

# The Muslim Brotherhood plot against Saudi Arabia

by Robert Dreyfuss

Saudia Arabia—and its production of one-third of the world's oil imports—is now the target of the “Islamic Revolution.” Among the forces being used to destabilize the Saudi royal family are the Iranian government of Ayatollah Khomeini, its radical sympathizers in the Arab world, and the controlling British specialists who have spent their lifetimes getting to know every nook and cranny of the Arabian peninsula.

The beneficiaries of the projected disruption of OPEC's most stable government are the City of London banks and the multinational oil companies they control.

The British goal—in the short term—is to effect a fundamental shift in Saudi policy in which the Saudis end their support for low, stable oil prices and move away from the U.S. dollar toward a “basket of currencies” such as the International Monetary Fund's Special Drawing Rights. The collapse of Saudi Arabia would bring about a devastating oil crisis in which the skyrocketing price and shortage would lead to the imposition of a worldwide energy regime under the auspices of the International Energy Agency, which is seeking authority for allocation of all oil exports and energy consumption.

The secret behind the destabilization of Saudi Arabia—like that behind Ayatollah Khomeini's Iranian revolution—is that London is making use of several long-standing, overlapping networks. They include the fundamentalist Muslim Brotherhood, on the one hand, and on the other, the radical-leftist network associated with George Habash's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP).

These two networks converge around Iran's new Foreign Minister, Sadeq Ghotbzadeh.

Ghotbzadeh—like his two predecessors in the post of foreign minister, Abolhassan Bani-Sadr and Ibrahim Yazdi—is part of the Jesuit-trained intelligence clique that has surrounded Khomeini since the Ayatollah arrived in Paris in 1978. Yazdi, Bani-Sadr, and Ghotbzadeh are each the product of a British intelligence special training program under Dr. Ali Shariati in Paris, London, and Washington. During his early career, Ghotbzadeh spent many years in Syria and Lebanon, where reportedly he was close to the PFLP terrorists and the extremist faction of the Syrian leadership around former President Salah Jadid.

Now, as Khomeini's foreign minister, Ghotbzadeh is in a position to coordinate a tribal uprising in Saudi Arabia.

## Inside Saudi Arabia

Inside Saudi Arabia a growing threat is posed by a coalition of dissident tribal forces opposed to the dominant Saudi family. The attack on the Mecca mosque drew upon, in particular, three basic tribal gropes, the Oteibas, the Kahtanis, and the Harbs, along with the Idrissis of southwest Arabia. Within the Saudi power elite, the tribesmen are represented generally by the British-trained and equipped National Guard, which itself is tribally based and commanded by Prince Abdullah. Abdullah is reported to be the leading sponsor of the Muslim Brotherhood in Saudi Arabia.

For the past week, the Saudi press has continually denounced the Muslim Brotherhood as responsible for the attack on Mecca. In one case, the chief editor of the daily *Ukaz* requested that the Saudi government look into the alleged connections between the Mecca affair and the massacre of 60 Syrian cadets by the Muslim Brotherhood in Aleppo, Syria, in August 1979. The striking fact that the Saudis are blaming the Brotherhood has not yet reached the American press at all.

These tribes in eastern Saudi Arabia are remnants of the force assembled by T.E. "Lawrence of Arabia" and the British army during World War I, and they are the old opponents of King Ibn Saud and the Saudi clan that eventually established hegemony over the entire Arabian peninsula. To this precise extent, they are controlled by London through the Muslim Brotherhood command. It is not known to what extent they might present a challenge to the regime; certainly, *Le Monde* of Nov. 30 is exaggerating when it reports a "grande marche" being planned in Riyadh, the Saudi capital, from Mecca. But, should they win support from the National Guard, a serious Saudi political crisis could emerge.

According to Washington sources, the revolt in Mecca was coordinated through the tribes of the western peninsula by left-leaning Arab nationalists including the Arab Nationalist Movement and the PFLP, both founded years ago at the American University in Beirut by Dr. George Habash. Reportedly, Habash, the PFLP, and the Nationalist Movement conducted support operations—including gun-running—for the Saudi rebels through the Yemens, especially the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (formerly Aden), where the Nationalist Movement is especially strong.

In Beirut on Nov. 30, an organization surfaced that called itself the Union of the People of the Arabian Peninsula, headed by Nasser al-Saeed, whom *Le Monde* described as a "veteran leftist of Saudi Arabia" who is currently living in Kuwait. At a Beirut press conference, he claimed that UPAP represents the Oteiba and Kahtani tribes, and he declared that the object of his movement is to topple the Saudi royal family. "We are not Saudis," he said. "We are people of the Arabian peninsula." He went on to proclaim a challenge to the Saudi family that could have been uttered 60 years before by one of Lawrence's old Hashemite agents!

According to European sources, the Mecca affair was supposed to be linked to the outbreak of rebellions in several other provinces, especially including the eastern region where the oil fields lie—and where the small but volatile Saudi Shi'ite population resides. On Dec. 3, there were unconfirmed reports of demonstrations and riots in areas near major Aramco oil installations, but they were not seen by any independent observers. Nevertheless, the

## The scandal behind the scandal

A 4000-word front-page article in the Nov. 30 *Washington Post* kicked off the scandal that may eventually topple the royal family of Saudi Arabia.

The *Washington Post*—which represents the interests of the pro-Zionist Lazard Freres family of Andre Meyer and publisher Katherine Meyer Graham of the *Post*—has a clear interest in destabilizing Saudi Arabia. Not a naive newspaper, the *Post* knows full well the implications of publishing a report on a scandal that involves the business dealings of one of the leading figures in the Saudi family, Prince Muhammad, the son of Crown Prince Fahd. Especially in the supercharged atmosphere generated by the Muslim Brotherhood destabilization in Saudi Arabia, any hint of illegal or even unethical dealings of a Saudi prince with a Western firm, especially one of the Aramco partners, would have devastating consequences inside Saudi Arabia.

According to the *Post*, the Mobil Oil Corp.—a shareholder in the world's largest oil company, Aramco, which is owned 60 percent by the Saudi government—and its president, William P. Tavouleras, were involved in a scandal in which Peter Tavouleras, the son of the Mobil president, was established as the head of a London-based shipping firm in order to circumvent some minor Saudi regulations. The company—established in 1973 "in anticipation ... of (Saudi) flag preference regulations"—was set up with Mobil capital in the name of the son of Tavouleras, and the *Post* is charging "nepotism."

But far more important than the minor matter of whether Tavouleras senior and junior did or did not engage in unethical business practices is the alleged involvement of Prince Muhammad and the Alireza family interests in the Mobil subsidiary. That company, Samarco, was established as a partnership firm, and according to the *Post* "one of the partners, the son of Prince Fahd, heir to the Saudi throne, apparently had a special arrangement."

On the same day that the *Washington Post* story came out, a Saudi expert at the University of Texas at Austin predicted that the Saudi royal family would soon be shaken by "corruption scandals."

next day the Saudi Cabinet held an emergency meeting to discuss the security situation.

Within days, two other organizations surfaced, in Beirut and Cairo, each also claiming to support the revolt in Mecca, the first called the World Leadership of the Muslim Brotherhood and the second the Islamic Revolutionary Movement of the Arabian Peninsula. Both groups professed support for the Ayatollah Khomeini and the "Iranian revolution."

### The Ghotbzadeh connection

Because of Foreign Minister Ghotbzadeh's well-known alliance with the PFLP, the events in Saudi Arabia seem to bear out earlier threats from Iran to topple the Arab "monarchs." But a series of leaks from Anglo-American intelligence sources last week reveals the actual strategy behind the Ghotbzadeh connection.

At the same time that Ghotbzadeh was named foreign minister of Iran, ABC-TV reported—quoting "American intelligence sources"—that the takeover of the U.S.

embassy in Teheran was organized by paramilitary cadre recruited and trained by the PFLP.

The next day, a leading double-agent named Mikhail Golienewski said that he possessed information "proving" that Ayatollah Khomeini was "one of the top five KGB agents in Iran during the 1950s." Golienewski, who defected to the West in the early 1960s, was in fact the very man whose information at that time was used to "prove" that Kim Philby was a KGB spy in the British intelligence system!

In Washington, Georgetown University Professor Thomas Ricks declared to a reporter that the real organizers of the anti-Saudi movement were the PFLP-linked Arab Nationalist Movement and its backers in the PDRY.

The effect of these leads is to paint the Iranian revolution as the outcome of a Soviet-sponsored conspiracy—a claim that can be used to justify an imminent U.S. military intervention into the Persian Gulf.

Second, the British and their American collaborators are trying to draw the Soviet Union and its apparatus into supporting the plan to disrupt the Persian Gulf. If the U.S.S.R. can be drawn into a wild scheme for making trouble in the Gulf, the British calculate, then it will risk destroying the until-now most basic attitude of Soviet foreign policy: detente, and especially the Soviet relationship with Western Europe. London is offering Moscow an opportunity to join in precipitating the destabilization of Saudi Arabia.

To accomplish this task, the British are well-positioned because of one advantage, namely the role of Kim Philby. Philby, a top-flight British spy, is also a well-known Arabist and Middle East specialist with close ties to radical Arab nationalism and to the Muslim Brotherhood. Presently, Philby is in the Soviet Union, reportedly in a position of some influence over Soviet Middle East policy. He is the son of Great Britain's leading expert on Saudi Arabia, Harry St. John Bridges Philby, who maintained close ties to the same tribal networks that are now rebelling in Saudi Arabia.

So far, the Soviet Union has not seen fit to denounce Ayatollah Khomeini. Although the U.S.S.R. and its diplomats have condemned the seizure of American hostages, they have not attacked Khomeini or the Muslim Brotherhood by name. When Ambassador Mohammed Mokri of Iran said in Moscow last week that Iran has the "support and synpathy" of the U.S.S.R., the Soviets did not disavow the claim. Even worse, when Soviet spokesman Zagladin told a *Le Monde* interviewer that in Iran, Islam "is of a progressive character," it appeared as if at least a powerful faction of the Soviet Union had decided to play along with the British-Khomeini game.

### "I foresee scandals..."

*Robert Fernea, an anthropologist at the University of Texas at Austin—an institution known for its involvement in Mideast tribal and sectarian activities—had this to say about the crisis inside Saudi Arabia in an interview Nov. 29:*

"The reports of tribal unrest in Saudi Arabia are important, because they have to be evidence of unrest *within* the ruling family, since the family has maintained itself in power precisely by cleverly intermarrying with most of the other tribes in Saudi Arabia.

"What you are probably now seeing in that country is a resurgence of the old Brotherhood-Ikhwan networks of years ago, coming out of the Hijaz region in western Saudi Arabia. These people will bring to the fore the issue of militant puritanical reformism, and if they gain any strength, they will focus their attention very directly on the practices and habits of the royal family. Here there is a real vulnerability: I can foresee corruption scandals and scandals about the lifestyles of the rulers of Saudi Arabia, and this can become serious in the not-too-distant future."