

U.S. and London plan invasion of Persian Gulf

Last week, a special advisor to U.S. National Security chief Zbigniew Brzezinski, told a European audience that Washington is prepared to invade the Persian Gulf to secure vital oil supplies. Professor William Griffith of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, speaking in Munich, West Germany, justified such action on the basis of a potential Soviet move into the Persian Gulf to seize the oil fields.

Timed with the Griffith speech, the London-based Institute for the Study of Conflict released a report warning again of imminent Soviet aggression in the Gulf and called for a Euro-American strike force to defend Western oil supplies.

U.S. Energy Secretary James Schlesinger and Defense Secretary Harold Brown have also uttered declarations to the effect that the "reds are on the move" and the U.S. is prepared to counter. Such statements fit with the oft-publicized scenario of "Soviet expansionism" which Great Britain has used as a pretext for its past colonial domination of the Gulf region.

Brzezinski is expected to take this military plan to the Tokyo summit of the seven major industrial nations on June 28, according to a well-informed Washington source. No doubt, the European and Japanese participants of the summit, who are looking to cooperation with the Middle East oil producers, will be more than a little leery of such schemes. The same source noted that the only way Europe and Japan will ever accept such a plan is if there was a real threat to the flow of oil from the Gulf.

Producer-consumer cooperation

A number of members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries—most emphatically Saudi Arabia—have either finalized or are negotiating direct sales to consumer nations, bypassing the multinational oil companies. This pattern has prevailed more and more since the beginning of the year following the shutdown of Iranian oil exports which led to a massive speculative binge on the international spot markets—notably Rotterdam—which the OPEC nations resoundingly condemned. Both Indian and Brazilian sources say that OPEC is already selling oil at a lower price to state-

owned companies than the multinationals in order to penalize the multinationals for market manipulation and profiteering with OPEC oil—a major factor in the current oil price hike and gasoline shortage in the United States.

The Saudis are known to be considering increasing their oil output from the present 8.5 million barrels a day to 9.5 mbd after the June 26 price setting parley of OPEC. A New York oil analyst stated that whether or not the increase comes about, the Saudis will continue to lessen their sales of crude oil to the four partners of the Saudi service company, the Arabian American Oil Company (Aramco) in favor of the Saudi state-owned company, Petromin. The Saudis intend to continue to negotiate direct oil sales through Petromin, which is unprecedented.

The Iranian wild card

The efforts of Saudi Arabia and the Europeans to undercut the monopoly of multinational oil companies in the world petroleum markets represents a serious potential threat to plans by the City of London and its Carter administration allies to generate political chaos and economic collapse by deliberately manipulating the supply and cost of oil. Since its inception, the oil monopoly—often termed the Seven Sisters—has been a key tool of international geopolitics.

Both the Washington-based *London Oil Reports* and the *Financial Times* of London this week smugly reported that any Saudi production increase would be deliberately offset by a decline in Iranian oil production. London is confident that Iranian oil production will be reduced—with the complicity of the fanatical regime of Iranian strongman Ayatollah Khomeini. Not only is Iran the catalyst within OPEC for a radical anti-Western crude oil price hike, but Khomeini's Islamic fundamentalist government represents the greatest threat to the stability of the Persian Gulf and, most importantly, the Saudi royal family.

Numerous Washington analysts, both civilian and military, agree that a U.S. military invasion of the Gulf without a viable pretext is not likely. But a disruption of the government of an Arab oil producing sheikhdom

or radical attack on an oil tanker in the strategic straits of Hormuz at the mouth of the Persian Gulf by the Khomeini-connected Islamic fundamentalist Muslim Brothers or radical leftists would provide the necessary pretext.

Ousting Khomeini

Both the Saudis and their European allies are aware of the problem of future security for the oil fields and the sovereignty of the nations of the region. For that reason, according to sources, certain European and Gulf interests are clandestinely working with Iraqi support to replace the Khomeini regime as soon as possible. In recent weeks the aging Ayatollah has been discredited for his total mismanagement of Iran economy and his government's inhuman repression.

According to an Iranian source, a number of former Iranian monarchists, generals and members of the secular Republican National Front have begun the process of unseating Khomeini and his band of reactionary Mullahs. The Iraqi regime is known to be cooperating to some extent in this effort as well as certain French interests. This source noted that within the groupings presently coalescing around the task of ousting Khomeini there is as yet an unresolved power play which makes predicting the outcome of an eventual coup difficult.

According to Eric Rouleau in *Le Monde*, June 11, there are three probable results of a coup: 1) a democratic-republican government which would include the National Front; 2) a Libya-style government and continuation of religious rule; and 3) a right-wing Chile-style military dictatorship. Iranian sources close to the National Front indicate that if the first alternative comes to pass, former premier Shahpur Bakhtiar may likely become Iran's premier again. Both the Iraqi News Agency and New York sources confirm that Bakhtiar has returned to Iran following a brief exile in Europe. Recently the radical Ayatollah Khakali called for Bakhtiar's execution because he was the last premier under the Shah prior to the Shah's January ousting.

Khomeini's attacks on Iraq

Recent harsh verbal attacks which Khomeini and members of Premier Bazargan's government have launched against Iraq also confirm Khomeini's fears that Baghdad may be conspiring for his overthrow.

In the last 10 days, both the labor minister and the interior minister have threatened the Iraqi regime. Labor Minister Darius Farouhar threatened Iranian military action against Iran's neighbor citing Iraqi support for the Khuzestani Arabs that are calling for autonomy.

Over the last month Teheran and Baghdad have, on

a number of occasions, traded verbal attacks. Arab sources note that the powerful Iraqi military could easily crush Iran given the fragmented state of the Iranian army.

London this week let it be known that Khomeini may soon bite the dust, a reflection of its own anxiety about an Iraqi-French backed coup to install a National Front government. A series of predictions appeared in the London press to the effect that the right-wing military option was the most likely outcome of a coup d'etat in the troubled state of Iran.

—Judith Wyer

U.S. designs military strike force plan

Below, a source who assists a prominent Washington oil consultant states his own knowledge of Washington's preparations for a Persian Gulf invasion and the growing polarization between European consuming nations and Washington over the energy issue.

The situation is dreadfully serious. I fear that there is a growing tendency in foreign policy and defense establishments that SWAT-type strike forces should be formed for the Gulf. We will lay on the table at Tokyo that we have these plans. The plans are in place, they are quite detailed, and can come into effect under a number of possible scenarios.

The reason these plans will be presented at Tokyo, albeit in a low key sort of way, is that the Europeans and Japanese are convinced that the American intention is to let prices go up and up, in order to allow for the development of alternatives. The Europeans and the Japanese perceive this as American policy, and see the U.S.'s aim as that of coming out on top at some point in the future in the alternative energies game, with Europe being relatively beggared....

The military strike force idea is designed by the Carter administration to assuage such apprehension. The administration is trying to say to Europe that under no conditions will they let the West be blackballed over energy. The French and Germans are likely to resist the idea, but the Japanese might under certain conditions of short supply agree to it if, say, there were a major shortfall due to a coup in Saudi Arabia, or any other supply interruption.

In terms of real scenarios in the Gulf, the real fear is not the Soviets, but an internal coup in Saudi Arabia, a case where one branch of the royal family will line up against the other, creating a confused situation about who is in control. There is a great concern over radical

officers deciding to seize power à la Libya. Also you have the problem of the immigrant population such as the Yemenis who could stir up trouble for purely inter-Arab reasons. So the big concern is that there will be a split in Saudi Arabia, and the U.S. might line up on the wrong side. The U.S. might actually intervene to protect the oilfields, on the pretext of defending one side against the other.

Britain harks back to colonial days

Clare Hollingworth, defense correspondent of the London Daily Telegraph, covered the newly released study from the Institute for the Study of Conflict on future Soviet aggression in a June 18 article which follows.

So concerned is the West by the ever rising cost of petrol that Russia's threat to Persian Gulf oil supplies appears to have passed virtually unnoticed.

According to a report published today entitled *The Security of Middle East Oil* by the Institute for the Study of Conflict, the Russians have the capability to deny oil in a global crisis which could imperil our survival.

The distinguished group of experts who produced the report includes Vice Admiral Sir Louis Bailey, the former head of Military Intelligence, professors Max Beloff, Leonard Shapiro, and Hugh Seaton Wat-Thompson, formerly head of the British Advisory Mission to Vietnam, and Brigadier W. F. K. Thompson.

The experts all agree that Britain can no longer mount the type of operation which served to protect Kuwait against the threat from General Qassim, prime minister of Iraq in June 1961. But they ask: "Might not Britain begin to think once more in global terms?"

They add that Britain still retains a position of influence within Oman, at the mouth of the Persian Gulf, where we might provide a small force of say, a battalion or less, which would help to ensure the security of the states through which every oil tanker from Saudi Arabia, Iran or the Gulf States must pass.

The authors obviously believe contingency plans should be drawn up to enable American and European forces—not necessarily under NATO arrangement—to go to the Middle East on short notice.

Iran charges Iraqi-Shah conspiracy

The clandestine National Voice of Iran on June 7 launched a round of attacks on Iraq for what it claims as outside

meddling in the affairs of Iran's Islamic fundamentalist government.

During discussions which representatives of the different political and social organizations, Vice Admiral Madani (governor general of the oil rich Khuzestan province—Ed.) said that individuals in Kuwait and Iraq, who had received sums of money from the former Shah, put this money at the disposal of elements in Iraq to be used for purchasing arms for opponents of the Iranian Government. Furthermore, some sources mentioned the secret visit of Ardeshir Zahedi and his futile attempts to carry out all kinds of conspiracies by using former SAVAK and CIA agents. By taking all these facts into consideration, political observers review and discuss in the same vein the sad events in Khuzestan and the border violations of the Iraqi fighter planes.

Same game, different players—Iraq

The Iraqi newspaper Ath-Thawra, organ of the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party on June 12 warned the rulers in Iran against any attempt to destabilize the country.

Ath-Thawra advises these rulers not to play the game which the Shah of Iran played with Iraq. The paper addresses these rulers by saying: "Do not play the harmful game and do not be taken in by illusions. This game is much more dangerous than you imagine and are led to believe."

Ath-Thawra recalls that Teheran media and leaders used to say against Iraq during the Shah's reign. The paper says that a review of that period will show that the biggest slogan raised at that time by the Shah's regime in Iran against Iraq was the slogan of religion, and that among the most important tools that regime used against Iraq were men who were counted among the clergy.

We must mention this paradoxical fact because strangely enough the game is being repeated although the player is different.

Ath-Thawra stresses that the great danger threatening the Arab nation during the Shah's reign resulted from two causes. First, attempts to prevent Iraq—which constitutes the strongest military power in the Arab East—from carrying out its role in confronting the Zionist enemy; and second, Iran's role of a policeman in the Arab Gulf and its assertion of this role by occupying the three Arab islands.