

TO SAUDI WITH LOVE: WORKING CLASS COMPOSITION IN THE MIDEAST

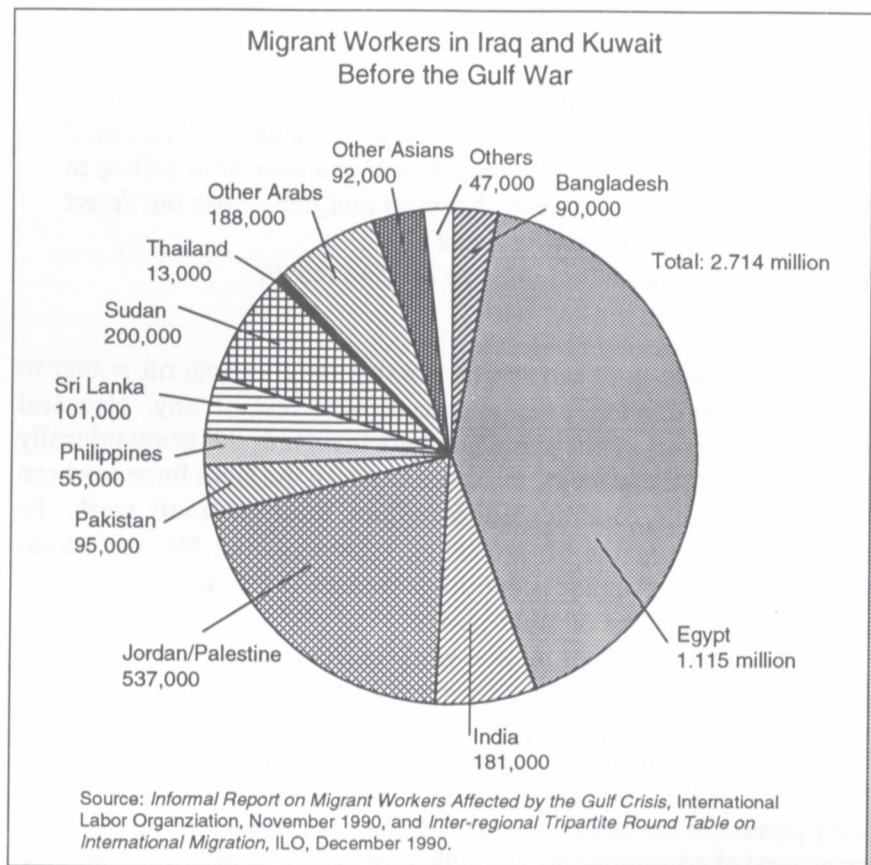
Midnight Notes Collective

“The mercy of God be upon you, Ustaz Selim. If you had lived, if you had been drowned by poverty as I have, I wonder if you would have done what I am doing now? Would you have been willing to carry all your years on your shoulders and flee across the desert to Kuwait to find a crust of bread?”

- Ghassan Kanafani, *Men in the Sun* (1956)

THE MASS MIGRATION OF MILLIONS OF WORKERS FROM AROUND THE PLANET TO THE Gulf region has been a process with few, if any, historical precedents. In terms of the sheer numbers involved, the geographically diverse origins of the workers, the speed at which the labor force has been assembled, and the conditions under which these migrants work, the structure of labor in the oil-producing regions of the Mideast stands comparable to the Atlantic slave trade and to the Nazi, Stalinist and apartheid organizations of labor power.

Roughly seven to eight million workers from outside the immediate oil-producing states comprise 75 percent of the total labor force in the Gulf.¹ This oil-producing proletariat comes largely from Asian countries, primarily Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, the Philippines and Sri Lanka, and African and Arabic countries such as Egypt, Sudan, Syria and Yemen. Ninety percent of the labor force of the United Arab Emirates, for instance, is composed of non-nationals, the bulk from India, Pakistan and Iran. And in pre-war Kuwait, non-nationals comprised more than 80 percent of the labor force. In large part, these workers are young men from rural areas, who come to the Gulf in search of higher wages and to escape poverty and repression in their own countries. But unlike so many others who have taken that path, these workers will not settle. They are temporary expedients. They have a single function: work.



Workers of the World

Straddling the continental divide between Africa and Asia, the Arabian peninsula has a long history of migration. But it was only through British colonial efforts in the 19th century that the region was drawn fully into the fold of the international division of labor. From the Indian merchants in Bahrain trading, among other things, hashish and opium, to

Migrant Workers in Iraq and Kuwait Before the Gulf War

the seasonal treks of pearl divers along the Gulf coast, the colonial legacy and the vagaries of the world market have consistently shaped the patterns of migration in and to the region.²

The development of the Arab oil industry in the 1930s initiated a new era in the history of migration in the Gulf. The immediate problem facing American and British oil companies was a shortage of labor. The region suffered both from a relatively small indigenous population, and a refusal of some to abandon their ways of life and work in the oil industry. The sheer number of workers needed in the burgeoning oil industry (as well as ancillary industries) combined with the strategic importance of petroleum, elevated the question of migration to one of fundamental political and economic importance. The basic question facing oil companies then, as it is now, was how to successfully mix and match an oil proletariat in order to prevent political explosions. While many of the early workers were drawn from up and down the Gulf coast, laborers were also brought from India usually by British companies.

The dangers of being reliant on a predominantly non-indigenous mass labor force, and the political necessity to develop a heterogeneous proletariat, were apparent in the early decisions of oil companies and local rulers. Limits were placed on who, and where, people could work. The British Political Agent in Kuwait in the 1930s was required to issue “no objection” certificates to migrant workers. Similarly, when the Bahrain Petroleum Company sought to hire workers from southern Persia in 1944, the British Political Agent, fearing political claims on the island, wrote to the company, “Any measures which will be likely to increase the permanent Persian population of Bahrain would be regarded with strong disfavor by the Bahrain Government for political and other reasons.”³ Workers’ struggles at the point of production also affected the formation of labor policy. A strike in 1943 by Indian workers at the Ras Tanura refinery in Saudi Arabia compelled the Arabian American Oil Company (Aramco) into using Italian prisoners of war as slave labor. Strikes in 1938, 1947 and 1953, and strikes in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, in 1956, prompted oil companies into imposing draconian labor laws including the banning of strikes.⁴

Following the independence of India in 1947, and the formation of the state of Israel in 1948, the oil companies shifted to using a predominantly Arab labor force in the oil industry. Many came in search of relatively well-paying jobs, while others, such as Palestinians, arrived fleeing from war or expulsion from their homes. Though presented with the usual brutalities and indignities of migration, it was relatively simple for Arabsto find work in the Gulf: communication was easy, there were religious similarities, and many were able to use informal networks to find work and accommodation. Jobs were commonly taken up in the expanding government apparatus, or in schools and hospitals, where language and cultural similarities facilitated work. By 1975, more than one quarter of the labor force of Jordan, Oman and Yemen were working in the Gulf, often as a result of direct state-to-state labor contracts.⁵

The leap in oil prices and the expansion in the oil industry in the early 1970s marked a turning point in Gulf labor policy. The size and diversity of the oil labor market underwent a tremendous explosion, with most major oil-producing states turning to the fresh pools of multinational labor power around the planet to staff their respective industries. Nigeria, Libya, and Venezuela, for instance, relied on Ghanaian, Egyptian and Colombian workers. In the Gulf states, migrant labor doubled from around 660,000 to 1,250,000 between 1970 and 1975. By the early 1980s, that number soared to at least six million. Among the workers were roughly 2.3 million Pakistanis, two million Indians and over one million Egyptians. The bulk of the remainder was provided by Yemenis, Jordanians, Palestinians, Filipinos, Turks, Bangladeshis, Thais and Koreans.⁶

The logic of the international division of labor is such that as workers in one country are forced to migrate and service the princes and oil companies of the Gulf, so they are replaced by other workers of the world. “One extraordinary phenomenon dominates the whole Yemeni economy,” said the *Financial Times* about the Yemen Arab Republic in 1984, “roughly half of the working population lives in Saudi Arabia.” This dissipation of Yemeni labor was partially ameliorated by Chinese road laborers, Egyptian teachers and Filipino and Pakistani hotel staff. In Jordan, a 1988 government study estimated that 40 percent of all Jordanian workers were employed outside the country and of the remaining work force approximately 25 percent was made up of workers from outside the country.⁷

Given the nature of the migration to the Gulf states, the methods of recruiting these workers are both complex and extensive. Workers are usually brought in by state-owned agencies in the “sending” countries or by private “manpower” companies. Typically, they receive contracts from corporations doing business in the Gulf or directly from a Gulf state, and, in turn, they may sub-contract out to merchants who ply their trade in the villages and slums of South and East Asia. In Bangladesh, workers call these merchants “Adam Bepari” - dealers in human cargo. By 1980 in Sri Lanka, there were over 500 such agencies operating, and there as many as 1,000 were operating in the Philippines by 1982. According to one study, a small agency placing 1,000 people a year could profit \$ 150-\$200 a person - an annual profit of \$150,000-\$200,000.⁸

The contractors charge exorbitant fees to prospective workers, fees that can take years to pay off. An Indian laborer expecting to earn \$175 a month base salary in the Gulf might commonly pay an agent’s fee of around \$1,500-\$2,000.⁹ Assuming the worker needs \$60 to live on and \$60 to send back home, that would leave \$60 a month left to pay off the fee, a process that could take three years. Hence, workers are compelled to put in overtime and are much less likely to cause trouble as the need to recontract becomes paramount. Fraud, extortion, forgeries and workers paying fees but ending up stranded are such common occurrences that governments are often forced to intervene.

On their arrival in the Gulf, workers often find that the terms of their employment have changed, a practice known as contract substitution. Longer hours and lower wages are the usual result. One pipe fitter from Kerala, where about half the estimated two million Indians working in the Gulf come from, paid an agent’s fee of \$1,500 and incurred an additional \$500 in personal expenses for a job earning \$350 a month for an eight-hour day. On arrival in the Gulf he found that the job had changed - \$262 per month for a ten-hour day. “We Indians are gambling when we come to work in the Mideast,” he ruefully noted.¹⁰

Unofficial migration is another significant characteristic of the labor market in the Gulf.¹¹ Many arrive via the Hajj, the annual pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina. (A tactic once favored by Syrian and Sudanese workers in the 1970s who sought to escape regulations in their own countries that defined who could and could not work in the Gulf.) Others arrive via land routes through the large Saudi Arabian border or by dhows, the single-masted Arabian Sea ships. One estimate put the number of “illegal” migrants in Kuwait at one out of every eight workers. In Saudi Arabia, where the size of this unofficial labor force is considered much greater than in Kuwait, many find work in large cities like Riyadh where it is easier to move around without getting caught. In 1978 when the government declared an amnesty in order to regain more control over the unofficial labor market, some 100,000 people took advantage of the offer.¹²

Not surprisingly, a flourishing trade in illegal documents is common throughout the Middle East and Asia. An exit/reentry visa for Saudi Arabia fetched \$800 in Pakistan in the mid-1980s and a Saudi resident’s permit could be bought for \$800.¹³ Once in the Gulf, illegal migrants can find work via agents who deal specifically with illegal workers, often placing them with small, cost-cutting contractors. The size and significance of this parallel labor market is suggested by one study that put the number of Pakistani nationals working in the Gulf without proper papers at 500,000. As is typically the case for “unofficial” workers, the level of exploitation and the conditions of work are far more severe than those in the official sector.

Indentured Servitude

As the US troops found, the conditions of work in the Gulf are indeed wretched. For a start, the work of directly producing oil is extremely dangerous. Heavy machinery, hazardous chemicals, the risk of fire and blowouts, combined with the negligence of oil companies and governments, mean death and mutilations are everyday occurrences.¹⁴ [On life and work in the oil industry, see J. Ihonvbere, “Resistance and Hidden Forms of Protest Amongst the Petroleum Proletariat in Nigeria,” S. Federici, “Development and Underdevelopment in Nigeria,” and E. Emory, “Some Photographs I Was Not Able to Take.”]

The immense armies of laborers brought into the Gulf are usually on short contracts and face long hours at low pay. As migrants, they have few legal rights. They must be sponsored by a local employer and cannot legally organize trade unions, own property, switch jobs, stay in the country without working or leave without the permission of their boss. Indeed, passports are usually taken away upon employment. Medical care is often poor or non-existent, wages are commonly withheld, and benefits, such as free passage home or annual leave, are frequently blocked. If workers protest, they can be easily arrested, jailed, ill-treated and repatriated. In one case, the government of Oman arrested 2,500 Indian workers and marched them through the streets because they had demanded the wages and benefits they had agreed upon before their arrival.¹⁵ Even before departure from their home countries, workers must provide a police statement verifying their “good character” and endure a medical examination. Though it varies from country to country, workers must be between 18 and 40-years-old and in good health. The conditions are such that even the *Financial Times* characterized the labor system in the Gulf as indentured servitude.

If not renting from private landlords, paying 60 percent of their income on rent, workers often end up in labor

camps. 16 Aramco Construction Camps (ACCs) in Saudi Arabia, for example, range from the major fully serviced townships for upper level management (complete with schools, hospitals and recreational facilities for themselves and their families), to those for workers, typically 36-man dorms with a common toilet facility in the middle. These workers' ACCs may have a cafeteria, a laundry service, a movie theater and a weight lifting room, facilities common to integrated work environments found in the oil industry such as on oil rigs. The camps are wrapped by barbed wire and security.

Contractor camps are much worse and more common. Corrugated metal shacks, mobile trailers, cabins, tents or mud huts provide the accommodation units. Fans, linens and blankets are scarce, as well as proper toilets and sanitation facilities. As for space, one Indian worker noted, "If we all stood up to dress at the same time, there wouldn't be enough room." (As the saying goes, "The room was so small I had to go out to change my mind.") There are few, if any, recreational facilities and workers may have to organize the mess after long days of work. The London-based Minority Rights Group noted that the "best" construction camp conditions were found in those run by South Korean companies; regulations stipulated that no more than 16 workers could live in one room and that a bathhouse must be provided for every 500 workers. 17

Many work seven days a week, 10-16 hours a day, for extended periods of time with only one day off a month for shopping and laundry. Most migrants do not get any social security and regularly complain of harassment, torture, assaults and long hours of work with few, if any, holidays. In Saudi Arabia, mobility is tightly controlled with both resident and work permits essential for travel.¹⁸ A recent *Financial Times* article quoted Luis, a Filipino truck driver in Saudi Arabia, who supports 10 members of his family in Manila. "I work 12-hour days and then I go home to a room that I share with nine Filipino men," he told the reporter. Luis tells the story of a friend who brought his wife to Saudi Arabia. "She came under her maiden name," he explained. "They have to live in separate compounds. They cannot be together. They cannot sleep together. All they can do is meet for lunch in a cafe."¹⁹

The principle of equal pay for equal work is non-existent in the Gulf. Wages are pegged to levels in the migrant's country of origin, leading to a three-tiered system of wages - Europeans and Americans at the top, Arabs, and then Asians. Among Asians, Sri Lankans and Bangladeshis share the lowest pay scale, followed by Indians, Pakistanis, Thais, Filipinos and Koreans at the high end of wage levels. An average Bangladeshi unskilled production worker in the Gulf in the mid-1980s would have earned \$ 184 per month while his Pakistani counterpart would get \$243 a month for the same work.²⁰

The division of labor along migrants' national origins is also well tuned. It is rare to find a Filipino time-keeper, for example, supervising a Filipino work crew. This pitting of one nationality against another, combined with wage levels being set according to a migrant's country of origin, creates a material distinction between workers along national lines. Indians are known as the ABCs of the Gulf- ayahs (maids), barbers and cooks; Pakistanis, Sri Lankans and Bangladeshis make up the bulk of unskilled and semi-skilled workers; Filipinos tend to work in the production process, as transport operators or in the service sector; Thais are often unskilled laborers; and Koreans are almost exclusively brought in by Korean construction companies, who offer a fully integrated service in the Gulf region. In addition, workers from one particular country may be heavily concentrated in one or two of the Gulf states. The reasons vary, but usually have a colonial or imperial legacy. Thai workers, for example, heavily concentrated in Saudi Arabia, were originally recruited by US construction companies that had been based in Thailand during the Vietnam War.

The police and army that maintain all these barriers and restrictions are themselves divided into many different sections. Most of the Gulf states have recruited Pakistani policemen and soldiers to play off their own nationally recruited forces. Private security forces, composed for example of Nepalese Gurkhas, are also hired to patrol anything from docks to refineries. The level of policing in the Gulf states is, not surprisingly, very high. One Kuwaiti MP noted that for every 10,000 new migrants, an additional 135 were needed in the security sector. (The United States has a rate of 22.5 police officers per 10,000.²¹)

The hardships of migration are more than matched by the hardships back home. Often the migrants' wives are burdened with more work than before; they have to take care of the family on top of the land, the house and the money. Occasionally, these new roles allow the women to take more power within the family and the community, but the women may also be rendered more vulnerable within patriarchal societies.²² Many of these realities of migrant work become the subject of TV or radio shows. In Manila, one of the most popular radio call-in shows in recent times was "To Saudi with Love," where husbands and wives might pass news, quarrel or make up over long-distance telephone.²³

The class anger of workers engendered by these experiences has not gone unnoticed by the Gulf rulers, who continually seek to avoid reliance on a single ethnic, religious, or national block of migrants. The homogeneity of Arab workers, for instance, which originally was advantageous to the sheiks and oil companies, quickly became a liability. That Arab workers could use their own informal networks to travel to and find jobs in the Gulf, meant they were

less susceptible to state control. Islam too has been used as a vehicle for more rights, whether it be around the grand demand of sharing “the gift of Allah to all” (oil) or using religious justifications to demand better housing and employment. Some areas, such as Saudi Arabia’s oil-producing Eastern Province, have large, strategically placed Shi’a populations who have in recent years launched riots, demonstrations, and strikes.²⁴ Other more mundane factors also cause trouble for employers. The simple fact that a worker can read and speak the same language as the boss translates into a greater awareness of (limited) legal rights or the content of a work contract.

Arab workers have also been considered too susceptible to the infectious political ideologies of the region. “The Gulf governments can be expected to deport any known political activists and to terminate the permits of as many Lebanese, Iraqi, Syrian and Palestinians workers, as well as other workers of Iranian origin, as they feel politically possible,” wrote analysts for the UK-based Royal Institute for International Affairs in 1986, foreshadowing the expulsions to come during the Gulf War.²⁵ One reason is the “dangerous” demand for residency rights. The Kuwaiti government has long been besieged with demands from Lebanese-Egyptian and Palestinian workers for the rights of residence.²⁶

The decline in the political power of Arab nationalism in the past twenty years is not surprising given the class experiences of many Arab workers. Expulsions and discrimination have been commonplace over the past decade, particularly that of Palestinians who have always been seen as a potent political danger.²⁷ Even Indian and Pakistani laborers, though “non-Arab,” have also been seen as a liability simply because they are thought of as having a “proclivity” to settle. In general, the closer the cultural similarity, the more local rulers felt threatened.

Thus, following the ever increasing demand for labor after 1973, the political and economic changes in the wake of the Iranian revolution, and the dangers posed by a predominantly Arab proletariat, the oil companies and rulers of the Gulf looked to East Asia, for a more sizable, transient diverse and cheap labor force. This trans-oceanic leap is reflected in statistics: by 1980, some 40 percent of the aggregate labor migration from Asia to the Middle East consisted of workers from East and Southeast Asia a trend that increased in the 1980s.²⁸

Women Workers

One of the most exploited sectors of the oil-producing proletariat are domestic servants, composed mostly of women from Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines. In pre-war Kuwait alone, approximately 35,000 Sri Lankan women worked as domestic servants.” The conditions of work by all accounts are horrific. Rape, sexual harassment and beatings are common. “One girl came home from Saudi last month in a hood and long dress,” explained Rosabella Khan, the head of a Filipino government agency for overseas workers, to a *Los Angeles Times* reporter. “I thought she was a Muslim. Then we found she’d been kicked and beaten and slapped by her employer. She was black and blue all over. We had to send her to three hospitals.”³⁰

Sri Lanka is the primary source for houseworkers in the Gulf. In fact, the majority of Sri Lankans in the region are female domestic workers, a situation that heavily affects the Sri Lankan economy. Almost one and half percent of all Sri Lankans work in the Gulf, the highest percentage of all Asian countries. More than 200,000 Sri Lankans (mostly women) were working in the area in 1983, a number that has certainly risen given the continued migration to the region since that time. The Sri Lankan government sets a recommended “minimum wage” of \$ 100 per month for these workers, and many don’t even hit that figure while working seven days a week, 15-16 hours a day.³¹ Most of the women from Sri Lanka are married and have children and are forced to the Gulf on the promise of-by Sri Lankan standards - a substantial wage. Again, most migrants operate through a recruitment agency with many borrowing money from family members, neighbors, or “in the streets” at interest rates of 15-30 percent per month in the early 1980s.

Non-payment of wages, lack of holidays, not being allowed to go out or be alone with men, no access to telephones, and being locked up in houses are also common experiences. (Some work contracts even go so far as to ban homesickness.) Notices announcing the absconding of contract workers and servants are standard fare in Gulf newspapers. They ask the readers to report the man or woman to the police or the contracting agency if they find him.³² Within Saudi Arabia, gangs of bounty hunters track down runaway workers, a practice reminiscent of the slave patrols in the US. Indeed, the Indonesian ambassador to Saudi Arabia compared the sending of women to the Gulf states as slavery and urged his government to stop the practice. India, according to one source, banned emigration of women to the Gulf in the 1970s and the Philippines temporarily banned the export of women as domestics in 1988.” Most recently, Sri Lanka banned the recruitment of women to Libya. All of these actions were, on the face of it, taken as a result of the complaints of brutalities.

In many Gulf states, domestic workers are in open rebellion. In the United Arab Emirates, 2,600 complaints of servants fleeing were registered with a government agency in 1991. (The 47,000 “national families” of the UAE have hired an estimated 25,000 maids.) In response, the Dubai police have called for the establishment of guidance bureaus to help Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states rear children. The UAE has also launched a campaign criminalizing houseworkers, claiming they are corrupting Muslim society and teaching children how to drink alcohol. In Kuwait too, houseworkers

commonly seek refuge in embassies or churches. Following the Gulf War, the number of assaults and rapes skyrocketed in Kuwait, a country that already had one of the highest rates of rape in the world. In response, many thousands of Filipina maids fled to the Philippines Embassy seeking refuge.

The Philippine government, though, like all governments that have substantial numbers of people working in the Middle East, does very little to protect these workers, unless they are, of course, forced to. They see it in their interest to continue and to expand the trade. Migration “eases” unemployment at home and provides foreign exchange revenues through workers’ remittances. The International Labor Organization (ILO) noted in 1990 that remittances for workers from Bangladesh, Egypt, India, Jordan, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Sudan and Thailand made up 24 percent of the average imports of their home countries.³⁴

In the early 1980s, remittances to Pakistan were reportedly running about \$3 billion a year, though now remits are down to \$1.9 billion a year.³⁵ Between 1982 and 1986, the total remits of Filipino contract workers reached \$3.8 billion. In the words of Corazon Aquino, the foreign exchange generated by the Overseas Employment Program (i.e., all Filipino migrant workers, 75 percent of whom are in the Middle East) is “eleven times the average net foreign investment” in the country.³⁶ Among the tasks of the government’s Philippine Overseas Employment Agency (POEA) is to conduct international marketing missions for Filipino labor.

The importance of remits to the Philippine economy led to legislation in 1982 that required all Filipino overseas workers to remit 50 percent of their earnings through the banking system. By 1984 the figure was raised to 70 percent. This measure effectively taxed workers, who would normally exchange money on the black market to get a more favorable rate. Not surprisingly, there was mass non-compliance that led the government to threaten the revocation of passports.”

Decomposition and Militarization

Despite the restrictions placed upon migrant workers in the Gulf, many have been able to organize and to establish a foothold in the region. Whether they organized as Arabs, Palestinians, Communists, Muslims, Catholics or along other lines, their struggles increasingly challenged the brutal conditions under which they were living. The more they overcame the boundaries created by their differences, the harder it became for the rulers of the region to continue the high level of exploitation.

But the decline in oil prices in the 1980s and the slaughter of the Iran-Iraq war undermined much of the economic and political power of migrant workers and the oil-producing proletariat generally in the Gulf. Lower oil prices and the ensuing austerity measures radically cut into people’s wages and standard of living. According to the *Financial Times*, foreign workers in Saudi Arabia are prepared to accept wages a third lower than what their predecessors demanded ten years ago. Along with decreased wages, higher consumer prices and cutbacks in social services, migration procedures tightened and police sweeps increased significantly in the 1980s. At the same time, “sending” countries aggressively pursued their policies of labor exports and continually lowered recommended minimum wage levels for their workers.

But by the end of the 1980s, a renewed upsurge of popular protest in the region, threw the old regimes and theocracies in crisis. The Intifadah, general strikes and riots in Algeria and Morocco, protests on the streets of Kuwait, and insurrections in Jordan brought back the nightmare scenarios of the late 1970s. As the key political power in the Gulf, Saudi Arabian rulers were particularly alarmed by these events. The death of 1500 pilgrims in Mecca in July 1990 exacerbated the situation and added little to the credibility of the “Custodian of the Holy Mosques,” King Fahd.

Coinciding with these events were profound changes in the regional oil industry. New capital investment and the decline in the “boom” industries, such as construction, required structural changes in the Gulf labor force. Though still heavily dependent on unskilled and semi-skilled labor, the Gulf states have been seeking to increase skilled workers relative to the unskilled workforce.³⁸ In addition, there is the problematic of the large non-national workforce, in some cases resident for decades, making economic, moral and political claims upon the Gulf states. Despite the continual effort to shuffle and renew the migrant labor force in order to prevent the solidification of political or economic demands, the threat of some sort of “international intifadah” making its way to these workers has long been worrisome. It is one thing for unemployed workers to explode

in the ghettos of the Gaza Strip, quite another for workers in near oil industry installations to rebel and threaten billions of dollars of capital investment.

Hence, the importance, and in fact the necessity, of the Gulf War, which at once fortified the vast system of indentured servitude in the region, allowed for the reorganization of the migrant labor force, and bolstered the despotic rule of the feudal monarchs in the heart of the most advanced and capital intensive industry in the world. The mass expulsions of Palestinians and Yemeni workers from Kuwait and Saudi Arabia would have been inconceivable without a significant increase in the

militarization of these countries. Thus, in order to protect the new, mass investment in the Gulf oil industry, to ensure its profitability, and to undertake a decomposition of the oil-producing proletariat required by this new technological leap in production, militarization was a necessary precondition. It is of course true, as John L. Lewis once said, that coal cannot be mined with bayonets; but at certain historical junctures, coal cannot be mined *without* bayonets.

Notes

¹ Exact figures are difficult to find because Gulf states do not publish accurate numbers, if at all. Estimate is of pre-Gulf War non-national populations of Iraq and the six Gulf Cooperation Council countries (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates). Compiled from: Godfrey Gunatilleke, ed., *Migration of Asian Workers to the Arab World* (Tokyo: United Nations University, 1986); *Informal Report on Migrant Workers Affected by the Gulf Crisis*, International Labor Organization, November 1990; *Inter-regional Tripartite Round Table on International Migration*, ILO, December 1990; Roger Owen, *Migrant Workers in the Gulf*, Minority Rights Group Report No. 68 (London: Minority Rights Group, 1985), and newspaper and magazine reports.

² P.R. Gopinathan Nair, "India," in Gunatilleke, ed., p. 68, and Owen, p. 4. For a historical summary of South Asian migration see Lydia Potts, *The World Labor Market: A History of Migration* (London: Zed Books, 1990) and Ijaz Shafi Gilani, *Citizen Slaves, Guest Workers: Dynamics of Labor Migration from South Asia* (Islamabad: Institute of Policy Studies, 1985).

³ Owen, p. 5. Quot from Ian J. Seccombe, "International Migration in the Middle East," in Reginald T. Appleyard, ed., *International Migration Today* (UNESCO), p. 195.

⁴ Owen, p. 4-7, and Seccombe, p. 184.

⁵ A.M. Farid and H. Sirriyeh, eds., *The Decline of Arab Oil Revenues* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), p. 90.

⁶ Owen, p. 4.

⁷ *Financial Times*, 26 November 1984 on Yemen. On Jordan, see "Jordan Staves off the Jobs Crisis," *Middle East Economic Digest*, 30 January 1988, and M. Samha, "The Impact of Migratory Flows on Population changes in Jordan," *International Migration*, June 1990.

"On the number of agencies, see Owen, p. 10. On profits, see Helmut Kurth and Ngo Huy Liem, eds., *Migrant Overseas Workers: New Area of Concern for Labour Unions* (Manila: Economic Research Center, University of Santo Tomas, 1988), p. 21.

⁹ Peter Woodward, *Oil and Labor in the Middle East* (New York: Praeger, 1988), p. 73.

¹⁰ Gunatilleke, p. 68, for origin of Indian migrant workers. Woodward, p. 76.

"Even the *Financial Times* (23 February 1983) took note of the size of the Kuwaiti unofficial labor market.

¹² *Growth and Adjustment in Asia* (Geneva: International Labor Organization, 1986), p. 94.

¹¹ Woodward, p. 20.

¹⁴ In June 1989, a gas pipeline explosion in the Urals in the Soviet Union killed over 600 people. In the North Sea in July, 1988, 167 workers were killed when the Piper Alpha production platform, owned by Armand Hammer's Occidental Petroleum, blew up. Over 300 people were killed in Mexico City in 1984 after a gas storage facility exploded, and in the same year in Cubatao, Brazil, over 500 were killed when an oil pipeline erupted. In the Middle East, deaths are far more of a day-to-day reality for the oil producing proletariat as a whole. In the first nine months of 1989, for example, the Iraqi government returned to Egypt the bodies of more than 1000 workers who died on account of the brutalities they had been subjected to in Iraq. The figure exceeded by 100 the 942 bodies sent back in all of 1988, due in part to the attacks on Egyptian migrants following the end of the eight-year war with Iran. See *New York Times*, 15 November 1989.

"These [labor] policies aim at keeping the foreign workers on a short lease, to avoid labor or political disputes." K. Pakravan, *Oil Supply Disruptions in the 1980s: An Economic Analysis* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press), p. 7. ¹⁶ Owen, p. 12. "Ibid." See Woodward, Owen, *passim*.

¹⁹ See *Financial Times*, 25 September 1990.

²⁰ Woodward, p. 42, and appendix.

²¹ Based on employment by 12,401 agencies for 233 million people. See *New York Times*, 17 February 1992.

²² For more information on the women who remain in the home country see *MERIP Reports*, June 1984.

²³ See "Paychecks Full of Pain and Profit," *Los Angeles Times*, 14 September 1990.

²⁴ The Shi'a riots in Qatif and Saihat in 1979, demonstrations in Bahrain and Kuwait the same year, the coup attempt in Bahrain in 1981 (which involved Bahraini and Qatari Shi'i), the bomb attacks in Kuwait in the early and mid 1980s, the hijacking of the Kuwait airliner in 1984, the attempted assassination of the Kuwait ruler in 1985, and, of course, the Iranian revolution, are just some examples of Shi'a agitation.

²⁵ See V. Yorke and L. Turner, *European Interests and Gulf Oil* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1986), p. 57.

²⁶ "Foreigners Feel the Pinch," *Financial Times*, 23 February 1989.

²⁷ Yorke and Turner, p. 57.

²⁸ From *Growth and Adjustment in Asia*, ILO 10th Regional Conference, Jakarta,

December 1985, p. 86. See also Seccombe, p. 204.

²⁹ "Working in Virtual Slavery," *The Nation*, 18 March 1991, p. 342. ³⁰ *Los Angeles Times*, 14 September 1990.

³¹ "Recruitment of Labor Migrants for the Middle East: The Sri Lankan Case," *International Migration Review*, Summer 1990, pp. 300-301.

³² A check of three different Arabic-language newspapers in Saudi Arabia (from the three different zones) for a week in February 1992 turned up at least one such notice everyday in each paper; some papers carried up to four and five in a day.

³³ See *Migrant Overseas Workers*, p. 21, for comments of Indonesian ambassador. On India banning women working in the Gulf see Gunatilleke, p. 68, and for Filipino ban see *Los Angeles Times*, 14 September 1990.

³⁴ *Informal Report on Migrant Workers Affected by the Gulf Crisis*, ILO, November 1990.

³⁵ *MEED*, 4 July 1989.

³⁶ *Migrant Overseas Workers*, p. 5.

³⁷ Woodward, p. 113.

³⁸ See Jon McLin, *Social and Economic Effects of Petroleum Development in Non-OPEC Developing Countries* (Geneva, ILO), pp. 52-55, Farid and Sirriyeh, eds., p. 102, and Owen, p. 16.