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Bahrain, Aden and the Red Sea, as Fustat in Fatimid Egypt replaced Abbasid Baghdad as the most prosperous city of the Middle East.

By the time of Masudi, about A.D. 940, most of the Arab ships were going no further East than Kalah in Malaya, where they met the Chinese merchants. However, trade remained vigorous with the Indian coasts, and with East Africa, until the coming of the Portuguese. After A.D. 1500 traffic became more local, although long sea-voyages were still undertaken from Aden, Bahrain and Muskat, for example, to the Andamans and South India.

Most of the ocean voyages were made with the help of the winter or NE monsoon, and the stormy SW monsoon of summer was avoided. The round voyage from the Gulf to China and back took about 18 months, and with a rest for re-loading the fleet could complete a circuit every two years. Linen and cotton goods, woollen rugs, metal work and bullion were transported to the East, and from China in return came silk fabrics, camphor, musk and porcelain, from India gems, spices and woods. East Africa supplied ivory, ebony, gold and copper.

III Techniques of navigation

The boats were made of planks of teak or coconut, arranged in carvel fashion and sewn rather than nailed. The vessels in pre-Portuguese times were double-ended, and steered at first by two side-rudders (**Sukkan**), but after about A.D. 1200 by a single stern-rudder. Power was obtained through a lateen sail which enabled the ship to 'tack' well into the wind; indeed, the English word for this technique possibly derives from the Arabic verb **ittaka** (= waka VIII).

Since the main Arab voyages were made in low latitudes near the Equator, it was possible to use the rising and setting positions of stars on the horizon to set the ship's course.

The magnetic compass, undoubtedly a Chinese invention,

the figure reached 65,000. Great interest was taken locally in the proposal made in 1943 that the American Government should take over control or at least a 40% stake in all American companies producing oil in the Arabian Peninsula. The firms involved resisted but the Petroleum Reserve Corporation was set up, one of its first activities being to finance a drum manufacturing and filling unit for aviation spirit in Bahrain.

This wartime expansion of oil production was one of the factors that caused another shortage in wartime Bahrain — that of labour. In 1939 many of the 250-odd Britons working for BAPCO wished to return home to enlist in the armed forces and so many of them remained dissatisfied that in May 1942 a decree was issued that employees with the oil company should be regarded as conscripts and that no British subjects would be permitted to leave. This was accepted by the British and Canadians but the 500-odd Indians were so upset that they petitioned the PA. Later the Britons had further grievances as none of them had had any home leave for years.

Apart from a suggestion in 1941 that some 70 Bahraini pearl divers should proceed to the Suez Canal to look for treasure in sunken ships, there was little increased demand for labour until 1943. Then the RAF needed about 3,000 for building work not merely in Bahrain but in other places in the Gulf including Sharjah. The expansion of the Refinery, approved in May 1943 led to a need for 3-500 American and 2,000 Bahraini construction workers. Skilled labour became difficult to get, the staff of the hospital found that they could earn much more with the army in India and so did garage mechanics. The shortage of experienced drivers meant a great increase in the number of traffic accidents. More serious, the following year, there was considerable unrest amongst the police, who, as they received rations, had no supplementary War Allowance and so found themselves no longer a well-paid elite and some of them sought other work. Refused permission to leave, there were strikes during the summer to the intense chagrin of Belgrave who

a Polish serjeant in the RAF was apprehended. Perhaps the biggest catch, however, was the Director of Customs of Al-Khobar who was caught smuggling goods out of Bahrain and during a visit to Doha in January 1945, Hickinbotham the PA noticed that the **suq** was openly displaying articles smuggled from Bahrain.

Shortages led to other crimes. There were complicated cases involving swindling over ration cards. A merchant found with 77 bags of rice was unable to convince the authorities that they were all for his own use but at the end of 1944 the position improved so quickly that many hoarders found that they had lost. Profiteers were sternly treated by the Government — in May 1943 a man overcharging on dates was fined RS400 and a merchant who had cornered all available supplies of wire for fish traps which he proposed to sell at RS10 a bundle found his stock taken over by the Government which sold it at Rs 2 a bundle. Considerable fortunes were however made and Belgrave says that after the war many houses were pointed out as having been built with black market profits. The PA reported that in January 1944 a plot of land which had sold three years before for RS2,000 now fetched RS70,000. However on the whole the people of Bahrain seem to have behaved much less selfishly during the war than many others.

During the early part of the war oil production was marginally reduced as the traditional markets in Southern Europe and Japan were lost and drilling for new wells ceased in October 1940. Earlier that year the Shaykh signed a new concession which extended the BAPCO area to the whole of his dominions, receiving £30,000 (RS 400,000) on signature and a guarantee of a minimum annual royalty of £95,000.

In September 1941 production averaged 15,000 barrels a day but in August the following year it was increased firstly to 25,000 and then to 33,500, of which the first figure included 15,000 local production and the latter 18,000. The following year processing averaged 37,500 barrels and in 1945, after a 12-inch pipeline from Dhahran had opened,

most likely attackers.

The Senior Naval Officer told Belgrave that he feared an attack by Japanese parachutists and it was decided to raise a force of 250 local levies. A camp was built at Muharraq where they drilled under NCOs from the Bahrain police. The Shaykh provided half their weapons and later others captured from the Italians were provided. In December they held a grand parade, inspected by the Shaykh and all commented upon their smartness.

More and more British officers arrived, some for the Levies, and an Air Liaison Officer was appointed. As early as April 1942 Belgrave recorded that he had been at a cocktail party where there had been so many uniforms that Muharraq had begun to look like a garrison town. Later a signals troop arrived and RAF nursing sisters were sent to the hospital. In November 1942 Belgrave recorded the first visit of American officers. Later he was to write that the golf course was covered with tents and huge wireless masts.

By the spring of 1943 the tide of the war had turned. The Germans after their defeats at Al-Alamain and Stalingrad no longer posed any threat to the Middle East and the Japanese had lost their original momentum in Burma and on the seas. The forces in the Gulf thus found themselves in a back-water. In January 1944 the Head Quarter of the Persian Gulf levies was transferred to Masira and the following year the force was disbanded. At the end of the war, in addition to the naval base opened before hostilities had started, there were a few minor technical RAF units such as Mosquito Control, Air/Sea Rescue (several aircraft crashed on or near Bahrain), Embarkation Control and the Aircraft Safety Centre.

We must now see how these events affected the people of Bahrain. For an island, unable to feed itself, the supply of food was obviously a problem and before the war had started, the Government bought 25,000 bags of rice from Calcutta, banned all export of food and required merchants to list their stocks. It was not until the spring of 1941 that there was any real shortage and in May the PA reported that, supplies of flour having been exhausted, there was no

forbidden land while the smugglers rejoiced at the overthrow of Reza Shah whose iron fist had made their operations difficult.

The entry of Japan into the war in December 1941 and the subsequent collapse of the British position in South East Asia caused great excitement in Bahrain, particularly as many of its people had had friends in Singapore. During that winter the German General Staff worked on one of the most ambitious strategic plans of the entire war. They aimed to launch a great spring offensive to force Russia to surrender and then move through Turkey to the Gulf where they would link hands with the Japanese who would by then have secured naval domination in the Indian Ocean. The German generals calculated that they could get through Turkey in 85 days if the Turks did not resist and would only be delayed six weeks if they had to fight.

Whether or not the British got wind of this plan, they took precautions to strengthen the defences of the Gulf with Bahrain as the essential link. On 16 April 1942 the Government announced "Bahrain has come within the zone of operations" and reassured the people that it would take all necessary measures. Plans were hurried through to establish listening posts around the Gulf linked with a new R.A.F. station at Muharraq. The PA reported that there was some apprehension amongst the local people that its presence would lead to air raids and Belgrave inspired an article in al-Bahrain advising people to leave town for summer; to make the point more clearly he sent away his own wife. Oil wells not actually in production were plugged with concrete. An Air Raid Precautions committee was established, a dug-out built at the Girl's School, incendiary bomb demonstrations were held and the police practised taking cover from air attack. That summer there were reports of unidentified ships in the Gulf and dhows from Kuwait and Qatar were sunk off the Indian coast. In June there was an alarm that a second air raid on the Refinery was taking place but this turned out to be a false alarm; significantly this time the Japanese were regarded as the