

Middle East Report by Robert Dreyfuss

Kuwait: the next hot spot?

A combination of British-connected "radicals" poses a threat to Saudi Arabia's neighbor.

An ongoing investigation by *Executive Intelligence Review* has turned up evidence of a subversive network in Kuwait whose aim is to topple the monarchy and destabilize the country.

This movement is comprised of prominent Kuwaitis associated with the Nadi al-Istiqlal, a leftist grouping; the Jamiyat al-Islah, an Islamic fundamentalist group; and radical elements in Kuwait's sizeable Palestinian and Shi'ite Muslim populations. The sociology of the Kuwaiti opposition closely mirrors that of the coalition of secular leftists and religious fundamentalist rightists which last year brought down the Shah of Iran and his economic development plans.

As in the Iranian revolution, the source of this movement is British intelligence and its Jesuit allies working through Kuwait University and the Institute for Palestine Studies. According to a well informed source, since the Iranian revolution, the minority Shi'ites in Kuwait have moved closer to forming an alliance with the Istiqlal against the Kuwaiti regime.

Kuwait's Shi'ites, many of whom are Iranian in origin, have reportedly been influenced by the propaganda coming from Ayatollah Khomeini, a Shi'ite who has called for the overthrow of the Arab monarchies of the Gulf.

Historically, the Nadi al-Istiqlal, though secular and left-leaning, has allied with the conservative

Muslim fundamentalist Jamiyat al-Islah al-Dini, a group known to be associated with the clandestine Muslim Brotherhood which installed the regime of the Ayatollah Khomeini.

The Jamiyat al-Islah al-Dini is reported to have worked with the Saudi dissident Juhaiman al-Oteibi in the seizure of the Grand Mosque of Mecca last year, which was the first major incident challenging the Saudi royal family in a decade.

An insurrection in Kuwait would assuredly reverberate into Saudi Arabia. The elites of the two countries are closely allied, and Kuwait is on Saudi Arabia's northern border not far from the Saudi oilfields. Analysts believe any disruption in Kuwait could spark unrest among the 100,000 Shi'ite Muslim oil workers in Saudi Arabia's eastern oilfields who earlier this year sparked violent strikes against the Arabian American Oil Company in Qatif, near the main oil terminal at Ras Tanura.

A key figure in the anti-monarchical movement in Kuwait is Ahmed al-Khatib, the leader of the Nadi al-Istiqlal who was an outspoken leader of the "Opposition Group" in Kuwait's now disbanded parliament.

Al-Khatib has a long history of associations with the radical wing of the Palestinian movement, notably George Habash's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. The Kuwaiti-based Institute

for Palestine Studies is known to be a command center for Palestinian terrorism, and is a sister institution to the Washington-based Institute for Policy Studies which this magazine has identified as a supporter of terrorism and radical "environmentalism." It also supported the Khomeini takeover in Iran. Al-Khatib formed the now defunct Arab Nationalist Movement in the 1950s, out of which the PFLP and his own party emerged.

Fuad Ajami of Johns Hopkins University expects a militant segment of the Palestinian movement to become a source of trouble for the Kuwaiti regime in the near future. He noted that traditionally the coalition led by al-Khatib has worked with the Palestinian movement. The *Jerusalem Post* on Sept. 18 reported increasing strains between the Kuwaiti regime and the Palestinian foreign workers in Kuwait.

Two months ago, the Emir of Kuwait, in an unusual statement, warned his tiny nation not to heed the demand of "certain divisive elements" and announced that Kuwait would reconstitute its parliament. The Kuwaiti parliament was disbanded in 1976, reportedly because of the increasing demands which al-Khatib and his following were making. It is believed that a new attempt at a parliament in Kuwait would open the door for a political offensive by al-Khatib's circles.

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