

Persian Gulf war scandals highlighted in British press

by Mark Burdman

Factional warfare among the Anglo-American oligarchy has broken out in the form of a series of articles which have appeared in the British press since mid-April exposing some of the manipulations and frauds that were employed to bring about the war in the Persian Gulf. One aspect of this may be the apportioning of blame for what is becoming an uncontrollable mess throughout the Middle East region.

The substance of the items now being exposed in the British media was already reported months ago in *EIR*, even if the new revelations in Britain contain new details. *EIR* made a point of exposing these scandals before George Bush launched the insane onslaught against Iraq. In Britain, some of those newspapers now publishing the revelations were supporters, in some cases avid supporters, of the war.

The Bazoft saga and Tiny Rowland

On April 23, the *Daily Telegraph* reported on the May release of a book on Iraq by *Financial Times* journalist Simon Henderson entitled *Instant Empire* (Mercury House, London). According to the *Daily Telegraph*, Henderson asserts that Farzad Bazoft, the London *Observer* journalist whose execution by Iraq on charges of being a spy “was a milestone on the road to the Gulf war,” was in fact a spy for the British intelligence services, carrying out a highly sensitive operation to spy on Iraqi military facilities under the direction of an official of the British embassy in Baghdad when he was apprehended by Iraqi authorities. According to Henderson, Bazoft’s surveillance of Iraq’s Qaqa military facilities and attempts to determine why an explosion had happened there, were part of a wider British intelligence-CIA “sting” operation to uncover and abort Iraqi military procurement operations. When journalist Bazoft was chosen for the espionage task, he was “already on the books of British intelligence, which cooperates closely with the CIA,” although he was later “left to hang” by the British after his capture.

Henderson’s point is hardly to defend Iraq’s hanging of Bazoft. But as the *Telegraph* review suggests, the international outrage over the hanging was exploited by the British and Americans, to win “public opinion” over to a war campaign: “The perception of his treatment was a factor in the metamorphosis in the public mind, particularly in America—

of Saddam the useful container of the revolutionary Iranian theocracy to Saddam the ‘new Hitler’—which gave President Bush the popular support he needed for his stand over Kuwait.”

The question of whether the Iraqi leadership could have avoided falling into a trap, by having punished Bazoft other than by hanging him, is not the immediate issue. Bazoft was cynically sacrificed by his intelligence masters, in a dangerous game that provoked the Iraqis in such a way as to make a confrontation in the Gulf all the more inevitable.

Henderson is sticking by his story, in response to complaints that he is defaming the memory of a man who was brutally treated by Iraq and that his contention of Bazoft’s espionage connections is untrue. One such complaint came from the editor of the *Observer*, Donald Treford. However, the *Observer* itself has a lot of explaining to do. One mystery that has never been sufficiently explained, and which none of the exposes in Britain so far has touched on, involves the circumstances of *Observer* owner Tiny Rowland’s trip to Baghdad, in mid-July, nominally to arrange the release of British nurse Daphne Parrish from a Baghdad prison. After Rowland’s departure, the British Foreign Office began to make cooing noises to an Iraq that was ostensibly suddenly back in Britain’s good graces. Yet just at that moment, Saddam Hussein began to dramatically up the ante, with violent threats against Kuwait. Did Rowland promise something that induced Saddam to move toward confrontation?

‘The CIA has been destabilizing Iraq’

Meanwhile, the daily *Glasgow Herald* (owned by the same Tiny Rowland), has publicized elements of the set-up and manipulation of Iraq. On April 16, the paper reviewed a new book by former high-ranking CIA official John Stockwell, *The Praetorian Guard—The U.S. Role in the New World Order*. Stockwell’s main thesis, is that George Bush is committed to a series of wars in, and against, the Third World, in order to divert attention from his growing domestic problems, including his implication in the “drugs-related Iran/Contra aid deal,” and in pursuit of the policy of Bush’s hero Theodore Roosevelt, who confided to a friend in 1897: “In strict confidence—I should welcome any war, for I think

this country needs one.”

Following the 1989 war against Panama, the war against Iraq is the second application of this strategy, but not the last. Stockwell charges that the Bush administration and the CIA first intentionally *provoked* Iraq, and later *encouraged* it to move against Kuwait. He is quoted by the *Herald*: “Through Kuwait, the CIA has been destabilizing Iraq. During the Iran/Iraq war of the 1980s, Kuwait advanced its border further north and seized valuable Iraqi oil reserves. By manipulating oil prices, Kuwait cost Iraq billions of dollars in revenues.” Beyond this, the United States, through Ambassador to Iraq April Glaspie, conveyed to Saddam Hussein, in late July 1990, a reassurance, in effect, that it would not respond to any action by the Iraqis against Kuwait. Stockwell is quoted in the April 16 *Herald*, insisting that the U.S. “had its own imperatives” in launching “expensive military action” against Iraq, beyond the issue of Kuwait as such.

The magazine *Private Eye*, in the edition dated April 26, claims to base its account on secret Kuwaiti intelligence reports that it has recently obtained, reports that on Oct. 22, 1989, the director-general of state security in Kuwait, Brigadier Fahd Ahmed Al-Fahd, had a long meeting with the Kuwaiti Interior Minister, “who, like all top ministers, is related to the emir.”

Says *Eye*: “As a result of that meeting, the brigadier traveled to the United States for long and anxious interviews at the headquarters of the Central Intelligence Agency. On Nov. 14, 1989, Brigadier Fahd had a long meeting with the director of the CIA, Judge William Webster. Webster and all his officials emphasized throughout these meetings that they must be kept top secret ‘in order not to arouse sensibilities among our brothers in the Gulf Co-Operation Council, Iran and Iraq.’ ” Fahd’s account asserts that “the CIA was willing to take joint steps to eliminate points of tension in the Gulf region.”

According to Brigadier Fahd’s own report, Webster also encouraged the Kuwaitis “to take advantage of the deteriorating economic situation in Iraq, to put pressure on that country’s government to delineate our common border. The CIA gave us its view of appropriate means of pressure.” Such means were chiefly to do with oil prices. Paraphrases *Eye*: “If oil prices could be kept down by the Kuwaitis, the CIA suggested, the pressure on Iraq to settle the border dispute would grow. This proved prophetic. Iraq was so squeezed by the low oil price that it invaded Kuwait and started the Gulf War.”

Other parts of the documents detail how Kuwait’s Amiri Guard, the crack unit which guards the royal family, had to spend increasing amounts of time trying to control the Kuwaiti royal family’s degenerate behavior, including drunkenness, gambling, use of prostitutes, etc.

The authoritarian Emir and his Kuwaiti torturers

In the early stages of the Gulf crusade, *EIR* had exclusively reported on the practice of slavery by the Kuwaiti

ruling family, as evidence that Bush and his friends were rallying the world behind a bunch of slave traders. Now, one of the British papers which most fervently supported the Thatcher-Bush campaign to “liberate Kuwait,” is publicizing shocking material on the Kuwaiti leaders’ behavior. On April 27, the Establishment’s London *Independent* published front-page headlines of a size usually reserved for Britain’s tabloids. The lead article was headed, “Kuwait’s Royal Torturers: U.S. evidence links emirate’s ruling family with death squads murdering Palestinians.” A second front-page piece was entitled, “Inside the Sheikhs’ chamber of horror.”

Since the end of the U.S.-led shooting war against Iraq, many stories have come out about Kuwaiti brutality, against Palestinians, Iraqis, dissident Kuwaitis, and others. But in terms of details and sensationalism, the April 27 package is a departure. One central contention of the *Independent* coverage, is that the ruling family, while under “allied” protection in Saudi Arabia, was devising a plan for the mass expulsion of Palestinians from Kuwait when and if the al-Sabah family came to power. Although the *Independent* doesn’t pursue this angle further, it mentions that the U.S. State Department was aware, while Iraq was still occupying Kuwait, that the Emir had such a plan being prepared. The articles convey the idea that the United States set in motion several operations to contain, or nullify, aspects of this plan, but at the same time, certain unnamed U.S. Special Forces and other U.S. Army operatives seem to have played a role in either covering up for, or expediting, the brutal treatment of Palestinians, once Kuwait was “liberated.”

The “chamber of horrors” story is about “brutal physical and psychological torture” that still takes place, in Geewan, a Kuwaiti military complex “controlled and operated by Kuwait’s ruling al-Sabah family.”

The *Independent* ran an unusual front-page editorial entitled “The Emir must clean up his act.” Noting that “last August, the United States and Britain pledged to restore the Sabah family to its hereditary throne in Kuwait,” the paper commented: “Not to put too fine a point on it, we pulled the Emir’s chestnuts out of the fire. . . . But the revelations on this page raise a question which will now be asked in exasperation all over Western Europe and North America. In terms of human rights, was there a pennyworth to choose between the autocrat we fought against, and the autocrat we fought to defend? While he was sheltering behind our armies in Saudi Arabia, the Emir was preparing to evict some 200,000 Palestinians from Kuwait with the greatest brutality, simply because they were Palestinians. When we had restored him to his fief, his country was disgraced by barbaric acts of torture hard to distinguish from those ordered by Saddam Hussein himself. . . . If the authoritarian Emir does not clean up his act, he may learn that the Western democracies will not forever tolerate as an ally a ruler who so grossly offends their sense of decency.”