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Original Read a  
Bahrain June 79  
UK/Bahraini relations



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

2 July 1979

cc Master Set  
cc Middle East Situation  
cc Energy Policy Pt 2

Dear Paul,

Prime Minister's Meeting with the Prime Minister of Bahrain  
Sheikh Khalifa, at Bahrain Airport  
on 2 July 1979

The Prime Minister's aircraft made a refuelling stop at Bahrain Airport at 0930 (local time) this morning and the Prime Minister of Bahrain, Sheikh Khalifa, came to the airport to meet her (interrupting, in order to do so, a meeting with Colonel Qadaffi of Libya). The following is a summary of the main points which arose during half an hour's discussion in the airport lounge, at which H.M. Ambassador was also present. Audibility was poor and Mr. Walker may wish to supplement this account if he finds significant gaps in it.

Arab/Israel

Sheikh Khalifa said that the recent declaration on the Middle East by the E.E.C. had been helpful. It was essential to safeguard the rights of the Palestinians and to give them a homeland. Nothing would be achieved in the negotiations on the future of the West Bank unless the Palestinians, who were becoming desperate, were allowed to take part in them. Commenting on the Camp David agreements, Sheikh Khalifa said that they had so far failed to produce any concrete results. Although they had been intended to mark the first steps towards peace, the only outcome so far had been the isolation of Egypt from her close friends. The Arab world could not afford to wait two or three years for more substantial results.

The Prime Minister gave Sheikh Khalifa a short account of Mr. Begin's last visit to London, when she had found him immovable on the issue of Israeli settlements. The Prime Minister said, however, that it was Mr. Begin's usual tactic to go to the brink before making any concessions. Later in the discussion, Sheikh Khalifa repeated that the West could not go on making excuses for the absence of a solution to the problem of the Palestinians; a homeland had to be found for them.

Iran

Sheikh Khalifa repeatedly expressed his deep concern over recent developments in Iran and the present situation there. The Shah had been a constant and staunch friend of the West, and

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especially of the United States; but now the Americans would not even allow him into their country. The Prime Minister explained that the U.S., like the U.K., were constrained by the threat to their own people in Iran which would be created if the Shah were to be given permanent refuge in either capital. Sheikh Khalifa expressed understanding of this. He said that the present course of events in Iran, and especially the wave of executions which had taken place, was not representative of Islam. He expected a further power struggle to develop in Iran; Iranian refugees were arriving in Bahrain at the rate of about 30 a week.

#### Iraq

The Prime Minister mentioned to Sheikh Khalifa the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's current visit to Baghdad, and asked for his advice on how the U.K. should respond to indications that the Iraqis wished to improve their relations with us. Sheikh Khalifa recommended that the British Government should respond positively.

#### Libya

Sheikh Khalifa told the Prime Minister that Colonel Qadaffi had arrived in Bahrain on the previous day and, when he heard that Sheikh Khalifa was to meet the British Prime Minister during her stop-over, had asked him to convey a message to her. This was to the effect that he wished to open a new book in Libya's relations with the U.K.. Colonel Qadaffi wished the Prime Minister to know that for the past three years there had been no contact between the Libyan regime and the I.R.A., nor any supply of weapons to them.. Colonel Qadaffi also admitted that he had been mistaken in his handling of the abortive defence deals between Libya and the U.K.. Sheikh Khalifa told the Prime Minister that Colonel Qadaffi evidently wished to improve relations with Britain: if he really meant it, this could be of benefit to the British Government. Libya evidently needed friends and a helping hand; but, the Sheikh added, there was an Arab proverb to the effect that if one had been bitten by a snake, one was suspicious of a piece of rope. The Sheikh suggested that Colonel Qadaffi's approaches could be pursued through diplomatic channels.

#### Relations between the West and OPEC

After a short discussion of the new instability in the Middle East and in Africa, following events in Iran and the activities of the Soviet Union's Cuban and East German proxies in Africa, Sheikh Khalifa spoke of the need to restore stability and said that the Communique issued at the end of the Tokyo Summit, like the E.E.C. Declaration on the Middle East, had produced a good effect in the OPEC countries. The fact remained, however, that unless the West's ideals concerning human rights were fulfilled so far as the Palestinians were concerned, OPEC would continue to use the

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energy weapon against Western consumers. He admitted frankly that the oil-producing countries had been robbing the West: Iran, for example, had cancelled all her long-term contracts and was now selling her oil to the highest bidder. The Iranians were producing less oil but gaining more revenue. Sheikh Khalifa said that he fully recognised, however, that if the West suffered, the Arab world would suffer as well. He agreed with the Prime Minister's comment that the less-developed countries would suffer most of all. The Prime Minister asked Sheikh Khalifa whether it was his view that if some advance could be achieved towards a solution of the Palestinian problem, oil prices would be stabilised: Sheikh Khalifa confirmed this. He strongly urged the Prime Minister to promote more frequent and more direct contact between the Western nations and the Arab world. The West should make a greater effort to hear Arab views at first hand. When the Prime Minister mentioned Prince Salman's visit to London in May, Sheikh Khalifa commented that Saudi Arabia was deeply committed to maintaining stability in the region. The Prime Minister told Sheikh Khalifa that the West and the Arab world should stand together to prevent the spread of Communism. Sheikh Khalifa agreed and commented that it was easier to let the Communists in than to get them out.

Bilateral Relations

Sheikh Khalifa spoke very warmly of U.K./Bahraini relations. Bahrain found it easier to get along with the U.K. than with any other country. The Sheikh went on to stress the importance which he attached to security matters and told the Prime Minister that he would greatly value British co-operation in this field. The Prime Minister invited him to let us know of his requirements. Sheikh Khalifa said that Bahraini resources were limited but it was not simply a matter of purchasing equipment: training and techniques were at least as important and Bahrain would value assistance of this kind.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Martin Vile (Cabinet Office).

*Yours ever,*

*Byan Lawrence*

Paul Lever, Esq.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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