

BT  
#0000

NNNNVV ESA174KWA924  
RR RUQMR  
DE RUQMKW #2921/01 1681345  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
R 171311Z JUN 79  
FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3885  
INFO RUQMBI/AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI 4748  
RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN 3090  
RUEHAD/USINT BAGHDAD 734  
RUQMBE/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT 5595  
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 2455  
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS 1663  
RUQMOD/AMEMBASSY DOHA 2580  
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM 509  
RUQMRA/AMEMBASSY JIDDA 6351  
RUDTC/AMEMBASSY LONDON 3514  
RUQMAM/AMEMBASSY MANAMA 3942  
RUQMMT/AMEMBASSY MUSCAT 2018  
RUQMYA/USLO RIYADH 372  
RUQMNS/AMEMBASSY SANA 1371  
RUFNPS/AMEMBASSY PARIS 2239  
RUQMRH/AMEMBASSY TEHRAN 4757  
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV 1177  
RUEHIA/USICA WASHDC  
RUSNAAA/USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GE  
BT

17 JUN 79 15 02Z

POL  
Chg  
RF  
Chro  
OR

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 5 KUWAIT 2921

USINCEUR FOR POLAD

E.O. 12065: GDS 6/17/85 (SUTHERLAND, PETER A.) OR-M  
TAGS: SOPN, PGOV, PEPR, PINR, PINS, XF, KU  
SUBJ: POLITICAL REASSESSMENT: ORIENTATION AND INFLUENCE OF THE  
MASS MEDIA

REFS: A) STATE 38873, B) KUWAIT 1443, C) KUWAIT 2807,  
D) KUWAIT 1471, E) KUWAIT 692, F) KUWAIT 1711, G) KUWAIT 1943

1. (C - ENTIRE TEXT).

2. SUMMARY. THE MASS MEDIA IN KUWAIT AS CONSTITUTED AT PRESENT IS NO POTENTIAL THREAT TO THE SECURITY AND STABILITY OF THE COUNTRY AND ITS GOVERNMENT EXCEPT PERHAPS UNINTENTIONALLY THROUGH INACCURATE REPORTING. THE BROADCAST MEDIA ARE ENTIRELY CONTROLLED BY THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION. ALL PRINTED PERIODICALS APART FROM GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS, ARE OWNED, MANAGED, AND EDITED BY LOYAL KUWAITI CITIZENS, AND ARE SUBJECT TO STRICT BUT POST-PUBLICATION CONTROL BY THE GOVERNMENT. ONE SEES A FAR BROADER RANGE OF POLITICAL SPECULATION AND COMMENTARY IN THE KUWAITI PRESS THAN IN THAT OF ALMOST EVERY OTHER ARAB COUNTRY, BUT IT DWELLS FAR MORE HEAVILY ON ARAB WORLD THAN ON KUWAITI

ISSUES. FOR THIS REASON KUWAITI PERIODICALS ARE READ AND QUOTED WIDELY IN THE AREA; BUT THE THREAT OF SUSPENSION OF PUBLICATION, AND, UNDER RECENT AMENDMENTS TO THE PRESS LAW, IMPRISONMENT OF OFFENDING EDITORS, EFFECTIVELY PREVENTS THE PRESS FROM PRINTING COMMENTARY WHICH MIGHT SERIOUSLY DAMAGE KUWAITI RELATIONS WITH NEIGHBORING STATES, OR BROADCAST DOUBTS ABOUT THE INTEGRITY OR WISDOM OF THE RULING FAMILY. THE PUBLIC HAS SHOWN LITTLE INTEREST IN PROTESTING GOVERNMENT CLAMPDOWNS ON THE PRESS WHEN THEY HAVE OCCURRED, AND THE GOVERNMENT, FOR ITS PART, HAS DEMONSTRATED A CONSIDERABLE DEGREE OF TOLERANCE. IT PERMITS USE OF THE DAILY PAPERS AS AN ESCAPE VALVE FOR POPULAR SENTIMENT, AS RECENTLY AMONG THE PALESTINIAN COMMUNITY IN REGARD TO ITS RESENTMENT OF EGYPT'S SIGNING THE PEACE TREATY WITH ISRAEL. THE GOVERNMENT ALSO FLOATS CONTENTIOUS TRIAL BALLONS IN THE PRESS, AS IN ITS RECENT STIMULATION OF DEBATE ABOUT RESTORING THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. THE KUWAITI PRESS IS MORE THAN READY TO INDULGE IN DEBATE ABOUT, OR APPEALS FOR, CHANGES IN THE GOVERNMENTAL SYSTEM IN THE COUNTRY, BUT ITS KUWAITI OWNERS AND EDITORS FOR THE MOST PART HAVE NO QUARREL WITH THE MAIN POLICIES OF THE GOVERNMENT AND THEY SHARE THE VERY WIDELY-HELD KUWAITI CONSENSUS THAT THE DEMONSTRATED SUCCESS OF THE PRESENT SYSTEM IN PROVIDING DOMESTIC PEACE AND PROSPERITY DESERVES CONTINUED SUPPORT. END SUMMARY.

3. THE MEDIA: KUWAITI OWNED, GOVERNMENT CONTROLLED: KUWAIT RADIO AND TELEVISION ARE STATE-OPERATED INSTITUTIONS WITH POLICIES INSEPARABLE FROM THOSE OF THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION WHICH IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE MEDIA IN KUWAIT. A STRICT PRESS LAW GOVERNS OPERATIONS OF THE PRINTED MEDIA, EXPRESSLY FORBIDDING THE PRESS TO ATTACK FOREIGN HEADS OF STATE OR TO PRINT MATERIAL PAID FOR BY FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS. BEYOND THESE PROSCRIPTIONS THERE EXISTS AN UNDERSTANDING THAT THE PRESS RISKS SUSPENSION OF PUBLICATION, AND, BY RECENT AMENDMENT OF THE PRESS LAW, JAIL FOR OFFENDING EDITORS, IF IT PRINTS MATERIAL DAMAGING TO THE SECURITY OF THE STATE. THE GOVERNMENT HAS SHOWN CONSIDERABLE RESTRAINT IN SANCTIONING INFRINGEMENTS OF THESE GUIDELINES; DURING LATE 1976 AND 1977 THERE WERE ONLY SCATTERED INSTANCES OF PAPERS SUSPENDED BRIEFLY. NO ONE HAS BEEN JAILED, BUT A COUPLE OF EXPATRIATE JOURNALISTS HAVE BEEN DEPORTED, MOST RECENTLY AWNI SADIQ, A PALESTINIAN EMPLOYED BY AL-WATAN. THE KUWAIT PUBLIC, FOR ITS PART, HAS SHOWN LITTLE INTEREST IN PROTESTING ACTIONS BY THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION TO ENFORCE PRESS DISCIPLINE.

BT

#2921

NNNNHHUY

18 JUN 79 17 02z

NNNNVV ESB027KWA927  
 RR RUQMER  
 DF RUQMKW #2921/2 1681445  
 ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
 R 171311Z JUN 79  
 FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT  
 TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3986  
 INFO RUQMBI/AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI 4749  
 RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN 3091  
 RUEHAD/USINT BAGHDAD 735  
 RUQMBE/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT 5596  
 RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 2456  
 RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS 1664  
 RUQMOD/AMEMBASSY DOHA 2581  
 RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM 512  
 RUQMRA/AMEMBASSY JIDDA 6352  
 RUDTC/AMEMBASSY LONDON 3515  
 RUQMAM/AMEMBASSY MANAMA 3943  
 RUQMMT/AMEMBASSY MUSCAT 2019  
 RUQMYA/USLO RIYADH 373  
 RUQMNS/AMEMBASSY SANA 1372  
 RUFNPS/AMEMBASSY PARIS 2240  
 RUQMRH/AMEMBASSY TEHRAN 4758  
 RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV 1178  
 RUEHIA/USICA WASHDC  
 RUSNAAA/USCINCEUR,VAIHINGEN GE  
 BT

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE 1976-258-344

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 15 KUWAIT 2921

4. THERE ARE GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS, INCLUDING THE INFLUENTIAL AL-ARABI WHICH HAPPENS TO BE EDITED BY A WELL-KNOWN EGYPTIAN, BUT THE PRIVATE KUWAITI PRESS IS ALMOST ENTIRELY OWNED AND EDITED BY KUWAITI CITIZENS. MUCH OF THE PROFESSIONAL STAFF OF THESE PERIODICALS IS EXPATRIATE ARAB -- PALESTINIAN, EGYPTIAN, SYRIAN OR LEBANESE --, AND PERIODICAL CONTENT OFTEN REFLECTS THE INTERESTS OF THEIR EXPATRIATE COMMUNITIES. IN THEORY, THOUGH NOT IN PRACTICE, THIS SITUATION COULD RESULT IN TWO SORTS OF DEVELOPMENTS: THE USE OF THE KUWAITI PRESS FOR THE STIMULATION OR CONTEST OF CONTROVERSIES BETWEEN COMPETING STATES OR FACTIONS WITHIN THE ARAB WORLD; OR THE AIRING OF GRIEVANCES NURTURED AMONG THE EXPATRIATE COMMUNITIES HERE AGAINST THE KUWAIT GOVERNMENT.

5. THE FORMER POSSIBILITY WAS QUITE EFFECTIVELY ADDRESSED IN AUGUST, 1976, COINCIDENT WITH SUSPENSION OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, WHEN THE GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCED STRICT PENALTIES FOR PRINTING OF MATERIAL PAID FOR BY OTHER STATES. VIOLENT INTER-ARAB EMOTIONS HAD ARISEN AT THAT TIME OVER THE CHAOTIC CIVIL WAR IN LEBANON, AND THEIR SPILLING

OVER INTO NATIONAL ASSEMBLY DEBATES AND INTO CONTROVERSIAL PRESS COMMENTARY SEEMED TO THREATEN TO INVOLVE KUWAIT AGAINST ITS WILL IN INTER-ARAB DISPUTES. WHILE NO ONE IS UNDER THE ILLUSION THAT LOCAL JOURNALISTS NOW NEVER ACCEPT GIFTS FROM OUTSIDERS, THE PARTISAN VIRULENCE OF THE PRESS IN MID-1976 HAS DISAPPEARED.

6. WITH RESPECT TO THE POSSIBILITY THAT EXPATRIATE COMMUNITY GRIEVANCES AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT MIGHT BE AIRED IN THE LOCAL PRESS, ONE SUSPECTS, SIMPLY, THAT SUCH ISSUES - REAL THOUGH THEY ARE - BOTH LACK ENOUGH HEAT TO GENERATE PRESSURE AND ALSO ARE OF LITTLE GENUINE CONCERN TO KUWAITI OWNERS AND EDITORS. ONE CAN ALWAYS AND EASILY GET AN EARFUL OF COMPLAINTS BY LOCAL PALESTINIANS THAT THEY ARE DISADVANTAGED BY KUWAITI LAWS OR PRACTICES, BUT SUCH COMMENTARY RARELY REACHED THE PRINTED PAGE.

7. PALESTINIAN PRESSURE - THE PRESS AS AN ESCAPE VALVE: PERHAPS IN PART AS COMPENSATION FOR THIS LACK OF OUTLET FOR THEIR COMPLAINTS, PALESTINIAN OR PRO-PALESTINIAN OPINION ON MIDDLE EAST DEVELOPMENTS RECEIVES VERY FREE REIN IN THE KUWAITI PRESS. RECENT EXTREME CRITICISM OF PRESIDENT SADAT, TOLERATED DESPITE THE GENERAL INJUNCTION ON ATTACKS AGAINST FOREIGN HEADS OF STATE, HAS BEEN PERMITTED, EXPRESSLY, AS A FORM OF ESCAPE VALVE -- A WAY FOR THE LARGE PALESTINIAN COMMUNITY TO BLOW OFF STEAM WITH MINIMUM DAMAGE DONE (REF B). AND, WITH RATHER STRICT IF VAGUE LIMITS PLACED ON INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING AND ON COMMENTARY CRITICAL OF LOCAL DEVELOPMENTS, THE PRESS DWELLS HEAVILY ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND ESPECIALLY ON MIDDLE EAST MATTERS. IN A SURVEY TAKEN A FEW MONTHS AGO 94 OUT OF 99 EDITORIALS IN KUWAITI ARABIC DAILIES PROVED TO BE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS ISSUES. OF 150 SPECIAL ARTICLES PUBLISHED DURING THE SAME PERIOD, ONLY 60 DEALT WITH DOMESTIC ISSUES. MOST "THINK PIECES" (EDITORIALS, COMMENTARIES AND ANALYSES) ARE WRITTEN BY KUWAITIS, NOT EXPATRIATES, AND IF THEY TEND TO TAKE A STRIDENTLY PRO-PALESTINIAN LINE, THAT IS ENTIRELY CONSONANT WITH OFFICIAL GOVERNMENT POLICY, AND WITH THE FELT INTERESTS OF KUWAITI OWNERS AND EDITORS IN SUSTAINING THE GOOD WILL OF THE PALESTINIAN COMMUNITY WITHIN AND OUTSIDE KUWAIT

BT  
#2921

18 JUN 79 02 03z

NNNNVV ESB008KWA928  
 RR RUQMR  
 DE RUQMW #2921/3 1631500  
 ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
 R 171311Z JUN 79  
 FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT  
 TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3887  
 INFO RUQMBI/AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI 4750  
 RUEHAM/AMFMBASSY AMMAN 3092  
 RUEHAD/USINT BAGHDAD 736  
 RUQMBE/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT 5597  
 RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 2457  
 RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS 1665  
 RUQMOD/AMEMBASSY DOHA 2582  
 RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM 511  
 RUQMRA/AMEMBASSY JIDDA 6353  
 RUDTC/AMEMBASSY LONDON 3516  
 RUQMAM/AMEMBASSY MANAMA 3944  
 RUQMMT/AMEMBASSY MUSCAT 2020  
 RUQMYA/USLO RIYADH 374  
 RUQMNS/AMEMBASSY SANA 1373  
 RUFNPS/AMEMBASSY PARIS 2241  
 RUQMRH/AMEMBASSY TEHRAN 4759  
 RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV 1179  
 RUEHIA/USICA WASHDC  
 RUSNAAA/USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GE

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE 1978-258-344

BT  
C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 3 OF 5 KUWAIT 29210

ALTHOUGH MANY KUWAITIS PRIVATELY RESENT THE STRONG INFLUENCE OF THE PALESTINIANS, PUBLICITY ACCORDED THE PALESTINIAN CAUSE IS NON-CONTROVERSIAL AMONG THEM.

8. OTHER FOREIGN AFFAIRS ISSUES SPRING UP FROM TIME TO TIME TO TIE TO TEST THE GOVERNMENT'S PRESS POLICY. A RECENT EXAMPLE IS THE OUTBREAK OF IRANIAN ARAB DEMONSTRATIONS IN KHUZISTAN, REPORTEDLY IN SUPPORT OF APPEALS FOR AUTONOMY. THE IRANIAN GOVERNMENT TOOK STRONG OFFENSE AT REPORTING AND COMMENTARY IN THE KUWAITI PRESS WHICH USED THE TERM "ARABISTAN" IN LIEU OF THE IRANIAN-APPROVED "KHUZISTAN", AND THE KUWAITI GOVERNMENT QUICKLY INSTRUCTED THE LOCAL PRESS TO CHANGE ITS TERMINOLOGY (REF C). THERE HAVE BEEN OTHER INSTANCES IN WHICH INTER-ARAB DISPUTES HAVE AVOIDED NOTICE ALTOGETHER IN THE LOCAL PRESS, PRESUMABLY AS A RESULT OF "GUIDANCE" FROM THE INFORMATION MINISTRY, ALWAYS ALERT TO AVOID ACCUSATION THAT THE KUWAITI PRESS HAS TAKEN A PARTISAN POSITION.

9. DOMESTIC AFFAIRS - THE GOSSIP SOCIETY:  
 FROM THE STANDPOINT OF ITS POTENTIAL WITH RESPECT TO STABILITY

AND SECURITY OF THE STATE, THE PRACTICE OF THE KUWAITI PRESS REGARDING DOMESTIC POLITICS IS PERHAPS MOST RELEVANT. FIRST OF ALL, KUWAITIS DO NOT DEPEND ON THE PRESS FOR THEIR LOCAL NEWS. THEIRS IS A "GOSSIP SOCIETY", IN WHICH WORD OF MOUTH CARRIES SIGNIFICANT NEWS THROUGHOUT THE COMMUNITY ALMOST FASTER THAN IT COULD BE BROADCAST. IN THEIR OFFICES OR "DIWANIYYAS" KUWAITIS TALK VERY FREELY, "NOT FOR PUBLICATION", ABOUT THE RULLING FAMILY, CORRUPTION IN HIGH PLACES, OR PROPOSALS FOR REPRESENTATIVE INSTITUTIONS.

R U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE 1975-258-344

10. AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND THE NEWSPAPERS NEED NOT BE EXPLICIT IN DISCUSSING CONTROVERSIAL DOMESTIC MATTERS: ALLUSIONS WILL SUFFICE. THERE HAVE BEEN EXTENSIVE CAMPAIGNS WAGED IN THE PRESS AGAINST WRONGDOING, ONE OF THE LATEST BEING A SERIES OF STORIES AND COMMENTARIES, MOSTLY WRITTEN ALLEGORICALLY AND WITHOUT NAMING NAMES, WHICH EMPHASIZED LOCAL GOSSIP CONCERNING THE PECULATIONS OF A MINISTER, WHO, COINCIDENTALLY OR NOT, RESIGNED HIS OFFICE WHEN THE CAMPAIGN HAD BEEN RUNNING SOME WEEKS (REF D). ONE IS TEMPTED TO CITE THE CASE AS PROOF OF THE POWER OF THE PRESS. GIVEN THE CLOSELY-KNIT NATURE OF KUWAITI ESTABLISHMENT SOCIETY, HOWEVER, THERE IS ALWAYS THE QUESTION WHETHER PRESS CAMPAIGNS OF THIS NATURE ARE THE RESULT OF STRONGLY HELD MORAL OR POLITICAL CONVICTIONS, OR ONLY SPRING FROM INTER-FAMILY FEUDS. IF THE CAMPAIGN WERE TO BE LAUNCHED AGAINST A TRUE FAVORITE OF THE AMIR OR ONE OF HIS CLOSE FAMILY, THE ASSUMPTION IS THAT IT WOULD BE PROMPTLY SQUELCHED. IF AN ATTACK ON SOMEONE IS ALLOWED TO PERSIST, IT MUST BE THAT THE AMIR THINKS EITHER THAT THE INDIVIDUAL CONCERNED DESERVES ATTACK, OR THAT HE THINKS SUFFICIENTLY LITTLE OF THE INDIVIDUAL AS TO SACRIFICE HIM IN THE NAME OF FREEDOM OF THE KUWAITI PRESS. THE RULING CIRCLES IN KUWAIT ARE SENSITIVE TO ATTACK, IN JOURNALS WHICH WILL BE READ THROUGHOUT THE EASTERN ARAB WORLD, BUT THEY ARE ALSO PROUD OF THE KUWAITI PRESS AND ITS REPUTATION AS ONE OF THE MORE FREE-SWINGING MEDIA IN THE AREA.

BT

#2921

18 JUN 79 02 03z

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE 1978-359-344

NNNNVV ESB010KWA929  
RR RUQMR  
DE RUQMKW #2921/4 1681530  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
R 171311Z JUN 79  
FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3988  
INFO RUQMBI/AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI 4751  
RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN 3093  
RUEHAD/USINT BAGHDAD 737  
RUQMBE/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT 5598  
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 2458  
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS 1666  
RUQMOD/AMEMBASSY DOHA 2583  
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM 512  
RUQMRA/AMEMBASSY JIDDA 6354  
RUDTC/AMEMBASSY LONDON 3517  
RUQMAM/AMEMBASSY MANAMA 3945  
RUQMMT/AMEMBASSY MUSCAT 2021  
RUQMYA/USLO RIYADH 375  
RUQMNS/AMEMBASSY SANA 1374  
RUFNPS/AMEMBASSY PARIS 2242  
RUQMR/AMEMBASSY TEHRAN 4760  
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV 1180  
RUEHIA/USICA WASHDC  
PUSNAAA/USCINCEUR VAHINGEN GE  
BT

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 4 OF 5 KUWAIT 2921

11. DEMOCRACY DEBATED:  
THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, SUSPENDED IN AUGUST, 1976 WITH THE PROMISE THAT REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT WOULD BE RESTORED WITHIN FOUR YEARS, HAS BEEN A HOT TOPIC RECENTLY. THE DISSOLUTION OF THE ASSEMBLY WAS THE "BIGGEST THING" IN KUWAITI POLITICAL HISTORY IN A LONG TIME. THERE WERE KNEE-JERK NEGATIVE REACTIONS, AND A GREAT MANY SIGHS OF RELIEF AS THE DEMOGOQUERY STOPPED FLOWING FROM THE PEOPLE'S CHOSEN REPRESENTATIVES. THEN, AYATOLLAH KHOMEINI'S REVOLUTION IN IRAN REACHED A CLIMAX JUST ABOUT THE TIME THAT THE ADVISORS TO THE CROWN PRINCE/PRIME MINISTER GOT TO HIM WITH ADVICE THAT IT WAS TIME TO START THINKING OF HOW TO IMPLEMENT THE PROMIS OF RESTORATION OF REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT BY AUGUST, 1980. ONE OF THE APPARENT LESSONS OF THE KHOMEINI REVOLUTON WATHAT STABLE GOVERNMENTS HAVE TRULY REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLIES. SEEKING TO APPEAR OPEN AT A TIME WHEN AUTOCRATIC REGIMES WERE UNDER STRESS, AND SEEKING TO ASSURE KUWAITIS THAT ITS WORD WAS GOOD, THE GOVERNMENT OF KUWAIT LET IT BE KNOWN THAT THE DAILY PRESS SHOULD DEBATE THE ISSUES OF WHAT SORT OF ASSEMBLY, WHAT SORT OF ELECTIONS, AND IN GENERAL, WHAT SORT OF DEMOCRACY KUWAIT SHOULD HAVE.

12. THE RESULT WAS A FLOWERING OF PUBLISHED KUWAITI OPINION. VARYING AS TO EDITORIAL POLICY, THE KUWAITI DAILIES RAN PUBLIC OPINION POLLS, COMMENTARY AND GUEST ARTICLES ABOUT THE PROPER KIND OF DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTION THE COUNTRY SHOULD HAVE (REF E). IT WAS A PERFECT OPPORTUNITY FOR THE REGIME TO SHOW ITS INTEREST IN A FREE PRESS AND IN PUBLIC DEBATE ABOUT DEMOCRACY, AND ALL CONCERNED ACQUITTED THEMSELVES "WELL"; NOT A SINGLE ARTICLE SUGGESTED THAT AMIRS ARE OUT OF DATE, BUT THERE WERE PLENTY OF ARTICLES WHICH CRITICIZED THE PRESENT SYSTEM FOR NOT TRUSTING TO THE "ONE MAN -- ONE VOTE" THEORY TO SUSTAIN THE REGIME IN POWER. THESE ARE THOSE WHO SAY THE GOVERNMENT WAS SHREWD TO LIFT THE LID ON CRITICISM THIS WAY: THE RESULT WAS NOT A FLOOD OF HOSTILE, ANTI-REGIME OPINION, BUT, IN FACT, A RATHER BALANCED MIX OF COMMENTARY, LEADING ONE TO CONCLUDE THAT KUWAITIS ARE OF VERY MIXED MINDS AS TO WHETHER ALL KUWAITIS SHOULD HAVE THE VOTE AND WHETHER THE LEGISLATURE SHOULD DOMINATE GOVERNMENT.

13. SELF-CENSORSHIP PROTECTS THE KUWAITI IMAGE ABROAD: THE PRESS GENERALLY KNOWS WITHOUT BEING TOLD WHEN TO AVOID REPORTING A GIVEN SUBJECT, AND MORE OUTSPOKEN KUWAITIS CITE THIS FACT AS PROOF OF THE ABSENCE OF FREEDOM IN KUWAIT. THUS ONE CANNOT FIND STORIES DIRECTLY INSULTING TO THE AMIR OR HIS RELATIVES, AND, FOR EXAMPLE, THERE WAS NO NEWSPAPER SPACE GIVEN TO THE RECENT INCIDENT WHEN YOUNG ARMY RECRUITS STAGED PROTESTS AGAINST INADEQUATE LIVING CONDITIONS AND THE ABSENCE AMONG THEM OF SONS OF THE WEALTHY (REF F). BUT THIS RESTRAINT, OR LACK OF FREEDOM, HAS ITS IMPACT OUTSIDE, NOT INSIDE KUWAIT: THE GOSSIP MILLS HERE CARRY EVERY SCRAP OF NEWS ABOUT THE RULING FAMILY, AND THERE CAN BE FEW KUWAITIS WHO DID NOT LEARN PROMPTLY ABOUT THE SNAFUS ENCOUNTERED IN THE ARMY'S FIRST ATTEMPTS TO IMPLEMENT CONSCRIPTION. THE LACK OF COVERAGE FROM SEIZING ON THE STORY AND REPRODUCING IT TO KUWAIT'S DISCREDIT AMONG FOREIGNERS.

BT

#2921



18 JUN 79 02 03z

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 1976-235-344

NNNNVV ESB011AAA824  
RR RUQMRH  
DE RUQMKW #2921/5 1681540  
ZNY CCCCC ZZR  
R 171311Z JUN 79  
FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT  
TO RUEHC/SEVSTATE WASHDC 3889  
INFO RUQMBI/AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI 4752  
RUEFAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN 3094  
RUEHAD/USINT BAGHDAD 738  
RUQMBE/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT 5599  
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 2459  
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS 1667  
RUQMOD/AMEMBASSY DOHA 2584  
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM 513  
RUQMRA/AMEMBASSY JIDDA 6355  
RUDTC/AMEMBASSY LONDON 3518  
RUQMAM/AMEMBASSY MANAMA 3946  
RUQMMT/AMEMBASSY MUWCAT 2022  
RUQMYA/USLO RIYADH 376  
RUQMNS/AMEMBASSY SANA 1375  
RUFNPS/AMEMBASSY PARIS 2243  
RUQMRR/AMEMBASSY TEHRAN 4761  
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV 1181  
RUEHIA/USICA WASHDC  
RUSNAAA/USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GE  
BT

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 5 OF 5 KUWAIT 2921

14. SELF-CENSORSHIP CAN ALSO PRODUCE A MISLEADING REPORT. A JOURNALIST CAN GET AWAY WITH PUBLISHING A STORY WHICH, IF HE BROUGHT IT TO THE ATTENTION OF GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS PRIOR TO PUBLICATION, WOULD NEVER SEE THE LIGHT OF DAY. FOR THIS REASON JOURNALISTS HERE GO AHEAD WITH SINGLE-SOURCE STORIES WITHOUT CHECKING THEM AGAINST SECOND AND THIRD SOURCES. THE RESULT CAN BE CONFUSION. THE ERROR CAN BE MULTIPLIED AND THE CONFUSION COMPOUNDED, WHEN THE STORY IS REPRINTED ABROAD. SINCE ARAB LEADERS DO ACT ON WHAT THEY LEARN FROM THE NEWSPAPERS, THE RESULT CAN BE UNINTENDED, AS WHEN EGYPT APPARENTLY BROKE RELATIONS WITH KUWAIT IN ADVANCE OF KUWAIT'S FORMAL ANNOUNCEMENT, AS A RESULT OF PREMATURE AND INACCURATE MEDIA REPORTING (REF G.)

15. CONCLUSION: AS KUWAIT GROWS, AND ITS POPULATION IS ONE OF THE FASTEST GROWING IN THE WORLD, THE CLOSELY KNIT, GOSSIPY NATURE OF LIFE HERE IS CHANGING. THERE MAY COME A TIME WHEN WORD-OF-MOUTH DOES NOT SERVE AS A SATISFACTORY SUBSTITUTE FOR AMPLE PRESS COVERAGE, AND WHEN, ACCORDINGLY, KUWAITIS WILL TAKE A STRONGER INTEREST THAN THEY DO NOW IN FREEDOM OF THE PRESS AS AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT IN COMMUNITY LIFE. BUT THAT TIME

IS NOT YET HERE. THE OWNERS AND EDITORS OF THE MEDIA IN KUWAIT  
ARE JUST AS INTERESTED AS THE RULING FAMILY IN PROTECTING  
KUWAIT FROM HARMFUL PUBLICITY. THE PUBLIC WILL NOT PROTEST  
IF THE GOVERNMENT PUNISHES A NEWSPAPER. OTHER THAN THE RARE  
POSSIBILITY OF SERIOUS UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES ARISING FROM AN  
INACCURATE PRESS REPORT, IT IS SAFE TO SAY THAT, IF THERE IS NOW  
A THREAT TO THE SECURITY AND STABILITY OF KUWAIT, THAT THREAT  
DOES NOT ARISE FROM OR DRAW SUPPORT FROM THE MASS MEDIA.

MAESTRONE

BT

#2921

U S GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 1978-258-344