

Middle East Report by Thierry Lalevée

The threat in Mecca

Among this year's pilgrims are over a hundred thousand Iranians said to be trained street-fighters.

Not only because of the Lebanese crisis, and an expected renewal of the fighting between Iran and Iraq, has the Middle East entered a most dramatic period. On September 5th began the yearly period of the Hajj, or pilgrimage to the holy shrines of Mecca, for millions of Muslim believers throughout the world—and this year again the Hajj means trouble for Saudi Arabia.

This has been the case ever since a small group of fundamentalists seized the Mecca Holy Mosque in November 1979, holding it until it was stormed by the Saudi army and French GIGN special police a few days later.

No one knows yet what will happen this year, but it is feared that events in Lebanon or the Gulf may become the catalyst for an explosion during the Hajj. The Saudis have again taken enormous security precautions. A special team of riot-control specialists from France has arrived, equipped with helicopters. The Saudis hope to be able to check each one of the pilgrims before they are allowed to enter the Holy Mosque.

Openly coming for a confrontation are no less than 110,000 Iranian pilgrims, accompanied by 3,000 Arab pilgrims sponsored by Teheran. According to *Times* writer Amir Taheri, these are divided in groups of 100 each, led by a mullah and a revolutionary guard. Each of the "pilgrims" is said to be an expert in street-warfare.

Saudi security nonetheless expects to be able to control the situation. Specialists say that this will be

possible if there is no complicity with the Iranians from inside the Saudi forces. In 1979 the Saudi national guard led by King Fahd's rival Prince Abdullah, was more than sympathetic toward the Mecca insurgents.

Islamic fundamentalist groups of all kinds have been reactivated throughout the Middle East. In recent weeks, both in Tunisia and in Egypt numerous cells of the little-known Al Tahrir al Islamiyya (Islamic liberation party) were discovered. As Tunisian army officers were brought to trial for plotting an Islamic military coup, it was revealed that Al Tahrir coordinated operations throughout the region from its main base in Teheran—and that one of its international headquarters was in Munich, West Germany.

Investigations by *EIR* pointed at the Islamic center there. One of the center's leaders is Fatima Hereen Sarka, the converted daughter of SS General Wolff, and a close associate of François Genoud in the recent "Hitler diaries" scandal. Al Tahrir's leader there was identified as one Salah Eid, based in West Berlin and the leader of a cell of Sufi mystics.

The Egyptian authorities later arrested some 20 members of yet another previously unknown group, which officials say for the first time included hardcore communists and muslim brothers in the same organization.

There has been another recent confirmation of the new Soviet Islamic strategy in the region: Nureddin Kianouri, the First Secretary of the

Iranian Communist Party (Tudeh) until his jailing by Khomeini four months ago, emerged from imprisonment to give a lengthy statement to Teheran Domestic Television Service that he had been born again as a Muslim fundamentalist. "What I have learned is that Marxism failed to take root and grow in Iranian soil because the Iranian people are deeply committed to the Shi'ite religion as pursued by Ayatollah Khomeini and his adherents," said Kianouri. "This religion, and system of values, provides an all-encompassing parameter that provides all the answers to all the questions arising among Iranian society in general. . . . This also means that Marxism has nothing better to offer them."

Meanwhile the celebration of the "Libyan revolution" was again the occasion for radical groups of all kinds to meet—especially the Palestinian rebels opposed to Yasser Arafat. On Sept. 6 they announced the creation of a "committee to monitor Arafat's activities," while Syria was relaunching its military drive against Fatah troops in Lebanon.

The Libyan festivities also saw the cementing of a relationship between the Armenian ASALA terrorists of Edward Hagopian, who is now permanently based in Libya, and the Abu Nidal group. (Abu Nidal is reportedly in East Germany for heart treatment.) Hagopian is now calling his members *mojahed* (holy fighters) and advocating a "holy war" against Turkey. He is working out of the Sebha military base in the south, whose commander, Colonel Messaoud, is also busy training Corsicans, Basques, and Sardinian separatists.

With Teheran as regional headquarters for the fundamentalists, and Tripoli and Damascus for the "political" terrorists, Moscow is ready to give the green light for an all out assault in the Middle East and in Europe.