

Russian Proposal to Iran on Nuclear Reprocessing Is Workable

by Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Since the following reports were written, new developments around the accelerated attacks on Syria must be taken into account in assessing the implications of situation described by Muriel Mirak-Weissbach. The shattering calamities hitting the U.S. Bush-Cheney Administration, have brought the role of the United Kingdom's Blair government more prominently into focus. Shades of Sykes-Picot, the British Foreign Office, flanked by France, have assumed a controlling role in the regional developments of the Southwest Asia region.

Under these shifts in the overall strategic situation, we must take into account the core-controversy which erupted within Europe as a whole, as Britain's Thatcher and France's Mitterrand moved in 1990 to attempt to crush Germany, leading into the so-called Maastricht agreements and the present crushing of the economy of Germany under the Euro single-currency system. The recent trend toward increasing Russian cooperation with Germany, around natural-gas marketing, and the weakening of the U.S.A. influence globally by the growing disgrace of the Bush-Cheney government, see London now working to usurp control over Southwest Asia and related developments, more than slightly away from the U.S. Cheney Administration, bringing old patterns of conflicts left over from early Twentieth-Century Europe into the fore again.

Thus, as we go to press, these new trends which have surfaced during recent days must be taken into account, together with the implications of Ariel Sharon's misfortunes, in assessing the implications of what author Mirak-Weissbach reports.

—Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr.

Although 2006 was happily rung in as the “Year of Impeachment,” the chief candidate for expulsion from office, Vice President Dick Cheney, may try to make it a year of new wars. As Lyndon LaRouche cautioned, an extremely dangerous situation is being created in the Persian Gulf region, as Cheney and his cabal escalate their longstanding plans for an attack against Iran, as codified in the 1996 “Clean Break” doctrine for war, destabilization, and regime change in the region.

The mid-December trip by CIA Director Porter Goss to Ankara and Kiev, involved discussions about planned U.S. air assaults on Iranian nuclear sites. Goss had followed on the

heels of FBI Director Robert Mueller and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. Most importantly, Cheney himself made a “surprise” trip to Afghanistan and Iraq, but had to cancel visits to Saudi Arabia and Egypt, to fly back to Washington, D.C. to cast tie-breaking votes in the Senate. Immediately, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld flew to the region, to pick up where Cheney had left off. Although precious little was published about the content of his discussions, regional sources told *EIR* that the top agenda item was Iran. In Kuwait, government circles have said in private, that they have been informed of a U.S. commitment to hit Iran, as “inevitable and imminent.” German political sources have confided that they have been transmitted a similar message.

The press drumbeat for an attack has also intensified. Among the daily barrage of stories, the most outspoken include a piece in the *Guardian* on Jan. 4, reporting on a new dossier which claims Iran is developing nuclear weapons. A 55-page report, dated July 1, 2005, and drawing on material from British, German, Belgian, and French intelligence agencies, says scientists from Iran have been shopping in Europe for equipment for nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles. The report has been used to brief governments and industries, warning them to be cautious regarding exports of sensitive equipment.

The neo-con *Washington Times* ran an editorial the same day, calling for a strike against Iran, before it develops a nuclear weapons capability, and outlined options for an Israeli or U.S. attack. Again, the same day, Prof. Raymond Tanter, a former member of President Reagan's National Security Council, told UPI editor Claude Salhani that, since military action against Tehran would not stop Iran from pursuing its nuclear weapons program, “regime change from within” should be pursued. “In order to achieve that, you need to empower and support regime change by supporting Iranian exiles and dissidents operating inside the country,” Tanter said. The professor, who is adjunct scholar at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy and co-chair of the Iran Policy Committee, a group lobbying for regime change, said that the Iran situation is now a “race of three clocks.” The first clock is the negotiations carried out with Iran by the Europeans; the second clock is Iran's efforts to develop the bomb; the third clock is regime change—but this clock has been stymied by

the Administration not recognizing Iranian exiles as freedom fighters, rather than terrorists.

These editorial threats and the *Guardian* dossier leak, came just as Tehran was announcing that it would resume its research on nuclear fuel, “in accordance with Iran’s safeguards agreement,” as it stated in a letter to the International Atomic Energy Agency. It asked the IAEA to “take necessary and timely preparation,” presumably regarding surveillance. State Department spokesman Sean McCormack warned Iran against taking such a step, saying “any further enrichment-related steps” taken would lead the “international community” to consider further measures against Iran.

A Way Out

The Iranian nuclear program should be no cause for alarm: The country has signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), as well as an additional protocol accepting far-reaching inspections, and is a member of the IAEA. The entire political establishment in Iran is committed to the nuclear program, including mastery of the complete fuel cycle technology. This is what the neo-con lobby has seized upon, to argue that Iran could thereby develop weapons-grade uranium. That there is a faction within Iran which would desire such a capability, is not to be ruled out. But, given the current internal factionalization, there is no reason to call out the cavalry and mount an assault.

There *is* a rational way out, and it is officially on the table. This is the proposal to Iran by the Russian government, for joint uranium enrichment facilities on Russian territory. This would provide Iran the access to the technology and know-how, as well as nuclear fuel deliveries, while establishing guarantees to the “international community” that no weapons applications were in the offing.

LaRouche characterized the Russian proposal as a “workable plan,” which would constitute an acceptable interim remedy to the confrontation that Cheney et al. have been trying to orchestrate. Such an interim remedy would be important, given Cheney’s desire to blow up the region, and, LaRouche said, it is crucial to concentrate on the Russian role in this regard. There are, he added, people in Washington who want to destroy Russia, and who will try to oppose the plan on those grounds.

The Russian offer, as detailed by *Tehran Times* on Dec. 31, was officially presented to the Iranian Embassy in Moscow, and Javad Vaeedi, deputy of the Supreme National Security Council, stated: “Iran takes seriously new proposals and ideas aimed at finding a peaceful solution to its nuclear program, and can review them.”

The *Tehran Times* piece considered various factors in the proposal. First, that Iran has pursued a three-pronged strategy over the past years, on its nuclear program: cooperating with the IAEA, respecting the NPT, and refusing to “renounce its sovereignty and its international right to the peaceful use of



UN Photo

The Fly in the Ointment: Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has fed into the neo-cons’ war drive, with his insanely provocative remarks against Israel. Here, he is addressing the UN General Assembly on Sept. 17, 2005. During the speech, he later claimed, world leaders were mesmerized as a halo of light enveloped him.

nuclear energy.” The European Union proposal of Aug. 5, it said, was a violation of international law.

Now, the paper continued, “although the plan ‘to establish a Russian-Iranian uranium enrichment facility on Russian soil’ is not quite logical and should have at least stated ‘on both Iranian and Russian territories,’ it seems that, from the viewpoint of Iran, this ‘unclear proposal on paper,’ could turn into a ‘viable agreement’ that would satisfy both sides.” Iran sees a possible agreement, “if there is a way to guarantee that neither side will divert activities towards a nuclear weapons program and [both] will remain committed to the NPT and if Iran’s obvious right to develop its indigenous nuclear technology for peaceful purposes . . . is recognized.”

The editorial listed the positive aspects of Russia’s proposal: Russia has constructed Iran’s nuclear plant at Bushehr, whereas France and Germany reneged; Russia acknowledges Iran’s right to the technology; Russia is not acting politically on the matter and is the only UN Security Council member Iran can trust.

Finally, the paper stated that if Russia delivers on this, it can enhance its international position. It must honor its agreements, i.e., start up Bushehr; the proposal should “guarantee nuclear development and research, technology transfer, and peaceful cooperation in a greatly expanded framework.” Decisive in the proposal is the “level of Iran’s participation and . . . Iran’s share of technical, financial, and proprietary aspects in the proposal.” Russia should not “mix up” its nuclear talks with the Iran/IAEA relations.

The Iranians have not yet said yes or no. On Jan. 2, Ali Larijani, head of the Supreme National Security Council told the news agency IRIB that Iran “welcomes all projects and proposals on nuclear cooperation from other states and is ready to conduct joint studies in detail.” He added, however, that “Iranians will rely on their own national resources and potential to materialize their goals in the nuclear field,” implying Iran would insist on the right also to enrich uranium on its own territory. Contrary to news reports interpreting this as a refusal, Iranian sources confirmed to *EIR* that the two sides were working on changes in the proposal, to reach agreement. Iran demands *acknowledgement* of its right to the technology. These sources cited statements by Javad Vaeedi, the head of the Iranian nuclear negotiating team, who said: “Iran can study the economic, technical, and scientific aspects of Moscow’s new proposal, according to which Russia would supply the nuclear fuel required by the Bushehr nuclear power plant for an entire year and Iran would transfer the nuclear fuel waste to Russia.” Speaking to the Iranian Students News Agency (ISNA), he said: “Obviously, the extent of Iran’s participation in the project is a serious factor.”

On Jan. 7, a Russian delegation was scheduled to visit Iran, to officially present the proposal to the government. The head of the Russian atomic energy agency (Rosatom), Sergei Kirienko, will visit Iran in February. He will “visit the reactor at Bushehr . . . and will also hold talks with the directors of the Iranian nuclear program,” said a spokesman for Rosatom. The reactor is to start functioning in 2006.

The Fly in the Ointment

A workable solution exists, but will it be seized upon?

Iran’s new President, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, has adopted a radical stance against “the West,” and has taken to spewing anti-Israeli rhetoric, which has provoked an international backlash, further fuelling the neo-con drive for confrontation. Ahmadinejad first issued statements on Oct. 26, 2005, in an interview to *al-Alam* during the summit of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) in Mecca, to the effect that, if Jews had been annihilated in Europe, by the Germans and Austrians, then those two countries should make available “two or any number of [their] provinces to the Zionist regime so they can create a country there.” Israel, he said, should be removed from the map. Further speeches reiterated the theme, calling into question the veracity of the Holocaust, and denying Israel the right to exist.

LaRouche warned that such provocative statements would almost insure that any U.S. air attack on Iran would prompt Iranian retaliatory strikes against Israel, engulfing the entire region in a potential nuclear-edged confrontation.

Why is the Iranian President acting in such a manner as to appear to be falling into a trap laid by the neo-cons who seek war? Not only abroad, but in Iran itself, political figures are posing this question.

Ahmadinejad was elected with a large mandate, in a run-



A gas centrifuge uranium enrichment plant at Natanz, Iran. Iran justifiably insists upon its right to the full nuclear fuel cycle. Will the government be open to the Russian offer of cooperation?

off election against former President Hashemi Rafsanjani, on the basis of his campaign pledges to end corruption, and, especially, to improve the economic and social status of the population, especially the large, unemployed youth population. His credibility rested on his experience as Tehran mayor, during which he promoted social housing and road construction.

Once in office, he enjoyed the enviable position of a head of government, with all leading institutions—the Majlis (parliament), Guardians Council, and Judiciary—dominated by his conservative allies. Plus, he had the explicit backing of the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Khamenei, who, as his title indicates, is the ultimate authority for policymaking in Iran.

Among the President’s base of support which swept him to victory, are also the Revolutionary Guards and the Basiji paramilitary militias. Both were born in the 1979 Islamic Revolution and have remained fixed to that paradigm. Ahmadinejad has demonstrated his reliance on these layers, in having assimilated a number of Revolutionary Guard figures into his government, including in sensitive departments involved with public law and order, in the Interior Ministry. In addition, he decided to overhaul the diplomatic corps, by replacing 40 top diplomats, including ambassadors, in key posts like Paris, London, Berlin, and Vienna, with his people.

The election victory of Ahmadinejad did split the country. Leaders of the reform movement initially cried foul, accusing the winning side of vote rigging. But the results were ulti-

mately accepted, also in view of the fact that the conservatives had no effective opposition in any of the nation's leading bodies.

However, Ahmadinejad soon had to face the fact that the nominal monopoly of the conservatives over political life, did not necessarily translate into a *carte blanche* for his policies and actions. To cite only one example: Ahmadinejad had to go through *four* nominees before he could get parliamentary confirmation for an Oil Minister. His first three nominees were rejected, on grounds that they were incompetent, inexperienced, and political cronies.

Further problems arose, as soon as the new President began to spout his anti-Israeli tirades. Seyyed Mohammed Khatami, who ruled for two terms until 2005, openly denounced Ahmadinejad's statements, as did Rafsanjani, who had served as President for two terms before Khatami.

Rafsanjani also openly attacked Ahmadinejad at a meeting of Muslim clerics on Nov. 15, 2005, for his personnel policy—of naming incompetent hardliner allies to important posts, and for the spiralling economic crisis.

Discontent with the new President's style was manifest in reports inside Iran, that some parliamentarians were discussing impeachment procedures, which the Constitution does foresee. Discontent became visible and vocal enough for the Supreme Leader Khamenei to intervene, more than once, pleading for support to the new President: "Give him more time," was the gist of the message.

However, it was also reported that Khamenei was getting worried enough about the new President's *faux pas* and inexperience, that he enhanced the power of the Expediency Council, headed by Rafsanjani, to supervise the work of the government bodies.

Given this factional ferment inside the country, within the broader context of the international pressures and threats against Iran, Ahmadinejad lurched into a flight forward. His anti-Israeli outbursts were apparently crafted in an attempt to mobilize support within Iran, especially from within the ranks of the 1979 militants, the Revolutionary Guards and Basiji, to whom such rhetoric is music to the ear. In addition, as indicated by the fact that his first such speech was delivered in the holy city of Mecca, on the sidelines of an OIC conference, he was appealing to the Islamic world more broadly, for support in a renewed campaign against Israel. This thrust has since been substantiated in a number of statements and foreign policy initiatives affirming Iran's intention to re-engage in the Palestinian issue.

There is a further dimension to the Ahmadinejad project which one might call messianic. One of Ahmadinejad's first trips as President was to Jamkaran, near the holy city of Qom, where there is a mosque of the same name, associated with the figure of the 12th Imam, or Mahdi. Imam Abul Qassem Mohammad, according to legend, disappeared or entered "occultation," from the city of Samarra, in today's Iraq. Many Shi'ites believe that the Mahdi will return one day, to rule and

establish justice on Earth. A messianic group which grew up around this figure, called the Hojjatiyeh (after Hojjat, or "proof," a name for the Mahdi) was active in the underground under the Shah, and was banned by the late Ayatollah Khomeini.

Now, Ahmadinejad has revived the tradition, allocating \$17 million for the Jamkaran mosque. Among his campaign supporters were many mosque-based religious groups that orient to the Mahdi.

During a visit to Qom, according to the Dec. 4 German daily *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Ahmadinejad told theologian Ayatollah Javadi Amoli that he had been graced with a halo of light, during his address to the UN General Assembly. According to the German newspaper, he said: "As I began my speech in the name of God, light came and enveloped me. I learned this from a participant of the session of the UN. I also felt it. During the 27 minutes of my speech, the world leaders were frozen. No one blinked an eyelash. An invisible hand held them as if nailed to their chairs, and opened their ears and eyes, in order to receive the words of the Islamic Republic." Ahmadinejad had in fact mentioned the coming of the Mahdi in his speech.

These utterings also gave rise to serious criticism in Iran, especially from among reformers associated with Khatami, but also among the mainstream clerical establishment. One cleric, a former Vice President under the reform government, Mohammad-Ali Abtahi, summed up the paradox of the new President in the following way: "Mr. Ahmadinejad's project must fail. He is caught in the paradox of those who understand religious mystery in a physical [literal] way. Of course, we must pray for the return of the Imam, but [in government] we must also tackle inflation and unemployment." Indeed: Were the President to deliver on his electoral promises, of investments and productive jobs, he would mobilize the entire population behind him.

The extremely intricate factional processes unfolding inside Iran define a task which only Iranian political figures and groups can or should tackle. In doing so, it is hoped that they will appreciate the extremely delicate position their nation and government are in. Sources from allied government circles in the region, as well as in western Europe, have told *EIR* that their message to the Iranians has been to be vigilant, and exercise the utmost caution, knowing the nature of the beasts currently occupying the White House. These sources have indicated their view that adopting militant rhetoric, in an attempt to play to the masses, will only exacerbate tensions.

If, as is the case, Iran has international law on its side in the nuclear dispute, and a powerful ally, Russia, in seeking a solution, it should pursue a rational solution to the nuclear issue, to pull the rug out from under the neo-cons' feet. Meanwhile, forces associated with LaRouche in the United States will accelerate the momentum toward removing the source of the problem from the halls of government.