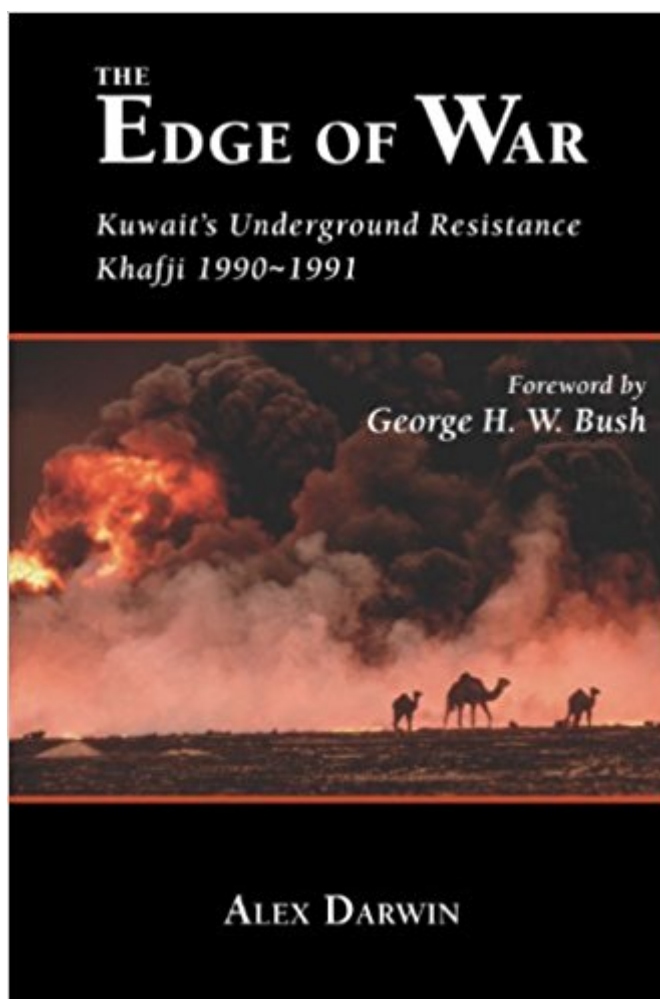




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The Edge Of War: Kuwaiti's Underground Resistance, Khafji 1990-1991



Synopsis

Smuggling, secret identities, and espionage: the true story of Kuwait's resistance
The Edge of War: Kuwait's Underground Resistance (Khafji 1990~1991) tells the little-known story of the brave men and women who joined the resistance and fought against the overwhelming might of the Iraqi military. Often relying on savvy rather than strength, Kuwait's resistance made a measurable difference in the battle for liberation, and this is their story.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Wonderful . . . keeps alive the selfless heroism of those Kuwaitis who refused to cower in the face of Saddam's inhumanity; and whose courage and love of country helped preserve Kuwaiti sovereignty during its hour of maximum peril." — Former President George H. W. Bush, Sr.

Alex Darwin is the literary pen name of a veteran British reporter who, as a foreign correspondent for several Fleet Street newspapers, covered many events that changed history in the Middle East and Africa over the past four decades. He reported on the Iraqi Ba'athist campaign against the Kurds in the 1970s, covered the 1979 Iranian revolution and the subsequent Iraq-Iran war, alternating between the two sides.

The Edge of War: Kuwait's Underground Resistance, Khafji 1990~1991, was an enlightening read, written by a team of area specialists, headed by a Middle East journalist with extensive regional experience. This book is about what some call

“The First Gulf War” (1990-1991). This next year (2016) will mark the 25th Anniversary of the War and Kuwait’s Liberation. I was particularly interested because this war was also part of my past. I was a young diplomat at the time who assisted the US Gulf War Task Force in the region. The book is solidly researched and well written. It’s not given to overstatement, which is refreshing. Most importantly it offers personal insight into little known, yet heroic, sacrifices made by many unsung heroes—mostly Kuwaitis who determined that they, along with President Bush (41), “would not let this injustice stand.” Though I’m not typically emotional, several personal accounts touched me deeply. I remember at the time the operation to counterfeit Iraq Dinars, and how quickly such was accomplished in the initial chaos brought on by the invasion. I remember interviewing a number of refugees fleeing Kuwait (and transiting Iraq, as required later by the Iraqis) and then to the Jordanian border and freedom. I remember the tens of thousands of helpless refugees and the brutality and inhumanity. I remember the Iraqi retaliation against the helpless, led by the Iraqi governor of “the 19th Province” General Ali Hassan (“Chemical Ali”) al-Majid. I remember being in awe of those Kuwaitis and others willing to stay behind and resist. I still recall wondering, when seeing the barbaric nature of the Iraqi Republican Guard particularly, why anyone could think they might somehow appease Saddam and his henchmen. I know that Kuwait, in those early days, wondered as well if the world would stand behind them in their hour of need. Fortunately they did, though that was not a given, not at the time. I loved the cultural and historical insights the book offered. I’m sorry to say but I marked up my copy with highlighting, and lots of personal comments scratched into the margins. I couldn’t help myself! I was especially impressed with the anecdotes that showed powerful, often emotional, examples of the closeness and unity of those who stayed behind, refusing to give in to tyranny. These personal, cultural, even emotional examples endear the book to the reader. Well done. It also showed how a spirit of victory is born, often in the darkest hour, a direct result of the passion and dedication of so many (for example, the “Great Takbiir,” when “Allahu Akbar” was shouted with one purpose from the rooftops of houses and apartment buildings in Kuwait City, bringing fear to the hearts of Saddam’s occupiers. Another example: the rescue of the nation’s vital statistics and data from the Ministry of Interior, and the National Data Center, an especially important success by the Kuwaiti Resistance, considering that Saddam had schemed to erase any record of the Kuwaiti people from the face of the earth and replace them with Iraqis. Of course, there

were special heroes, such as the late Sheikh Ali Sabah, those who, with a cool head and courageous heart, focused Kuwaiti determination to create the necessary organization of liberation. Every great revolution, or resistance to evil, produces such men and women, including Dr. Farida al-Habib, Salwa Hussein, and of course, Asrar al-Qabandi. Though she was tortured and murdered by Saddam's Mukhabarat (secret police) for her patriotism, she became a powerful symbol of a free Kuwait – a woman of extraordinary courage, offering her life that a nation might live. The book explained how the Movement required funding, and how that was creatively accomplished. This is a critical element, often overlooked by historians. Ali Sabah, and others, had the ability to convince men and women to sacrifice what they could, no matter how little. As well, these patriots and resisters became the prime source of inside intelligence, more effectively focusing the Coalition to accomplish victory with minimal death and destruction, especially of those civilians who might be in the way of attacking forces. In essence, the Resistance did help shorten the war and make it less costly in lives and property. I especially enjoyed hearing about the Battle of Khafji (probably the largest single engagement), the Battle of the Bridges at Jahra, as well as the Qurain Battle, which cost the lives of 12 brave young Kuwaiti fighters, and the wounding of others. And of course, the initial success of the Kuwait Air Force and missile batteries in bringing down Iraqi attack helicopters, as well as jet fighters, all worthy sources of pride today to Kuwaitis everywhere. Perhaps the most important aspect of the book, for me, was the contrasts in humanity – between Saddam Hussein and the Kuwaiti Amir Jaber al-Sabah, between Tariq Aziz and President Bush, between “Chemical Ali” and Sheikh Ali Sabah. To feel the passion displayed by Kuwait's Sheikh Saad Abdullah (“Abu Tahriir” – The Father of Liberation) – amazing the contrast between these leaders, their styles, their personal strengths, and their wisdom. Absolutely glaring. And finally to see the mercy offered to those Iraqi occupiers by many Kuwaitis after the liberation, and Kuwait's concern for the displaced and abused. The several international media accounts from the period were especially enlightening, both in the Arab press and elsewhere. That was a great idea to include those accounts because it transported the reader back, immersed in the period when it was not at all certain how this would end. Finally, I was impressed with President George H.W. Bush's touching response to the official, yet personal, gift of a Kuwaiti door with the names of those Americans who lost their lives in Kuwait's liberation etched into the wood panel. Kuwait's Ambassador, the late Sa'ud Nasser al-Sabah, explained that when a person gives you the key to his house you are a trusted friend, but

when he gives you his door, he gives you all he can give in honor and trust. Such cultural insights are priceless. The perfect ending to a perfect book

•Rick Robison

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