

Middle East Report by Robert Dreyfuss

Saudi-bashing escalates

The Saudis are getting slammed from all sides, thanks to some of their friends in London.

Saudi-bashing is in vogue again. And, if the British have their way, not only will Saudi Arabia be undermined, but with it U.S. influence in the region.

This is no long-term scenario on the part of the British Secret Intelligence Service. It is policy, and the policy is being carried out with a vengeance.

London has three vehicles of assault: Iran's renewed military offensive against Iraq; Israel's threat to Lebanon and Jordan; and Britain's declaration of war against Riyadh for its support of Nigeria. With the Reagan administration paralyzed by Secretary of State Alexander Haig's support for the dangerous policies of Menachem Begin in Israel and Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran, the Saudis are exposed and vulnerable to the operation being launched against them by the British and Britain's deployables in Iran and Israel.

On the Iran front, Khomeini's hordes, backed by arms from Begin's Israel, have launched a new offensive in its war with Iraq, which could unsettle the entire Persian Gulf by boosting the cause of pro-Khomeini subversives in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere.

Hurling thousands of brainwashed youth at Iraqi armor—draft cards in Iran are called “tickets to martyrdom”—the Muslim Brotherhood controllers of Teheran are escalating their threat not only to Iraq but to the Saudis, Ku-

waitis, and other Gulf Arabs.

“Of course you can compare Khomeini to Adolf Hitler,” said one Israeli official, who admitted that his country was arming the mullahs. “But Iran is the enemy of my enemy, and is thus my friend.”

Together with Iran's escalation in the Gulf, the unprecedented crackdown by Begin and Defense Minister Ariel Sharon in the occupied West Bank—and the ever-present threat to Lebanon—threatens to radicalize the Arab world even further, putting the Saudis in a vise. During the last weeks of March, radical Palestinians in Kuwait rioted in the streets against Begin's West Bank repression.

The actions by Iran and Israel represent a new level of threat to the position of the United States in the Middle East. The British SIS, which is backing Begin, and Khomeini, is fully aware that the destabilization of Saudi Arabia and the decline of American interests in the region would strategically humiliate Washington.

“If Begin and Sharon do go into Lebanon, the fighting will be bloody,” said one intelligence analyst, “and with each passing day the pressure will grow on Saudi Arabia to cut its ties with the United States.”

The British, who orchestrated the 1979 revolution that put Khomeini in power, and who stage-managed the election of Begin in 1977, are using both Iran and Israel

to assault U.S. influence in the Gulf. And Moscow, which has avoided making any overt commitments in the region, is expected to take advantage of any decline in America's role in the area.

Mr. Haig, operating at the behest of the British, is covering for both Israel and Iran. The evidence includes the fact that Haig has rejected repeated Iraqi requests to halt the supply of U.S. arms to Iran through Israel and other third parties. Thus he has guaranteed a steady flow of very sophisticated weapons to the Khomeini forces through Italy, Great Britain, and Pakistan.

These arms have enabled Iran to beat back an Iraqi offensive and return the Iran-Iraq war to yet another stalemate (though late-March press accounts of a major Iranian victory were exaggerated). Iran, financially strapped and in domestic chaos, is unable to withstand any long offensive.

Regarding Israel, Haig has also given important cover to Begin and Sharon in their atrocities on the West Bank. Despite a worldwide outcry since Israel began its West Bank crackdown, Haig has refused to issue even mild criticism of Israel, and has even blamed Jordan for the “events” on the West Bank!

On the oil front, as our Special Report documents this week, London, working in tandem with Libya, is engaging in a showdown over Nigeria with Saudi Arabia which has threatened to boycott any company that refuses to purchase Nigerian oil at current prices. Both Shell and British Petroleum, the prime marketers of Nigerian oil, are trying to force Nigeria to drop its price to that of British North Sea oil.