544, D.M.H. Riches on Bahrain, 9 March 1956.

⁵⁴⁹ *Al-Isra wa Al-Mi'raj* is the day Muslims believe Prophet Mohammed traveled to Jerusalem from Makkah and then ascended to the heavens accompanied by Archangel Gabriel.

minutes also revealed that there was a strong belief publically that the arrest of the Movement's leading figures was imminent.⁵⁵⁰

Burrows thought that 'any disturbance of basically local origin is apt to have overtones of Egyptian propaganda and, therefore anti-Iraq feeling, added to it'. Burrows believed that Egyptian radio played a critical role locally compared with Iraq's radio station. To the Resident the Egyptians were 'in a different class to that of Iraq and Egypt has so far shown itself the most ready provider of experts and technicians'. Burrows recommended to the FO the establishment of cultural missions between Iraq and Arab Gulf States, to strengthen Iraqi influence and diminish that of Egypt.⁵⁵¹

In a note from the British Prime Minister to his Minister of Defence on 10 March, Eden declared that 'We have just got to get it into these people's heads that the situation in the Persian Gulf may become highly dangerous at any moment'. Eden further warned that oil supplies must not be compromised and military support was vital for its protection. He insisted that 'Both the political and military difficulties have got to be overcome'.⁵⁵²

In March the situation in the Middle East looked gloomy for Britain, Conservative politician William Clark summarised in his memoir the state of affairs as he saw them:

General Glubb, commander of the British-trained Arab Legion in Jordan, was sacked by King Hussein, which was a shocking blow to our prestige throughout the Middle East. The Baghdad Pact was

⁵⁵⁰ TNA, FO 1016/465, Residency Minutes, 9 March 1956.

⁵⁵¹ TNA, FO 1016/465, Burrows to FO, 10 March 1956.

⁵⁵² TNA, PREM 11/1471, M.42/56, Prime Minister's Personal Minute, 10 March 1956.

breaking up and so was our whole Middle East position (Selwyn Lloyd was fooled in Cairo and stoned in Bahrein).⁵⁵³

No major events were recorded immediately following the stoning of Lloyd's procession and negotiations between the Administration and the HEC, mediated by the Residency, seemed to be moving towards an eventual resolution. But the morning of 11 March proved catastrophic, as a minor quarrel in the vegetable market in Manama became a deadly affair and developed into a general strike. The event turned the Prime Minister's attention once again to Bahrain and a demand for the arrest of the opposition. Nonetheless, negotiations continued locally and resulted in a colossal political breakthrough as the next Chapter details.

⁵⁵³ W. Clark, *From Three Worlds: William Clark Memoirs* (London: 1986), 162, hereafter *From Three Worlds*.

Chapter Seven

The Municipality Incident, Official Recognition of the Nationalist Movement, and the Belgrave Question

11 March to June 1956

After the sudden disturbance that accompanied the visit of Britain's Foreign Secretary tensions in Bahrain remained high. A minor incident at the local Manama vegetable market resulted in a mass brawl that reached the capital's municipal offices -- hence the label the 'Municipality Incident'. The latest episode would result in a number of deaths followed by a strike with the very real threat to violence. The incident pressed British strategy makers to re-evaluate their policy on Bahrain and deliberate over the Belgrave question.

Frantic correspondence between the Residency and the FO ensued, as the Residency continually updated the FO on developments in Bahrain and seek its advice. On a broader perspective, events in Bahrain, together with Nasser's gradual *rapprochement* with the Eastern Bloc and Glubb's dismissal, forced the strategists in Whitehall to abandon the Alpha Plan and adopt a new one. Eden was even moved to caution Khrushchev during the latter's visit to Britain to stop interfering in the Middle East.

Only minutes after the Administration had successfully met with the HEC on 11 March, the Resident had to inform the FO that an unplanned and unexpected disturbance had occurred in the capital's vegetable market close to the main *souq* and municipal offices. It seems the cause was an approach by a municipal

regulations official to a vegetable market seller who had set up an unlicensed stall on the roadway. The official told the seller to remove his products and an argument developed between the two. A scuffle ensued between a policeman, who was at the scene, and the vegetable seller and, as always, crowds gathered.

The fracas turned into a large-scale brawl and police officers stationed at the market sought refuge in the Municipality's offices. The mob pursued the fleeing policemen and besieged them. The police from inside and outside the building fought hard to disband the angry mob for more than four hours, but with little success. An attempt was made by the police outside to drive a truck to the door of the Municipality to rescue their colleagues, but their efforts failed. Only then did the police open fire, killing two people on the spot and fatally injuring three others. It was assumed at the time that someone from the crowd fired first. The Residency immediately moved a small unit of British forces from the Arabian Gulf to Bahrain as a 'precautionary measure'.⁵⁵⁴

Belgrave believed that the clash had developed as a result of sectarian tensions between the vegetable sellers (the majority of whom were Shi'ites) and municipal officials who were mostly Sunni. Furthermore, the vegetable sellers were already disaffected because they had recently been moved to a new market built by the Ruler and had much preferred their previous, albeit outdated, premises. These feelings compounded the sense of resentment towards municipal officers in his

⁵⁵⁴ TNA, FO 1016/465, Despatch 197, Burrows to FO, 11 March 1956; and 'Bernard Burrows, Residency's Report for the Month of April 1956', 1-10 (3-4).

opinion.⁵⁵⁵

Early next day, 12 March, the expected announcement of a national strike did not happen. However a number of Shi'ite public transport and BAPCO vehicle drivers failed to come to work. Shops at the local *souq* did not open for 'precautionary reasons'. No news of violence in Manama was reported, but in Muharraq a number of vehicles were stoned. The Residency felt ready to cope with the situation as two British frigates lay at anchor in Juffair and Sitra, available to protect Bahrain's oil refinery. The Residency pressed unidentified members of the HEC to use their influence to encourage those who wished to go on strike to return to work. Burrows believed that the 'Ruler is anxious that [the] stationing of British troops here should be regarded only as temporary expedient lasting, he hopes, only a few days'. Apart from the stationing of troops to protect the oil company's facilities, there were no discussions on the use of these forces to bring about law and order.⁵⁵⁶

The HEC's actions and policy seemed to Burrows to be all too predictable and he had predicted the steps that would be taken by the Party way before its issue of a circular. He said that the HEC would issue an announcement calling on people to refrain from any violent activity, the condemnation of the police, a demand for an enquiry, and Belgrave's head.⁵⁵⁷

⁵⁵⁵ Belgrave, *Personal Column*, 221-22.

⁵⁵⁶ TNA, FO 1016/465, Despatch 202, Burrows to FO, 12 March 1956.

⁵⁵⁷ TNA, FO 371/120544, Despatch 204, Burrows to FO, 12 March 1956.

As expected, the HEC issued a proclamation on 12 March in which it expressed its shock 'by the irresponsible criminal act' and laid the responsibility squarely onto the Government. The Party blamed Belgrave personally for past shootings and for the Municipal Incident. As expected the HEC demanded the immediate dismissal of the Adviser. However what was not expected by the Resident was that the Movement also announced the commencement of a strike based as what it oddly cited was the peoples' own desire for a strike.⁵⁵⁸ Burrows, through the Residency's staff, made contact with the HEC and they were urged to end the strike. But Burrows felt that the Party's influence over its own followers was 'much less than it was'. He was right, and anarchy prevailed.⁵⁵⁹

The earliest Government reports that had reached the Residency suggested that the police were strongly provoked and that shots had possibly been fired first from the crowd. Further investigation suggested that a bullet extracted from one of the victims of the affair was not police issue. The Resident did not question that the police had fired wildly but was not able to lay the blame on them for doing so since they had been placed in considerable danger. Nevertheless it was all too clear to Burrows that 'Feeling against Belgrave is unfortunately widespread, even among the normally-responsible elements, senior merchants etc. His departure would ease immediately the situation', although the incident itself had nothing to do with Belgrave personally. However the Adviser's departure at this particular time was seen as particularly awkward and a 'considerable blow at our prestige' especially it would follow so soon after the dismissal of Glubb, Burrows thought. To ease this

⁵⁵⁸ TNA, FO 1016/465, The High Executive Committee, Bahrain, Proclamation No. 45, 12 March 1956.

⁵⁵⁹ TNA, FO 371/120544, Despatch 202, Burrows to FO, 12 March 1956.

highly volatile situation Burrows felt that it would be a good idea to establish an Administration Council to take over Belgrave's responsibilities.⁵⁶⁰

Eden's response to this news of further disturbances in Bahrain was recorded in Shuckburgh's diary entry of 12 March. At first a meeting to discuss the matter was held at 10 Downing Street. Shuckburgh noted that Eden in the meeting immediately 'began by cursing us for not telling him about the Bahrain telegrams last night (Sunday), and proceeded to be pretty bloody to everyone present'.⁵⁶¹

Internationally-circulated newspapers, such as the *New York Times*, covered developments in Bahrain. It reported that a dispute at the vegetable market in Bahrain had turned into a riot aimed at Belgrave's dismissal. The newspaper also claimed that eleven people had died as a result of the riot without providing further details.⁵⁶² The UK daily *The Manchester Guardian* offered its version of events saying that only three men were killed in the latest disturbance. The paper concluded that, 'There is no foundation for reports that the incident had any anti-British basis'.⁵⁶³ The London-based *Daily Express* offered a more detailed account of the disturbance and background to the conflict, adding that one hundred and twenty British military personnel were on their way to Bahrain and said that the riot was in protest at Belgrave's presence.⁵⁶⁴ The *Daily Mirror* newspaper maintained in its news coverage that eleven people were killed 'when anti-British riots flared' in

⁵⁶⁰ TNA, FO 371/120544, Despatch 207, Burrows to FO, 12 March 1956.

⁵⁶¹ *Descent to Suez*, 12 March 1956, 346.

⁵⁶² '11 Die in Bahrein Riot: Vegetable Market Dispute Starts Street Battle', *New York Times*, 12 March 1956, 8.

⁵⁶³ 'Official Version of Bahrein Incident: A Quarrel, Not Anti-British', *The Manchester Guardian*, 13 March 1956, 9.

⁵⁶⁴ 'Eleven killed in new oil riots', *Daily Express*, 12 March 1956, 1.

Bahrain's capital as protestors demanded Belgrave's dismissal.⁵⁶⁵ The most accurate report of the event was published in *The Times*, suggesting that the event commenced as a dispute between a vegetable-seller and municipal official, which had escalated into a riot when a large crowd besieged the police who had intervened at the scene.⁵⁶⁶

Shuckburgh was assigned by Sir Norman Brook, the Cabinet Secretary, to prepare minutes of discussion with the Prime Minister to be forwarded to Sir Gerald Templer. It proposed that problems in Bahrain had arisen 'from the general awakening of the Arab world and the unsettling effect of Egyptian leadership'. The minutes recorded that the use of British forces in Bahrain could prove to be disastrous and used only 'in a moment of extreme emergency'. It was also asserted that the HEC movement in Bahrain had 'never been directed against us [Britain]'. Nonetheless fear persisted that agitation might turn anti-British and the continued presence of Belgrave and his future was in the balance. The minutes went on to record the view that, in order to maintain the overall continuation of Britain's presence in the Gulf region 'the Egyptian drive for revolutionary leadership in the Arab world as a whole' must be countered. That realistic assessment of the situation would later change with the Prime Minister's personal reaction to further developments.⁵⁶⁷

The situation in Bahrain took a turn for the worse on 13 March as reports of 'hooliganism' in Manama were received and that official cars passing between

⁵⁶⁵ 'Report from Oil Isle: 11 die in "Sack this Briton" riot', *Daily Mirror*, 12 March 1956, 1.

⁵⁶⁶ 'Three Killed in Bahrein Riot: Police Attacked by Mob', *The Times*, 12 March 1956, 10.

⁵⁶⁷ TNA, FO 371/120571, Shuckburgh to Templer, 14 March 1956.

Manama and Muharraq had been obstructed. Other roads were blocked, more vehicles were stoned and a European-owned car was burnt out. Understanding the complexity of the situation and seeing that matters had gone too far, the HEC informed the Residency that they were prepared to withdraw their insistence on Belgrave's departure, as a *quid pro quo* for the Administration announcing an enquiry into the latest shootings. The Party, it said, would then urge people to return to work. Burrows recorded that the Residency was in contact with a member of the HEC to negotiate a breakthrough but did not name the individual concerned. The Resident observed that the HEC did not want to extend the strike and had seemed unprepared for it.

After the Residency's mediation between the Administration and the HEC, an initial understanding between the two was reached. In order to help bring about an end to the strike the HEC was granted permission to use trucks equipped with speakers to urge people to disband.⁵⁶⁸

But the strike continued and on 14 March a noticeable change was seen in Burrows' attitude towards the nationalists. The Resident, in his account to the FO, alluded to the possibility of initiating a crackdown against local agitators whether they were individual agitators or HEC members. Burrows proposed to the FO that British troops should take over some of the responsibilities of the local police in order to restore order on the islands. Furthermore the Resident said that he had been approached by Belgrave who sought action against the HEC if they opted to extend the strike. Burrows sought advice from the FO. The Resident now believed

⁵⁶⁸ TNA, FO 371/120544, Burrows to FO, 13 March 1956.

that even when the HEC advocated or called for non-violent strikes they turned into 'a threat to security since strike conditions are bound to breed incidents which, as we have just seen, can grow to dangerous proportions'.⁵⁶⁹

The HEC for its part tried to call off the ongoing strike, but to no avail. On 14 March the Resident met with the Ruler to persuade him to meet with the HEC in order to finalise an agreement with the Party. In the discussion the establishment of an Administration Council to assist the Ruler in his work and ease pressure on Belgrave was also discussed. The Ruler did not accept the Resident's proposal to meet the HEC and requested that British officials in Bahrain meet them first. So Gault met with four unidentified members of the HEC on the afternoon of the same day. The Agent discussed three major points with the nationalists on which to base an end to the deadlock. The first was official acknowledgement of the HEC. The second was that an enquiry should be launched to look into recent events. The third point was the dismissal of Belgrave. The Resident then expressed his hope that an agreement would be reached soon.⁵⁷⁰

Shuckburgh, based on his diary entry of 15 March, saw Eden to be in a great 'state of excitement' as he was shown the latest telegrams on Bahrain from the Residency. Shuckburgh specified that as a response the Prime Minister 'seems to want to march troops in and arrest the "Higher Executive Committee" with which Bernard [Burrows] is now negotiating'. The developments in Bahrain and the region must have added to Eden's overall anxiety. Shuckburgh believed that matters had reached a state 'where each telegram that comes in causes Ministers to

⁵⁶⁹ TNA, FO 1016/465, Despatch 218, Burrows to FO, 14 March 1956.

⁵⁷⁰ TNA, FO 1016/465, Despatch 221, Burrows to FO, 14 March 1956.

meet, telephone one another, draft replies and curse everybody'.⁵⁷¹ The British Cabinet held a meeting on 15 March to discuss the crisis in Bahrain. In the meeting Nutting examined the possible responses to the conflict. One was to back the NUC and take the risk that the strike would continue for a longer period. Another was to bring in one hundred and seventeen Iraqi officers to assist Bahrain's police (favoured by the Ruler but currently discouraged by his Adviser). Deploying British troops was also mooted. Eden noted in the meeting Iraqi personnel were already en route and that it would look 'indecisive to divert them now'. Nutting suggested advising the Iraqis to delay their arrival and to significantly decrease their numbers. Eden ordered to inform Burrows that he could deploy British troops to restore order.⁵⁷²

In the Cabinet meeting's conclusion it was disclosed that British troops had already been deployed to Bahrain from the Trucial State of Sharjah (in modern day United Arab Emirates). Additionally there were two frigates anchored off Bahrain and a cruiser was ordered to sail from Malta. Eden also disclosed that the Commander-in-Chief in the Middle East and the Gulf Resident both recommended that any use of force by Britain in Bahrain might result in very damaging long-term consequences. However with current developments 'in Bahrain some use of British troops seemed inevitable', the Prime Minister commented. He noted Burrows' view that the situation would be exacerbated by the arrival of Iraqi reinforcements, recommending that no more than thirty 'non-commissioned officers' be sent to Bahrain and that those 'should be held back until the situation had been restored'.

⁵⁷¹ *Descent to Suez*, 15 March 1956, 347.

⁵⁷² TNA, CAB 195/14, C.M. 23 (56), Bahrain, 15 March 1956.

Burrows wanted the authority based on his judgement as to whether British forces were needed in Bahrain. It was therefore essential to bolster Bahrain's Police Force. Based on these arguments, the Cabinet invited the Foreign Secretary to inform Burrows that he had the authority, with the Ruler of Bahrain's prior consent, to use British troops in Bahrain if he deemed it necessary.⁵⁷³

Lloyd told the Residency that the FO was 'gravely disturbed' at the situation and developments in Bahrain and that its first priority was to bring the riot to an end. The FO felt that it had 'no confidence in [the] High Executive Committee's ability to assist' in the process of bringing the strikes to an end. Moreover, the Foreign Secretary sensed that the HEC

are setting up unacceptable conditions for co-operation with [the] Ruler and I am concerned lest continued negotiation with them will merely lead to protracted discussions while riots persist.

Lloyd had endorsed Burrows' proposal to delay the arrival of Iraqi police reinforcements. Nonetheless it recommended the strengthening and development of the Police Force. It also granted the Resident permission to use British troops to bring order to Bahrain, but only with the Ruler's permission.⁵⁷⁴

On the wider front, Eden sent Eisenhower what he claimed was British intelligence on Nasser's plans in the Middle East. These included the formation of the United Arab States under Egypt's leadership. This involved the overthrow of the Hashemite ruling families in Iraq and Jordan, the overthrow of the Libyan ruling family, the establishment of republics in Northwest Africa, and at a later stage, the unseating of the Saudi Arabian monarchy. This strategy, according to Eden, had

⁵⁷³ TNA, CAB 128/30, 23rd conclusions, 15 March 1956.

⁵⁷⁴ TNA, FO 1016/465, Despatch 259, SOSFA to Residency, 15 March 1956.

received Soviet support by aiding the Egyptians in organising its intelligence services. The plan also featured the despatch of trained Egyptian personnel (in the form of education missions) to the Arab World who would establish communication 'with anti-Government movements'.⁵⁷⁵

Regardless of the accuracy of these claims, Eden, at the time leading up to the Suez crisis, had seemed obsessed by Nasser. Nutting recalled in his memoir that during a telephone conversation between him and Eden, he suggested earlier various steps that should be taken to isolate Nasser. Eden viewed Nutting's recommendations unfavourably and exclaimed:

But what's all this nonsense about isolating Nasser or 'neutralising' him, as you call it? I want him destroyed, can't you understand? I want him removed, and if you and the Foreign Office don't agree, then you'd better come to the Cabinet and explain why.⁵⁷⁶

The Political Agent had another meeting on 15 March with four members of the HEC. An initial agreement was reached for the official recognition of the Party provided that Al-Bakir left Bahrain for a fixed time as requested by the Ruler and that an enquiry into recent events was held. No objection to the Ruler's conditions by the HEC was recorded. At that point there seemed to be a clear division between the members of the HEC. Al-Bakir and Al-Shamlan wished to bring the strike to a swift end but the Shi'ite element of the Party saw themselves to be in a personal feud (particularly with the police) following recent events. Furthermore locals from

⁵⁷⁵ Eden to Eisenhower, 15 March 1956 in *The Eden-Eisenhower Correspondence, 1955-1957*, edited by P.G. Boyle, (Chapel Hill, NC: 2005), 123-24.

⁵⁷⁶ Nutting, *No End of a Lesson*, 34-35.

Muharraq Island (a predominantly Sunni community) had also shown an unwillingness to accept any form of settlement.⁵⁷⁷

The Residency updated the Ruler on 16 March regarding the recent understanding reached with the HEC. Burrows explained to him that the Party had been told that the latest proposal was 'the final offer' and that he had pressed the HEC to end the strike by 17 March. The dissidents had also been warned that any future disturbance would entitle the Government to exert its authority to bring by stability and security.⁵⁷⁸

Eden was preoccupied with Bahraini affairs and together with Lloyd, drafted a message to Bahrain reiterating that there should be no move to displace Belgrave at this stage, although Shuckburgh himself believed that the Adviser 'ought to go, and soon', as he noted in his diary, adding:

Fuss, fuss; no confidence in anyone; teaching Bernard Burrows his business. The PM [Eden] has never understood that it is far more courageous to accept a humiliation than to do a damn silly 'bold' act.⁵⁷⁹

It was around this time that, according to Shuckburgh, the Prime Minister recalled meeting the Adviser's son who, he understood, was 'training to succeed' his father.⁵⁸⁰ Eden also thought that the Residency in Bahrain should have never allowed itself to be put into a position to negotiate with the HEC on Belgrave's

⁵⁷⁷ TNA, PREM 11/1471, Burrows to FO, 15 March 1956.

⁵⁷⁸ TNA, FO 1016/465, Despatch 227, Burrows to FO, 16 March 1956.

⁵⁷⁹ *Descent to Suez*, 16 March 1956, 348.

⁵⁸⁰ TNA, FO 371/120549, M.43/56, Prime Minister's Personal Minute, 16 March 1956.

future. Eden, it seems, preferred for negotiations to stall rather than to secretly plot Belgrave's demise.⁵⁸¹

On 16 March the FO's Eastern Department instructed the Resident that any move to displace Belgrave at this point 'would be a great blow to British prestige in Bahrain and in the whole of the Gulf'. It also proposed three moves: the hiring of an Assistant Adviser to replace Belgrave, the hiring of an Iraqi or Pakistani Adviser to replace the Adviser, and dividing the position of the Adviser into two different posts.⁵⁸² Burrows then informed the Ruler Britain's support of the Administration and its 'retention of Belgrave'.⁵⁸³

With this directive in mind the Resident urged the FO to consider hiring an assistant to the Adviser who would gradually take over the Adviser's work, saying that this would improve public opinion and maintain British prestige. Belgrave's status had not been a matter for debate in recent negotiations, but the nationalists spread rumours that Belgrave was soon to leave his post. The Residency, in return, warned the Party about repeating such claims and threatened that -- if it continued - - they would have to issue a public statement on the matter.⁵⁸⁴ A possible explanation as to why the Party spread rumours of Belgrave's departure was to appease their supporters and convince strikers to suspend the strike.⁵⁸⁵

The Government of Bahrain issued an official communication, signed by Belgrave, on 16 March recognising the opposition under the new name of the

⁵⁸¹ TNA, FO 371/120549, M.45/56, Prime Minister's Personal Minute, 17 March 1956.

⁵⁸² TNA, FO 371/120544, D.M.H. Riches from FO to Residency, 16 March 1956.

⁵⁸³ TNA, FO 371/120544, Burrows to FO, 17 March 1956.

⁵⁸⁴ TNA, FO 1016/465, Despatch 231, Burrows to FO, 16 March 1956.

⁵⁸⁵ TNA, FO 1016/465, Despatch 81, Burrows to FO, 17 March 1956.

National Union Committee (NUC).⁵⁸⁶ The FO expressed its pleasure to the Residency that the situation in Bahrain had settled down.⁵⁸⁷

The proclamation of the official recognition of the NUC was reported internationally and the BBC's English radio also announced on 16 March that Iraqi policemen were being despatched to Bahrain. Following the report the Resident requested the FO to issue a statement denying the validity of the news report on both the Arabic and English services.⁵⁸⁸ The initial broadcast by the BBC was picked up by other media outlets, such as the *New York Times*, which reported that an Iraqi unit of one hundred and forty men was on its way to Bahrain from Baghdad.⁵⁸⁹ *The Manchester Guardian* also covered the rumours of Iraqi officers being sent to Bahrain. The newspaper added further and exaggerated claims to the initial account, saying that two hundred Iraqi officers were on their way to Bahrain but were asked to return. It also said that an agreement had been concluded between the Iraqi and Bahraini Governments on seconding the Iraqi officers for six months.⁵⁹⁰ The *Daily Express* also covered the news of Iraqi officers being sent to Bahrain with its claim that two hundred policemen were to be sent.⁵⁹¹

The announcement of the NUC's official recognition was followed by another public notice from the Government on the formation of a Board of Enquiry to review recent developments in Bahrain, headed by the Judicial Adviser to the Administration Geoffrey Peace and the Assistant Judge for HMG Court for Bahrain,

⁵⁸⁶ TNA, FO 371/120545, Government of Bahrain: Notice, No. 17/1956, 16 March 1956.

⁵⁸⁷ TNA, FO 371/120544, Despatch 281, FO to Residency, 17 March 1956.

⁵⁸⁸ TNA, FO 1016/465, Despatch 233, Burrows to FO, 17 March 1956.

⁵⁸⁹ 'Bahrein Curbs Meetings', *New York Times*, 17 March 1956, 6.

⁵⁹⁰ 'Change of Plan: Return of Iraqi Police Loaned to Bahrein', *The Manchester Guardian*, 19 March 1956, 7.

⁵⁹¹ S. Harper, 'Britain allows oil mob to win', *Daily Express*, 17 March 1956, 1.

WPR Mawdsley. The Board would look into disturbances that had occurred from 2 to 16 March and called on any witnesses to come forward and testify regarding the incidents.⁵⁹²

Recent events in Bahrain did not go without an Egyptian twist Trevelyan posted to the FO a communiqué concerning Egyptian media coverage of Bahrain. He reported being surprised that the, 'Egyptian press devoted relatively little space to Bahrain's disorders'. However the small coverage of events in Bahrain that there was portrayed the British as having attacked Bahraini citizens. For example, *Al-Akhbar* (The News) newspaper recorded on 14 March that ten were killed in Bahrain due to 'British machine-gun fire during a British attack on the populace'. Furthermore the paper blamed the start of the incident on British soldiers who suddenly attacked Bahrainis avenging earlier anti-colonial protests and demands for the removal of the British Adviser. Another account of events was issued by *Al-Gomhouria* (The Republic) also published on 14 March that said that those who had fallen had died following Belgrave's own orders to open fire. The newspaper maintained that Bahrainis were calling Belgrave 'Glubb II'. *Akhbar Al-Youm* (News of Today) in alluding to the attacks in Bahrain by the British said somewhat strangely that they had targeted Bahrainis' religious freedoms.⁵⁹³ Angered by the fabricated news in the Egyptian press, Riches suggested that the matter ought to be raised personally with Nasser.⁵⁹⁴

⁵⁹² TNA, FO 371/120546, Government of Bahrain: Notice, No. 18/1956, 18 March 1956.

⁵⁹³ TNA, FO 1016/465, Trevelyan to FO, 17 March 1956.

⁵⁹⁴ TNA, FO 371/120545, D.M.H. Riches on Bahrain, 28 March 1956.

The NUC visited the Ruler in his palace on 18 March to sign a settlement agreement. Al-Shamlan gave a speech in which he appreciated the Ruler's acceptance of the NUC.⁵⁹⁵ The *New York Times* covered this news, reporting that the strike in Bahrain had ended and that the local 'authorities had agreed to set up committees to consider grievances'.⁵⁹⁶

As matters settled Riches summarised the state of agitation that had led to the recent disorder making three points. The first was Shi'ite suspicion (from a sectarian perspective) towards the Administration governed, as it was, by a Sunni ruling family. The second was the feeling of discontent towards the Adviser by Bahrainis as a whole. The third was the rise of Arab nationalism. Based on these, Riches summarised the policy needed to deal with the situation in Bahrain. He proposed first and foremost to strengthen the police by hiring British officers, the recruitment of only thirty Iraqi officers (hoping that this lesser number of Iraqis would not be a cause dissent), the employment of more Iraqi officers in the longer term, and hiring of Bahrainis to the force. As for Belgrave, his departure should be eased out.⁵⁹⁷

The Labour MP Philips Price asked the Foreign Secretary in the House of Commons on 19 March about the advice given to the Ruler in enabling the public to take an active part in the country's own affairs. Lloyd replied that Bahrain's internal affairs were its own business. Nonetheless he referred to discussions held with the Ruler to further modernise his Government. Another Labour MP, Henry Hind,

⁵⁹⁵ TNA, FO 371/120544, Burrows to FO, 19 March 1956.

⁵⁹⁶ 'Strike Ends in Bahrein: Work Resumes After Britain Backs Ruling Sheikh', *New York Times*, 18 March 1956, 16.

⁵⁹⁷ TNA, FO 371/120544, D.M.H. Riches on Bahrain, 17 March 1956.

pointed out that Bahrain was the only Arabian Gulf sheikhdom where a form of democracy existed explaining that it had established an electoral roll and elections had taken place and to that the Foreign Secretary responded positively.⁵⁹⁸

The Ruler also declared, on 20 March, the formation of an Administration Council with Sheikh Abdulla bin Isa Al-Khalifa as President. The members were: Sheikh Khalifa bin Mohammed Al-Khalifa, Sheikh Duaij bin Hamad Al-Khalifa, Sheikh Khalid bin Mohammed bin Abdulla Al-Khalifa, GWR Smith, Ahmed Al-Umran, and Salem Al-Arrayed. Yusuf Al-Shirawi was appointed Secretary. The Council, which was to meet weekly with representatives from various government departments, had a one-year term with the option of its reappointment and extension. Administrative affairs were to be dealt by the Council through the Ruler or the Adviser. Most importantly, the Council was ordered to open channels of communication with the general public and to keep themselves up to date regarding the state's affairs.⁵⁹⁹ The Government of Bahrain further announced the promotion of Colonel Hamersley from Assistant Police Commandant to Police Commandant (effective from 20 March), replacing Belgrave as the head of the police. Additionally the Administration announced its need to recruit policemen to the force and awarded Bahrainis priority in the selection process.⁶⁰⁰

The Political Agent endeavoured to analyse the Bahraini Administration's structure and the reasons for the agitation towards the Adviser and his assessment of Belgrave was that

⁵⁹⁸ HC Deb 19 March 1956, vol 550, cols 807-8.

⁵⁹⁹ TNA, FO 371/120545, Administrative Council Notice, 20 March 1956.

⁶⁰⁰ TNA, FO 371/120545, Translation: Government of Bahrain Announcement.

in order to get things done, acquired the habit of exercising more executive authority than he should have done and at the same time the Ruler has tended to shelter behind his Adviser when unpleasant decisions had to be taken – making his excuse always that the Adviser had wanted it this or that way. This in turn has brought the Adviser the reputation among the Bahrainis for being the real ruler of Bahrain.

Furthermore, his hands-on, micro-management style, Gault believed, had delayed some projects, adding to Bahrainis' frustrations.⁶⁰¹

On 21 March an Air Ceylon flight was scheduled to refuel in Bahrain. It was to carry the prominent Egyptian politician Al-Sadat as he was en route, this time to Karachi, to attend Pakistan's Republic Day celebration. To Burrows' surprise the nationalists seemed not to have been informed of Al-Sadat's stopover and thus no organised party awaited his arrival.⁶⁰² Nevertheless Radio Cairo reported, according to the Residency's monthly report, that Al-Sadat had awarded one thousand rupees to the families of the victims who had fallen during the riot of 11 March. Burrows insisted that that no such incident had occurred.⁶⁰³

Yet, on 1 May, the British Embassy in Cairo signed by the Chancery forwarded a letter to the Residency in which it claimed that Major Amin Shakir, the Assistant Secretary General of the WIYC, had confirmed the substance of Cairo Radio's broadcasts to the Embassy. Shakir informed the British that Al-Sadat instructed him to distribute the amount of a thousand rupees to the family of each of those who had died on 11 March.⁶⁰⁴ Whether this was true or not and how Shakir

⁶⁰¹ TNA, CAB 129/80, C.P. (56) 98, Bahrain, *Annex*: Extract from despatch No. 4 of 20th March, 1956, from Political Agent, Bahrain, to Political Resident, Persian Gulf, 14 April 1956.

⁶⁰² TNA, FO 371/120544, Despatch 252, Residency to FO, 21 March 1956.

⁶⁰³ 'Bernard Burrows, Residency's Report for the Month of April 1956', 1-10 (5).

⁶⁰⁴ TNA, FO 371/120546, Chancery at British Embassy to Residency, 1 May 1956.

went about his mission in Bahrain without the Administration or British knowing, remains a mystery.

Having set up Nasser in Egypt and aided him through its intelligence services to take over the state, the Americans were ready to abandon the Alpha Plan that had aimed at establishing a long-term peace settlement between the Arabs and Israelis. In President Eisenhower's opinion it had become clear by the spring of 1956 that the Egyptian leader's primary objective was 'to be the most popular man in all the Arab world'.⁶⁰⁵ In addition, Nasser turned towards the Eastern bloc, incited trouble in Jordan, and increased his influence in Bahrain. This prompted the Western powers to seek different solutions to perceived threats in the Middle East.

US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles proposed, in a memorandum to Eisenhower, a new plan to handle Egypt's leadership. The strategy, which was eventually adopted by the US and Britain, was dubbed the Omega Plan and set down Anglo-American policy towards the Egyptians. The plan *inter alia* would refuse the selling of arms to Egypt, purposely delay the Aswan High Dam's financial support, and help Iraq to establish radio services to counter Egyptian propaganda in the Arabian Gulf region. In short, the plan aimed at Nasser's isolation from within the Arab World and at lessening his status domestically.⁶⁰⁶

In Britain, Eden before the adoption of the Omega Plan, had urged Eisenhower to make 'a careful re-examination' of policy targeted at Egypt's

⁶⁰⁵ R.H. Ferrell (ed.), *The Eisenhower Diaries* (New York: 1981), entry from 13 March 1956, 319.

⁶⁰⁶ FRUS, vol. XV, 'Arab-Israeli Dispute January 1-July 26, 1956'. Doc. 223: Memorandum From the Secretary of State to the President, 28 March 1956.

Nasser.⁶⁰⁷ The British Foreign Secretary during a meeting of the Cabinet, expressed his belief that 'Nasser was unwilling to work with the Western Powers or to cooperate in the task of securing peace in the Middle East'. Hitherto it had been imperative for British policy to continue supporting the Baghdad Pact and to convince the US to join. Lloyd further underlined that Britain's presence in the Arabian Gulf must be sustained.⁶⁰⁸

A COS Committee memorandum on 23 March confirmed that the situation in Bahrain had settled and sought the Minister of Defense's approval to return a company of armed men to their previous location in Sharjah.⁶⁰⁹ Fulfilling his part of the deal between the Administration and the NUC, Al-Bakir left Bahrain for Lebanon on 23 March for a six-month set period. But ignoring the British diktat he travelled on to Cairo.⁶¹⁰ He was received by the WIYC's Kamal Yaqub on 27 March. He later claimed to have stayed in Cairo for some five months but without providing much detail to his activities there. In his absence Al-Shamlan took his place with the title of Acting Secretary, given to him by Al Bakir on 21 March.⁶¹¹

An account by the Residency, based mostly on evidence produced by Gault on the NUC and developments in Bahrain, was sent to Lloyd on 26 March. One of the features of the account alluded to the existence of experienced elements from Bahrain's society with good education and knowledge of the outside world who had failed to exert their influence on the Adviser, or on the political scene by restraining

⁶⁰⁷ Eden to Eisenhower, 19 March 1956, (also found in Boyle, 125).

⁶⁰⁸ BDEEP, Series B, Part III, vol. 4, 'Egypt and the Defence of the Middle East' 1953-1956. Doc. 635: CAB 128 30/1, CM 24(56)5, 'Middle East': Cabinet conclusions on countering Egyptian policy. 21 March 1956.

⁶⁰⁹ TNA, DEFE 4/85/35, C.O.S. (56)35th Meeting, 23 March 1956.

⁶¹⁰ 'Bernard Burrows, Residency's Report for the Month of April 1956', 1-10 (4).

⁶¹¹ Al-Bakir, *From Bahrain to Exile*, 113 and 116-17.

extremist elements from taking control of the situation, nor on influencing society as a whole. On the contrary these elements had withdrawn from the political scene altogether. When invited by the Government to participate in its committees and councils they turned such offers down and did not voice their opinion on current events, even to the Ruler. However they were known to be paying 'contributions to NUC funds for fear of having their windows broken, rather than as an investment in political security'.⁶¹²

Britain's Ambassador to Iran, Sir Roger Stevens, warned the FO that the cohesiveness of the Baghdad Pact was at stake, undermined by the conflict in Bahrain. He referred to an unspecified Iranian newspaper that had reported that Britain sought Iraqi aid in the form of armed troops to be stationed in Bahrain. The publication urged Iraqis not to accept Britain's request and called for the Bahraini issue to be raised at the upcoming Baghdad Pact Council Meeting.⁶¹³ The Iranians, it seemed, were more concerned about the conflict in Bahrain (due to their claim of sovereignty over the islands) than they were in supporting the coalition's own interests.⁶¹⁴

Al-Watan of 28 March announced that the Government's Board of Enquiry had launched its first in a series of public investigations into the events that had unfolded in Bahrain between 2 to 16 March. Two of the earliest citizens to come forward with testimony (in particular about the Lloyd car-stoning incident) were Abdulla Al-Wazzan and Mohammed Al-Shirawi. According to the newspaper a total

⁶¹² TNA, FO 371/120545, Burrows to FO, 26 March 1956.

⁶¹³ TNA, FO 371/120545, Roger Stevens to FO, 30 March 1956.

⁶¹⁴ For information on the alleged Iranian claim of Bahrain see J.B. Kelly, 'The Persian Claim in Bahrain', *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)*, 33.1 (1957), 51-70.

of twenty-five statements had been presented by 6 April.⁶¹⁵ *The Manchester Guardian* also covered the proceedings of the Board of Enquiry on 7 April but the newspaper reported that no witnesses had come forward and that the hearings had been adjourned to the following day.⁶¹⁶

Stephen Harper of the *Daily Express* published an article on 31 March entitled 'They all stop for Abdul Aziz' in reference to Al-Shamlan, the new figurehead of the NUC. The article highlighted Al-Shamlan's influence on his followers during his presence at the Board of Enquiry's hearings.⁶¹⁷ Harper's editorial caught the attention of Eden who demanded more information on the Bahraini nationalist.⁶¹⁸ Eden's request was based on a letter to the FO by Sir Freddie Bishop the Principal Private Secretary to the Prime Minister. The note described the article in Eden's view to have been rather 'unpleasant'.⁶¹⁹

The British Embassy in Cairo kept a close eye on Al-Bakir's movement during his time in Egypt. The Embassy informed the FO that based on an editorial published in Egypt's *Al-Ahram* (The Pyramids), there had been a meeting in late March between the Bahraini nationalist leader and Al-Sadat. Al-Bakir was also due to give a press conference on Bahrain, it said, adding that the British had expelled Al-Bakir from Bahrain.⁶²⁰

Trevelyan gave an account to the FO dated 30 March of Al-Bakir's press conference in Cairo. He said that Al-Bakir had claimed that he had left Bahrain in

⁶¹⁵ 'Hayet Tahqiq tabda Amalaha' [The Investigative Committee Begins its Work], *Al-Watan*, 6 April 1956.

⁶¹⁶ 'Bahrein Inquiry', *The Manchester Guardian*, 7 April 1956, 5.

⁶¹⁷ S. Harper, 'They all stop for Abdul Aziz', *Daily Express*, 31 March 1956, 2.

⁶¹⁸ TNA, FO 371/120545, D.M.H. Riches on Al-Shamlan, 5 April 1956.

⁶¹⁹ TNA, FO 371/120545, Bishop to FO, 2 April 1956.

⁶²⁰ TNA, FO 371/120545, Trevelyan to FO, 29 March 1956.

return for a guarantee by Britain to officially recognise the NUC. He described Bahrain as 'being governed by steel and fire' and blamed the 'British "Inspector"' (meaning Burrows) for interfering in Bahraini affairs and obstructing reform. He went on to assert that the British had purposely 'defamed' the nationalist movement by describing it as 'communist' and by claims that it was funded by Egypt. He added that Britain controlled Bahrain through twenty British firms employing 12,000, of which only 2,500 were Bahrainis.⁶²¹ Following these remarks, Burrows asked the British Embassy in Cairo to further investigate the matter and to ask Al-Bakir if he had actually made these statements.⁶²²

Audsley, the Labour Counsellor who had earlier met with the Bahraini nationalist to discuss labour issues in Bahrain, interviewed Al-Bakir at the British Embassy in Cairo on 7 April to discuss reports of his claims in the Egyptian press. By Audsley's account, Al-Bakir had said 'quite bluntly that it recorded accurately the main points of his statement'. The Bahraini nationalist leader did not hide his personal antipathy towards Belgrave and vowed to pursue his removal 'until he, his wife and his son have left for good'. In Audsley's view, Al-Bakir blamed Britain for his exile and seemed not to have taken the issue too well, as he no longer viewed Britain as a friend, but as an enemy. It was also recorded that Al-Sadat had provided him with a flat in Cairo's upmarket Zamalek district for his stay.⁶²³

Riches informed Burrows on 10 April that an anonymous but 'reliable source' had reported that Al-Bakir had conducted further meetings with Al-Sadat and other

⁶²¹ TNA, FO 371/120545, Trevelyan to FO, 30 March 1956.

⁶²² TNA, FO 371/120545, Burrows to FO, 31 March 1956.

⁶²³ TNA, FO 371/120546, Chancery at British Embassy to Residency, 28 April 1956.

members of the WIYC. Riches sought the Resident's opinion about persuading the Ruler to allow Al-Bakir to return to Bahrain as he might be doing more damage in Egypt than he would be in Bahrain.⁶²⁴ This was discussed with both Burrows and Gault to see if the matter should be raised with the Ruler. They both agreed that it would be better not to raise the issue and they thought that the Ruler would be reluctant to accept it.⁶²⁵

In April the Government of Bahrain offered to arrange a meeting between the NUC's leadership and the newly-appointed Administration Council. They refused to meet the Council. The Resident also understood and reported in a despatch to the FO that a senior unnamed Shi'ite member had resigned from the NUC. The member's resignation was in opposition to the hardline policy adopted by the Party, he said.⁶²⁶ The resignation was confirmed in Belgrave's memoir, although he did not name the individual, saying only that he was one of its eight frontline members. In Belgrave's opinion the resignation came as a result of the former member's opposition to the Party's 'violently anti-British speeches'.⁶²⁷

That member was possibly Mohsin Al-Tajir and the *raison d'être* behind his resignation was unearthed in 1957 by WJ Adams of the Political Agency of Dubai in the Trucial States. He had interviewed Al-Tajir's son, Mehdi. According to him his father's resignation was based on two issues. The first was his disapproval of using the NUC's funds to send students to Egypt as he viewed this to be 'a waste of money' and that their finances should not be spent outside Bahrain. The second was that

⁶²⁴ TNA, FO 371/120545, D.M.H. Riches at FO to Bahrain, 10 April 1956.

⁶²⁵ TNA, FO 371/120546, Burrows to FO, 28 April 1956.

⁶²⁶ TNA, FO 371/120545, Burrows to FO, 9 April 1956.

⁶²⁷ Belgrave, *Personal Column*, 225-26.

the NUC was 'foolish in trying to attack the Bahrain Government and British Foreign Policy at the same time'.⁶²⁸

On assessing Britain's Middle East policy, and using Bahrain as an example, Sir Norman Brook, the Cabinet Secretary, shared his views with the Prime Minister in a letter of 14 April. Brook started his letter with a quote from one of Eden's own Cabinet papers from 1953 in which the Prime Minister when Foreign Secretary proclaimed: 'In the second half of the 20th century we cannot hope to maintain our position in the Middle East by the methods of the last century'. On nationalist movements the paper urged 'to harness these movements rather than to struggle against them'. Brook later provided Eden with his thoughts as he declared that 'These are the principles which should, I believe, guide our policy in the Middle East'. He further warned that since nationalist power was rising in the Middle East, supporting their governments would be regarded by such movements as a form of occupation. Although it was essential to sustain law and order, Brook believed that Britain might be setting itself up 'against forces of nationalism which may be the Government of tomorrow'. Brook also feared that, given Britain's current stance, his country might end up 'backing the wrong horse'.

The Cabinet Secretary saw Bahrain 'to be a case in point' and understood the nationalist movement there to be 'not at present anti-British'. However if Britain continued with its policies in Bahrain he thought that it might force the Movement to seek support from elsewhere, from Egypt, for example. Brook certainly did not wish to see 'another Glubb incident in Bahrain' and so he advocated a push towards

⁶²⁸ TNA, FO 1016/551, W.J. Adams from Political Agency in Dubai to Residency, 17 June 1957.

Belgrave's departure and the swift appointment of another British expert in his place. On Nasser and his influence, Brook warned that 'He will direct his appeal to nationalist and democratic movements'. A handwritten note was appended to the last comment – an aside, perhaps scratched in by an angry Eden, which reads: 'but he [Nasser] doesn't practice democracy'.⁶²⁹ Bishop, Eden's Aide wrote back in response to Brook's letter saying 'I wish I could say that the Prime Minister received your views with delight, or even appreciation'. Bishop noted that Eden thought that the 'general principle' could not 'safely be applied in Bahrain'.⁶³⁰

A tape recording of the NUC's appeal 'to the Arabs and the UN to save them from the imperialism of Persia and Sir C Belgrave' was played to Lloyd, Riches, and the Permanent Undersecretary Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick. This stimulated a debate and led them to question the FO's policy on Bahrain. Kirkpatrick believed that 'pussyfoot methods' must be adopted by the Ruler in his dealings with the NUC. In other words Kirkpatrick suggested that the Ruler should not commit himself to the Movement. Riches, on the other hand, considered adopting a policy of restraint in the Administration's dealings with the NUC.⁶³¹ Based on this discussion a telegram from the Eastern Department was sent to the Residency in Juffair on 14 April. The telegram instructed the Residency to let it be known to the Ruler that he should not take any steps that might cause an 'unwanted reaction' by the nationalists. And then, in an apparent *volte face*, the telegram instructed the Residency to give the

⁶²⁹ TNA, PREM 11/1457, Minute on the Middle East from Brook to Eden, 14 April 1956.

⁶³⁰ TNA, PREM 11/1457, Bishop to Brook, 15 April 1956.

⁶³¹ TNA, FO 371/120545, D.M.H. Riches on Bahrain, 12 April 1956.

Administration freedom to arrest any member of the Party who encouraged others towards violence.⁶³²

Lloyd forwarded to Eden a draft copy of a Cabinet paper on the situation in Bahrain.⁶³³ The paper, dated 14 April, provided an overview of the Movement in Bahrain and the complex Sunni-Shi'ite political structure on the islands. In relation to the NUC and Egyptian ties Lloyd said that

There is no evidence that the reform movement is directly sponsored by Egypt, but in the present state of the Middle East, Egypt is looked upon as the fount of progressive political ideas and the Bahraini leaders undoubtedly seek their inspiration there.

Lloyd also brought to the forefront the NUC's opposition to the enrolment of Iraqi officers in Bahrain's Police Force. The Foreign Secretary believed that British policy *vis-à-vis* Bahrain needed 'to adopt a middle way, pushing the Ruler to go a little faster and the reformists a little more slowly along the path of constitutional advance'. The paper was discussed at a Cabinet meeting held on 17 April. On Belgrave's role, Lloyd maintained that

Sir Charles Belgrave had held this position for thirty years, but he had not lost the confidence of most of his British assistants and of many of the people in London who had interests in the Persian Gulf.

Nevertheless Lloyd sealed Belgrave's fate for the general security of Britain in the Arabian Gulf as he 'recommended that appropriate steps should be taken to secure his retirement'. He was also determined to have a British assistant hired to gradually take on the Adviser's role. He also cautioned that Belgrave's dismissal only weeks following Glubb's discharge from service 'would be a blow to British

⁶³² TNA, FO 371/120545, D.M.H. Riches at FO to Residency, 14 April 1956.

⁶³³ TNA, FO 371/120545, Bishop on Draft of Cabinet Paper on Bahrain, 11 April 1956.

prestige in the Middle East' and said it was imperative that Belgrave's departure should be presented as if he 'was retiring of his own volition in order to give way to a younger man'. Britain, he said, should look for a suitable candidate for the position and adopt whatever method was necessary to convince the Ruler. The Cabinet approved the proposal of the Foreign Secretary and suggested that the Minister should prepare a list of candidates to meet with Eden. Furthermore, it agreed to seek the best way possible to convince the Ruler to let go of Belgrave.⁶³⁴

A high-ranked Soviet delegation arrived on a visit to Britain on 19 April, invited by Eden in the summer of 1955.⁶³⁵ Prior to the visit, Eden informed Eisenhower of what Britain had intended to discuss with the Russians during their stay. The Prime Minister was going to underline to the Soviets 'that our Middle Eastern oil supplies are a vital interest and that any attempt to deny them to us will create a most dangerous state of tension'.⁶³⁶ The Soviet delegation included Prime Minister Nikolai Bulganin, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR and Nikita Khrushchev a Member of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR.⁶³⁷ Eden recorded in his memoir that he had informed 'the Russians that the uninterrupted supply of oil were literally vital to our economy', and, as a result, the situation in the Middle East had overshadowed discussions. Eden went further as he declared Britain's intention *vis-à-vis* securing oil and that it 'would fight for it'. The Soviets on their part criticised Britain for setting up the Baghdad Pact.⁶³⁸ The

⁶³⁴ TNA, CAB 129/80, C.P. (56) 98, Bahrain, 14 April 1956; and TNA, CAB 128/30, C.M. (56), 29th conclusions, 17 April 1956.

⁶³⁵ *Descent to Suez*, 19 April 1956, 353-54.

⁶³⁶ Eden to Eisenhower, 18 April 1956, (also found in Boyle, 126-27).

⁶³⁷ 'Court Circular', *The Times*, 23 April 1956, 12.

⁶³⁸ Eden, *Full Circle*, 357-59.

Soviet arms deal with the Egyptians in 1955, disturbances in Jordan, and Bahrain aided by Egyptian propaganda must have increased Eden's doubts about Soviet penetration of the region and particularly the targeting of the oil-rich Arabian Gulf by Nasser.

The Financial Times issued a summary of developments in Bahrain in an article entitled, 'Anti-British Danger in Bahrein' on 27 April. The report said that although Bahrain witnessed a phase of 'serious demonstrations' a period of calm had overtaken the islands. But the state of serenity was due to expire following the end of *Ramadan* which began on the second week of April and was due to end in May. The newspaper viewed 'a certain divergence of views between the Ruler of Bahrein and his British Adviser'. The newspaper did not give details on the 'divergence'. *The Financial Times* also considered 'the Egypt-inspired' NUC 'not to represent the views of the most educated and influential part of the Bahrein community, the Manama merchants'. Of the Party's prime objectives it believed was the elimination of 'British influence in Bahrein'.⁶³⁹ The article caught Eden's attention and he requested that Lloyd provide his comments on it. Riches answered the Prime Minister on Lloyd's behalf. Riches saw the newspaper's assessment that the NUC's goal was to end British authority was wrong. As for the NUC not representing the views of the merchants of Manama as a whole, unsurprisingly that view, in the FO's opinion, was accurate.⁶⁴⁰

⁶³⁹ 'Fears of Renewed Riots Next Month, Anti-British Danger in Bahrein', *The Financial Times*, 27 April 1956, 2.

⁶⁴⁰ TNA, FO 371/120546, D.M.H. Riches' Minutes on Newspaper Article, 27 April 1956.

Further division between the senior members of the NUC surfaced when intelligence reports presented to the FO through the Residency suggested that two senior Sunni members of the NUC had sent a private letter to Al-Bakir in Egypt. The letter criticised him for his comments made through the press. Moreover, the two were critical of Al-Bakir 'aligning the Movement with Egypt'. Regardless of Al-Bakir's activities in Egypt, the Resident believed that with Al-Bakir's absence the Movement had lost its allure in Bahrain.⁶⁴¹

Rumours once again began to circulate about the possibility that the NUC would declare a five-day strike starting on 18 May with the likelihood of violence to follow. More than seven hundred volunteers were ready to take part in the strike. It was hoped that new negotiations between the Administration and the NUC would ease the situation.⁶⁴²

Eden in a short minute on the situation in Bahrain was deeply disturbed at events on the islands. He expressed his frustration at withdrawing the idea of having Iraqi police reinforcements on the islands and the Prime Minister exclaimed: 'Why did it have to be conducted in this way?' He later asserted that newspapers' coverage of Bahrain 'seem[ed] to be justified'. Eden added: 'I confess that all this shakes my confidence in Burrows and fills me with apprehension for the future unless we make a real effort to take matters in hand'.⁶⁴³ A pattern and a motivation is beginning to emerge: Eden was concerned at how the press handled the Bahraini issue seeing this as a judgement of his own and the Government's work and policy.

⁶⁴¹ TNA, FO 371/120546, Burrows to FO, 28 April 1956.

⁶⁴² TNA, FO 371/120546, Burrows to FO, 3 May 1956.

⁶⁴³ TNA, FO 371/120546, M.97/56m, Prime Minister's Personal Minute on Bahrain, 4 May 1956.

The Prime Minister attended a meeting on the situation in Bahrain at the request of AD Dodds-Parker of the Foreign Secretary's office. Reports of the meeting did not list the other attendees but recorded that it had criticised the Administration's approach in neither containing the Movement nor reaching a point of conciliation with it. Eden noted the importance of strengthening Bahrain's police. He also recommended the gradual introduction of Iraqi personnel into the force. After Eden had been briefed about the latest developments he experienced a *volte-face* about the Resident, recognising 'Burrows's extra-ordinary difficult position' in managing the crisis and that he had shown 'considerable skill and patience' in doing so.⁶⁴⁴

Based on the rumours of coming strikes in Bahrain the British Cabinet discussed once again the Bahraini dilemma on 10 May. Fearing that strikes might lead to disturbances, the Prime Minister recommended that Britain's Navy should take sole responsibility for the area. Accordingly, the Cabinet invited Sir Walter Monckton, the Minister of Defence, to assume responsibility for the stability of Arabian Gulf region and the protection of Britain's oil supplies from there.⁶⁴⁵

The *Chicago Sun-Times* newspaper published reports by American journalist Joseph Alsop on current affairs in Bahrain. Alsop praised Belgrave for his work in developing Bahrain over the years by building hospitals, roads, the electricity supply, and schools. Regarding the NUC, Alsop believed that the Party was 'strongly supported by the Egyptian Government of Gamal Abdel Nasser' and aimed to seize power from the Bahraini Administration. Alsop claimed to have interviewed

⁶⁴⁴ TNA, FO 371/120546, A.D. Dodds-Parker's Minutes on Bahrain, 9 May 1956.

⁶⁴⁵ TNA, CAB 128/30, C.M. (56) 35th conclusions, 10 May 1956.

supporters of the NUC although he gave no details about what was said and shed no light onto the views expressed. He, nevertheless, recalled as he conducted the interviews that the NUC spokesmen with whom he spoke 'were educated and polished' at the schools founded by the Ruler and his Adviser. The situation to the journalist called to mind a line from Shakespeare's *King Lear*: "How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless child". Alsop, likewise, saw the situation in Bahrain to 'make good material for the most sardonic sort of political comedy'.⁶⁴⁶

In May the Board of Enquiry concluded its investigation into the 'Month of March incidents' but the findings were not published until June. Following the Board's conclusion, a pamphlet was issued by the NUC. It criticised the Board's decision to conclude its work without interviewing all possible witnesses the Party believed were involved in the disturbance from the police's side.⁶⁴⁷ The claim by the NUC was accurate, as a conflict had developed earlier between the Board of Enquiry and Colonel Hamersley over the latter's refusal to have further policemen interviewed by the Board. Hamersley believed that the investigation affected the police's morale and he threatened to resign. Belgrave suggested having the Board interview the officers at the Police Fort instead of the temporary headquarter set up for the Board, a matter that was rejected by the Board. Furthermore, the Board wished to have the proceedings open to the public, which also proved to be a point of difficulty.⁶⁴⁸

⁶⁴⁶ J.W. Alsop, 'The Serpent's Tooth', *Chicago Sun-Times*, 8 May 1956, 24.

⁶⁴⁷ TNA, FO 1016/467, The National Union Committee: Pamphlet No. 51, 6 May 1956.

⁶⁴⁸ TNA, FO 1016/467, Residency to FO, 10 May 1956.

Gault believed that the police felt during their enquiry that they were really on trial and were not just being questioned. Further, verbal threats were made at the police from crowds that gathered outside of the Board of Enquiry's headquarters. It was then that Colonel Hamersley's decision came not to allow his Police Force to be further demoralised by the proceedings.⁶⁴⁹

On the second week of May two telegrams from the Residency grabbed Eden's attention. The first, dated 7 May, included details of a meeting between the Resident and the Adviser in which the former discussed Belgrave's retirement plans. According to Burrows the Adviser 'had expected to stay for another "couple of years"'. When Belgrave enquired about the timetable the Residency had in mind, Burrows informed him that he would discuss the matter with him on a different occasion.⁶⁵⁰ The other telegram of 9 May reported on a follow-up meeting in which Belgrave was said to have expressed his concern about the effects his exit would have on the Ruler in light of Sheikh Salman's 'general doubts about our support'. Nonetheless the Resident urged Belgrave to proceed and raise the topic of his departure with the Ruler.⁶⁵¹ Eden noted in a personal minute to Lloyd how 'disturbed' he was with the two telegrams. He referred to the Cabinet's paper presented by Lloyd in April in which it was decided that the initial move was to find a replacement to Belgrave before taking any further steps. But Eden's biggest concern was that 'the Ruler is beginning to lose confidence in us'. He furthermore

⁶⁴⁹ TNA, FO 1016/467, Gault to Burrows, 31 May 1956.

⁶⁵⁰ TNA, PREM 11/1472, Despatch 419, Burrows to FO, 7 May 1956.

⁶⁵¹ TNA, PREM 11/1472, Despatch 426, Burrows to FO, 9 May 1956.

feared that a situation much worse than Glubb's was heading its way if they lost 'both the Ruler and Belgrave'.⁶⁵²

The Foreign Secretary submitted a situation paper to the Cabinet on 14 May on Britain's position in the Gulf. In it Lloyd asserted that the NUC does 'not openly attack the British connection' and that the Movement was directed against Belgrave's centralisation of powers and not 'against him as an Englishman'. He expressed his concern that the anger with Belgrave will be turned against HMG.⁶⁵³

With the threat of strikes persisting by the NUC, the Ruler established a direct contact point with the Party. On 15 May Sheikh Salman met with four members of the NUC at his palace and this was to develop into a series of meetings between the two sides. The meeting started with the NUC's objection towards the presence of Belgrave at the meeting. During the meeting an agreement was reached to the formation of Health and Education Councils with half appointed and half elected members, a matter that had been agreed upon the previous year. However the new arrangement was to exclude members of the ruling family as appointed members on the Councils and for Councils to have the right to nominate their own Chairmen. The NUC also objected to the formation of the Administration Council since it did not include elected members. The Ruler during the meeting agreed to the NUC's *cris de coeur* to relax censorship laws by adopting new print regulations. Further discussions were postponed to 20 May.⁶⁵⁴ Al-Shamlan, E Fakhroo, Kamal-

⁶⁵² TNA, PREM 11/1472, M.105/56, Secret: Prime Minister's Personal Minute, 10 May 1956.

⁶⁵³ TNA, CAB 129/81, C.P. (56) 122, Persian Gulf: An Analysis of our Position and Problems, 14 May 1956.

⁶⁵⁴ TNA, FO 1016/467, Burrows to FO, 15 May 1956.

el-Deen, and Al-Alaiwat attended the meeting on behalf of the NUC. Minutes of the meeting were recorded by Yusuf Al-Shirawi on behalf of the Government.⁶⁵⁵

On the same day that the Ruler met with the NUC, a discussion took place in the British Cabinet regarding Belgrave's future and Nutting updated them. He believed that there existed a growing sense of distrust aimed at Belgrave in Bahrain. Nutting feared that the Ruler would eventually give in to public pressure and dispense with Belgrave before a successor could be appointed. Therefore, it was essential to secure a deputy to the Adviser while Belgrave was still active in his position. However the Minister cautioned that 'the Ruler's confidence in us should not be shaken by any premature disclosure of our intentions'. After a deputy had been chosen, Belgrave must be approached and persuaded to accept a deputy to aid him and he must then aim to win over the Ruler to influence him in allowing him to takeover all of Belgrave's duties.⁶⁵⁶ An early list of candidates to replace Belgrave was proposed by Riches. They were: Duncan Weir, Geoffery Hawkesworth the former Sudanese Provincial Governor, Lord Oxford and Asquith the former Adviser to the Libyan Prime Minister, and a JS Hewitt who worked for the Saudi Arabian anti-locust mission. At the very beginning of the process of candidate selection, Weir and Hawkesworth on personal grounds withdrew their names.⁶⁵⁷

On the mere thought of having JH Belgrave, the Adviser's son, replace his father, Lloyd commented: 'The son is not fit to "inherit" Belgrave's position'.⁶⁵⁸ In

⁶⁵⁵ TNA, FO 1016/467, Translation: Minutes by Yusuf Al-Shirawi of Meeting held at Riffa Palace, 15 May 1956.

⁶⁵⁶ TNA, CAB 128/30, C.M. (56) 36th conclusions, 15 May 1956.

⁶⁵⁷ TNA, FO 371/120549, D.M.H. Riches on Proposal of an Assistant to Sir Charles Belgrave, 17 May 1956.

⁶⁵⁸ TNA, CAB 195/14, Discussion on Bahrain, 17 April 1956.

addition to the list of possible candidates to replace Belgrave (according to a conversation between Kirkpatrick and Lloyd), the former informed the Foreign Secretary of the Residency's recommendation to promote GWR Smith, the Director of Customs, who had worked as acting Adviser during Belgrave's absence on leave, to succeed him and take up some of his duties.⁶⁵⁹

In Egypt, in a move that would further alienate Nasser from the West, the Egyptian leader announced his country's recognition of communist China on 16 May.⁶⁶⁰ Nutting considered the move by Nasser as a response to the fear that an arms embargo might be placed on the Middle East by the Western powers.⁶⁶¹ Also in Egypt Al-Bakir met again with Audsley for the second time in the third week of May. The nationalist informed Audsley that the demand to remove Belgrave from power was 'unalterable'. The Secretary of the NUC produced a telegram to the British official from members of his Party in Bahrain that proposed the announcement of a general strike with an undisclosed time period with another demand for Belgrave's removal. Al-Bakir claimed to have opposed taking such measures, but its purpose was to inform the British that the NUC was capable of its execution. As for Al-Sanhouri, Al-Bakir believed his delay in travelling to Bahrain to work on editing the Penal Code was due to the expert's connections with the former regime of King Farouk. Al-Sadat saw him to be the best selection to take on the responsibility of rewriting the code but, Al Bakir said, the choice was not favoured by Nasser. The Bahraini nationalist believed that Al-Sanhouri would not be allowed

⁶⁵⁹ TNA, FO 371/120549, I. Kirkpatrick Minutes, 22 May 1956.

⁶⁶⁰ 'Setbacks to U.S. Policy on China', *The Times*, 18 May 1956, 10.

⁶⁶¹ Nutting, *Nasser*, 138.

to travel to Bahrain before July.⁶⁶² This confirmed *The Economist's* account that the Egyptian legal expert was purposely not allowed out of Egypt since 'apparently he was not in the *junta's* good books'.⁶⁶³ The reason why he might not have been on good terms with the regime was that he had stood for a return to a 'constitutional government in 1954', thus opposing Nasser during the crisis that overtook Egypt in 1954.⁶⁶⁴

During Al-Bakir's stay in Egypt he also met with the General Secretary of the Arab Lawyers Union headquartered in Cairo. The aim of the meeting was to convince the General Secretary to raise the issue of Bahrain with the UN Human Rights Committee.⁶⁶⁵

By the month of May the Bahraini Health and Education Councils had started to take shape. The Council elections that were due to be held in March were put off until April. All six candidates who ran for the Health Council were selected as no other candidates had been nominated.⁶⁶⁶ Then followed the Administration's announcement on 19 May of its appointed members of the two councils. In the Health Council the following were nominated: Ahmed Ali Kanoo, Rashid Abdul-Rahman Al-Zayani, Abdul-Razeq Khunji, Mohammed Al-Mahroos, Hamad Mubarak Al-Fadhel, and Abdul-Aziz Al-Janussani. For the Education Council: Abdul-Rahman

⁶⁶² TNA, FO 1016/467, Chancery at British Embassy to Residency, 18 May 1956.

⁶⁶³ "'Faster, Faster..." in Bahrain', *The Economist*, 14 July 1956, 141.

⁶⁶⁴ A. Goldschmidt Jr., 'Abd al-Razzaq al-Sanhuri', *Biographical Dictionary of Modern Egypt* (London: 2000), 180-81.

⁶⁶⁵ 'Qathiyat Al-Bahrain Tuarath ala Lajnat Huquq Al-Insan fi Al-Umam Al-Mutahida' [Bahrain's Case is Presented to the United Nation's Human Rights Committee], *Al-Watan*, 15 June 1956, 1.

⁶⁶⁶ 'Bernard Burrows, Residency's Report for the Month of May 1956', in *Political Diaries of the Persian Gulf*, vol. 20 1955-1958, ed. R.L. Jarman (London: 1990), 1-8 (2).

Abdul-Wahab Al-Zayani, Mohammed Yusuf Jalal, Abdulla Yusuf Ali Akhber, Ahmed Hassan Kanoo, Saleh Abdulla Al-Saleh, and Hassan Abdul-Rasool were chosen.⁶⁶⁷

The Government had fulfilled a request by the Movement to re-appoint the two Councils excluding members of the ruling family. That was followed in May with the Government's announcement to end censorship and establish a free press in Bahrain, effective from 21 May.⁶⁶⁸ The law also allowed for the freedom to publish pamphlets and circulars locally.⁶⁶⁹

A new round of discussions between the Ruler and the NUC was conducted on 20 May. The meeting lasted for three hours and was of no consequence due to a dispute among the NUC's members. According to the Residency the NUC's delegation renewed topics which had already been discussed and agreed and had refused to approve the minutes of the last meeting. The meeting was adjourned until 27 May.⁶⁷⁰ The NUC issued a new circular on 26 May renewing its demand for the dismissal of Belgrave. In the circular they declared that 'thousands of letters' had reached them from Bahrainis pressing them to dismiss the Adviser.⁶⁷¹

The next round of talks between the Administration and the NUC took place on 27 May. The Ruler informed the NUC's representatives of his desire to discuss the Health and Education Councils before proceeding to review other issues. This was rejected by the NUC as they wished to have all points of discussion concluded before a final agreement was reached. The issue regarding the Administration

⁶⁶⁷ TNA, FO 1016/467, The New Government's Appointees, 19 May 1956.

⁶⁶⁸ 'Awdat Al-Huriyah ila Al-Sahafa' [The Return of Press Freedom], *Al-Watan*, 18 May 1956, 1.

⁶⁶⁹ 'Government of Bahrain: Annual Report for Year 1956', in *The Bahrain Government Annual Reports 1924-1956*, vol. IV 1947-1952, ed. R.L. Jarman, (Buckinghamshire: 1986), 1-111 (7).

⁶⁷⁰ TNA, FO 1016/467, Burrows to FO, 20 May 1956.

⁶⁷¹ TNA, FO 1016/467, Burrows to FO, 26 May 1956.

Council was reopened as the NUC wished to have elected members on the Council. The Party also criticised the Administration on the conclusion of the Board of Enquiry's investigation. The next meeting was scheduled for 2 June.⁶⁷²

Lloyd informed the British Cabinet on 29 May that he had given further consideration to the Bahraini conflict. He declared that a new approach must be adopted to solve the Belgrave question. Instead of focusing on the Adviser's replacement 'an independent enquiry should first be held into the general structure of the Administration' he suggested. Should such an enquiry be accepted by the Ruler and his Adviser, the public would then be informed that Belgrave was soon 'expected to relinquish his position'. The measure would secure public opinion and reduce general apprehension. The Cabinet agreed with Lloyd's proposal and requested him to seek the necessary steps to achieve it.⁶⁷³

With pressure mounting on the Adviser and the fear of more trouble, the Foreign Secretary recommended to the Residency that they arrange a dignified exit for Belgrave from Bahrain. Lloyd followed the line he had proposed and which had been accepted by the Cabinet. The Bahraini Administration was to hire an expert to review its work and an effort must be made to effect Belgrave's retirement. A public announcement would then be made that, due to Belgrave's forthcoming retirement, an expert would be appointed to review the Government's operations. It was hoped that this move would ease tensions in Bahrain.⁶⁷⁴

⁶⁷² TNA, FO 1016/467, Burrows to FO, 28 May 1956.

⁶⁷³ TNA, CAB 128/30, C.M. (38) 56, 38th conclusions, 29 May 1956.

⁶⁷⁴ TNA, FO 1016/467, Despatch 598, SOSFA to Residency, 30 May 1956.

Nonetheless, the Foreign Secretary intended to keep the role of the Adviser but with a different title. Lloyd adopted on 30 May Burrows' earlier proposal of promoting Smith, Bahrain's Director of Customs. Lloyd's plan was to appoint Smith as the Director of Finance and, following Belgrave's departure, he would be granted greater authority over administrative affairs in Bahrain. On the Arabian Gulf as a whole, Lloyd further recommended that in the future no British official was to be placed in influential positions and those that were in place should keep a low profile.⁶⁷⁵

On receiving these recommendations, Burrows immediately met with the Ruler and suggested Smith for the position of overseeing the financial affairs of the state. The Ruler objected to the idea as it might displease Sayed Mahmood, a Shi'ite who ran the Accounts Department, since it would imply that Smith would have a bigger role than his. The Ruler's objection was not against having Smith take over some of Belgrave's responsibilities as such, but on his suggested title.⁶⁷⁶

The BBC's *Panorama* television programme visited Bahrain on 30 May to conduct interviews *vis-à-vis* developments in Bahrain as part of a feature on the Arab Gulf that included Kuwait.⁶⁷⁷ The *Panorama* 'Special' was presented by British politician and journalist Woodrow Wyatt. Al-Shamlan was featured in the programme as Wyatt interviewed him with other prominent members of the NUC surrounded by the new Party's Acting Secretary. In the interview Al-Shamlan spoke authoritatively with a good command of the English language. He was highly critical

⁶⁷⁵ TNA, FO 1016/467, Despatch 600, SOSFA to Residency, 30 May 1956.

⁶⁷⁶ TNA, FO 1016/467, Burrows to FO, 1 June 1956, 1.

⁶⁷⁷ *Sir Charles Dalrymple Belgrave's Personal Diaries*, 30 May 1956.

of Belgrave and his work in Bahrain, saying he had no expertise in administrative work. He also harshly criticised Belgrave, saying that the Adviser had done nothing to improve the country for over three decades. Additionally, Al-Shamlan regarded Belgrave as too old and that he had concentrated all power on himself. When asked about the riot that had greeted Lloyd during his visit to Bahrain, Al-Shamlan proclaimed that the riot did not target Lloyd but was an expression of dissatisfaction aimed at Belgrave. On the subject of Egyptian influence, Al-Shamlan stated that although they loved Egypt as a result of common traits shared by both states the Movement was not influenced by any external power. On cooperation with the Government of Bahrain, the Bahraini nationalist said that he wished to have all the NUC's demands met at one time and not in installments. This, he said, included Belgrave's departure.

Wyatt further interviewed random people on the streets of Manama, which gave a rare insight into Bahrainis' outlook on local developments and the Adviser. All those featured in the report overwhelmingly demanded in basic English that Belgrave leave the country immediately, one of them even wanted him to go 'in twenty-four hours'. The BBC special also featured an interview with Burrows. In the film the Resident explained the structure and work of the Residency and Political Agencies throughout the Gulf. On the policy adopted in internal politics of these states, Burrows explained that the Residency did not interfere in local politics unless it was asked for advice or when the Residency felt that the situation called for them to provide advice to the Rulers. Hussain Yateem, a Bahraini Sunni merchant,

when interviewed about Bahrain's economy and what merchants in Bahrain sought from the Government, answered simply: 'stability'.

Scenes from inside the Police Fort headquarters in Manama and the outside structure of the Ruler's palace in Riffa were shown. The final segment of the programme included a short interview with Belgrave on the local conflict. The report is the only known live interview with the Adviser on film. During the interview, Belgrave seemed rather nervous and uncomfortable. He said he thought that some of the demands forwarded by the NUC were reasonable but others were not. He also pointed to Wyatt that discussions with the NUC were still ongoing.⁶⁷⁸

Wyatt later described his stay in Bahrain in his own memoir and saying that he had become '*persona non grata*' on the islands. He went on to allege that when his interviews with locals was made known, a unit from Bahrain's 'local Army' (possibly he meant the police) sought to stop his activities. But by then he had managed to conclude all his interviews. Belgrave then asked Wyatt to leave the country.⁶⁷⁹ His diary entry of 2 June expressed his frustration at Wyatt's behaviour and his further knowledge of the NUC interviews.⁶⁸⁰ Wyatt would later play role in collecting funds to help with the defence of the exiled members of the Movement in St Helena as is described in Chapter Nine.

In early June a letter written by Hassan Al-Mahmood, a Bahraini from Muharraq was published in *Al-Watan*, criticising local cinemas for showing a pro-

⁶⁷⁸ 'Report on Bahrain', *Panorama*, BBC, 1956.

⁶⁷⁹ Wyatt, *Confessions of an Optimist*, 245-46.

⁶⁸⁰ *Sir Charles Dalrymple Belgrave's Personal Diaries*, 2 June 1956.

Baghdad Pact newsreel,⁶⁸¹ a testimony to the influence of Egyptian propaganda on Bahraini nationalists which argued that it was in their general interest to attack the anti-Soviet Pact.

On 3 June the Resident met Belgrave and advised him to review the country's administrative system according to the FO's instructions, a matter that was approved by the Adviser. Based on the proposal Belgrave met with the Ruler and provided the Residency his account of the proceedings. The Adviser informed the Ruler of his opinion that an overall review of the Administration must take place, paving the way for his exit. In reply the Ruler asked the Adviser whether the idea was his or was put to him. Belgrave acknowledged that the idea was proposed to him but that he himself genuinely wished to retire. On the conclusion of the meeting between the two, the Ruler proposed to Belgrave, based on Burrows' recommendation, to meet Smith and seek his views regarding the proposal that he take over the Adviser's duties.

Following on these developments Burrows recommended a new structure to the Government following Belgrave's departure. The hierarchy would consist of Smith as the Ruler's 'Head of his personal office', to be followed by the Administration Council, the Government's main operational body. Burrows further proposed to have Smith's appointment made following the end of summer after he was scheduled to return from a three-month holiday starting in June with an official announcement by the Ruler about his promotion. That announcement would

⁶⁸¹ H. Al-Mahmeed, '*Hilf Baghdad fi Dur Al-Cinema*' [The Baghdad Pact in Film Theatres], *Al-Watan*, 1 June 1956, 9.

coincide with the hiring of an expert to review the Administration.⁶⁸² Later, on 5 June, Lloyd approved Burrows' recommendations and further advised that Smith's new post was to be known as the 'Secretary to the Government of Bahrain'.⁶⁸³

A meeting was arranged between the Ruler and the NUC on 3 June to continue their dialogue. The parties discussed the inaugural sessions of the Health and Education Councils and why the NUC had failed to attend them, despite the Government's invitation to. They answered by informing the Ruler 'that other more important matters had to be settled first'. The NUC further questioned the Ruler about the Board of Enquiry's report, which had been presented to the Administration but not yet made public. According to the Residency's intelligence, the overall attitude of the NUC had recently been negative, due largely to internal divisions. The latest division within the political party came about when local merchants were 'trying to exercise a restraining influence' on the NUC. Burrows saw the NUC in clear opposition to the Administration Council. The reason for the Party's objection was due (in the Resident's opinion) to the Council's 'success in dealing with administrative problems and personal complaints'.⁶⁸⁴ Gault confirmed the Resident's views of the Administration Council's work since its establishment earlier in the year. In Gault's opinion the Council had 'fully justified its creation and has, in fact, served as a receiving agency and forum for discussing suggestions and requests from the public'. Additionally Gault associated previous disturbances in Muharraq to Muharraqis' general feeling that the Adviser had neglected them as he

⁶⁸² TNA, FO 1016/467, Despatch 510, Burrows to FO, 3 June 1956; also in TNA, FO 371/120572; and TNA, FO 371/120573, D.M.H. Riches to Burrows on Bahrain and Sir Charles Belgrave, 5 June 1956.

⁶⁸³ TNA, FO 1016/467, SOSFA to Residency, 5 June 1956.

⁶⁸⁴ TNA, FO 1016/467, Despatch 511, Burrows to FO, 3 June 1956.

had failed to provide the island with the range of services seen in other regions of Bahrain, such as piped water. The Council for its part adopted the plan to improve conditions in Muharraq and a scheme to build a fresh-water supply system.⁶⁸⁵

In a striking development the NUC in a new circular announced publically the formation of a Scouts organisation. Regulations of enrollment included a fee of 5 Rupees and a monthly subscription of 2 Rupees. Application was open to all Arabs with a minimum age set at sixteen.⁶⁸⁶ *Al-Watan* declared in June that the Scouts organisation established by the NUC had already reached a total of five hundred subscribers and that their numbers were expected to double.⁶⁸⁷

The Resident saw the objective of the Scouts organisation was to form a body able 'to control its followers or oppose the police, as it may decide at the time'. Even if the presence of such a force was genuine for the Party to control its supporters during strikes and rallies, to the Resident it was 'a serious threat to the authority of the State'.⁶⁸⁸ He doubted the Movement's motives as it seemed to be imitating dictators such as Benito Mussolini and Adolf Hitler, who both formed paramilitary units for their parties. Jassim Murad, a former member of the NUC, asserted that the Scouts movement was the brainchild of a party supporter named Mohammed Kamal Al-Shehabi. Murad also said that Al-Shehabi was influenced by Mussolini's Fascist Black Shirts organisation.⁶⁸⁹

⁶⁸⁵ TNA, FO 1016/467, Gault to Burrows, 31 May 1956.

⁶⁸⁶ TNA, FO 1016/467, The National Union Committee, Circular No. 56, 4 June 1956.

⁶⁸⁷ '*Al-Qafilah Taseer*' [The Caravan Marches On], *Al-Watan*, 15 June 1956, 7.

⁶⁸⁸ TNA, FO 1016/467, Burrows to FO, 12 June 1956.

⁶⁸⁹ '*Jassim Murad wa "Nishwar" Al-Sineen Al-Khamseen*' [Jassim and the 'Elegant Words' of Fifty Years], 9.

The Board of Enquiry's report was made public on the afternoon of 8 June. No immediate trouble was reported as a result of the report's issue. The NUC sent a letter to the Ruler informing him that they would not attend the scheduled meeting due on 9 June, but did not explain whether further meetings were expected to take place.⁶⁹⁰ Burrows explained that the NUC's decision to discontinue negotiations with the Ruler was decided on 7 June prior to the issue of the Board of Enquiry's report. The intention behind suspending negotiations was to force the Government to accept their proposals regarding the Administration Council, only then would discussions resume.⁶⁹¹ The main objection of the NUC to the Council centered upon the idea that its members would, at the same time be representing other government departments bringing into question transparency issues when evaluating these departments.⁶⁹²

The Board of Enquiry's report offered further details about the events that had unfolded in March. As to the origins of disturbances on 11 March the account laid the blame on a trivial dispute between a vegetable-seller and an inspector. The argument started between 9.30 am to 10.00 am. The vegetable-seller failed to come forward to present his testimony. The quarrel escalated when a policeman of Yemeni origin interfered. The policeman told the enquiry that he had been struck by the seller and had slapped him back. Crowds gathered at the scene and that prompted the policeman and three others on duty in the market to seek refuge at

⁶⁹⁰ TNA, FO 1016/467, Burrows to FO, 10 June 1956.

⁶⁹¹ TNA, FO 1016/467, Burrows to FO, 8 June 1956; and also in TNA, FO 371/120573, Burrows to FO, 8 June 1956.

⁶⁹² TNA, FO 371/120545, Translation of Note dated the 27.3.1956, submitted by the Committee of National Unity, to His Highness the Ruler of Bahrain, 27 March 1956.

the Municipality's Offices nearby. The policemen remained at the offices until after 3.15 pm when the police started to shoot at the besieging mob. The crowd was estimated at between four hundred and five hundred. The Board also believed that 'There is evidence that a section of the crowd was excited and was being urged by one particular unidentified man to affect an entrance into the Municipal Offices'. At 3.15 pm shots were heard that resulted in the police firing back. The shots later were identified to be possibly the use of fire 'crackers or squibs'. In the Board's view this level of reaction by the police was 'grossly excessive'.

The Board was not satisfied with both claims that the initial shots were fired from either the crowd or the police, as it was 'unable to solve the mystery'. Regarding the bullet retrieved from one of the victims' body, which was not used by the police, it was said to have struck the victim near to Ahmedi's Factory, which is some distance from the site of the actual incident. Most of the firing by the police was into the air. Had it been directed at the crowd, it could have resulted in a substantial number of casualties, the Board concluded. As for the Lloyd car-stoning incident in Muharraq, the Board was unable to identify any individual guilty of orchestrating the event.⁶⁹³

The Residency continued with its arrangements to promote Smith to his new post through the local administration. It was decided that Smith was to leave on 16 June and upon his return he would be appointed Secretary to the Government. Sayed Mahmood would travel to Britain in July to interview candidates to work in his department and meet an expert who would be assigned to review the country's

⁶⁹³ TNA, FO 371/120547, G.L. Peace and W.P.R. Mawdsley's Report of Board of Enquiry into the Disturbances in Bahrain, 2nd-16th March 1956, May 1956.

Administration.⁶⁹⁴ An official announcement on the matter was made by Bahrain's Administration on 9 June.⁶⁹⁵ With the new arrangement the title of Adviser to the Government of Bahrain following Belgrave's retirement would cease to exist.

Nothing was said about Belgrave's status. Lloyd expected, however, that the 'announcement of Mr. Smith's promotion will be interpreted in Bahrain as heralding retirement of Sir Charles Belgrave'.⁶⁹⁶ The Minister's expectations turned to be accurate as a scornful report on the front-page of *Al-Watan* declared that an unnamed senior government employee's papers were being extracted in one of the country's departments in preparation to bring his long tenure to an end. It also claimed that it was believed that another government employee currently employed in a prestigious position (Director of Customs) would take his position.⁶⁹⁷ *The Times* additionally covered Smith's appointment but did not link his promotion to Belgrave's removal.⁶⁹⁸

The Egyptian legal expert Al-Sanhouri visited the Oriental Counsellor Trevor Evans at the British Embassy in Cairo on 9 June, and told him that he had met with Al-Bakir who said that, although he believed in general Arab unity, he was realistic in his approach, as he only wished for internal political reform and did not intend for the British to leave at this stage. In return Al-Sanhouri suggested to Al Bakir that he should visit London to raise his issue of reform personally with HMG. Al-Sanhouri believed 'that perhaps Al-Bakir was not so much in favour with the

⁶⁹⁴ TNA, FO 1016/467, Burrows to FO, 7 June 1956; and also in FO 371/120573, Burrows to FO, 7 June 1956.

⁶⁹⁵ TNA, FO 1016/467, Belgrave's Administration Announcement No. 1970-22, 9 June 1956.

⁶⁹⁶ TNA, FO 1016/467, SOSFA to Residency, 8 June 1956.

⁶⁹⁷ 'Khabar Al-Youm' [Today's News], *Al-Watan*, 15 June 1956, 1.

⁶⁹⁸ 'New Bahrain Post: Briton As Secretary to Government', *The Times*, 18 June 1956, 8.

Egyptian authorities as might be supposed'. Furthermore Al-Bakir had requested weeks ago to have a private meeting with Nasser but this had not yet been granted. The British Chancery in Egypt gave a cautious review of the embassy's meeting with Al-Sanhouri and his thoughts about Al-Bakir as they knew that Nasser was very busy and 'it may be that it suits his present policy better to avoid giving us the impression that he is interfering in the affairs of Bahrain'.⁶⁹⁹

Egypt celebrated on 18 and 19 June the evacuation of the remaining troops in the Suez Canal Zone. Nasser gave a speech in which he vowed 'Egypt's adherence to complete neutrality'. The Soviet Union's Foreign Minister, Dmitri Shepilov, attended Nasser's speech.⁷⁰⁰ Bahrainis celebrated the evacuation, the Adviser wrote in his diary, noting that on the island of Muharraq flags were seen and people danced in celebration.⁷⁰¹

Bahrain was due again to be visited by yet another high-ranking international figure, this time it was India's Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru who was scheduled to stop over en route to London on 21 June. Intelligence reached the Resident indicating that the NUC had cabled Nehru prior to his visit to either ask him to support their political demands or mediate in negotiations with the Ruler. The Residency feared that demonstrations might take place on the occasion of the visit. Burrows deplored the idea of forwarding a letter to the Indian Government through the FO prior to the visit in an attempt to provide it with its overview of the political scene in Bahrain. What surprised the Resident in relation to the NUC's

⁶⁹⁹ TNA, FO 1016/467, Chancery at British Embassy to Bahrain, 9 June 1956.

⁷⁰⁰ 'The New Phase in Egypt', *The Times*, 20 June 1956, 9.

⁷⁰¹ *Sir Charles Dalrymple Belgrave's Personal Diaries*, 18 June 1956.

contact with Nehru was the nationalists' negative stance on the employment of Indian workers in Bahrain as perceived through their press.⁷⁰² *Al-Watan's* article 'Who are our Enemies?' aggressively condemned companies in Bahrain for hiring Indian and Pakistani labourers as an example of the nationalists' policy about foreigners gaining employment in Bahrain.⁷⁰³

The Administration expressed to Gault its fear that Nehru's visit would be greeted by a local demonstration and asked that the Indian plane be diverted to a different airport. It was also feared that Indians coming out to greet Nehru might clash with NUC sympathisers in Muharraq.⁷⁰⁴ The plane was not diverted as Britain's High Commissioner in India Sir Malcolm MacDonald decided to continue with the scheduled journey after consultation with Burrows who was at the time in London.⁷⁰⁵

The night before Nehru's arrival, Gault sent a firm warning through an unnamed Agency employee to the NUC to exercise restraint with their members and not to allow matters to get out of hand. Furthermore, as Egypt had just celebrated Britain's troop withdrawal from the Suez Canal Zone, it was feared that crowds might express their excitement on the occasion of Nehru's visit.⁷⁰⁶ The much-anticipated visit of Nehru went on without any incidents. Approximately a thousand

⁷⁰² TNA, FO 371/120546, Burrows to FO, 8 June 1956.

⁷⁰³ 'Ma'n hum A'adauna?' [Who are our Enemies?] *Al-Watan*, 26 August 1955, 2.

⁷⁰⁴ TNA, FO 371/120547, Gault to FO, 19 June 1956.

⁷⁰⁵ TNA, FO 371/120547, Malcolm MacDonald's Outward Telegram from Commonwealth Relations Office, 19 June 1956.

⁷⁰⁶ TNA, FO 371/120547, Despatch 577, Gault to FO, 21 June 1956; also in TNA, FO 371/120573, Gault to FO, 21 June 1956.

Arabs and Indians came to see the Indian leader during his short stop at Bahrain's Muharraq airport.⁷⁰⁷

Referring to past visits by Nasser, Al-Sadat, Lloyd, and Nehru; Gault expressed his fear to the FO that Nasser might be tempted to visit Bahrain. Though the Egyptian now had the capability of traveling directly from Egypt to locations like India and Pakistan, but the Political Agent feared that Nasser might 'seek to do so deliberately just to "show" us and to symbolise Egyptian penetration of the Persian Gulf'.⁷⁰⁸ However Nasser's short visit to Bahrain in 1955 proved to be his first and last.

The NUC celebrated the second anniversary of those who had fallen during the Police Fort clash in 1954 on 15 June at the Mu'min Mosque in Manama. Two thousand people attended the meeting. Al-Shamlan gave a speech in which he described the NUC's meetings with the Ruler. He said:

Our four meetings with the Ruler were absolutely fruitless and we have been unable to reach any result because, during the course of the conversation, the authority has not shown any good-will and real intention to fulfill our demands.⁷⁰⁹

Fearing an escalation by the NUC the Adviserate responded with a swift public statement about recent events. It declared that the Government had presented to the Party the names of its nominees to both the Health and Education Councils to which the NUC had objected. The Government then requested the Party to provide reasons for their objection in the following meeting, but the NUC failed to

⁷⁰⁷ TNA, FO 371/120547, Despatch 578, Gault to FO, 21 June 1956.

⁷⁰⁸ TNA, FO 371/120547, Gault to FO, 25 June 1956.

⁷⁰⁹ TNA, FO 1016/467, Report on the Meeting held Yesterday 15th June 1956 at Masjid Moamin by the National Union Committee, 16 June 1956.

do so. On the issue of the Administration Council and the insistence of the NUC to have public representatives on the Council, the announcement declared that the Ruler had informed the Party that the Council had been established on his own initiative and not via public demand as a body to assist his Administration's work. The announcement was concluded by the following statement: 'The door to discussions which the Committee has shut, is as far as the Government is concerned, still open'.⁷¹⁰

One of the problems of the meetings between the two sides was that there was no mutually-agreed agenda prior to the meetings, since both were relatively new at holding political discussions. Thus the topics of the meetings seemed to have arisen on the spot. Additionally the NUC displayed a poor sense of political tactics by insisting on presenting all their reform proposals in one unified package. The Party should have adopted a more flexible approach in its dealings with the Administration and taking its successes step by step.

Alarmed at the growth and development of the NUC's Scouts movement the Resident on 19 June asked the FO for its opinion regarding the organisation.⁷¹¹ Based on the request Riches forwarded to Kirkpatrick a document regarding the Scouts in Bahrain. Riches saw the organisation to be a threat that required immediate action before matters developed even further. He recommended that British officials warn the NUC about their recent activities.⁷¹² On the Scouts, the Foreign Secretary believed 'that a quasi-military organisation of this kind cannot be

⁷¹⁰ TNA, FO 1016/467, Government of Bahrain: Statement of the Public by Belgrave, 17 June 1956.

⁷¹¹ TNA, FO 1016/467, Burrows to FO, 19 June 1956.

⁷¹² TNA, FO 371/120686, Riches' Confidential Minute on Bahrain, 19 June 1956.

tolerated'. He stressed the need to make illegal the 'wearing of unauthorised uniforms' and activities carried by the organisation.⁷¹³ Riches later informed the Political Agent Gault that legal advisers were consulted on the issue of the Scouts movement and had pointed out that the Public Order Act of 1936 prohibited the use of uniforms for political motives. It further outlawed the formation of quasi-military organisations and for groups to obtain for themselves the power to run their own police force. Riches advised Gault to bring the law to the Ruler's attention and, accordingly, to draft an order.⁷¹⁴

In late June *Al-Watan* celebrated Nasser's election as Egypt's second republican President and the approval of the new Egyptian constitution.⁷¹⁵ Nasser was the only candidate who ran for election and people were required to either approve, or disapprove, of his nomination. The new President of Egypt won the elections according to *The Times* with a ninety-eight per cent vote,⁷¹⁶ which set a precedent for republican regimes throughout the Arab World.

With the conclusion of this time period in this thesis, three features are emerging. First, the British Government seemed to be indecisive early on the Belgrave question as it tried to seek the best method to navigate safely through the crisis until an approach was devised for the Adviser's eventual exit. Second was Britain's understanding that the NUC was not an anti-British movement, although Egyptian influence could not be overlooked. Third was Burrows' deft political

⁷¹³ TNA, FO 1016/467, SOSFA to Residency, 20 June 1956.

⁷¹⁴ TNA, FO 1016/467, Riches to Political Agency, 21 June 1956.

⁷¹⁵ 'Distor Masir Al-Jadid Yuhaqiq Iradat Al-Sha'ab wa Yahmi Huquqah' [Egypt's New Constitution Achieves the Will of the People and Protects their Rights], *Al-Watan*, 29 June 1956, 1.

⁷¹⁶ 'Col. Nasser as President', *The Times*, 25 June 1956, 8.

manoeuvring during the crisis that had twice saved Bahrain from taking direct British military intervention and a possible catastrophe following the Lloyd and the Municipal Incidents of March.

The second-half of the year would see major developments on a regional scale that would have a direct influence on Bahrain. These events and the local response to it would bring an end to Bahrain's nationalist political party, and a long legal battle would begin for its exiled members in St Helena.

Part IV: The Imminent Clash and Downfall

Chapter Eight

Belgrave's Resignation, the Ghosts of Past Appeasers, the Suez War, and Anti-British Riots in Bahrain

July to November 1956

The period between July and November 1956 proved decisive in the life of the NUC. Political tensions rose again between the Administration and the Movement. As war later erupted in Egypt the NUC's declaration to opt for a strike and its aftermath sealed the Party's fate. The first major clash between the two was the indefinite suspension in July of *Al-Watan* following an article it published attacking a regional state the newspaper did not specify by name. The Residency's report for the month of July stated that the newspaper published the article in defiance of recommendations not to do so. The account, however, failed to identify the authorities that had told the newspaper's editor to avoid publishing the article.⁷¹⁷

In order for the Councils to commence operation the Bahraini Administration decided to hold a meeting of the Health Council, with or without the NUC's members, on 8 July. With the announcement to convene the Councils by the Government the Party invited all of its one hundred and twenty founding members

⁷¹⁷ 'Brooks Richard, Residency's Report for the Month of June 1956', in *Political Diaries of the Persian Gulf*, vol. 20 1955-1958, ed. R.L. Jarman (London: 1990), 1-12 (4).

and the general public to attend a meeting to discuss the affair. According to Burrows only about a hundred attended of which a minority represented the Party's founding members. The NUC decided in the meeting to boycott all of the Government's Councils.⁷¹⁸

All members of the Health Council, including the nominated ones, failed to attend the meeting initiated by the Administration as they were 'intimidated from doing so by the Committee of National Union' as Gault concluded. Based on the current situation the Political Agent advised the Ruler 'to let the Health Council and the Education Council be for the time being'. The Ruler complained to Gault that, whenever he concluded an issue with the NUC, the Party would later go back in its word and new challenges would arise thus affecting the Administration's developmental programme. Moreover the Ruler told Gault that the NUC should not be encouraged by Britain and that 'the door of his house was always open if they wished to discuss things with him'.⁷¹⁹ To the Agent the priority for the meantime was the protection and safety of the lives of approximately seven hundred Europeans and five thousand Indians and Pakistanis residing on the islands should a serious strike take place, as (in his view) it was very likely to escalate into violent demonstrations.⁷²⁰

Rumours of the NUC calling a strike as discussed in the previous chapter materialised into actual threats by early July. Gault told the FO that the NUC on 8 July threatened the Ruler to strike if their demands to dismiss Belgrave and participation

⁷¹⁸ 'Bernard Burrows, Residency's Report for the Month of August 1956', in *Political Diaries of the Persian Gulf*, vol. 20 1955-1958, ed. R.L. Jarman (London: 1990), 1-7 (2).

⁷¹⁹ TNA, FO 371/120547, Gault's Minutes with the Ruler of Bahrain, 9 July 1956.

⁷²⁰ TNA, FO 371/120547, Despatch 614, Gault to FO, 10 July 1956.

in the Administration Council were not accepted. The Party gave the Ruler ten days to reply. Gault blamed the new strike on rumours in the *souq* to the effect that Belgrave was to be retained.⁷²¹ The Political Agent reiterated his belief that the main reason for the NUC's opposition to the Administration Council as he saw it was that it had 'done good work' and that the Party 'cannot claim any credit for what it does'. Additionally, he pointed out, the NUC had been 'under attack by its more extreme followers for failure to produce results'.⁷²²

On the issue of the postponement of council meetings boycotted by the NUC the Political Agent minuted a heated *tête-à-tête* he had with the Adviser. Belgrave attacked HMG's approach with the NUC and in response Gault explained his position to the Adviser saying that

the advice we were giving [to the Administration] was to appease the Committee of National Union because we felt that it was necessary to do so in order to gain time for the reorganisation and development of the police force and to prevent a complete breakdown in the meantime as between the Ruler and his Government and the Committee of National Union but we saw no other way.⁷²³

Gault notified Riches that he suspected that Belgrave seemed to wish to remain in Bahrain during the upcoming winter.⁷²⁴ Riches blamed Belgrave for upsetting the 'delicate compromise' that was reached earlier to ease his exit and to allow Smith to take over. It was mainly due to the Adviser's 'bungling' and 'his apparent intention not to retire till next year' as Riches observed. Based on a conversation Riches alluded to between Burrows and Sir Harold Beeley, the Assistant Under-Secretary

⁷²¹ TNA, FO 371/120547, Despatch 608, Gault to FO, 9 July 1956.

⁷²² TNA, FO 371/120547, Despatch 613, Gault to FO, 10 July 1956.

⁷²³ TNA, FO 371/120547, Minutes between Gault and Belgrave, 10 July 1956.

⁷²⁴ TNA, FO 371/120547, Despatch 620, Gault to FO, 10 July 1956.

for the Middle East affairs, the two believed that a showdown with the NUC would be a foolish thing, as the Party would enjoy massive support on the issue of Belgrave's dismissal.⁷²⁵

Gault thought that both sides of the affair were to be blamed: the NUC was stubborn in its demands on the Administration Council and so was the Ruler on the issue of Belgrave's leaving. With the success the Residency and Political Agency seemed to have accomplished over the process of easing Belgrave out, it now seemed to be suffering a setback.

The Ruler had informed the Editor-in-Chief of the suspended *Al-Watan*, newspaper that, until things have settled down in Bahrain, 'he could not let him [Belgrave] go'. Gault added: 'now that Belgrave's personal position has become involved, he will stiffen the Ruler's resistance to what we may say'.⁷²⁶ To the Agent the matter had reached a point that 'far from Belgrave's going being a blow to British influence in this area, his remaining becomes a far greater liability to us'.⁷²⁷

On 11 July a British Cabinet meeting discussed the status of Belgrave and developments in Bahrain. The Foreign Secretary said that although steps were being made to appoint a new British official to take on Belgrave's duties, the Adviser seemed to be having second thoughts about his retirement. Lloyd feared that a decision to retain Belgrave would push the NUC to call for a national strike. He thus

⁷²⁵ TNA, FO 371/120547, D.H.M. Riches' Confidential on Bahrain, 10 July 1956.

⁷²⁶ TNA, FO 371/120547, Despatch 614, Gault to FO, 10 July 1956.

⁷²⁷ TNA, FO 371/120547, Gault to FO, 11 July 1956.

recommended that a clear official announcement on Belgrave's retirement must be issued and that he should go before the end of 1956.⁷²⁸

Without knowledge of the Cabinet's conclusions a personal letter was sent on 13 July to Lloyd by the Ruler of Bahrain in which he criticised what he considered to be Britain's interference in Bahrain's local affairs, viewed by the Ruler to be an adopted policy by HMG for the last two years adding:

The Committee of National Union are always in communication with the British Authorities in Bahrain and are fully informed of all that takes place between us and the British Authorities. Sometimes the British Government policy regarding local affairs is made known to the Committee before it is made known to us.

The letter's objective was to defend Belgrave as the Sheikh refused comparisons between his Adviser and to Glubb Pasha. The letter concluded (regarding Belgrave's status) by saying: 'it is not our intention to dispense with his services'.⁷²⁹

The letter was sent before the Ruler had known that on the same day an unsigned document from the FO's Eastern Department to the Residency proposed to the Ruler to hold a private meeting with the NUC and issue a stern warning to them that he would not submit to their threats and would not publically announce Belgrave's dismissal since he felt honoured not to shame the man who had assisted him and his father for thirty years. The Eastern Department believed that 'If the Committee try to hasten Belgrave's retirement, the Ruler would feel inclined to postpone it'. It further warned that 'it would be foolish of the Committee to make an issue of something which is already on the way to a solution'.⁷³⁰

⁷²⁸ TNA, CAB 128/30, Conclusions, 11 July 1956.

⁷²⁹ TNA, FO 371/120549, Sheikh Salman Al-Khalifa to Selwyn Lloyd, 13 July 1956.

⁷³⁰ TNA, FO 371/120547, FO to Residency, 13 July 1956.

The NUC submitted an official written demand on 14 July to the Sheikh for elected seats on the Administration Council and for Belgrave's removal. Surprisingly the demands were not attached to any threats of strikes as had been feared. One possible explanation as to why the NUC did not threaten a strike was that Bahraini villagers were awaiting their date harvest (according to the Agency) and a strike would curtail sales of the crop.⁷³¹ Based on the Eastern Department's suggestion on 13 July the Ruler invited the NUC on 22 July to his palace to discuss their latest set of demands.⁷³²

As the new meeting between the Ruler and the NUC was about to begin the Americans considered formally withdrawing their offer to assist in the construction of the Aswan High Dam. The US National Security Council's memorandum of Discussion offered an insight into American views of the project. George M Humphrey, the Secretary of the Treasury, wished that Egypt would agree to the Soviet offer to build the dam. Dulles believed that in the short-term an Egyptian agreement with the Soviets to have the latter finance the dam might reflect negatively on the US but in the long term it would be seen positively. Dulles noted that the loan for the dam would be a heavy burden on Egypt's economy and that the Egyptians would then blame their creditor for their suffering.⁷³³ In July the British Embassy sent a memorandum to the US Department of State in which it stated its concern that a deal between Nasser and Moscow on the finance of the Aswan High Dam was imminent. It was concerned that Nasser's entanglement with the Soviets

⁷³¹ TNA, FO 371/120547, Gault to FO, 15 July 1956.

⁷³² TNA, FO 371/120547, Gault to FO, 23 July 1956.

⁷³³ FRUS, vol. XV, 'Arab-Israeli Dispute January 1-July 26, 1956'. Doc. 412: S. Everett Gleason's Memorandum of Discussion at the 289th Meeting of the National Security Council, 28 June 1956.

was not only political but also economic. It was then suggested to announce a withdrawal of the West's offer to help finance the dam.⁷³⁴

A meeting on 19 July was conducted between Dr Ahmed Hussein the Egyptian Ambassador to the US and Dulles. As was expected by the Americans the Egyptians announced their acceptance of the West's offer to finance the dam. However Dulles in the meeting informed Hussein that the offer to finance the dam had been withdrawn.⁷³⁵ The US's official withdrawal was followed, on 20 July, by Britain's own cancellation of its offer to finance the project.⁷³⁶ Within less than a week these fateful decisions would provoke Nasser to take revenge by nationalising the mainly British-and-French-owned Suez Canal Company.

A day before the scheduled meeting on 22 July between the Ruler and the NUC, Colonel EF Henderson of the Residency held a *tête-à-tête* with Al-Shamlan, who said he did not believe that the Ruler would set a date for Belgrave's departure nor would he agree to the Party's demand concerning the Administration Council. The Acting Secretary believed that then the NUC would call for a long-standing strike, which would likely be a bluff. To that Henderson replied that the Belgrave question to his own knowledge had been resolved. In relation to the Administration Council the Residency's official pointed out that the Council was due to run until the end of its term in a year's time. Henderson also pointed out the political gains they had managed to achieve over time and had manifested in the establishment of the Health

⁷³⁴ FRUS, vol. XV, 'Arab-Israeli Dispute January 1-July 26, 1956'. Doc. 442: Memorandum from the British Embassy to the Department of State, 10 July 1956.

⁷³⁵ FRUS, vol. XV, 'Arab-Israeli Dispute January 1-July 26, 1956'. Doc. 478: Memorandum of a Conversation, Department of State, 19 July 1956.

⁷³⁶ 'Aswan Offer Withdrawn', *the Times*, 21 July 1956, 6.

and Education Councils. The official challenged the NUC's member, saying that his Party had boycotted all Government Councils and had thus far 'obstructed the first opportunity of the Bahrain people to participate in the Government'. He further recommended to him and his Party to abort the idea of going on strike, he

reminded him of the help he and his committee had received in the past, and that which H.M.G. had often shown sympathy with C.N.U. [NUC] objectives, they were not always in agreement with their methods.

As to the reason for the NUC's boycott of the Health and Education Councils Al-Shamlan explained that, had they participated, their other demands would not be met and Belgrave would have had the ability to overrule the two Councils' decisions.⁷³⁷

Al-Shamlan was the only member of the NUC who attended the meeting with the Ruler on the 22 July. The Acting Secretary excused the rest from coming as he claimed that they did not know the reason for the latest meeting, a matter Gault believed that even Al-Shamlan felt to be a poor excuse. A statement was made by the Ruler and an official written response was submitted to the NUC.⁷³⁸

The response by the Sheikh to the NUC was based on two points. The first being the Administration Council as the Ruler notified members of the Party that it was his intention to have the Council continue its work through its current format. The second point was on the position of the Government's Adviser. In that regard the Ruler proclaimed:

⁷³⁷ TNA, FO 371/120549, Minutes between E.F. Henderson and Al-Shamlan on 21 July 1956, 24 July 1956.

⁷³⁸ TNA, FO 371/120547, Gault to FO, 23 July 1956.

He is a faithful servant who has obeyed our orders for a long period and in doing so has been an example in straight dealing and loyalty, and there is no doubt that he has carried out his task with probity and we will not terminate his services in this way.

The Ruler further reminded the NUC that the reform steps initiated would take time for their implementation. The most striking feature of the letter was the Ruler's announcement to the Party that his Government 'will never yield to threats of strikes' as he had been advised by the FO's Eastern Department. He concluded the letter by saying that the door for dialogue from his part was still open and that it was the NUC who had broken off the talks.⁷³⁹ The *New York Times* covered the news of Sheikh Salman's decision not to dismiss his Adviser, but did not add any further information.⁷⁴⁰

Objecting to the Ruler's statements on Belgrave, the NUC in its proclamation numbered sixty-four replied,

It is quite possible that the Adviser has been a loyal servant to the Sheikh himself whereas to the people he has been an arrogant tyrant and a hangman who has been playing with the vital affairs of this country as he wished and without anybody to check him.⁷⁴¹

An official response to the Ruler's original letter on 13 July from the Foreign Secretary came on 26 July. Lloyd asserted in the letter Britain's long-standing friendship with Bahrain. He later drew to the Ruler's attention that political movements, like the one in Bahrain, were bound to rise sooner or later. He further pointed to HMG's experience in dealing with such movements in other regions and believed that the best methodology to adopt was to enable cooperation between

⁷³⁹ TNA, FO 371/120549, Translation of letter from H.H. Shaikh Salman al Khalifa to the Committee of National Union, delivered to the Secretary of the Committee, 22 July 1956.

⁷⁴⁰ 'Bahrein Keeps British Adviser', *New York Times*, 28 July 1956, 2.

⁷⁴¹ TNA, FO 1016/468, the National Union Committee Proclamation No. 64, 23 July 1956.

these movements and their Governments. The Foreign Secretary informed the Sheikh of his original conviction that Belgrave would not stay in office beyond the end of the year. He reminded Sheikh Salman of the steps taken earlier that involved the appointment of Smith, as that was an indicator to the public that Belgrave was on his way out. Lloyd observed that the best policy to be adopted by the Bahraini Government was winning over public support and strengthening its Police Force to assure public safety and welfare.⁷⁴²

In response to the offer to withdraw finance of the Aswan High Dam and in his usual rhetorical manner Nasser delivered a long speech on 26 July in Alexandria. The name of the French Suez Canal developer Ferdinand de Lesseps was the signal Nasser gave via his broadcasted speech for his army to take over the Suez Canal Company.⁷⁴³ The speech concluded with Nasser's proclamation that the company had been nationalised by Egypt.⁷⁴⁴ Lloyd recalled in his memoir that he was at a banquet hosted by Eden in honour of King Faisal II of Iraq and Prime Minister Nuri when the news of the company's nationalisation arrived. Nuri advised him, as Lloyd noted, to 'hit Nasser hard and quickly'.⁷⁴⁵ Nasser intended to compensate the foreign shareholders and then use the company's income to build the dam.⁷⁴⁶ Hugh Gaitskell, the Leader of the UK's Labour Opposition Party, noted what he perceived

⁷⁴² TNA, FO 371/120549, Selwyn Lloyd to Sheikh Salman bin Hamad Al-Khalifa, 26 July 1956.

⁷⁴³ Heikal, *Nasser: The Cairo Documents*, 91.

⁷⁴⁴ For the nationalisation speech made by Nasser see 'Speech by President Nasser at Alexandria announcing the nationalization of the Suez Canal Company on 26 July 1956', in *Documents on International Affairs* 1956, ed. N. Frankland, (London: 1959), 77-113.

⁷⁴⁵ Lloyd, *Suez 1956*, 74.

⁷⁴⁶ P. Catterall (ed.), *The Macmillan Diaries: The Cabinet Years 1950-1957* (London: 2003), entry from 27 July 1956, 578, hereafter *Macmillan Diaries*.

as the lack of logic behind the nationalisation of the company and financing through its revenue the Aswan High Dam in his address to the House of Commons,

How can he [Nasser] at one and the same time both keep the Canal going, spend the necessary money on the repairs, extensions and reconstruction, pay the compensation or service the compensation loan to the shareholders, and also find money for the Aswan Dam?⁷⁴⁷

When emotions run high in the Middle East, logic seemed take a back seat.

Additionally to that argument, the Suez Canal Company's contract was due to expire in 1968,⁷⁴⁸ and Egypt would then obtain full control of the company without risking possible Western retaliation. Nasser eventually sought Soviet loans for the construction of the dam, as he had failed to use the revenue from the Canal's company to finance the project.⁷⁴⁹

To Britain the Suez Canal Company and the control of the passage of ships through the canal was vital for the maintenance of the Empire. It was feared that with Nasser's control of the Canal the freedom of passage through it would be jeopardised in defiance of the treaty signed in Constantinople in 1888.⁷⁵⁰ The Suez Canal was Britain's 'jugular vein',⁷⁵¹ and as Clark noted 'Nasser could not be allowed, in Eden's phrase, "to have his hand on our windpipe"'.⁷⁵² The Prime Minister feared (as he explained to Eisenhower) that if Nasser got away with it, his stock would rise throughout the Arab World enticing other military *juntas* to overthrow their governments. Such new governments would, Eden explained:

⁷⁴⁷ HC Deb 02 August 1956, vol. 557, cc1602-43, (1611-12).

⁷⁴⁸ Eveland, *Ropes of Sand*, 205.

⁷⁴⁹ T. Little, *High Dam at Aswan*, 57.

⁷⁵⁰ Nutting, *No End of a Lesson*, 173.

⁷⁵¹ M. Bromberger and S. Bromberger, *Secrets of Suez*, 14.

⁷⁵² Clark, *From Three Worlds*, 166.

in effect be Egyptian satellites if not Russian ones. They will have to place their united oil resources under the control of united Arabia led by Egypt and under Russian influence. When that moment comes Nasser can deny oil to Western Europe and here we shall all be at his mercy.⁷⁵³

Even prior to the crisis, Eisenhower understood the importance of oil to Europe, as 'The economy of European countries would collapse if those oil supplies were cut off'.⁷⁵⁴ Likewise, as Macmillan illustrated in his diary, the dilemma Britain was in, as Western Europe relied eighty to ninety per cent of its oil supplies on Middle Eastern oil. He, moreover, feared that action against Nasser would close the Canal and result in revolts in the Arabian Gulf States. But if Nasser was left unchecked, the next possible step in the Arab World would be the nationalisation of oil production.⁷⁵⁵

The new conflict must have brought back to Eden memories of his stance in 1938 against Neville Chamberlain's policy of appeasement with European dictators like Hitler and Mussolini. Eden, who was then the Foreign Secretary, had resigned from his post in 1938 in opposition to Chamberlain's policy.⁷⁵⁶ The Prime Minister's memoir compared Nasser's takeover of the Canal to that of Hitler's seizure of the Rhineland and Stalin's suppression of liberty in Czechoslovakia.⁷⁵⁷ Although in Egypt's case the Suez Canal lay within its own boundaries and was not a separate entity outside of its borders. Nevertheless Eden refused to be haunted by the ghosts

⁷⁵³ Eden to Eisenhower, 6 September 1956, (also found in Boyle, 164-67).

⁷⁵⁴ *The Eisenhower Diaries*, 13 March 1956, 319.

⁷⁵⁵ *Macmillan Diaries*, 25 August 1956, 590-91.

⁷⁵⁶ D. Yergin, *The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money and Power* (New York: 2009), 469; on the news of Eden's resignation see 'What will Mr. Eden do? Will He Decide to Fight for His Policy?', *The Manchester Guardian*, 21 February 1938, 11; and F. Kuhn Jr., 'Britain is Shocked: Foreign Secretary Quits Over Issues of Seeking Deals with Dictators', *New York Times*, 21 February 1938, 1.

⁷⁵⁷ Eden, *Full Circle*, 441.

of past appeasers. Trevelyan viewed that 'appeasement of a dictator was the most serious danger to reputation and career'.⁷⁵⁸

In the British Cabinet's meeting following Nasser's nationalisation held on 27 July, Eden informed the Cabinet that he had made it clear to the US's Charge d'Affaires and the French Ambassador that

any failure on the part of the Western Powers to take the necessary steps to regain control over the Canal would have disastrous consequences for the economic life of the Western Powers for their standing and influence in the Middle East.

More information on the economic importance of the Canal was presented to the Cabinet detailing that sixty million tons of oil from the Arabian Gulf region (of a total of seventy million tons) passed through the Canal en route to Western Europe. Furthermore any threat to the Canal would also obstruct Britain's trade routes to the East.⁷⁵⁹ Britain's first step at retaliating was its freeze of Egypt's sterling balances, estimated to be around £110 million.⁷⁶⁰ The crisis would be the start of frantic international diplomatic efforts to bring about a peaceful resolution.

Following up on the desire to reshuffle Bahrain's Administration Gault met with the Ruler on 5 August. The Sheikh informed the Agent that he had agreed to Belgrave's retirement but that he did not envision that he would leave Bahrain immediately. The Agent reminded the Ruler that it was arranged for Smith to take over the Adviser's duties as Secretary to the Bahraini Government upon his expected return in October and that it would not be possible for both to carry out

⁷⁵⁸ Trevelyan, *The Middle East in Revolution*, 7.

⁷⁵⁹ TNA, CAB 128/30, Conclusions of a Meeting of the Cabinet held in the Prime Minister's Room, House of Commons, 27 July 1956.

⁷⁶⁰ FRUS, vol. XVI, 'Suez Crisis July 26-December 31, 1956'. Doc. 40: Special National Intelligence Estimate: Nasser and the Middle East Situation, 31 July 1956.

the same responsibilities. The Agent also advised the Ruler to issue a clear public statement *vis-à-vis* Belgrave's retirement to avoid any possible disturbances based on any misunderstandings of the matter. On the issue of British troops stationed in Bahrain in case of major disturbances the Agent reported that 'The Ruler commented that it was no more his wish than ours that British troops should be used and I think he sees objection to do so as clearly as we do'.⁷⁶¹

The Ruler called once again on Gault on 7 August to inform him that he was willing to make a public announcement on Belgrave's retirement but without any commitment as to the timing.⁷⁶² The Adviser then officially resigned from his post on 13 August. The written announcement was made by Belgrave himself, saying that 'The Ruler has very reluctantly accepted' his request to resign. The Adviser further proclaimed that he would complete a gradual hand-over of his duties by the early part of 1957.⁷⁶³

Fears about Bahraini public's reaction to the news of Belgrave's long-awaited retirement were unfounded as Bahrainis had been completely engaged by the news of the Suez Canal Company's nationalisation which overshadowed everything else.⁷⁶⁴ Riches of the FO's Eastern Department viewed Belgrave's retirement to be 'somewhat disappointing' since the Administration would be retaining the Adviser's services until early 1957. Nonetheless, Riches believed that the announcement had now committed the Government to let him go and within a specific time period.⁷⁶⁵

⁷⁶¹ TNA, FO 371/120549, Gault to FO, 5 August 1956.

⁷⁶² TNA, FO 371/120549, Burrows to FO, 7 August 1956.

⁷⁶³ TNA, FO 371/120549, Office Order: Belgrave's Resignation, 13 August 1956.

⁷⁶⁴ TNA, FO 371/120549, Gault to Burrows, 31 August 1956.

⁷⁶⁵ TNA, FO 371/120549, D.M.H. Riches' Confidential on Bahrain, 13 August 1956.

The *New York Times* covered the news of Belgrave's resignation in its 15 August edition. In an interview with the newspaper, Belgrave insisted that 'It is not a second Glubb affair'.⁷⁶⁶ The *Daily Mail* additionally produced an article by Vincent Mulchrone on the Adviser's resignation. The article was labeled 'Charles of the Gulf is sacked'. Mulchrone added that the Adviser was not sacked by the Ruler of Bahrain but by pressure from the FO.⁷⁶⁷ RB Tillotson who described himself as a friend of the Foreign Secretary's sister Doris and her husband Howard Shone expressed his concern to Lloyd regarding Britain's position in the Gulf after reading the *Daily Mail's* article. Lloyd responded in a short letter to Tillotson and informed the family's acquaintance that 'we are not going to surrender our position in Bahrain to any Committee'.⁷⁶⁸ Interestingly, the British diplomatic stance towards Belgrave did not change following Nasser's nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company. Regardless of the crisis in Egypt, the British wished to see the Adviser out of the Bahraini political scene as soon as possible, certainly making no attempt to retain him for reasons of British prestige.

As for Al-Bakir, by late July he had returned to Lebanon from Cairo and from there he was active in Beirut and other Arab capitals, accepting invitations from dignitaries and holding press conferences. In Beirut he was invited to a luncheon party organised by the Lebanese journalist Riyad Taha at the Bristol Hotel. *Al-Massa* (The Evening) Lebanese publication covered the luncheon which the British

⁷⁶⁶ 'Bahrein Adviser Quits: Briton had become Target of Nationalist Elements', *New York Times*, 15 August 1956, 2.

⁷⁶⁷ TNA, FO 1016/468, V. Mulchrone, 'Charles of the Gulf is sacked', *Daily Mail*.

⁷⁶⁸ TNA, FO 371/120573, Tillotson to Lloyd, 18 August 1956; and TNA, FO 371/120573, Lloyd to Tillotson, 27 August 1956.

Embassy in Beirut sent to the Residency in Manama. The publication described Al-Bakir as being 'one of the leaders of Bahrain'.⁷⁶⁹

Al-Ahram covered in August a press conference held by Al-Bakir in Damascus. It claimed that, according to Al Bakir, Bahrain's trade union, (or the NUC's version of the union consisting of 8,700 workers) had 'decided to destroy completely, within 48 hours of any attack on Egypt, refinery and oil pipes'. *Al-Ahram* further claimed that Al-Bakir had indicated that the US and Britain were working together on establishing bases in Bahrain 'which will be used for atomic planes'. When the nationalist was asked about his reaction to the West's threats aimed at Egypt, Al-Bakir replied: 'If any aggression is carried out against Egypt by anyone, we will immediately destroy the oil refinery, air and naval bases, and all other British and American establishments'. Another account within the same issue of the newspaper proclaimed Al-Bakir's announcement in Damascus of the establishment of a liberation coalition with the objective of 'liberating Arab States from the clutches of Imperialism'.⁷⁷⁰

Al-Bakir revealed more about this coalition in his memoir. The objective of the Movement was to unite other nationalist personalities from other states in the Arabian Gulf and Peninsula under the umbrella of a 'Revolutionary Pact'. The personalities Al-Bakir met were from Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, and South Yemen. An office was established for this mission in Damascus and was named as the 'Gulf and South Arabia'.⁷⁷¹

⁷⁶⁹ TNA, FO 1016/468, Chancery's British Embassy in Beirut to Residency, 4 August 1956.

⁷⁷⁰ TNA, FO 1016/468, Translation of *Al-Ahram's* News Reports, 26 August 1956.

⁷⁷¹ Al-Bakir, *From Bahrain to Exile*, 119.

Further to the news coverage by *Al-Ahram* the British Embassy in Damascus forwarded a despatch to the Residency in Bahrain on Al-Bakir's activities and the Syrian press coverage of his work. The Syrian press' version added that Al-Bakir viewed 'that the British authorities in Bahrain, Sir Charles Belgrave in particular, opposed all nationalist and liberation political activities'.⁷⁷² Burrows, surprised at Al-Bakir's claims, requested the British Chancery in Beirut to contact Al-Bakir and enquire as to: 'the reason for his changed attitude towards us'.⁷⁷³

The Bahraini nationalist leader had come a long way since his days as a merchant in Doha in 1952. The attention, publicity, and status he earned during his stay away from Bahrain had possibly given him overconfidence and might have encouraged him to make daring and outrageous claims, regardless of their validity, as the more bold the claims were the bigger the challenge was perceived by the public.

On the developments of the Suez Crisis, Eisenhower suggested to Eden the assembly of an international conference that included the nations that signed the Constantinople Convention in 1888.⁷⁷⁴ Based on the proposal a Suez Canal Conference was scheduled between 16 to 23 August in London. It consisted of twenty-two nations. Egypt and Greece declined to participate, the latter due to its stance towards the conflict in Cyprus.⁷⁷⁵

⁷⁷² TNA, FO 1016/468, Chancery's British Embassy in Damascus to Residency, 11 August 1956.

⁷⁷³ TNA, FO 1016/468, Residency to British Embassy in Beirut, 20 August 1956.

⁷⁷⁴ Eisenhower to Eden, 31 July 1956, (also found in Boyle, 156-58).

⁷⁷⁵ FRUS, vol. XVI, 'Suez Crisis July 26-December 31, 1956'. Doc. 290: Report Prepared in the Executive Secretariat of the Department of State, 2 October 1956; and TNA, CAB 128/30, C.M. (56) 59th conclusions, 14 August 1956.

Calls went out in Bahrain to go on a strike on 16 August, purposely coinciding with the London conference and in support of Egypt. It was feared that the Scouts movement might be mobilised for the event. Nonetheless the Bahraini Administration decided to postpone any declaration in relation to outlawing private armies till after the strike was over. By doing so it aimed to avoid further trouble by the NUC and was practical in wanting to see the NUC Scouts movement on display with the objective of recognising its leaders.⁷⁷⁶

To add further complications to the proposed strike, it would coincide with the first day of the annual Shi'ite festival of *Muharram*, mourning the death of Hussein which was due to take place on 16 and 17 August. Prior to the start of the festivities it was noticed that the NUC's Scouts' team had appeared publically on the evenings of 14 and 15 August in a meeting organised by the Party at a Shi'ite mosque. The Scouts numbered around fifty. They had fitted themselves out in khaki coloured shirts and trousers, together with the Arab head attire, and a badge. The Scouts were mostly responsible for regulating traffic.⁷⁷⁷ On the first day of the Shi'ite festival, which coincided with the declared strike, the Scouts were seen again regulating traffic and Gault noted his account of Scouts being drilled by former Bahraini policemen. It was believed that the NUC's Scouts had wanted to participate in overseeing the organisation of the *Muharram* processions, but this request was rejected by the Shi'ite procession leaders.⁷⁷⁸ No incidents were observed on the day

⁷⁷⁶ TNA, FO 371/120549, Burrows to FO, 13 August 1956.

⁷⁷⁷ 'Bernard Burrows, Residency's Report for the Month of August 1956', 1-7 (1-2).

⁷⁷⁸ TNA, FO 371/120549, Gault to Burrows, 31 August 1956.

of the strike that was mainly due to the fact that it occurred on a religious and public holiday. On the second day of the festivities the Scouts were not seen again.

Referring to the Scouts Burrows said to the FO that it had 'become clear that the Bahrain Government must now take determined action to stop the existence of this private army'.⁷⁷⁹ It was estimated by the Residency that the Scouts organisation had reached a thousand members who were called the Suez Canal Troop and that the NUC was working on organising another troop consisting of an additional one thousand to be named the Palestine Troop. The uniforms worn by the Scouts certainly got Burrows' attention as he commended the 'beautiful uniform[s]' for their design. Interestingly he further viewed the Scouts to be 'the foundation of the future Bahrain national army'.⁷⁸⁰ The statement by Burrows highlighted the Resident's view of the future of Bahrain, seeing through the Scouts the future of Bahrain as an independent nation with its own defence force.

Based on the information provided, the only concern at the time to the FO in relation to the Scouts organisation was reflected in a FO document by SH Hebblethwaite in which he asked the Residency: 'Can you tell us who supplied the beautiful uniforms to the Scouts?'⁷⁸¹ In response the Residency replied that the Scouts' uniforms were made at different tailors in Bahrain and each Scout was responsible for the purchase of his own uniform. Each uniform cost the equivalent of about £3.00.⁷⁸²

⁷⁷⁹ TNA, FO 371/120686, Despatch 737, Burrows to FO, 18 August 1956.

⁷⁸⁰ TNA, FO 371/120686, Despatch 749, Burrows to FO.

⁷⁸¹ TNA, FO 371/120686, S.H. Hebblethwaite from FO to Residency, 24 August 1956.

⁷⁸² TNA, FO 371/120686, P.W. Wilkinson from Residency to FO, 5 September 1956.

Taking on the issue of the Scouts from a legal standpoint, the Administration issued a public ordinance derived from Britain's 1936 Public Order Act.⁷⁸³ The ordinance was issued on 20 August banning the NUC's Scouts movement. Following the ban Al-Shamlan met with Colonel Anderson from the Residency to discuss the matter. Gault specified, that according to Anderson's account, the Acting Secretary of the NUC 'appeared to have no clear idea of what the correct definition of a Scout was'. The Party in response issued a circular objecting to the proclamation. Gault also noted that the NUC's popularity seemed to have waned and that they were short of money and unable to collect further donations from local merchants.

In Manama and other villages the support for the NUC was seen to have decreased the most, mainly due to their continued call for strikes and its adverse effect on general public welfare.⁷⁸⁴ After the issue of the Administration's public ordinance on the Scouts movement, the organisation gradually faded away not to be seen publicly again.⁷⁸⁵

Three notable events occurred in August. The first was the arrival of six British officers who joined Bahrain's Police Force, increasing the total number of British officers in the force to twelve. Additionally, without much publicity, two Iraqi officers were transferred from Iraq to Bahrain.⁷⁸⁶ The second was the Ruler's approval to appoint, on a temporary basis, an Adviser for Bahrain's Public Relations Department based on a recommendation by the Residency. The Ruler requested

⁷⁸³ 'Bernard Burrows, Residency's Report for the Month of August 1956', in *Political Diaries of the Persian Gulf*, vol. 20 1955-1958, ed. R.L. Jarman (London: 1990), 1-7 (2).

⁷⁸⁴ TNA, FO 371/120549, Gault to Burrows, 31 August 1956.

⁷⁸⁵ TNA, FO 371/120549, D. Blelloch's Bahrain Monthly Intelligence Summary: September 1956, 6 October 1956.

⁷⁸⁶ 'Bernard Burrows, Residency's Report for the Month of July 1956', in *Political Diaries of the Persian Gulf*, vol. 20 1955-1958, ed. R.L. Jarman (London: 1990), 1-7 (2).

that the candidate for the position would be employed part-time for two months. The candidate chosen for the position was William Buchan.⁷⁸⁷ Buchan had worked previously as a public relations consultant and was the brother of Lord Tweedamuir.⁷⁸⁸ The third was the Bahraini Government's choice of selecting JW Cummins to review the Administration's work and departments. Cummins had previously reviewed the work of the Qatari Government. He was due to arrive in Bahrain later in 1956.⁷⁸⁹

For its part, in August, the NUC sent a new batch of students to further their studies in Egypt. The Egyptians awarded about thirteen Bahraini students scholarships.⁷⁹⁰ According to Belgrave, the families of those who were sent to Egypt complained to him later that, although their children received free education there and their travel fares were covered by the NUC, they were not assisted financially with monthly or daily allowances.⁷⁹¹

The Suez Canal Conference concluded in London on 23 August with the agreement of eighteen participating states (out of the original twenty-two) to send a delegation in September to meet with Nasser. The delegation was to be headed by the Prime Minister of Australia, Robert Menzies.⁷⁹² The Conference also concluded with a proposal to establish an international authority for the Canal. The authority would run the Canal's operations, ensure the passage of ships through the Canal in

⁷⁸⁷ TNA, FO 371/120556, Burrows to FO, 24 August 1956.

⁷⁸⁸ TNA, FO 371/120556, G.C. Moberly, at FO to Residency, 26 October 1956.

⁷⁸⁹ TNA, FO 371/120549, Gault to Burrows, 31 August 1956.

⁷⁹⁰ 'Bernard Burrows, Residency's Monthly Diary: August 1956', in *Political Diaries of the Persian Gulf*, vol. 20 1955-1958, ed. R.L. Jarman (London: 1990), 1-7 (2).

⁷⁹¹ Belgrave, *Personal Column*, 228.

⁷⁹² 'Suez Committee Makes the First Move: Mr. Menzies's Call on the Egyptian Ambassador', *The Times*, 25 August 1956, 6; see also *The Eden-Eisenhower Correspondence, 1955-1957*, Boyle, 'The Suez Crisis and Eden's Resignation', 149-53 (150).

accordance with the Convention of 1888, secure payments to the Canal Company, and ensure Egyptian rights.⁷⁹³

The day following the conclusion of the Conference a new Bahraini weekly newspaper named *Al-Shula* (The Torch) appeared for the first time. However its first edition proved to be its last as it was banned from publication following an anti-Iraqi article in its inaugural issue.⁷⁹⁴ No known copies of it exist today. *Al-Shula* was an attempt initiated by Al-Mardi and Ebrahim M Al-Moayyed to revive *Al-Watan* newspaper under a different title.⁷⁹⁵

Concerned with the developments in Bahrain, two leading figures from Bahrain's community, Ahmed Fakhroo and Mansoor Al-Arrayed (a Sunni and a Shi'ite respectively), visited the Residency where they met with both the Resident and the Political Agent on 27 August. The minutes of the meeting provided insight into how a sample of the population, non-aligned to the NUC viewed the political situation. The two men feared a further deterioration was imminent of Bahrain's political scene and wished to see matters come to a resolution. A Fakhroo and Al-Arrayed believed that the NUC had achieved a great deal of its original aims and they felt that there was no reason for them to further complicate the situation by insisting that the Government accept every one of their political demands. A Fakhroo testified that his son Qassim ran for the Education Council on behalf of the NUC in February. He said that he had spoken to his son in order further understand the NUC's point-of-view in its objection to cooperating with the Administration and

⁷⁹³ 'The First London Conference', in *Documents of International Affairs 1956*, ed. N. Frankland, (London: 1959), 173-86.

⁷⁹⁴ TNA, FO 371/120549, Gault to Burrows, 31 August 1956.

⁷⁹⁵ Al-Maawda, *Bahrain's Press*, 96-97.

utilising the channels of expression they had already gained. In response Qassim had agreed with his father in questioning the Party for its refusal to take advantage of the political gains it had made. To that Qassim added, that 'he had been elected by people who, in fact, were very ignorant and he could not go against their mandate'. A Fakhroo added that Bahrainis 'as a whole were frightened that if they stood out against the Committee the Government would not or could not support them'. Al-Arrayed felt that the public had grown tired of the NUC's continuous call for strikes and that the Party had so far 'achieved nothing'.⁷⁹⁶

Meanwhile Menzies, as head of the delegation meeting with Nasser, understood that any lessening of the Egyptian leader's stance towards the Suez Canal Company's nationalisation would undermine his prestige regionally. Therefore, Menzies surmised, Nasser had no other alternative but to carry on. The Australian Prime Minister met with Nasser on 3 September to present him with the conference's proposals.⁷⁹⁷ Menzies failed to convince Nasser to accept the conference's proposals and the Australian Prime Minister was sent an official reply from Nasser confirming this.⁷⁹⁸

Following Britain's threat to take the issue to the UN Security Council, Dulles proposed the formation of 'a Canal Users' Club'.⁷⁹⁹ The name of the club that was formed based on Dulles' proposal was, in fact, the Suez Canal Users' Association (SCUA).⁸⁰⁰ It was publically proposed during the Suez Canal Conference's second

⁷⁹⁶ TNA, FO 1016/468, Minutes between Burrows, Gault, Fakhroo and Al-Arrayed, 29 August 1956.

⁷⁹⁷ R.G. Menzies, *Afternoon Light: Some Memories of Men and Events* (London: 1967), 155 and 162.

⁷⁹⁸ 'Reply by President Nasser to Mr. Menzies on 9 September 1956', in *Documents on International Affairs 1956*, ed. N. Frankland, (London: 1959), 194-99.

⁷⁹⁹ Clark, *From Three Worlds*, 184.

⁸⁰⁰ Eveland, *Ropes of Sand*, 208.

meeting, also held in London, between 19 to 21 September and was officially formed on 1 October.⁸⁰¹ The Association's resolutions can be summarised as follows: to aim towards a solution to end the crisis; to support secure and safe transit in the Canal; to collect and distribute the Canal's revenues; to deal with problems that might arise from failure of managing the Canal; and to reach a conclusion to the conflict which should be adopted by the UN among others.⁸⁰² The American suggestion to first organise a conference and then form a users' club might have been a ploy intended to delay (or even stop) military action against Egypt.

On 26 September during the Shi'ite celebrations marking the passing of forty days following the anniversary of the death of Hussein and a day before Al-Bakir's return to Bahrain, the NUC held a public meeting. Only a thousand people attended the meeting, an indication of the NUC's loss of popularity when compared to previous attendance numbers. In an intelligence *tour d'horizon* by the Acting Political Agent D Blelloch he compared the recent figure with the five thousand that had attended a similar occasion in 1955. A speech was delivered by Al-Shamlan who criticised the Government for the Egyptian legal expert's delay in coming to Bahrain to review the Penal Code, although the delay, in fact, was from the Egyptian side. He additionally criticised the Administration for not introducing new trained judges and for press censorship. The meeting was also the Party's first-known

⁸⁰¹ H. Callender, 'Suez Plan Omits Drastic Action; Parley is Ended: Proposal Urges Formation of User's Group by Oct. 1', *New York Times*, 22 September 1956, 1; and K. Love, 'Suez Users' Group Formed in London with 15 Members', *New York Times*, 2 October 1956, 1.

⁸⁰² 'The Second London Conference on 21 September 1956', in *Documents of International Affairs 1956*, ed. N. Frankland, (London: 1959), 234-40.

public meeting in which the NUC's President Kamal-el-Deen had presented a speech since he had assumed the position the year before.⁸⁰³

Al-Bakir returned to Bahrain on 27 September after approximately six months away. Hundreds of admirers gathered to greet the nationalist leader. Upon his arrival Al-Bakir made no speech, saying that he wished to speak to people on an individual basis. One of the earliest claims that Al-Bakir made to Bahrainis was his denial of the comments that were attributed to him in the press. Burrows expected that one of the criticisms Al-Bakir would face locally was 'expenditure of funds collected in Bahrain and failure to publish accounts'.

Burrows predicted Al-Bakir's possible behaviour following his return saying that he would either exercise a more moderate influence on his Party, or would resort to trouble and/or would join with other elements in their disapproval of the Party's policies. The Resident was concerned that should any action were to be taken against Al-Bakir by the Administration at this point it would turn him locally into 'a martyr and a hero'. The biggest change in the Residency's attitude towards Al-Bakir following his return was Burrows' intention not to resume contact with him.⁸⁰⁴ One of the most striking features that Al-Bakir noted in his memoir upon his return was what he viewed as general antipathy towards the Movement from the public. It was then that the nationalist leader considered the establishment of a new organisation, but that plan was not destined to take shape.⁸⁰⁵

⁸⁰³ TNA, FO 371/120549, D. Blelloch's Bahrain Monthly Intelligence Summary: September 1956, 6 October 1956.

⁸⁰⁴ TNA, FO 371/120549, Burrows to FO, 1 October 1956.

⁸⁰⁵ Al-Bakir, *From Bahrain to Exile*, 121.

Anxious to know of Al-Bakir's initial reaction upon his arrival in Bahrain the Residency advanced to the FO a translated transcript of Al-Bakir's first public speech delivered in a gathering on the occasion of the anniversary of Prophet Mohammed's birthday on 17 October. The transcript of the speech was translated from Arabic as it had been featured in its entirety in *Al-Mizan* newspaper published on 19 October. Translation of the article is available among Bahraini records at TNA. Al-Bakir had praised Nasser's measures in nationalising the Suez Canal Company and explained that he saw this to be a part of the greater picture of Arab nationalism reaching a state 'of resolution'. He went on: 'We here declare that the imperialist should pick up his stuff and go' and 'If the imperialist wants to remain in Bahrain, which is now a vital artery to him, he ought to change his policy'. Al-Bakir, moreover, claimed that the NUC was 'regarded by the Arab leaders [whom he did not specify] as the pivot of the liberation of the Gulf'. He reiterated the Party's policy in boycotting the Administration Council even if it caused an impediment to the departmental services in Bahrain, it was for the sake of the greater nationalist cause. The head of the NUC further criticised those who blamed the Party's policies to have caused the employment of more British citizens and a stronger presence of military personnel in Bahrain.⁸⁰⁶

Another article in *Al-Mizan* newspaper featured an interview with Al-Bakir of which the Residency forwarded a translated copy to the FO. Unfortunately the original issue of the newspaper is not now available for public viewing. The interview was conducted by *Al-Mizan's* Editor-in-Chief, Abdulla Al-Wazzan. The

⁸⁰⁶ TNA, FO 371/120549, Abdulrehman Al Bakir's Speech, 30 October 1956.

translated interview obtained at TNA suggested that the interviewer took a bold line. One of the features of the interview that interested the Residency 'was the public airing of the rumour that he [Al-Bakir] had squandered Committee funds in the Lebanon'. In the interview the NUC's leader rejected the accusations that claimed him to have lived an extravagant life in Lebanon. He proclaimed that he gained his finances from his work as a merchant and from his work as a Secretary for the local insurance company he helped to establish. Although it is not clear whether Al-Bakir meant that he had saved money from his salary before his departure or he was paid by the company during his six-month absence.

Al-Mizan also presented a further accusation to Al-Bakir, challenging him that he had received a salary of 3,000 Rupees from the British. Al-Bakir rejected these claims and accused opponents of the NUC for spreading unfounded accusations. The nationalist was also asked about Al-Sanhouri's status. He responded that he had met the Egyptian law expert a number of times in Egypt and that the reason for his delay was 'not connected with the Government of Bahrain'. This is a claim that agrees with the British Embassy in Cairo's reports featured in Chapter Seven. Al-Bakir, furthermore, pointed out his submission of 'Bahrain's case' to the Arab League.

Finally Al-Bakir was asked about the answer he had given at a press conference in Damascus in relation to the action Bahrainis would take if an attack on Egypt occurred. The Arab press stated that Al-Bakir had replied with a call to murder all British citizens in Bahrain within twenty-four hours. The nationalist leader rejected the newspapers' accounts. Al-Bakir informed *Al-Mizan* that he had

‘replied that the necessary measures would be taken in time’. He claimed that the statement attributed to him was an addition by the French News Agency. In return *Al-Hayat* (The Life) newspaper in Lebanon picked it up and other Arab newspapers followed.⁸⁰⁷ On the accusation that Al-Bakir had received finances from the British, Belgrave seemed to believe that this was indeed the case. In his diary he noted that the Bahraini nationalist had received 5,000 Rupees from the Residency to persuade him to leave Bahrain in late March.⁸⁰⁸ There are no FO documents at TNA to support the allegation.

The coming of October witnessed the completion of the draft Labour Law Code on which work had begun in 1955. A copy of the draft was officially submitted to the Government of Bahrain on 10 October for its review and translation. Additionally in October a representative from the Bahraini Government traveled to Egypt to meet Al-Sanhouri to discuss his status on the Penal Code’s review. Al-Sanhouri, due to constraints placed on him by his own Government, would never make the journey to Bahrain.⁸⁰⁹ Also in October, in its attempt to reach out to the Arab Gulf masses a new pro-British Arabic language newspaper publication published three trial issues. The newspaper was named as *Al-Khaleej* (The Gulf Times). The company that sponsored the new publication also ran the *Iraq Times*. Burrows hoped that with the arrival of a new linotype machine and operator, it

⁸⁰⁷ TNA, FO 371/120549, Burrows to FO, 22 October 1956.

⁸⁰⁸ *Sir Charles Dalrymple Belgrave’s Personal Diaries*, 17 December 1956.

⁸⁰⁹ TNA, FO 371/120549, D. Belloch’s Bahrain Monthly Intelligence Summary: October, 1956, 17 November 1956.

would become the very first daily newspaper in the Arab States of the Gulf and would be distributed throughout the region.⁸¹⁰

Concurrent to these events, Britain and France submitted a draft resolution to the UN Security Council on 13 October consisting of six principles on the issue of the Suez Crisis: the free passage of ships through the Canal; the acknowledgement of Egypt's sovereignty; that the politics of any country must not interfere with the Canal's operation; the tolls for passage shall be decided between the users of the Canal and Egypt; part of the Canal's revenue would be assigned for developmental projects; and an arbitration body would be set up to handle disputes should they arise between the Suez Canal Company and Egypt.⁸¹¹ The resolution was vetoed by Russia and Yugoslavia.⁸¹²

With these ongoing developments the Israelis and the French were making plans to launch military action against Egypt. The Israelis hoped to use the attack to create a buffer zone between them and the Egyptians and have the Gulf of Aqaba open for shipping. The French had shares in the Suez Canal Company and were fighting the Algerian resistance movement known as the National Liberation Front (FLN) supported by Nasser, so (as they saw it) they had a score to settle with the Egyptian leader. After France had made Britain aware of its plans a meeting was held by the French, British, and Israelis in Sèvres in France. The three sides devised a plan that would enable them to take over the Suez Canal. The agreement would

⁸¹⁰ 'Bernard Burrows, Residency's Monthly Diary: September 1956', in *Political Diaries of the Persian Gulf*, vol. 20 1955-1958, ed. R.L. Jarman (London: 1990), 1-7 (2).

⁸¹¹ 'Draft resolution submitted to the Security Council by Britain and France on 13 October 1956', in *Documents on International Affairs 1956*, ed. N. Frankland, (London: 1959), 249-50.

⁸¹² 'Verdict Against Egypt: Russians use of Veto', *The Times*, 15 October 1956, 10.

have Israel invade the Sinai Peninsula then the British and French would invade the Suez Canal on the pretext of separating the combatants after an ultimatum was issued and refused (as they expected it would be) by the Egyptian side. The plan was signed on 24 October and came to be known as the Protocol of Sévres.⁸¹³ According to Wilbur Crane Eveland of the CIA, the Agency notified Egypt's Ambassador to the US that a possible Anglo-French attack was forthcoming.⁸¹⁴

As the Protocol was in its final stages Hungarians rose in revolt against their Soviet masters and demanded the return of Imre Nagy with neutralist inclinations to the position of Prime Minister. The rebels succeeded in restoring Nagy to power. The Soviets responded by marching their troops into the heart of Budapest on 24 October and fierce fighting ensued between the rebels and Soviets aided by the Soviet Hungarian State Protection Authority.⁸¹⁵ Although the Soviets initially withdrew, the Suez War provided them with the perfect distraction that enabled them to launch a new attack to quell the Hungarian revolution on 4 November. The attack on Egypt would overshadow the Hungarian people's struggle for freedom from the Soviet-Communist grip.⁸¹⁶

A strike in Bahrain was called upon on 28 October in solidarity with a group of North African nationalists. The strike took place between 6.00 am to 6.00 pm,⁸¹⁷

⁸¹³ K.B. Yesilbursa, *The Baghdad Pact: Anglo-American Defence Policies in the Middle East, 1950-1959* (London: 2013), 165; Farnie, *East and West of Suez*, 725-28; *The Eden-Eisenhower Correspondence, 1955-1957*, Boyle, 'The Suez Crisis and Eden's Resignation', 149-53 (151); S. Aster, *British Prime Ministers: Anthony Eden* (London: 1976), 157; Childres, *The Road to Suez*, 257-58; and Nutting, *No End of a Lesson*, 91-93.

⁸¹⁴ Eveland, *Ropes of Sand*, 226.

⁸¹⁵ 'Insurrection in Budapest', *The Times*, 25 October 1956, 10.

⁸¹⁶ For information see V. Sebestyen, *Twelve Days: Revolution 1956* (London: 2007).

⁸¹⁷ TNA, FO 371/120549, D. Blelloch's Bahrain Monthly Intelligence Summary: October, 1956, 17 November 1956.

and, according to Bahrain's annual report for the year 1956, 'few people knew what it was about except that it was ordered from Egypt'.⁸¹⁸ The North African nationalists the strike was organised for were likely to be headed by the Algerian resistance leader Ahmed bin Bella (one of the founders of the FLN), who was arrested along with four others when the French intercepted his plane as he flew from Morocco to Tunisia on 22 October.⁸¹⁹ Al-Bakir confessed in his memoir that the strike had become violent in Muharraq and feared that violence might spread to Manama.⁸²⁰ It was surely a sign to Al-Bakir of things to come when the NUC once again took the initiative to call for a strike.

Military operations against Egypt started on 29 October 1956 when Israel invaded Egypt's Sinai Peninsula. In a short period of time the Israelis managed to advance to within fifty miles of the Suez Canal.⁸²¹ A statement by Eden was made on 30 October in the House of Commons with the Prime Minister declaring that both the British and French Governments had communicated to both the Israelis and Egyptians ordering them to cease fire and withdraw ten miles from the Suez Canal. Then, he said, Anglo-French military units would seize key positions throughout the Canal in order to separate the warring factions and secure safe passage for all ships.⁸²²

⁸¹⁸ 'Government of Bahrain: Annual Report for Year 1956', 1-111 (7).

⁸¹⁹ T.F. Brady, 'Seizure of Algerian Rebels Described by Correspondent on their Plane', *New York Times*, 24 October 1956, 1.

⁸²⁰ Al-Bakir, *From Bahrain to Exile*, 122.

⁸²¹ 'Israel Attack on Egypt', *The Times*, 30 October 1956, 8.

⁸²² 'Statement by Sir Anthony Eden in the House of Commons on the Anglo-French communications to Egypt and Israel on 30 October 1956', in *Documents of International Affairs 1956*, ed. N. Frankland, (London: 1959), 262-63.

No disturbances were recorded in Bahrain on 31 October. Burrows, unaware of the prearrangement between Britain, France, and Israel, feared that a reaction might erupt in Bahrain as a result of Britain's probable announcement to re-occupy strategic posts in the Suez Canal Zone or the insistence that both the Egyptians and Israelis should withdraw from the area. Burrows made the point that, should events call for British military intervention (boots on the Egyptian ground), it would be interpreted in Bahrain that Britain was taking the Israeli side of the conflict. His advice (from his role in Bahrain) was that Britain should broker a ceasefire and force Israel to withdraw.⁸²³ As the day progressed Burrows realised that Bahrainis firmly believed that both Britain and France had instigated the Israeli attack in order to give itself a *casus belli* and a *bona fide raison d'etre* to take over the Canal.⁸²⁴ The Bahrain Government Annual Report noted that a small demonstration by schoolboys and girls took place on 31 October led by Al-Bakir's son.⁸²⁵

As anticipated, Nasser rejected the Anglo-French ultimatum.⁸²⁶ The bombing of Egyptian targets by British and French aircrafts followed. The following day, 1 November, a reaction in Bahrain started to take shape, as Belgrave noted in his diary. Problems started with a demonstration by local schoolboys which escalated in Muharraq as demonstrators blocked roads, stoned cars, and attacked government-owned flats.⁸²⁷

⁸²³ TNA, FO 1016/478, Despatch 956, Burrows to FO, 31 October 1956.

⁸²⁴ TNA, FO 1016/478, Despatch 961, Burrows to FO, 31 October 1956.

⁸²⁵ 'Government of Bahrain: Annual Report for Year 1956', 1-111 (7).

⁸²⁶ 'Rejection by Col. Nasser', *The Times*, 31 October 1956, 8.

⁸²⁷ *Sir Charles Dalrymple Belgrave's Personal Diaries*, 1 November 1956.

Gault was out of Bahrain on leave until 6 November, but the Political Agency recorded that on the first day of November the Agency had evacuated European and American citizens from Manama. The Westerners were transferred to the BAPCO housing compound in Awali where the company provided them with temporary housing. Moreover the Agency's report confirmed Belgrave's diary entry that students had taken part in the demonstrations, adding that the demonstrators attempted to surround the Adviserate, Political Agency, and buildings owned by the BOAC. Bahrain's police managed to successfully contain the demonstration. On the same day, the NUC issued a circular in which it called for a general strike and held the British responsible for its outcome. The NUC further requested the Bahraini Administration to allow it to organise a protest on Friday 2 November with a predetermined route agreed by both sides. Permission to organise the procession was granted by the Bahraini Administration.⁸²⁸

Bahrain's Government Annual Report for 1956 prepared by Belgrave established that Al-Bakir had met with the Adviser and decided on the route of the demonstration. It also established that the Adviser had received assurances from the NUC's Secretary that the demonstration 'would be peaceful and orderly'.⁸²⁹ Belgrave further added in his memoir that the meeting took place at his home.⁸³⁰ Al-Bakir did not mention any such meeting in his memoir.⁸³¹

⁸²⁸ TNA, FO 371/120549, Gault's Bahrain Monthly Intelligence Summary: November 1956, 5 December 1956.

⁸²⁹ 'Government of Bahrain: Annual Report for Year 1956', 1-111 (7).

⁸³⁰ Belgrave, *Personal Column*, 229.

⁸³¹ Al-Bakir, *From Bahrain to Exile*, 122-23.

Following his meeting with Al-Bakir, Belgrave sent a message informing the Police Commandant Colonel Hamersley regarding the Administration's agreement with the NUC for the latter to hold a procession. It was agreed that the procession would start from a mosque in Hoorah in Manama at 10.00 am, most likely Al-Awadhiyah Mosque, known today as Al-Farooq Mosque. The streets and the order of the procession were clearly identified by Belgrave. The Adviser requested the police to 'provide two or three [police] jeeps, with radios, to precede the procession' and to update the Police's headquarters on its progress. Belgrave, furthermore, gave instructions that if the procession became disorderly the police may deploy officers from the Police Fort in Manama to control the crowd and arrest the agitators.⁸³² As a further precaution British soldiers of the Cameron Highlanders from Aden had stationed themselves in Bahrain, together with two units of the Gloucestershire Regiment.⁸³³

The demonstration on 2 November did not keep to the agreed route and hundreds of youths broke away and marched close to the Political Agency. In the afternoon events deteriorated rapidly as crowds of demonstrators flooded Government Avenue in the heart of Manama, the gateway to the main *souq*. Al-Zayani's Petrol Station was set on fire, the African and Eastern bank offices were damaged, Yateem's Petrol Station was attacked, Gray Mackenzie's windows were broken, and other buildings were damaged during what had turned into a riot. The

⁸³² TNA, FO 371/126895, Belgrave to Hamersley, 1 November 1956.

⁸³³ 'Bernard Burrows, Residency's Monthly Diary: November 1956', in *Political Diaries of the Persian Gulf*, vol. 20 1955-1958, ed. R.L. Jarman (London: 1990), 1-15 (2).

police were unable to deal with the riots in Muharraq and withdrew. The BOAC's flats were robbed and set on fire.⁸³⁴

According to Al-Bakir the first frontline member of the NUC to be arrested was E Fakhroo. He was held with a group of other protestors as they attempted to rescue a young boy who had been arrested by a British police officer. The officer then informed Belgrave that E Fakhroo was among the protestors close to Muharraq's police station and that he had attacked the police. The Adviser then ordered his arrest.⁸³⁵ FO documents from the tribunal that was held later in December against a number of the NUC's frontline members gave similar accounts about E Fakhroo's arrest, saying *inter alia* that he had tried to help a man who was being apprehended without giving further details of his age nor did it specify whether or not Belgrave had ordered his arrest.⁸³⁶ Sir Edward Boyle the Economic Secretary to the Treasury and Nutting resigned from the British Cabinet in protest at Britain's involvement in the Suez invasion.⁸³⁷

Patricia Thomas, the wife of Captain T Thomas of the Gulf Aviation Company in Bahrain, posted a letter to Buckingham Palace on 7 November. She was living in Muharraq during the attacks of 2 November and had sent a letter to complain directly to HM Queen Elizabeth II. The letter provides a rare neutral eyewitness account of events on Muharraq Island during that time as the captain's wife lived in the BOAC's flats that came under attack. P Thomas said that the island had been

⁸³⁴ TNA, FO 371/120549, Gault's Bahrain Monthly Intelligence Summary: November 1956, 5 December 1956.

⁸³⁵ Al-Bakir, *From Bahrain to Exile*, 216.

⁸³⁶ TNA, FO 371/126895, Résumé of the Proceedings against Five Members of the Committee of National Union.

⁸³⁷ Heikal, *Cutting the Lion's Tail*, 195.

infiltrated 'by Egyptian propagandists' and had become 'a hotbed of anti-British sentiment'. She criticised the assurances made by British officials in Bahrain that disturbances similar to the ones witnessed in March would not be allowed to occur again. The earliest attack P Thomas recalled was when a stone was thrown at her apartment's window. Although the police were contacted it was of no use as further windows were broken and a mob of demonstrators gathered outside the apartment building which was occupied by some fifteen Europeans, including seven children and six women. During the riot one apartment was completely burnt out. After further calls to the police an anti-riot squad finally arrived and dispersed the mob with tear gas. P Thomas and others were carried away in a RAF truck to safety at the air force's base. She was later informed that, following the police's departure, the apartments were looted by the mob and then set on fire. P Thomas claimed that she and her husband, as a result, had lost all their possessions.⁸³⁸

On the regional scale the UN's General Assembly issued a resolution in which it called on Israel and Egypt to accept a ceasefire. It additionally urged other states involved in the war to bring military activities to an end.⁸³⁹ On the morning of 3 November a number of representatives from various British-owned businesses complained to the Agency about the local authority's lack of capability in protecting their businesses. In the early hours of 3 November it seemed that disturbances had decreased on the streets. However violence quickly returned later in the day. An attempt was made to burn the Bahrain Slipway Company and the Public Works

⁸³⁸ TNA, FO 371/120549, M.L. Cahill at Buckingham Palace to FO, 22 November 1956.

⁸³⁹ 'Resolution of the General Assembly of 2 November 1956', in *Documents on International Affairs 1956*, ed. N. Frankland, (London: 1959), 270-71.

Department building close to the Muharraq causeway was set on fire. In Manama *Al-Khaleej* newspaper's premises were destroyed and attacks were also reported at the Roman Catholic Church and School,⁸⁴⁰ a shameful act quite against Bahrain's long tradition of openness and tolerance of religious minorities.

As fires raged in Manama a request to the Residency came at 12.30 pm from Belgrave on behalf of the Ruler asking for British troops to help in restoring law and order. The British were asked to take control of the outskirts of Manama while Bahraini police attempted to control the *souq*. Another operation was launched to re-open the Muharraq causeway.⁸⁴¹ British military reinforcements first landed in Bahrain after 1.15 pm and their first task was patrolling Manama. Patrols were deployed from Manama all the way to Awali Road to the south of the main island. As the British units were taking up their positions a curfew was imposed at 2.30 pm, about which the Administration used its radio service, loud speakers, and distributed leaflets to inform the general public. RAF operated helicopters dropped some of the leaflets. News in English was broadcasted for the first time on Bahrain Radio at 9.00 am, 1.00 pm, 4.00 pm, and 7.30 pm.

On 4 November a circular was issued by the NUC calling for a boycott of all British and French goods, not to assist in the process of loading or unloading tankers owned by Britain or France, to refuse to supply fuel to planes operated by Britain or France, and not supply food to British army personnel.⁸⁴² In Burrows' memoir he

⁸⁴⁰ TNA, FO 371/120549, Gault's Bahrain Monthly Intelligence Summary: November 1956, 5 December 1956.

⁸⁴¹ TNA, FO 1016/478, Burrows to FO, 4 November 1956.

⁸⁴² TNA, FO 371/120549, Gault's Bahrain Monthly Intelligence Summary: November 1956, 5 December 1956.

claimed that the process of dispersing leaflets from the air was later aborted as some failed to scatter properly and were a danger to the demonstrators.⁸⁴³ These eventful days also witnessed, as the Administration's Annual Report for 1956 recorded, the first use by the demonstrators, of Molotov Cocktails.⁸⁴⁴

The Manchester Guardian claimed that two people were injured on 4 November as a group of five hundred demonstrators defied the curfew.⁸⁴⁵ *Al-Ahad* (The Covenant, a Lebanese magazine) published exaggerated stories about British troops' intervention in Bahrain, saying *inter alia* that the intervention took place when demonstrators blew up the road leading to Muharraq's airport. During the head-to-head clash between protestors and the British four Bahrainis and three British military personnel were killed. British troops later occupied Gudaibiya in Manama as its headquarters, having driven out all the Bahrainis.⁸⁴⁶

Belgrave met with Burrows, EF Henderson, Benn who worked for the Police Force's intelligence unit in Bahrain, and an unidentified Cypriot. During the meeting, which he noted in his diary, it seemed that the idea of arresting the NUC's frontline members was broached. The operation was codenamed Operation Pepsi Cola, but Belgrave gave no more details in his diary. The Ruler was notified on 5 November that the NUC's leading members were to be arrested. Belgrave described in his diary his emotions on the night before the arrests, comparing them to 'the feeling of the dance before Waterloo'.⁸⁴⁷ Details of the arrests and of the steps taken

⁸⁴³ Burrows, *Footnotes in the Sand*, 82.

⁸⁴⁴ 'Government of Bahrain: Annual Report for Year 1956', 1-111 (8).

⁸⁴⁵ 'Renewed Rioting in Bahrain', *The Manchester Guardian*, 5 November 1956, 7.

⁸⁴⁶ TNA, FO 371/126895, Local Press Extracts: Information Policy Department at the FO to the Residency, 8 February 1957.

⁸⁴⁷ *Sir Charles Dalrymple Belgrave's Personal Diaries*, 4-5 November 1956.

to detain the Party's members were not noted in the Residency's archive at TNA, but Burrows did say:

we had for a long time been advising against the arrest of members of the Committee but on this occasion it was we who took the initiative in proposing action against them and in fact the plans were drawn up mainly in our office with considerable help being given to the Bahrain police by my staff and a representative of the Security Services.⁸⁴⁸

The constant threat of strikes which at times turned violent, failure to cooperate with the Government, failure to build on its political gains, the establishment of a paramilitary organisation, and Al-Bakir's press conferences abroad (whether covered accurately or not by the international press) must have all played a part towards the Residency's decisive decision in November.

Since Belgrave was no longer the Commandant of the Police he did not take part personally in the arrests. Al-Bakir recalled in his memoir that he was arrested at 2.00 am on 6 November from his home in Manama. A British officer and a Cypriot headed the police unit sent to arrest the NUC's leader. Al-Bakir claimed that the police handled him 'roughly'. The other members arrested on that night included Al-Shamlan and Al-Alaiwat. All three were later transferred from the main island of Bahrain to the island prison of Jidda.⁸⁴⁹ A fourth frontline member, Ibn Musa, was arrested later that day,⁸⁵⁰ bringing the total number of frontline members arrested to five out of the original eight founders of the Party.

It was publically announced on 6 November that arrests had taken place of Al-Bakir, Al-Shamlan, Al-Alaiwat, and Ibn Musa and that the NUC was officially

⁸⁴⁸ TNA, FO 1016/552, Burrows to FO, 4 April 1957.

⁸⁴⁹ Al-Bakir, *From Bahrain to Exile*, 210-11 and 214.

⁸⁵⁰ Belgrave, *Personal Column*, 231.

dissolved in consequence of its 'failure to observe the assurances given with regard to the previous Friday's procession and of the damage done as a result thereof'. The homes of those arrested were searched and police seized a number of documents at their premises.⁸⁵¹ In addition to these arrests, fifty other members of the Party -- described by Burrows as 'trouble-makers' -- were also apprehended.⁸⁵² Other members of the NUC left Bahrain of their own free will to Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Kuwait waiting to return when the situation had calmed down. The Administration also announced the implementation of the new Penal Code without any further delay or review.⁸⁵³

As for the war in Egypt, all of the possible scenarios that it was feared would come after Nasser's nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company occurred during the war and not in peacetime. The Canal was blocked, ships sunk, oil denied, Syria sabotaged oil pipelines, and Saudi Arabia broke off ties and placed an oil embargo on both Britain and France. Nasser's stock rose considerably throughout the Arab World as result of this miscalculated adventure.⁸⁵⁴ The Baghdad Pact lay in shambles. The Soviets warned Britain and France about its continued aggression in Egypt.⁸⁵⁵ The Americans, preoccupied with presidential elections, pressured Britain and France to cease military operations in Egypt on 6 November.⁸⁵⁶ Britain and France later in December agreed to withdraw from Egypt. Israel, however, had

⁸⁵¹ TNA, FO 371/120549, Gault's Bahrain Monthly Intelligence Summary: November 1956, 5 December 1956.

⁸⁵² TNA, FO 371/126869, Bernard Burrows' Persian Gulf: Annual Review for 1956, 15 April 1957.

⁸⁵³ 'Government of Bahrain: Annual Report for Year 1956', 1-111 (8).

⁸⁵⁴ Nutting, *No End of a Lesson*, 113 and 171.

⁸⁵⁵ 'Russian Warning to Britain and France', *The Times*, 6 November 1956, 10.

⁸⁵⁶ *The Eden-Eisenhower Correspondence, 1955-1957*, Boyle, 'The Suez Crisis and Eden's Resignation', 149-53 (153).

succeeded in occupying the Gaza Strip and Sinai Peninsula refused initially to withdraw.⁸⁵⁷ But with Americans threatening economic sanctions against the Israelis, the latter withdrew its troops in 1957.⁸⁵⁸

In Bahrain, law and order gradually returned to the islands and employees resumed work both in the public and private sectors and no deaths were recorded as a consequence to the riots. No major incidents followed the arrests, except an attempt on 25 November by a lone Bahraini to set the Adviserate on fire. The perpetrator was arrested.⁸⁵⁹ As for the expenses incurred during the process of transporting and landing British troops in Bahrain, the FO Grants and Services Vote was to be charged.⁸⁶⁰

In the House of Commons, Labour MP William Warbey enquired on 12 November if there would be a statement on developments in Bahrain. Dodds-Parker replied on behalf of the FO. He provided an overview to the history of the NUC and the demonstrations that had turned violent in early November. On the dissolution of the NUC he concluded that he hoped that it would help to open the way for moderate elements in Bahrain's society to participate in their country's political evolution, as they would no longer be 'intimidated by the Committee'.⁸⁶¹

Lord Glyn asked the Foreign Secretary in the House of Lords on 20 November about the current state of affairs in Bahrain. Lloyd replied that the NUC had 'assumed to itself the right to act as the mouthpiece of the people of Bahrain' and

⁸⁵⁷ S. Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism: The Eisenhower Doctrine and the Middle East* (Chapel Hill, NC: 2004), 65, hereafter *Containing Arab Nationalism*.

⁸⁵⁸ J.A. Hail, *Britain's Foreign Policy in Egypt and Sudan 1947-1956* (Reading: 1996), 141.

⁸⁵⁹ TNA, FO 371/120549, Burrows to FO, 27 November 1956.

⁸⁶⁰ TNA, T 220/538, W. Russell Edmunds' Note for Record on Bahrain, 27 March 1957.

⁸⁶¹ HC Deb 12 November 1956, vol 560, cols 9-11W.

that the Administration had exercised patience in its dealing with them. The ultimate aim was to allow the Party to contribute in the development of constitutional government. But the Foreign Secretary believed that the NUC had refused to cooperate and had 'turned to more extreme courses'. As a result of the violence that ensued during the November riots the Government of Bahrain had detained five of the Party's frontline members, Lloyd explained. The Foreign Secretary concealed that the order to arrest the NUC's members actually came from the Residency and not the Administration.⁸⁶² An interesting feature of this period in Bahrain was that Smith did not play any role following his return from leave. Power remained firmly in the hands of Belgrave, the Adviser.

The idea of exiling some of the members of the NUC was first entertained in late November. In a meeting between the Ruler, Belgrave, and Gault, it was felt by Gault that the Administration wanted to have two or three members of the Party exiled to a secure British possession. The Adviser suggested that the soon-to-be exiled prisoners be sent with a single journey travel passport to the Seychelles. There they would receive during their exile allowances from the Bahraini Government. The idea was for the prisoners to live a normal life and be granted mobility throughout the islands but without being able to leave the country.⁸⁶³ The choice to have the prisoners sent to the Seychelles was chosen because Archbishop Makarios of Cyprus was already serving his banishment on the islands.⁸⁶⁴

⁸⁶² *House of Lords (HL)* Deb 20 November 1956, vol 200 cols 369-70.

⁸⁶³ TNA, FO 1016/470, Burrows to FO, 24 November 1956.

⁸⁶⁴ TNA, FO 1016/550, Gault to Burrows, 17 January 1957.

Both Al-Bakir and Belgrave accused Britain of collaboration or sympathising with the other party. Al-Bakir in his memoir claimed that, on his return to Bahrain in late September, the Administration offered an open door for negotiations only to gain time to implement its grand scheme of eliminating the NUC in due course. Al-Bakir further claimed that the plan to dismantle the Party was devised by the British Foreign Office itself and that he was misled during negotiations and he had failed to understand the true intentions of the Administration and Britain.⁸⁶⁵ No FO documents at TNA survive of a grand plot to eliminate the NUC. On the other hand the Bahrain Government Annual Report for 1956 prepared by Belgrave claimed that the NUC's

actions were approved and supported by the British Government and this impression deterred many of the responsible Arabs who supported the Government from indicating their disapproval of the H.E.C.⁸⁶⁶

Burrows explained the Residency's stance towards the two sides in Bahrain in the Residency's Annual Report, saying that his policy was to find 'some common ground' between the factions likening the Bahraini Movement to those seen in other territories under British colonial rule. The intention was to bridge the gap between the Administration and the reformists 'using our experience of constitutional development and administration to guide in the direction of gradual rather than violent change'. Unfortunately the attempt at holding both the Administration and

⁸⁶⁵ Al-Bakir, *From Bahrain to Exile*, 121-22.

⁸⁶⁶ 'Government of Bahrain: Annual Report for Year 1956', 1-111 (4).

the Reformers' hands in an attempt at conciliation for the betterment of all had suffered a setback as the Movement in Bahrain had 'gone too far'.⁸⁶⁷

Due to the Suez War, the Hungarian uprising, and the US's presidential elections that took place between late October and early November, the coverage of Bahrain's disturbances in Western newspapers did not receive the attention that past conflicts on the islands had done. However with the trial of members of the NUC and the exile of three others, the world's press kept a close eye on their fate and a campaign was launched to help them. As for Belgrave, the following months would mark the end of his long tenure in Bahrain.

⁸⁶⁷ TNA, FO 371/126869, Bernard Burrows' Persian Gulf: Annual Review for 1956, 15 April 1957.

Chapter Nine

The Trials, Exile, and Belgrave's Departure

December 1956 to April 1957

With the fall of the NUC the Government of Bahrain sought to re-organise its Administration. One of the earliest moves was the appointment of new councils for Diving, Trade, Minors, *Waqf* (religious endowments), Agriculture, and Water. The appointed members were presented to the Ruler on 10 December. During the presentations the Sheikh said that, although the councils had been elected in the past, it was advisable at this point and under current circumstances that they be appointed and for a one-year period only.⁸⁶⁸ On the same day the councils were presented to the Ruler interrogation began of the five frontline members of the NUC, according to Al-Bakir's memoir.⁸⁶⁹ Since, the interrogation was carried by Bahrain's Police Force, there are no documents that exist in TNA on the details of the interrogation process, nor did Al-Bakir's memoir provide much information.

Based on the Administration's desire to have some of the NUC's prisoners exiled as presented in the previous chapter, the British Cabinet discussed briefly the Ruler's request to move some of the Party's members in custody abroad. In the discussion Lloyd asked for suggestions about places of their imprisonment and Alan Lennox-Boyd, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, responded by putting forward the island of St Helena.⁸⁷⁰ The Foreign Secretary then instructed the Residency to

⁸⁶⁸ TNA, FO 1016/470, New Councils Present themselves and Ruler's Speech, 10 December 1956.

⁸⁶⁹ Al-Bakir, *From Bahrain to Exile*, 307.

⁸⁷⁰ TNA, CAB 195/15, C.M. 97 (56), Discussion on the Suez Canal, 7 December 1956.

guide the Administration regarding the steps required to achieve that goal. Lloyd pointed out to the Residency that in order for such a move to take place an Order in Council must be issued applying the Colonial Prisoners' Removal Act of 1869 to Bahrain. The Ruler would then be able to appeal for a sanction to arrange for the handover of the prisoners to St Helena. A second Order in Council would be needed to complete the second sanction. But before any process was to be made, the Ruler was required to write a request to HM Queen Elizabeth II. Lloyd further wished to add a clause to the Administration's request to transfer the prisoners saying that they would be entitled to a remission of one-third of their sentences, if they were sent to St Helena.⁸⁷¹ A letter was sent to HM Queen Elizabeth II from the Ruler of Bahrain on 18 December seeking the permission of HMG to remove the sentenced prisoners to St Helena to serve their sentences.⁸⁷² The Queen's approval through her Court at Buckingham Palace granted permission that both the Government of Bahrain and St Helena 'enter into an agreement for the removal of prisoners' based on the Colonial Prisoners Removal Act of 1869 which extended to Bahrain through its removal of prisoners order of 1956.⁸⁷³ Prior to the trial Bahrain's Administration considered whether to have all five frontline members deported or just a few of them. The Resident replied 'that five may be too many', as it might not be accepted by St Helena or onboard the frigate which would transport them there.⁸⁷⁴

⁸⁷¹ TNA, FO 1016/470, SOSFA to Residency, 14 December 1956.

⁸⁷² TNA, FO 371/126895, Translation of an Address Submitted by His Highness the Ruler of Bahrain to H.M. the Queen, 18 December 1956.

⁸⁷³ TNA, FO 1016/470, W.G. Agnew on Colonial Prisoners, 19 December 1956.

⁸⁷⁴ TNA, FO 1016/470, Burrows to FO, 21 December 1956.

A special tribunal was appointed under the instructions of the Ruler of Bahrain. The tribunal consisted of Sheikh Abdulla bin Isa Al-Khalifa, Sheikh Duaij bin Hamad Al-Khalifa, and Sheikh Ali bin Ahmed Al-Khalifa as judges. The defendants consisted of the five arrested frontline members of the NUC being Al-Bakir, Al-Shamlan, Al-Alaiwat, E Fakhroo, and Ibn Musa. The tribunal was held at Budaiya village to the north west of the main island of Bahrain. A room in the village's Police Station was setup for the court. The decision to have the trial held in Budaiya and not in the Manama Court was for security reasons, as it was feared that having the court assemble in the capital would invite trouble. The trial opened on 22 December and lasted for two days.

The accusations against the defendants were that they had planned the assassination of the Ruler, his Adviser and members of the ruling family, the destruction of the palace, airport, and other buildings and an attempt to overthrow the Government and deprive the Ruler of his authority. The defendants were also accused of deliberate defiance of the agreement between them and the Administration on the route decided upon in relation to the demonstration that resulted in violence and destruction. Al-Bakir, who spoke on behalf of the defendants, demanded the trial be held in Manama and further criticised the accusations brought forward against him and his fellow Party members. Moreover he asked the court to supply the defendants with written copies of the accusations and documentary evidence to support them. The tribunal agreed to his request but his demand to have the trial held in Manama was rejected. Al-Bakir later asserted that, as his request to have the tribunal in Manama had not been met, the defendants

would not speak. As a result, all the defendants refused to defend themselves throughout the trial.

The documents collected to form the basis of the accusations were found at the homes of the defendants, other members of the NUC, and the Party's offices in Manama. Setting up the Scouts movement and its activities were used in the indictment of the five members of the Movement. The tribunal also brought forward the press accounts of Al-Bakir's statements abroad and circulars produced by the NUC in which it had called those who had collaborated with the Administration 'traitors'. Letters from Al-Shamlan to Al-Sadat on local affairs were produced in evidence that attempted to serve as *pièce justificative* against Al-Shamlan.

Belgrave was present at the tribunal to testify against Al-Bakir *vis-à-vis* the latter's promise to conduct a peaceful and orderly procession. The tribunal also used a letter submitted by the Ruler on 22 July 1956 to the NUC holding the Party responsible for disturbances that would result from their calls to go on strike.⁸⁷⁵ A British officer from Bahrain's police represented the prosecution. The verdict was a *fait accompli* and was reached on 23 December. It called for the imprisonment of Al-Bakir, Al-Shamlan, and Al-Alaiwat for fourteen years and E Fakhroo and Ibn Musa for ten years. According to Gault villagers from Budaiya were granted permission to witness the trial but locals from Manama and Muharraq were not permitted entry. As for the other fifty members and or supporters who had been arrested, eight were released and twelve more followed. Some of those released were banished to up to

⁸⁷⁵ TNA, FO 371/126895, Résumé of the Proceedings against Five Members of the Committee of National Union.

two years abroad and others remained in Bahrain on the promise of good behaviour. The remaining imprisoned Party supporters were sent from Rumaitha south of Bahrain to the prison island of Jidda.⁸⁷⁶

The Administration decided on 24 December that it wished to exile to St Helena: Al-Bakir, Al-Shamlan, and Al-Alaiwat. The Administration planned to keep the remaining two frontline members (E Fakhroo and Ibn Musa) in custody in Bahrain with the objective of reducing their sentences later. The ship scheduled to carry the prisoners onboard was HMS Loch Insh, it called on two destinations en route to St Helena, Mombasa and Simonstown. Travel expenses and accommodation costs were to be paid by the Bahraini Government.⁸⁷⁷ A letter from the Admiralty to the Residency pointed out that it was inadvisable to have HMS Loch Insh arrive on 22 January 1957 as HRH the Duke of Edinburgh was scheduled to visit St Helena on board HM Yacht Britannia on that date. The ship carrying the prisoners should arrive after 27 January, it said.⁸⁷⁸

In the wake of sentencing an attempt was made on the life of a British employee of Bahrain's International Aeradio named Plummer on 27 December. Since the assailant escaped and Plummer was not known to have enemies, Burrows concluded that the attempt on Plummer's life must have been politically motivated following the sentences. The Resident recommended that the incident be given as 'little publicity as possible'.⁸⁷⁹

⁸⁷⁶ TNA, FO 1016/550, Gault to Burrows, 17 January 1957.

⁸⁷⁷ TNA, FO 1016/470, Burrows to FO, 24 December 1956.

⁸⁷⁸ TNA, FO 1016/470, Naval Message to Bahrain, 29 December 1956.

⁸⁷⁹ TNA, FO 1016/470, Burrows to FO, 28 December 1956.

The exiled prisoners departed on HMS Loch Insh on 28 December and were not initially informed of their final destination, nor was it publically known. The majority of ordinary Bahrainis believed that the prisoners were headed to the Seychelles.⁸⁸⁰

In the wider world, the Omega Plan's death certificate was proclaimed on 5 January 1957 when American President Eisenhower announced to Congress his initiative to counter Soviet penetration in the Middle East that came to be known as the 'Eisenhower Doctrine'.⁸⁸¹ The President's plan was to contain Nasser's ambitions through the Soviet Union and to assist in the economic development of Middle Eastern nations in order to sustain their independence, to offer military assistance, and the utilisation of American armed forces in the Middle East, to defend it from 'armed aggression from any nation controlled by International Communism'.⁸⁸² On 9 January Eden submitted his resignation to HM the Queen, sighting ill-health as the cause.⁸⁸³ Macmillan succeeded Eden as Prime Minister.⁸⁸⁴

The three Bahraini prisoners reached St Helena on 27 January.⁸⁸⁵ Sir James D Harford the Governor of the island, proposed keeping the prisoners confined to one location and for them not to be held incommunicado. The three asked for pocket

⁸⁸⁰ TNA, FO 1016/550, Gault to Burrows, 17 January 1957.

⁸⁸¹ For information on the Eisenhower Doctrine see Takehy, *Origins of the Eisenhower Doctrine*; and Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism*.

⁸⁸² D.D. Eisenhower, Eisenhower Doctrine, 5 January 1957
<https://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/education/bsa/citizenship_merit_badge/speeches_national_historical_importance/eisenhower_doctrine.pdf> [accessed 15 February 2016].

⁸⁸³ D. Marks, 'Eden Resigns', *Daily Express*, 10 January 1957, 1.

⁸⁸⁴ 'Mr. Macmillan becomes Prime Minister', *The Times*, 11 January 1957, 8.

⁸⁸⁵ Al-Bakir, *From Bahrain to Exile*, 311.

money, their laundry to be taken care of, refused to undertake any labour tasks, and requested access to a radio.⁸⁸⁶

In the early part of 1957 the Ruler of Bahrain considered once again retaining Belgrave as a Personal Adviser or as a representative of the Government in London, and making regular visits to Bahrain. The Resident felt that such a proposal was unacceptable and instructed the Political Agent to notify the Sheikh on 27 March with the Residency's views. Although Burrows did not mind having Belgrave represent the Ruler in London and to visit Bahrain only on an annual basis, he rejected any arrangement to further involve Belgrave in the Government's work or for him to make a series of visits to the islands throughout the year.⁸⁸⁷ The Adviser was now expected to finally retire by summer but fate intervened to hasten his departure. After a medical examination on 11 April a growth on the Adviser's bladder was detected. Because of his medical condition he was to leave Bahrain as soon as possible to seek treatment in Britain. Bahrain Radio announced Belgrave's departure but did not say whether he was going to return. The Ruler wished to see the Adviser back before his expected retirement in the summer of 1957.⁸⁸⁸

Before Belgrave's departure he met with the Resident, who asked him his thoughts on the political party and whether it should have been left to run. Belgrave's reply was typically devious, saying that it might have been better to have been left to its own devices so 'that people could see for themselves what were the result of political controversy here'. Burrows agreed with Belgrave's view and the

⁸⁸⁶ TNA, FO 371/126895, Sir J. Harford to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 4 February 1957.

⁸⁸⁷ TNA, FO 1016/552, Burrows to FO, 4 April 1957.

⁸⁸⁸ TNA, FO 371/126897, Burrows to FO, 13 April 1957.

Resident seemed to be having second thoughts about his decision to arrest the Party's leading members.⁸⁸⁹

Belgrave left Bahrain with his wife at 6.00 am on 18 April stopping at Kuwait, Baghdad, Istanbul, and Rome until they finally reached London.⁸⁹⁰ His medical condition prevented the Adviser from an immediate return to Bahrain and he would only come again in 1965 as a visitor.⁸⁹¹

Smith was appointed Secretary to the Government upon his return from a three-month leave in June 1956 did not have much of a role until Belgrave's departure. Following the Adviser's sudden return to Britain, Smith worked as Acting Adviser. He finally gained official recognition by the Ruler for the first time on 1 June when a letter was forwarded to him by Sheikh Salman that addressed him with the title of Secretary to the Government of Bahrain. Based later on Smith's recommendation, the Adviserate was converted into the Secretariat.⁸⁹²

In a discussion between Gault and Ahmed Fakhroo on affairs in Bahrain after Belgrave's departure and Smith's takeover, A Fakhroo described the Administration as disorganised. The Political Agent further declared regarding A Fakhroo's opinion, 'He now regretted Sir Charles Belgrave's departure'. During Belgrave's tenure it was the Adviser who held heads of departments reliable for their department's work and held those who mismanaged accountable, a trait that was not seen in Smith.⁸⁹³ On this issue Mapp noted in his memoir quoting a Bahraini taxi driver, 'The people got

⁸⁸⁹ TNA, FO 1016/552, Burrows to FO, 17 April 1957.

⁸⁹⁰ *Sir Charles Dalrymple Belgrave's Personal Diaries*, 18 April 1957.

⁸⁹¹ Al-Khalifa (ed.), *Charles Belgrave Al-Sira wa Al-Muthakarar 1926-1957* [Charles Belgrave Biography and Memoirs 1926-1957], 428-29.

⁸⁹² TNA, FO 371/126897, Gault to FO, 5 June 1957.

⁸⁹³ TNA, FO 1016/551, Minutes between Charles Gault and Ahmed Fakhroo, 23 December 1957.

Belgrave out, but two or three years after he went they were crying to have him back'.⁸⁹⁴

Although the NUC had ceased to exist as a movement by the end of 1956, the effects it had on constitutional developments, both directly and indirectly continued to be felt.⁸⁹⁵ The Penal Code was implemented in November 1956. The Health and Education Councils continued work but through appointed members. On 21 February the two Councils were restructured, each one consisting of eight members, five of whom were selected by the four municipalities of Manama, Muharraq, Riffa, and Hidd. The Ruler appointed the remaining three members.⁸⁹⁶ The Administration Council continued its work,⁸⁹⁷ and work on the Labour Ordinance was completed by 29 July to come into effect officially on 1 January 1958.⁸⁹⁸ Municipal elections had been held before the rise of the NUC, but a return to public elections for the municipalities was declared in early 1958.⁸⁹⁹

According to Burrows there were two driving forces to the NUC. The first was the resentment felt by some Bahraini Shi'ites' (from a sectarian standpoint) towards the Sunni ruling family. The second was a 'genuine wish for reform, partly by half-backed Arab nationalism of the usual kind'.⁹⁰⁰ As to the Party's failure, Mehdi Al-Tajir, the son of Mohsin Al-Tajir one of the frontline members of the NUC, blamed the policies adopted by Al-Bakir and Al-Shamlan. In Mehdi's view the two

⁸⁹⁴ Quoted in Mapp, *Leave Well Alone*, 293.

⁸⁹⁵ TNA, FO 371/126869, Charles Gault's Annual Review of Bahrain Affairs for 1956.

⁸⁹⁶ TNA, FO 371/126895, Health and Education Councils, 21 February 1957.

⁸⁹⁷ TNA, FO 371/140064, Annual Review of Bahrain Affairs for 1958, 31 December 1958.

⁸⁹⁸ 'Bahrain Monthly Report: For the Five Weeks ended Tuesday, 30 July, 1957', in *Political Diaries of the Persian Gulf*, vol. 20 1955-1958, ed. R.L. Jarman (London: 1990), 1-3.

⁸⁹⁹ TNA, FO 371/132748, Charles Gault's Annual Review of Bahrain Affairs for 1957.

⁹⁰⁰ TNA, FO 1016/552, Burrows to FO, 4 April 1957.

were unable to avoid the ‘allure of Egypt’. As to the reason for the two’s attraction to the Egyptian sphere, Mehdi believed was ‘because “they wanted to be heroes in the fight against Imperialism and loved to have their photographs in the Nationalist magazines”’.⁹⁰¹

In St Helena a long legal battle to free the prisoners ensued. On 10 June 1958 Bernard Sheridan’s law firm on behalf of Al-Bakir submitted an application for a writ of *habeas corpus*.⁹⁰² A document among TNA CO’s papers unnamed and undated but archived among the records for the year 1958, suggested upon acknowledgement that a writ of *habeas corpus* was applied by the prisoners that

It is important politically that the application should be rejected and should not, therefore, be held in conditions in which it is likely to succeed through inadequate defence.

Furthermore it was recommended that little publicity to the hearing was to be given and ‘to avoid proceeding in such a way as to make the Colonial judicial system the subject of legitimate attack’. It was also expected according to the paper that an appeal to the verdict would be made to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council.⁹⁰³

Nonetheless one of the earliest attempts to bring public awareness in Britain to the plight of the three prisoners was when British filmmaker John Tunstall, hired by the French Government to produce a film on St Helena, Napoleon Bonaparte’s final place of exile, met the three men on the island. The meeting and first call to

⁹⁰¹ TNA, FO 1016/551, W.J. Adams at Political Agency in Dubai to Residency, 17 June 1957.

⁹⁰² In the Privy Council: On Appeal: From the Supreme court of St Helena (No. 43) (1959), *The Incorporated Council of Law Reporting for England and Wales*, 1959.

⁹⁰³ TNA, CO 1026/188, St. Helena Prisoners: Venue for Hearing of Application for Writ of *Habeas Corpus*.

free the men was chronicled in *Reynold's News* weekly newspaper of 7 September 1958 in an article with several images of the prisoners in St Helena. Interestingly, the newspaper reported that the initial *habeas corpus* application was unsuccessful because of a technical issue: one of the relatives of the prisoners' had failed to sign it on their behalf.⁹⁰⁴ This report corresponded with a claim made by Murad that early in the process of defending the three, signatures were collected on behalf of the three exiled men's families, in order to allow for lawyers to represent them. However one of the prisoners' sons (whom he did not specify) had refused to sign it for reasons unknown. There was no other choice left then but to forge his signature to allow lawyers to represent his father and for the case to proceed.⁹⁰⁵

The case proceeded and affidavits were collected from witnesses. Affidavits were made by Al-Bakir on 15 October, Salem Al-Arrayed the Registrar of the Bahrain Law Courts on 23 February 1959, Sir James D Harford (former Governor of St Helena) on 26 February, Belgrave on 27 February, Patrick Truebody (the Senior Sergeant of Police in St Helena) on 17 March, and Sir Robert Edmund Alford (Governor of St Helena since 12 February 1958) on 17 March. On behalf of Sheridan Ronald GM Brown was appointed to defend Al-Bakir.

The defence argued that Al-Bakir was unlawfully detained in St Helena. It based its key points of defence on the following arguments: first that the prisoner 'was never convicted by a court of competent jurisdiction', despite having the Act extended to include Bahrain 'it cannot apply to the applicant because he was not

⁹⁰⁴ 'New Hope for three St Helena Captives', *Reynold's News*, 7 September 1958, 9.

⁹⁰⁵ 'Jassim Murad wa "Nishwar" Al-Sineen Al-Khamseen' [Jassim Murad and the 'Elegant Words' of Fifty Years], 9.

convicted in the exercise of any jurisdiction of Her Majesty's in Bahrain', and that the warrant that was delivered to HMS Loch Insh was not valid under the Act 'because it was executed by the Ruler of Bahrain before the Order sanctioning the agreement had come into force in Bahrain'. The hearing lasted from 17 to 20 March 1959. Unfortunately for Al-Bakir, the court's Chief Justice, Justice Lionel Brett, dismissed the summons. Al-Bakir then appealed to the Privy Council's Judicial Committee on 12 August 1959.⁹⁰⁶ The appeal was yet again unsuccessful as it was declared on 1 June 1960.⁹⁰⁷

The internal pressure in Britain to release the prisoners was feared, Richard A Beaumont at the Arabian Department of the FO (formerly the Eastern Department), noted, however, that on the prisoners in St Helena issue, 'No Arab diplomatic missions in London have (to the best of my knowledge) taken up this question with us'. Nevertheless, to relieve the Government from pressure at home Beaumont proposed three possible solutions: to 'ride out the political storm in the House of Commons'; to convince the Ruler to pardon the prisoners; and/or to return the men to Bahrain were they would serve out the remainder of their prison sentences.⁹⁰⁸ A new development transpired *vis-à-vis* the prisoners' case in the second-half of 1960. A letter from Sheridan to JC McPetrie at the Colonial Office on 24 October 1960 found at TNA suggested that the ship that carried the prisoners to

⁹⁰⁶ In the Privy Council: On Appeal: From the Supreme court of St Helena (No. 43) (1959), *The Incorporated Council of Law Reporting for England and Wales*, 1959.

⁹⁰⁷ 'Justice v. Politics', *The Observer*, 18 June 1961, 36.

⁹⁰⁸ TNA, FO 371/149133, R.A. Beaumont on Bahraini Prisoners on St Helena, 30 September 1960.

St Helena had sailed at 4.00 am before the Order in Council was published that would provide authority to the warrant.⁹⁰⁹

At about this time the new Resident Sir George H Middleton (Burrows' successor, appointed in 1958), recommended that the best course of action to take would be for 'the Ruler to commute the sentences to one of exile'. Middleton hoped that, if this course of action was implemented, the damage the prisoners would do through the media 'would be short-lived'.⁹¹⁰ However instead he sent the Ruler a letter on 15 December seeking his approval to return the prisoners to Bahrain where they would resume their sentences.⁹¹¹ The British Government's eagerness to have the prisoners returned was probably due to the knowledge that new evidence by Sheridan would be introduced and the fear of a public backlash.

The Ruler replied by accepting the Resident's request to return the prisoners to Bahrain.⁹¹² Replying to a question in the House of Commons on 19 December about the status of the prisoners on St Helena by John Stonehouse Labour MP, the Lord Privy Seal Edward Heath replied that the Ruler wished to have them complete their sentences in Bahrain.⁹¹³ A debate followed on the following day and Labour MP Denis Healy exclaimed,

The Lord Privy Seal has given no assurance that if these men are returned to the custody of the Ruler, their sentence will not be doubled or that their heads will not be cut off the moment they step ashore at Bahrain.⁹¹⁴

⁹⁰⁹ TNA, FO 371/149133, Bernard Sheridan to J.C. McPetrie, 24 October 1960.

⁹¹⁰ TNA, FO 371/149133, G.H. Middleton to FO, 29 November 1960.

⁹¹¹ TNA, FO 371/129134, G.H. Middleton to Ruler of Bahrain, 15 December 1960.

⁹¹² TNA, FO 371/149134, Translation: Ruler of Bahrain to Residency, 17 December 1960.

⁹¹³ HC Deb 19 December 1960, vol 632, cols 877-78.

⁹¹⁴ HC Deb 20 December 1960, vol 632, cols 1149-208.

Commenting on Healy's remarks, Belgrave wrote to *The Times* citing a Bahraini friend, whom he alleged had bellowed in shock at the statement, saying 'Do these people think that Bahrain is a savage country, like the Yemen?'⁹¹⁵

On the issue between the choice of living freely in exile or returning to Bahrain as a prisoner Al-Bakir wrote in his memoir of 21 December that 'it is better for me to be imprisoned, even with shackles, in my country, to share my fellow friends their suffering in jail'.⁹¹⁶ However the Governor of St Helena on 3 January 1961 contradicted Al-Bakir's statement reporting 'that Abdul Rahman al Bakr says he would prefer to remain in St Helena rather than be returned to Bahrain if he cannot be released'.⁹¹⁷

The Lord Privy Seal Sir Edward Heath visited Bahrain on 15 January for two and a half days. With permission from the Ruler, he visited the two frontline members who remained imprisoned on the island of Jidda in order to inspect the conditions of imprisonment on the island. Heath claimed to have spoken with the two prisoners, he later told the House of Commons that the 'two men are living in reasonable conditions, with a considerable degree of freedom on the island'.⁹¹⁸ *The Observer* covered Heath's visit to Bahrain and Jidda Island. In conclusion of the visit Heath noted: 'What I saw completely disproves the wild, exaggerated accusations made about the way these men would be treated if they were returned to Bahrein'.⁹¹⁹

⁹¹⁵ C.D. Belgrave, 'Bahrain Arabs', *The Times*, 28 December 1960, 9.

⁹¹⁶ Al-Bakir, *From Bahrain to Exile*, 436-37.

⁹¹⁷ TNA, FO 371/149134, Adams at FO to Singapore, 3 January 1961.

⁹¹⁸ HC Deb 30 January 1961, vol 633, cols 596-603.

⁹¹⁹ 'Mr Heath "rejects charges about Bahrein gaol"', *The Observer*, 17 January 1961, 10.

Bernard Levin, one of the most vocal journalists on the Conservatives' *The Spectator* magazine on the issue of the three prisoners, attacked Heath's statements in the House of Commons, as in his view the prisoners had been unable to express their opinions freely in the presence of the local Police Chief.⁹²⁰ E Fakhroo recollected in an interview with *Al-Wasat* newspaper a visit by a British official he did not name. He further recalled of the official that he 'did not hear from him a thing and did not see him again'. Hassan Al-Jowdar, who worked for the police on Jidda Island, indicated in the same interview that two frontline members of the NUC were well-respected by the Public Security Chief, Sheikh Khalifa bin Mohammed Al-Khalifa who used to call the two to his office whenever he visited the island. Other prisoners were required to assist them in cooking and cleaning.⁹²¹

According to Al-Bakir he received a letter from Sheridan's law firm on 21 January 1961 that informed him that new facts had been revealed in relation to the time the prisoners were brought onto the HMS Loch Insh, but no further information was relayed to him at that point. A new *habeas corpus* application was made, this time under Al-Shamlan's name.⁹²² The affidavit of Al-Shamlan confirmed that he was arrested on 6 November 1956 and was later trialed in Bahrain and deported. Al-Shamlan appealed that the order sanctioning his removal and the other two prisoners did not take effect at the time of deportation since it was not posted on the Political Agency's board.⁹²³

⁹²⁰ B. Levin, 'How Much Longer?', *The Spectator*, 3 March 1961, 6.

⁹²¹ 'Akhar Qiyadi ala gayid Il-Hayat min Hayet Al-Itihad Al-Watani' [The Last Member Remaining from the National Union Committee], *Al-Wasat*, 12 October 2002, 2.

⁹²² Al-Bakir, *From Bahrain to Exile*, 440-41 and 444.

⁹²³ TNA, CO 1026/188, Affidavit of A.A. Al-Shamlan.

Proceedings for the new appeal were announced to start on 30 January 1961.⁹²⁴ During the proceedings a letter by Smith, Bahrain's Secretary to the Government, officially requested the Political Agency on 7 March that the prisoners be returned to Bahrain.⁹²⁵ The request was not granted and the three prisoners were ordered to be freed by Justice Myles John Abbott the Acting Chief Justice of St Helena on 13 June 1961. Since Al-Shamlan's application for *habeas corpus* was upheld the other two prisoners were granted the same ruling. The hearing for the case was held for three days in what *The Guardian* described was a crowded Supreme Court.

The loophole that was applied to free the prisoners on their second appeal was that the men were handed over to the Captain of the HMS Loch Insh at 6.00 am, and not at 4.00 am as had been stated in Sheridan's letter, with a warrant that authorised their deportation. However the Order in Council that provided authority for the warrant was published on the Political Agency announcements' board at 8.00 am, two hours after they had been taken aboard the ship. A copy of the *pro forma* that was submitted to the Captain of the ship, according to the newspaper, was retrieved. It was then used as the primary evidence to free the prisoners.⁹²⁶ According to Murad, a former member of the NUC, the document had been retrieved by an unnamed friend from the Adviserate, later the Secretariat, who copied the document that was submitted to HMS Loch Insh and it had included the time at

⁹²⁴ 'Justice v. Politics', *The Observer*, 18 June 1961, 36.

⁹²⁵ TNA, CO 1026/238, Smith to Political Agency, 7 March 1961.

⁹²⁶ TNA, CO 1026/240, Judgment, 13 June 1961; and '3 Bahreinis Freed: Judge's ruling on St Helena', *The Guardian*, 14 June 1961, 9.

which the prisoners had been handed over.⁹²⁷ In Gault's affidavit he claimed to have received the order to remove the prisoners from Bahrain from Burrows following the former's working hours on 27 December at the Agency as he worked from 8.00 am to 1.30 pm. He did not see the point of publishing the order on the Agency's notice board in non-office hours and had published it on the following day at 8.05 am.⁹²⁸ The Commander of the HMS Loch Insh was revealed to be Robert Barcham. In his affidavit he claimed to have been informed via the Senior Naval Officer on either the 26 or 27 December 1956 that his ship was to carry three prisoners to St Helena. He confirmed to have received the prisoners at around 6.00 am.⁹²⁹

In order to help sponsor the prisoners' defense team, Bernard Levin claimed in an article in *The Spectator* that a committee was set up to help in raising the necessary funds. The committee consisted of Woodrow Wyatt MP, Jeremy Thorpe MP, John Stonehouse MP, Donald Chesworth, and Bernard Levin. The committee contributed to past funds, though it is unknown the date on which the committee was first formed for the prisoners and in 1961 a new appeal was proclaimed in *The Spectator* to help the three Bahrainis due to the 'sheer lack of funds'. Levin urged the readers to forward their donations to the magazine.⁹³⁰ When the case concluded with the release of the prisoners, Levin referred to 'the considerable debts incurred' for the cases, which some remained outstanding. Thus the committee announced that it would withhold donations that had not been spent yet until further proposals

⁹²⁷ 'Jassim Murad wa "Nishwar" Al-Sineen Al-Khamseen' [Jassim and the 'Elegant Words' of Fifty Years], *Abwab Al-Wasat*, 9.

⁹²⁸ TNA, CO 1026/238, Charles Gault's Affidavit.

⁹²⁹ TNA, CO 1026/238, Robert Barcham's Affidavit.

⁹³⁰ B. Levin, 'Chalk It Up', *The Spectator*, 4 May 1961, 6.

were made to the donators, as it was not yet clear what the final charges for the legal procedure would be. Levin thanked all those who contributed as people sent varying donations; even clergymen who were poorly paid as Levin stated contributed to the cause.⁹³¹

Prime Minister Macmillan decided that an appeal should not be made against the freeing of the three prisoners and that their solicitors be consulted on the topic of settlement.⁹³² In 1962 it was decided that the three Bahrainis would receive compensation by the British Government worth £15,000. Additionally other unspecified costs incurred by the three men would also be compensated by the government, worth £5,000.⁹³³

Upon the three prisoners' release they were taken onboard the Warwick Castle to London. They arrived on 14 July 1961. A press conference was given by the three chaired by J Stonehouse. In the conference Al-Bakir expressed his gratitude to the people of Britain and singled out the British Government as *The Guardian* noted.⁹³⁴

The Ruler of Bahrain Sheikh Salman passed away on 2 November 1961. His oldest son and heir apparent HH Sheikh Isa bin Salman Al-Khalifa became Bahrain's new Ruler.⁹³⁵ As for the former Adviser, he spent the remainder of his life in retirement in Britain. As a member of the Royal Central Asian Society he was awarded in 1967 with the Lawrence of Arabia Memorial Award, for his services to

⁹³¹ B. Levin, 'The Ex-Prisoners of Saint Helena', *The Spectator*, 15 June 1961, 5-6.

⁹³² TNA, FO 371/156750, FO to Residency, 17 October 1961, 1-2.

⁹³³ '£5,000 awards to three Bahreinis', *The Guardian*, 5 June 1962, 1.

⁹³⁴ 'Bahreinis from St Helena: Awaiting News on Compensation', *The Guardian* 15 July 1961, 2.

⁹³⁵ 'Son to Succeed Bahrain Ruler', *The Times*, 3 November 1961, 12.

the Arab World. A special ceremony was held for the award at the Hyde Park Hotel on 7 December and was attended by dignitaries from around the world.⁹³⁶ Belgrave died on 28 February 1969 in Kensington at the age of seventy-four. A memorial service was held in his owner on 10 March.⁹³⁷

Obituaries were placed in *The Times* and *The Guardian* as it recalled the services of the Adviser to the government and people of Bahrain.⁹³⁸ British historian Elizabeth Monroe author of *Britain's Moment in the Middle East 1914-1956* wrote remembering Belgrave as she illustrated in *The Times*, that it was the Adviser's,

ill-luck to leave Bahrain at a moment when the anti-British tide was running high, and so never heard the applause that he deserved for the steady and devoted way in which he helped with the island's slow but solid development into a modern state.⁹³⁹

Dr RHB Snow, who worked in Bahrain's medical department, further added in a separate obituary to Belgrave as he noted Belgrave's virtues of 'extreme patience, courage and courtesy'.⁹⁴⁰ Even past Bahraini foes like Sayyar testified decades after his passing that,

Justice requires us to give Charles Belgrave his right in managing his responsibilities assigned to him. He was the one who established administrative systems and did all he could do in order for Bahrain to become distinctive among the Gulf States.⁹⁴¹

Al-Mardi's *Al-Adwha'a* determined *vis-à-vis* the Adviser that,

⁹³⁶ 'Annual Dinner, 1967', *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society*, 55.1, (1968), 105-12.

⁹³⁷ 'Obituary: Sir Charles Dalrymple Belgrave', *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society*, 56.2, (1969), 210-11.

⁹³⁸ 'Obituary: Sir Charles Belgrave', *The Times*, 1 March 1969, 10; and 'Obituary: Sir Charles Belgrave', *The Guardian*, 3 March 1969, 5.

⁹³⁹ E. Monroe, 'Obituary: Sir Charles Belgrave', *The Times*, 5 March 1969, 13.

⁹⁴⁰ R.H.B. Snow, 'Obituary: Sir Charles Belgrave', *The Times*, 6 March 1969, 10.

⁹⁴¹ A. Sayyar, '*Biqalam Ali Sayyar*' [Written by Ali Sayyar], *Kurasat Charles Belgrave 1926-1957* [Charles Belgrave Booklet], 6.

no matter how much we differed with him and the policies he instituted or the methods he followed, he was clean hand and honest during all the time he worked. He did not exploit his wide authority during that long period to himself or to his own personal gains.⁹⁴²

Belgrave's home in Manama no longer exists as it was demolished and fenced. The road that carried his name was changed to Sheikh Isa Al-Kabir (the Great) Road. Today there are no artifacts related to Belgrave in Bahrain's museums with the exception of him appearing in the background of various photographs featuring local dignitaries. A question arises as to why there is virtually no mention of Belgrave's work or presence in Bahrain. The answer to that is found in Belgrave's publications, in particular his *Personal Column* and in his diary. The content featured in his work that contained local gossip, personal attacks on various local and British figures, mockery, and history of the humble and at times controversial beginnings of various known local families resulted in him burning all bridges amongst the locals. Hence, there is virtually no artifacts left of him.

Al-Bakir, after a short stay in Britain traveled to Lebanon where he arrived on 22 July 1961.⁹⁴³ Lebanon turned to be his final home as he lived there until his death on 8 July 1971. His body was buried in Qatar. Al-Alaiwat after his release from St Helena lived in Syria and Iraq. He died on 14 January 1969 and was buried in the city of Najaf in Iraq.⁹⁴⁴ As for the two frontline members Ibn Musa and E Fakhroo who were imprisoned in Bahrain, they were less fortunate than the first three, as the two were freed on 8 August 1964. Ibn Musa died approximately forty

⁹⁴² 'Wafat Al-Sir Charles Belgrave' [The Death of Sir Charles Belgrave], *Al-Adwha'a*, 6 March 1969, 3.

⁹⁴³ Al-Bakir, *From Bahrain to Exile*, 457.

⁹⁴⁴ 'Aham Al-Shakhsyat alti Asrat "Al-Hay'eh' [Contemporary Personalities that Witnessed the Committee], *Abwab Al-Wasat*, 13 October 2004, 13.

days following his release.⁹⁴⁵ E Fakhroo resumed his political career. After Bahrain's independence in 1971, he was elected to participate in the establishment of the country's constitution as a member of Bahrain's General Assembly in 1973 and was also elected as an MP in 1974. He died on 20 February 2005.⁹⁴⁶ Kamal-el-Deen according to Belgrave's diary entry on 16 January 1957, asked the cleric to travel away from Bahrain to Iraq for an unspecified period of time.⁹⁴⁷ He later returned to Bahrain and died in 1974 and was buried in Manama.⁹⁴⁸

Of all the frontline members of the NUC the most fortunate was Al-Shamlan. After his release from St Helena and departure to London, he lived in Damascus until 1971 when he returned to Bahrain. He was elected to Bahrain's General Assembly in 1973. Al-Shamlan was appointed by the government as ambassador to Egypt and subsequently to Tunisia. He suffered from hemiplegia and was sent to Britain and the US for treatment. Following his return he was visited by the Ruler of Bahrain. On 30 December 1988, Al-Shamlan suffered a stroke that led to his death. He was buried in Muharraq.⁹⁴⁹ An avenue in Umm Al-Hassam in Manama was named after the former NUC's frontline member.

As for the Baghdad Pact, the alliance that tore the Middle East apart, the Iraqis eventually withdrew from the Pact in 1959 following the bloody overthrow of

⁹⁴⁵ 'Akhar Qiyadi ala gayid Il-Hayat min Hayet Al-Itihad Al-Watani' [The Last Member Remaining from the National Union Committee], *Al-Wasat*, 12 October 2002, 2.

⁹⁴⁶ 'Raheel Akher Qiyadat Al-Hay'eh' [The Passing of the National Union's Last Leaders], *Al-Dimokrati*, March 2005, 10.

⁹⁴⁷ *Sir Charles Dalrymple Belgrave's Personal Diaries*, 16 January 1957.

⁹⁴⁸ E.A. Kamal-el-Deen, *Thakerat Al-Watan* [A Nation's Memory] (Manama: 2006), 58-61.

⁹⁴⁹ L. Nasr and A. Al-Moasawi, 'Ma'tah Abdul-Aziz Al-Shamlan... Wa tabqah Mawaqifuhu Al-Wataniyah Al-Khalidah' [Abdul-Aziz Al-Shamlan Died... But his Immortal National Stance Remains], *Akhbar Al-Khaleej*, 2 January 1989, 3.

the monarchy in 1958.⁹⁵⁰ The Pact became known as the Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO) following the Iraqis' departure.⁹⁵¹ Concerning Nasser the destructive outcome of the 1967 Six Days War, participation in the 1962-70 Yemeni Civil War, the short-lived union with Syria, poor economy, and centralisation of power led the Egyptian writer Al-Hakim who once labeled the Free Officers' Movement as the 'blessed movement' to reassess his position. After Nasser's death and in 1972, Al-Hakim published the *Return of Consciousness*, in which he expressed his disappointment in Nasser's rule and policy.⁹⁵²

⁹⁵⁰ 'Baghdad Pact Minus Baghdad', *New York Times*, 26 March 1959, 30.

⁹⁵¹ Gallman, *Iraq Under General Nuri*, 58; J.C. Campbell, *Defense of the Middle East: Problems of American Policy* (New York: 1961), 242; and Marlowe, *The Persian Gulf*, 203.

⁹⁵² Al-Hakim, *Return of Consciousness*, 56-60. For information on the Six Days War, Egyptian involvement in the Yemeni Civil War, and the short-lived Egyptian-Syrian union see J. Bowen, *Six Days: How the 1967 War Shaped the Middle East* (London: 2003); J. Ferris, *Nasser's Gamble* (New Jersey: 2013); and J. Jankowski, *Nasser's Egypt, Arab Nationalism, and the United Arab Republic* (Boulder, CO: 2002).

Conclusion

British policy manifested itself through the Residency's work in Bahrain. The Resident, Burrows, offered to mediate between the two conflicting parties in Bahrain being the local Administration and the nationalist movement. The Government of Bahrain suspiciously looked at the process of mediation, which at times took on the form of private meetings with a member or members of the NUC. Nevertheless, negotiations with the Movement were key in the Residency's policy to reach a compromise between the two sides. The Residency was probably inclined to show sympathy to the Movement based on Western ideals of democracy and development of constitutional government. Constraints were also placed on the two sides to prevent one from overtaking the other.

British policy up to a late stage in the development of the Bahraini movement in 1956 did not view the opposition to be that of an anti-British nature. Despite attacks on British interests, allies, and policies in nationalist press. Following the stoning of Lloyd's car in Bahrain and the events that followed in March 1956 there seemed to be a division amongst British policy makers on how to deal with the Movement. Eden wanted to adopt a firm stance against the NUC and if it weren't for Burrows' maneuvering and understanding with the FO the Movement would have been suppressed in March. Burrows adopted a more lenient approach with the Party in accordance to his understanding first hand of the situation on the ground.

Though it was Burrows who helped the Party remain intact, it was him who sealed its fate in November of that year. A number of possible factors affected the Residency's decision to suppress the Movement those being its constant call for strikes some of which led to violence having a negative impact on the economy, the statements attributed to Al-Bakir abroad, the creation of a paramilitary organisation in the form of a Scouts movement, failure to cooperate with the government, failure to take advantage of the political concessions awarded to them, and the riots of November 1956.

The position of Belgrave presented British policy makers with a dilemma. The Residency understood that part of the local agitation was the position of the Adviser. Since the Adviser was not an employee for Britain and did not receive orders from it, policy makers had to convince both the Ruler of Bahrain and Belgrave that the latter had to go. The tactics employed by the British dealt sensitively with the issue, as they feared that an insistence on their part for Belgrave to depart might lead to instability in the Administration and force the Ruler to abdicate. That position relatively changed following the sacking of Glubb Pasha in Jordan and the stoning of Lloyd in Bahrain. The new policy adopted then was to allow Belgrave to remain temporarily and not to impose the issue on the Administration as British prestige was on stake if a sudden departure of the Adviser were to take place. A long-term plan was devised to ease Belgrave out by persuading the Ruler to adopt that line. The plan after thorough consideration involved convincing the Ruler to hire a British secretary to the government who would eventually ease out the Adviser. There is no evidence to suggest that

Belgrave served at the time British imperial interests, as a matter of fact his presence at the head of the Administration in Bahrain turned into a heavy burden on Britain. Nor is there any evidence to suggest that Belgrave's work was dictated to him by Britain's FO through the Residency. Moreover, there is no evidence to suggest that neither he nor the Residency purposely sought sectarian division in Bahrain.

Though Egyptian influence on the nationalists was apparent as seen through their press and some of the prominent members of the NUC's actions. It is hard to determine whether Egyptian influence affected the Party as a whole since those who contributed to press publications and spoke in rallies were but a few. Those whose influence by Egypt's Nasser seemed apparent, there existed no proof to suggest that they were controlled by the Egyptians though the influence was reasonably high.

In order to better understand the Party and its driving force it is essential to dissect the Movement. The NUC consisted of a two-headed complex structure each driven by its political motives. The first being the Shi'ite element of the Party which some of its supporters were driven by their traditional sectarian feud with the Administration's Sunni ruling family. Though the Movement was not of a religious nature, it heavily relied on religious platforms and occasions for its political gatherings, in particular Shi'ite celebrations which were held throughout the year. Though such gatherings promised to assemble thousands it probably gave a false impression to some Shi'ites, as they thought the Movement stood in support to their religious practices. Further, there was noticeable objection from an element within Bahrain's Shi'ite community towards the Party's hardline stance and Egyptian

influence as was noted through Mohsin Al-Tajir's resignation. This, however, does not rule out the possibility that some of the NUC's Shi'ite supporters genuinely revered Nasser and his version of Arab nationalism.

The other element in the Movement represented the Sunnis; the driving force of this element was Al-Bakir and Al-Shamlan. Al-Bakir seemed to have a dual personality from 1953 up to his departure in March 1956. The personality seen in his memoir and nationalist press differed to that in British papers found at TNA. Though he was a self-proclaimed nationalist, he blamed in a secret meeting with the British two other members of the Party for its radicalisation following their return from Egypt as presented in chapter five. Furthermore, he seemed not to mind additional British domination of the Administration when he suggested with another frontline member of the NUC in relation to the establishment of a commission to investigate the government's performance that three of its six members be chosen by HMG, as presented in chapter three. Al-Shamlan on the other hand seemed to be genuinely inspired by nationalist ideals. He, however, lacked political maneuvering as his insistence during Al-Bakir's absence on having all of the Party's demands met in one go rather than in installments proved detrimental. Additionally it was during his presence as Acting Secretary that the Scouts movement was publically established, another act that harmed the NUC. Likewise to parts of the Shi'ite community Sunnis and in particular the merchants of Manama resented the Party for its hardline policy. However this section of society seemed shaken and unable to vocalise its disapproval.

The Party's focus on international affairs and alignment through nationalist press and circulars with Egyptian politics whether by knowledge or ignorance, saw the Movement thrust itself into Cold War politics. The scale of the Cold War, its complexities, and covert operations was far more multifaceted for the inexperienced politicians to comprehend, as they were new to this *terra incognita*. Instead they should have focused purely on local political and social development. There was no maltreatment, however, in showing sympathy with other nations in distress or under aggression through peaceful means.

One of the NUC's noticeable failures was its insistence to rid Bahrain of a single British man being Belgrave. That determination resulted in the recruitment of many other British experts on a part-time or full-time basis throughout the Administration to relieve the Adviser from his duties or develop governmental work. The failure was compounded in November 1956 when Bahrain was run over by British military units.

The NUC exerted much effort in the organisation of political rallies, speeches, and publication of countless long circulars and pamphlets. The Movement had a golden opportunity of dominating public opinion if they had served and served well in the Health and Education Councils. Additionally the NUC failed to recognise the complexity and reality of its surroundings as further concessions would be looked upon unfavorably regionally. It is also ironic that although the Party called upon a form of democratic representation, some of its supporter's looked on to Nasser as a political model though he did not adopt democratic values.

As for the Administration, Belgrave's stubbornness and insistence on remaining in his position awarded nationalists with the perfect scapegoat to pour their wrath and frustration on. Furthermore, the failure of Belgrave and the Administration in improving the local Police Force haunted Bahrain as policemen failed to control riots that resulted in terrible outcomes. The Adviser further failed to keep up with the times, as he did not make use of modern channels of communication early like the radio, press, and film to highlight to locals the Administration's work and achievements over the years. If such channels were utilised early it could have deflated support from the nationalists.

It is unfortunate that Bahrain's political party of the 1950s ended on the note it did. If the opposition had adopted a more flexible approach and managed to build on to its political gains, it would have turned into an early watchdog to the Administration and contributed to the political and social development of Bahrain.

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