

Iran: The Offer Is On the Table

by Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Unless Vice President Dick Cheney jumps the gun and orders a military attack against Iran, under cover of an orchestrated terror incident during the World Cup soccer games in Germany, for example, there would be good reason to believe that the so-called “nuclear conflict” around Iran’s nuclear energy program could be resolved through diplomatic means, giving each side its just reward.

The danger that such a happy solution will *not* be realized, lies outside the issue of Iran per se. As Lyndon LaRouche—who was the first to raise the alarm about Cheney’s war plans—has stressed, the danger lies in the onrushing collapse of the global monetary financial situation, and the thrust towards dictatorship and war. LaRouche has identified the crucial role of synarchist Felix Rohatyn in organizing the destruction of the U.S. economy, and an end to constitutional government. It is the resistance to LaRouche’s proven alternative economic policies, which constitutes the threat of a new dark age.

Thus, in considering the admittedly positive developments which have emerged over the past week, pointing to a possible resolution of the Iran nuclear dossier, one must keep the bigger picture in the forefront. As a corollary of this, one must also evade the trap, being proffered by certain media, that if the possible negotiations with Iran were to fail, that would constitute a pretext for war. As LaRouche has insisted, the causes for war lie elsewhere, in the bigger picture.

Optimists must be cautioned, LaRouche has warned, that the proffer made to Iran now does not actually lessen the general danger of war. Iran is not, and never was, the true issue of the quarrel. The true issue lies in the commitment to globalization, which, combined with the world monetary and

financial collapse, has accelerated the current impulses leading toward the increasing likelihood of an early general warfare.

The Offer One Should Consider

On June 12, European Union foreign policy representative Javier Solana officially presented the Iranian government with a proposal worked out by the permanent five members of the United Nations Security Council, plus Germany. If Tehran, after careful study of the document, gives a nod, negotiations can begin, not only with the EU-3 (Great Britain, Germany, and France) but also with Russia and the United States. Washington signalled its willingness to join such talks on May 31, in a public statement by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, which reversed 27 years of the U.S. policy of having no contact with the Islamic Republic.

The stumbling block in Rice’s offer was the demand that Iran halt all enrichment-related and reprocessing activities, something Tehran had repeatedly refused, on grounds that such activities were guaranteed in the Non-Proliferation Treaty, which it has signed, and in agreements with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). *EIR* had suggested (“Behind the U.S.-Iran Breakthrough,” *EIR* June 9, 2006) that the glitch could be removed, if Iran were asked to suspend such activities, in order to allow negotiations to begin, and for the duration of the negotiations. This now is what the Europeans, the United States, and Russia have agreed upon.

As reported in the *Washington Post* and wires on June 7, U.S. officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, confirmed that Iran would be asked to suspend enrichment as a condition for talks. “We are basically now saying that over the long

haul, if they restore confidence, that this Iranian regime can have enrichment at home. But they have to answer every concern given all that points to a secret weapons program,” one U.S. source said. Another official said, enrichment was “a very important part of the deal, and it’s what will allow Iran to accept it.”

Government confirmation came a day later when White House spokesman Tony Snow stated: “The precondition of suspending uranium enrichment-related and reprocessing activities—that is still an absolute condition.” And State Department spokesman Sean McCormack specified, “That condition would have to hold throughout any negotiating term.” Beyond that, he said, he would not speculate.

Additional Elements of the Offer

Other elements of the offer which Solana presented to Ali Larijani, head of Iran’s Supreme National Security Council, and its chief nuclear negotiator, are said to include “a new facility to stockpile nuclear fuel,” and “an unofficial regional security forum,” according to leaks reported by Reuters news agency. In addition, several reports have noted, Iran would be offered help to acquire light water reactors and better trade conditions, including allowance to purchase airplanes and spare parts (urgently required for its obsolete civilian fleet), as well as U.S. agricultural technology.

According to other sources, an internal working paper has been circulating informally, which refers to other items discussed in the process leading to the final offer; among them are a European-Iranian energy partnership, fuel guarantees, and a dialogue on regional security which would include certain security guarantees, such as national sovereignty and territorial integrity. Sources noted that even the prospect of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction for the “Middle East” was discussed, which would include Israel’s deterrent.

The official offer to Iran has not been made public yet, to allow Tehran time to deliberate without undue pressure. It is significant, in fact, that the regime of ultimatums and threats which had characterized Washington’s stance until very recently, seems to have been overthrown. A distinctly new tone—most welcome—is to be noted. Sean McCormack said, “We want to give [the Iranians] a little bit of space to consider what’s in the package, both on the positive as well as the negative side.” And Tony Snow struck a similar tone: “I would counsel patience,” he said to press. “At this point, as we’ve said all along, let’s give it time. Let’s let the Iranians take a look at what the offers are, at the incentives and disincentives.”

Such a refreshing change of tone, which Tehran has always demanded, is accompanied by categorical statements, coming from Moscow, that the “military option,” so often invoked as a threat, is off the table. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has reiterated time and again in recent days, that since the agreement was reached in Vienna, nobody is talking about the use of force. His most recent such declara-

tion came in an interview with *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* on June 6: “Indeed, I can say that the accords reached within the framework of the [six nations meeting in Vienna] rule out the use of force in all eventualities.” Lavrov has said so; but whether or not this will be the case, depends, again on the broader context identified above.

Tehran’s Response

When presenting the offer, Solana met in Tehran with Larijani for two hours, with no journalists present, after which the Iranian negotiator stated: “They submitted the proposals and the discussions were good. We have to examine these proposals and then we will give our response. . . . There are positive steps in the proposal, and there are also some ambiguities that should be cleared up. . . . We consider that the European will to solve the issue through talks is a correct step, and we welcome this.” For his part, Solana was upbeat: “We had good discussions,” he said. “Now that the proposal is on the table, I hope we will receive a positive response which will be satisfactory to both sides.” He expressed his delight at being able to restart talks with the Iranians. “We want to restart a fresh relationship and we want to do it based on a spirit of trust and respect and confidence. The proposal we bring along will allow us to get engaged in negotiations based on trust, confidence and respect.”

Iranian Foreign Minister Mottaki commented: “If their aim is not to politicize the issue and if they take our demands into consideration, we can reach a reasonable agreement. We will examine this proposal and give our reply after the end of the defined period.” Saying that his country preferred “cooperation to confrontation,” Mottaki added that “shuttle diplomacy, if it is in good faith, would allow us to find grounds for understanding.” This refers to the possibility, raised by German Foreign Minister Steinmeier, that Solana return to Iran, to facilitate the process, a suggestion Solana readily accepted.

Can a Solution Be Reached?

If rationality were to prevail, and serious talks were to begin among the concerned parties—emphatically including the United States—a solution agreeable to all sides would be within reach. Iran would provide credible, verifiable guarantees that its program were exclusively for civilian use, and it would be granted the technology foreseen by the NPT for nuclear energy programs, including the right to enrichment on its soil. Furthermore, its pariah status would be removed, and normal relations, including trade, could be put on the agenda, even with Washington.

The benefits for Washington would be immense, considering the role that Iran plays in the region. Crises now careening out of control, in Iraq and Afghanistan, might be alleviated by cooperation with Tehran. In this light, any form of regional security cooperation arrangement, as hinted at, would be crucial.