

The Madness and Malevolence of Kuwait

By now we have all heard of the decision by the government of Kuwait to end all of its flights between New York and London in order to achieve one thing: to be able to avoid having to transport an Israeli, or maybe even two – *horribile dictu* – on such a flight.

It is things like this that reveal the full madness and malevolence of Kuwait's economic warfare, its economic Jihad against Israel. Kuwait is willing to deprive its national airline of what is surely one of its most important and profitable routes, all because allowing even a lone Israeli to take a seat for six hours constitutes "doing business" with the Jewish state, and that can't be countenanced by little Kuwait. For where might it all end, if a lone Israeli were to be assigned even a lousy center seat in the back? Possibly by Israel doing even more business, and before you know it, Israel will have bought up all those nonexistent high-tech companies in Kuwait City, and then Israel, as sure as night follows day, would be able to expand its territory from the Nile to the Euphrates.

The bizarrerie of Kuwait's identifying the taking of a plane flight, without more, as "doing business" in any meaningful sense is matched by the bizarrerie from the opposite camp: to wit, New York City Councilman Rory Lancman, who said that "it was unconscionable that Kuwait, who the United States had helped liberate in the early 1990s with the help of Jewish soldiers, would continue to discriminate against Israeli passengers." I was unaware that Jewish soldiers taking part in Operation Desert Storm had any bearing on whether an Israeli might be a passenger on a Kuwaiti flight from New York to London. Whether there were 5, or 5,000, or no Jewish soldiers in that campaign, should be irrelevant as to whether Israelis

can fly on Kuwaiti planes. And what Kuwait does or does not do – halt a flight or keep it flying – is irrelevant to the long-established American policy of opposing the economic warfare, including the boycotts, that Arab states have been conducting against the state of Israel for many decades. It is too bad that the American government did not ban the New York to London flight by Kuwait Airlines, but allowed the Kuwaitis to beat them to the punch, offering to the world a parody of a “principled” stand: “we give up a profitable route for morally more elevated reasons.” Fortunately, it is not too late for the American government, if it wished, to ban all flights by airlines from countries that participate in the economic boycott of Israel. That would mean standing on quite a different principle.

This is the kind of story that helps rip the mask off of the sheikdom depicted in 1990-91 as “plucky little Kuwait,” a splendid little sheikdom that was the victim of Saddam Hussein and Iraq. Plucky little Kuwait, brave little Kuwait, Kuwait the Soft, Kuwait the Victim, Kuwait the So-Much-More-Moderate-Than-Saudi-Arabia, brave little plucky little Kuwait saved by its age-old friends the Americans, who came in 1991 to save it from the rapaciousness of Saddam Hussein. And in so doing, the Americans earned gratitude so eternal that it lasted as long as it took the first President Bush to come and collect, when out of office, a million dollar speaker’s fee, and a few other well-placed Americans (was Clinton one of them? James Baker? I forget) to pocket similar sums for a half-day’s work.

That eternal gratitude must have lasted at least 3-4 years. Then Kuwait, not the Kuwait represented by a handful of members of this or that family (Fouad Ajami visiting them from time to time) that sends its children to the American School of Kuwait, but all the other Kuwaitis, revered to type, to the type of all societies and peoples suffused with Islam.

The Gulf War certainly made sense as far as the ruling families of Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, the U.A.E., and Saudi

Arabia were concerned. But did it, the original Gulf War, make sense for the long-term interests of Infidels? What if Saddam Hussein had captured and held the oil riches of Kuwait?

What then? What would Saudi Arabia have done? Saddam Hussein's army could not simply march into Saudi Arabia. The American Air Force could have destroyed it as it marched across the desert. Would Saddam Hussein have managed to appeal to the people who live in Saudi Arabia? Not to the Wahhabis, who would regard his brand of Sunni Islam – just look at the freedoms of Iraqi women – as far too secular. Not to the Shi'a in the Eastern Province, where the oil is produced: Saddam Hussein was the arch-enemy of the Shi'a. The Al-Saud would very likely have had to embrace, as they never really have embraced, the American government, and it would have been ready to pour out huge sums for a guarantee of protection against a more powerful, and closer, Iraq.

That would have been a good thing. We want the Al-Saud to be worried. We want them to have to worry about whether or not their enemies, foreign and domestic, will be held in check by the powerful Americans. We want to force them to give us far more of their unmerited wealth, for such protection, and thereby have less to spend on mosques, madrasas, and campaigns of Da'wa.

And what would Saddam Hussein have done had Iraq been able to take over Kuwait, and make it a province of Iraq? Would he not, over the next decade, have used that wealth to try again to destroy once and for all the "Persians" of Shi'a Iran? And would he not have been supported in such a new effort by the Saudis themselves, both because they would take his side against those "Persians" of Shi'a Iran, but because they might hope that he would once again be in an endless war with Iran, with Iraqi military might confronting the human-wave techniques of the basiji? For this would have kept both Saddam Hussein and the Islamic Republic of Iran busy for a long time.

The American government at the time, however, was intent on "protecting Saudi Arabia," and it saw things one-dimensionally. It could not conceive of how mischief-makers and megalomaniacs can sometimes be used, or at least not prevented from acting, in ways that, objectively, help the Camp of the Infidels, and damage the Camp of Islamic Jihad. Now, so many years later, it again misses an opportunity it could have seized, to reinforce a valuable and important principle, in failing to boycott Kuwait Airways for banning Israelis.

First published at