

are all leaving. One says he thinks we have seen the best of Dubai. He has all the money he can manage, a good life, and he is going back to Kent and the commuter life with taxes and bad weather because, he claims, he wants his family to grow up in pleasant surroundings. He's a pukka, stiff-upper-lip type and I tell him he is talking like a sentimental Pakistani, but he is right.

'If there weren't so many Pakistanis in England I would go there. They have made such a mess of things. It is impossible to prove to the average Englishman that we are not the same, that we don't all want to be porters or bus drivers. Maybe I will go to the Seychelles, spend my summers in England and play the old colonial way of life with my British friends.

'I am very pro-British. After all, you educated me for £27 a term, payable in instalments of £9 a month. Really, what a crazy nation . . . but maybe not, because we all have affection for you. If the British had stayed in this part of the world the money rush might have worked. It could have operated as in India where a few families were told, "Look, you chaps, if you want to rule these beggars we'll show you how to do it, and then let's all have a good time."

'Instead, it is out of control. It is all very dandy when everything is working in your favour, but the whole place is based on a construction boom which has to end. They can stretch it out with government white elephants but one fine morning they will wake up and won't know what's hit them. The dry dock will never work. Would you send your multi-million dollar tanker to one of the most expensive cities in the world, where there is no expertise, and where politically it might be a mistake? The economics are unfavourable, apart from the fact that these people don't have the experience to run a tea shop.'

Mr Abdul Ghaffair Hussain, a swarthy man, sat sweating in the dishevelled office to which he is entitled as deputy director of Dubai municipality. His sensuous English secretary perched on the desk and appeared to listen intently to every word of the conversation, punctuated as it was by squawks and whoops from outside. It is a very busy office, like any similar place, but

Mr Hussain is not a normal town hall functionary nor does he radiate traditional municipal penury. He is a fifty-one per cent partner in a £12 million development by the construction firm MacAlpine, and he owns the *Bon Vivant*, apartment blocks, the largest cold store in the Emirates, and a plastic manufacturing company which has fortuitously won a large local government contract. Black plastic bags sprout throughout Dubai, and old pipes are disinterred to make way for the plastic revolution. Mr Hussain reassured me there was no conflict of interest between his government and business activities. How could there be?

'In fact,' he confided, 'I am thinking seriously of leaving the government and so are many of my colleagues. We are not appreciated. We are not being given our rights.'

'We are competing and fighting with foreigners,' he continued. 'Most of them are here for the money. That is depressing in some ways, but they wouldn't come if they were not encouraged and we need their expertise. But they should be made to have a local partner otherwise they take away our money. Why give them that chance? When I do something, my money stays here. Why should Sunley or Costain make money here and take it out of the country? What are we getting from them?'

His secretary looked pensive. He smiled at her and there was clearly nothing personal in his next remark. 'Let me tell you I was thankful when the British left here. For 150 years they did nothing. On the contrary, they closed the door to civilization and prevented progress. They say they were protecting us, but they were protecting us only from becoming civilized. That is history. Whether you agree or not, it is history.'

'It is,' said his secretary. 'Yes.'

'This country is now for us. And our children.'

But how can such a small country survive? I wondered, as I set off a hundred and fifty kilometres across the desert to see President Zayed bin Sultan al-Nahyan whose deposed brother Shakhbut decided to ignore the money rush in the hope that it would disappear. Shaikh Zayed knows that it will not. Moreover, he has learned quickly that there is one supreme prerequisite for international success today, one qualification without which a ruler is as bereft as his people, one essential by which leaders

judge each other. It is something the Gulf Arabs did not understand until blessed with money and earnest Egyptian or Palestinian advisers.

You can have a country. You can have money. You can have tradition. But before you are really respected and join the ranks of the civilized nations, you must have a mammoth bureaucracy to guide your progress. I should have known that civil servants, like the mice who ate through the boxes of cash Shakhbut kept under his bed, would begin to plague the money rush sooner or later.