

**In This Issue**

Oman

A Visit to Washington

Written and photographed by Tor Eigeland

About three o'clock in the afternoon, on Monday, April 11, a white DC8 settled gracefully onto the runway at Andrews Airforce Base, traditionally the landing field for important visitors to the White House. Moments later, the huge jet rolled to a stop and a clutch of dignitaries stepped forward - it included the U. S. Secretary of State George P. Shultz and Oman's ambassador to the United States, Ali Salim al-Hinai - to greet the Sultan of Oman, Qaboos bin Sa'id.

Unlike Ahmad ibn Na'aman, Oman's flamboyant ambassador to the States in 1840 (See page 23), the dignitaries were dressed in the more conservative fashion of today's diplomacy. But Sultan Qaboos, in the national dress of Oman, brought at least a small dash of regal color to the cloudy Washington scene.

Since it was too cold and windy to linger over formalities, the welcoming ceremonies were brisk; within six minutes the sultan, the ambassador, the secretary and other officials were whizzing off in limousines to the Hotel Madison, pressed into service as a substitute guest house while Blair House is being reconstructed. And since the sultan was not to go to the White House until Tuesday his schedule was light. His only visitors, in fact, were former President Carter and Mrs. Carter. They arrived about 6:30 p.m., stayed nearly an hour and left with pleasant smiles but no comments.

On Tuesday, weather conditions improved visibly as, for the first time in several days, Washington was bathed in brilliant sunshine - just in time to show the capital's famous cherry blossoms at their peak. At the White House, where the lawns sparkled fresh and green from the recent rains, multi-colored uniforms added dash to the scene as the sultan's motorcade arrived at precisely 10:00 a.m. to be greeted by President Reagan and Mrs. Reagan, the Vice-President and Mrs. Bush, the Secretary of State and Mrs. Shultz, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Mrs. Vessey and others.

President Reagan, relaxed and affable as usual, welcomed the sultan and then launched into his formal greeting:

"Your Majesty, the American people are deeply impressed with what you have achieved, since you assumed leadership. Your country's progress - economically, socially, and politically - has established your reputation as a compassionate leader who can get things done..."

Reagan, applauding what he called the sultan's farsighted approach, also touched on brutality in Afghanistan, the "debasement of its religion and the use of chemical weapons and other crimes against civilization..."

"Your Majesty, we are proud to be on your side in your quest for a better life for your people and your search for peace and stability. Relations between our two peoples have spanned a century and a half. I am confident that your visit today will serve to further strengthen the bonds between us. We are happy you have come to visit. Welcome."

In reply, Sultan Qaboos stressed the fact that friendly relations between the two countries were established 150 years ago - and have remained friendly since. "In recent years," he said, "the forces of aggression, intolerance and lawless ambition have increasingly sought to impose their will on mankind. The world has had no respite from the continuing threat of instability. Nowhere has this threat been more acutely felt than in our region of the Middle East, where we and our brother states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) have pledged ourselves to work together in the closest accord to safeguard our peoples and our ancient culture..."

The sultan expressed appreciation for U.S. efforts in pursuit of peace, which, he said, "Oman has unwaveringly supported."

After the ceremony, the sultan met privately with Reagan to discuss, among other subjects, threats to peace in the Middle East.

Later, Sultan Qaboos attended a lunch at the State Department hosted by Secretary Shultz, to whom he expressed gratitude for the "sympathetic awareness" shown by U.S. officials toward the problems and sensitivities of the Arab world.

That evening, a highlight of the White House visit, the Sultan was the guest of the President and Mrs. Reagan at a sparkling dinner party crowded with top representatives of government, diplomacy and business, and enlivened by the appearance of the Oman delegation, some with the famous curved *khanjar* in their waistbands. Among the guests were Dr. Michael De Bakey the famous heart surgeon, designer Calvin Klein, artist Andrew Wyeth and Thomas Gleason, President of the International Longshoremen's Association.

Also present was Leonard Silverstein, President of the National Symphony Orchestra touring the dance floor and displaying a gift from the sultan that the *Washington Post* called "a gesture unparalleled by visiting Kings, Presidents and Potentates." This was a \$300,000 check made over to the account of the National Symphony Orchestra, endowing a chair of narrative music in the name of the First Lady, Nancy Reagan.

A total surprise, the sultan's gift shows his interest in classical music - he is a fan of Brahms and Bach - and is the first such gift to the NSO by a head of state, according to Silverstein. "The grant," Silverstein said, "reflects the exceptional generosity of the sultan and the people of Oman," adding that it also would help the symphony pay its bills.

During the rest of the week, the sultan and his party - some 13 ministers and advisers - mixed work with pleasure. On Wednesday, for example, the sultan met Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger at the Pentagon and then joined him and the Joint Chiefs of Staff at a working lunch. On Thursday, Sultan Qaboos was the honored guest at a coffee hosted by Congressman Clement J. Zablocki and then went to lunch with members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Finally, on Friday, he met again with Vice-President Bush and then left for Oman, 150 years of cordial relations reaffirmed.

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