



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

30 August 1988

*Dear Charles*

Prime Minister's Visit to Oman

Thank you for your letter of 24 August about follow-up to the recent talks between the Prime Minister and Sultan Qaboos.

We propose to raise the question of the PDRY/Oman border with a Soviet delegation, under Vice-Minister Petrovsky, which is scheduled to visit the UK on 31 August for talks, mainly on UN matters, with an FCO team led by Sir John Fretwell. Time has been set aside for discussions on Iran/Iraq and other Middle East issues and this seems to us to be an opportune occasion to raise the border question. It is clear from Robert Alston's letter to you of 22 August that the Sultan is anxious for progress on this issue and this early action would no doubt be well received by him.

Your agreement that HM Ambassador should also raise with the Sultan, on instructions from the Prime Minister, other subjects not raised during the discussions at Salalah is most helpful. Reference to the British Eastern Relay Station (BERS) and the "Britain with Oman" exhibition would enable Robert Alston to move forward on both these matters. We hope that the Prime Minister will agree to write a foreword for the booklet being prepared for "Britain with Oman" week to underline HMG's commitment to this venture. We shall provide a draft.

We also feel that it would be appreciated by the Sultan if, following Zia's death, the Ambassador explained why we feel the idea of the formation of a Muslim bloc, is now even less likely. You will recall that the Sultan raised this subject during the discussions.

During her talks with the Sultan, the Prime Minister also undertook to encourage more ministerial visits to Oman. We have been discussing with the Departments of Trade and Industry and Energy and the Home Office possible visits by their Ministers. We intend to convey the Prime Minister's interest to those - and, as appropriate, other - ministries in planning the future visits programme.

/I enclose



I enclose two draft telegrams to Muscat. The first telegram contains detailed instructions for Mr Alston on the line to take in his discussions with the Sultan. The second contains a further short message from the Prime Minister to the Sultan explaining the action we are taking on the border issue and touching on the subjects mentioned above. This should ensure rapid access for Mr Alston to the Sultan, and lend force to the Ambassador's approach on BERS and "Britain with Oman".

Yours ever  
R N Peirce

(R N Peirce)  
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq  
10 Downing Street

# OUT TELEGRAM

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		Catchword: <b>MIFT)</b>	
YYYY MAIN ADDITIONAL NNNN	File number <b>N10AB0</b>	Dept <b>MIDDLE EAST</b>	Drafted by (Block capitals) <b>A L WOTTON</b>
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OUT TELEGRAM (CONT)

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MIFT) the Prime Minister has said that she hopes the leases could be renewed on similar terms to the present agreements.

5. If asked about the proposal for Omani broadcasting facilities in the UK, you should explain that there are major legal and practical difficulties with terrestrial facilities (ie. no foreign organisation has or would be permitted to have medium wave or VHF broadcasting facilities in Britain). However cable companies may offer other possibilities perhaps worth pursuing (eg. the Westminster Cable Company, which has an Arabic channel carrying Dubai television, has spare time available on its channels).

6. The message also contains a reference to the Prime Minister's support and hopes for the success of the Britain with Oman exhibition. The Prime Minister has also agreed to write a foreword in support of the exhibition. We are drafting.

7. In her letter of 31 July to the Sultan the Prime Minister picked up the Sultan's concern about the formation of a Muslim bloc comprising Pakistan, Iran, Afghanistan and Turkey. You should explain in our doubts that this is a serious policy aim of Pakistan drawing on the following:

a) The situation in Afghanistan is unpredictable. It is impossible to guess when the current regime will fall or the shape of any future government. Although Zia clearly hoped for a compliant administration in Kabul, the history of friction between Afghanistan and Pakistan may make this unlikely. In particular, a resurgence of the Pushtunistan issue (Afghan claims to Pushtun tribal areas inside Pakistan) cannot be ruled out, even if a future Afghan government uses it only as rhetoric. In short, community of interests between Pakistan and Afghanistan cannot be assumed.

b) The Pakistani relationship with Iran is tricky. Relations are currently on an even keel, but only by dint of Pakistan maintaining strict neutrality in the Gulf War. Pakistan forbade

## OUT TELEGRAM (CONT)

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calls in Karachi by warships coming from or bound for the Gulf, thus annoying her Western backers. Pakistan can only guess how relations with Iran will develop post-Gulf War. There is potential for Pakistani/Iranian friction over their respective involvement in Afghanistan. The ending of the Gulf War may yet tempt Iran to become more active in Afghanistan. The Pakistanis cannot therefore be confident of staying on good terms with the Iranians.

c) It is hard to see Turkey, a member of NATO, involved in a bloc comprising Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan. She shares a general sense of Muslim community with them and has political and economic interests to protect with Pakistan and Iran. But she is careful to balance the latter by her ties with India and Iraq, <sup>and</sup> most importantly, the Turks are much more concerned with presenting themselves as a modern, Westernised society and trying to get into the EC.

d) Finally, Pakistani membership of a non-Arab Muslim bloc might strain Pakistani relationship with Arab and particularly the Gulf States. The Saudi decision at the end of 1987 to end the contract of the Pakistani brigade based in Saudi Arabia was an indication of growing friction. Remittance of earnings from Pakistanis in the Gulf States is a major source of foreign currency which Pakistan would not wish to risk disrupting. The Sultan's remarks may not in fact reflect any set concrete Pakistani intentions. The idea may be floating around some senior military officers but it is not an immediate, or indeed a realistic, long term policy aim for Pakistan. The death of Zia has made it even less likely that such a bloc might emerge, particularly when it is not clear what manner of government might emerge when the present transition period is over.

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10 MIPT : FOLLOW-UP TO THE PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT

11 1. Following is text of the Prime Minister's message to Sultan

12 Qaboos:

13 Begins

14 Your Majesty

15 In my letter to Your Majesty of 31 July I undertook to

16 consider how I could help with the Soviet Union over the question

17 of the border with the PDRY. *take the synthesis of talks* We have decided to raise the matter

18 *at the level of discussion to raise the matter* in talks with the Russians this week, and I shall let you know

19 the outcome.

20 You also expressed concern about the possible formation of a

21 Muslim bloc comprising Pakistan, Iran, Afghanistan and Turkey. I

22 agree that this would be a worrying development. However, I am

23 not convinced that this is a realistic or serious policy aim of

24 Pakistan, particularly following the death of President Zia

25 al-Haq. The situation in Afghanistan is unpredictable, the

26 current relationship between Pakistan and Iran may not be

27 durable, Turkey's membership of NATO would be a stumbling block,

28 and Pakistan would be wary of straining her relations with Arab,

29 especially Gulf, states. I have asked the Ambassador to discuss

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Drafted by (Block capitals) <b>J R YOUNG</b>	
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this matter further with Your Majesty.

There are two other points I did not have time to cover in our talk, but to which I attach great importance. As you may know, the leases on the British Eastern Relay Station in Masira expire in 1991. The station performed a valuable function and I very much hope it may be possible to renew the Leases on a similar basis to the present one.

As you may be aware, we are planning a quote Britain with Oman unquote event next February. The programme being prepared is designed to demonstrate our determination to maintain very close ties with Oman into the 1990s and beyond and our desire to work with Your Majesty's government in all aspects of the continuing development of the country where you feel that British involvement could be of assistance. The wide range of activities planned is particularly aimed at the younger generation of Omanis. I hope you will feel able to lend the event your support.

The Ambassador will be able to go into greater detail on all these issues.

With warm and respectful regards. *Margaret Thatcher*

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