

Negotiations with China, Russia Offer Way Out of Iran Crisis

by Michele Steinberg

Expressing agreement with the statements of Lyndon LaRouche, that Russia's offer to provide enriched uranium fuel for Iran's nuclear power reactors is an acceptable course of action, a retired former U.S. Cabinet official told *EIR*, however, that he is very concerned that the United States is not doing everything that is possible to work with Russia and China to find a diplomatic solution for the Iran nuclear issue. Much more is possible, he warned.

Indeed, since Jan. 10, when Iran implemented its decision to restart nuclear fuel research, and had seals removed from its facilities in Natanz, the crisis heated up, with war threats coming from Britain's Tony Blair, the Dick Cheney-controlled Bush Administration, and Jabotinskyite circles in Israel, all rushing to go to the UN Security Council, to demand sanctions, which could then be used as a stepping stone to war action.

Such insanity from London and Washington is actually the *cause* for the war danger. A war that would have no end, warned LaRouche on Jan. 11, at his international webcast in Washington, D.C. Replying to a question about Iran's sovereign right to nuclear power, he said, "The essential problem we're facing is the insanity of the United States and Britain . . . threatening war. We are creating an incentive for nations to desire to have intimidating weapons. . . . Iran requires nuclear energy for development of its economy. They can have nuclear power, but they can't have nuclear weapons. . . . But the problem is that Iran is under the threat of attack. Otherwise, what the Russians offered, and I think what the Europeans would tend to agree to, would be a perfectly rational solution. . . ."

Despite the instability of Iran under President Ahmadinejad, LaRouche said, "There's no rush! . . . Continue the negotiations. Say in principle they have a right to know the technology, they have a right. But we *have come to the end of the use of nuclear weapons!*"

Solution Emerges

Then, on Jan. 26, in the midst of a diplomatic foray by Ali Larijani, the secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, to Russia and China, where he held extensive high-level discussions about Iran's nuclear program, he signalled

approval of the Russian plan, similar to what LaRouche had proposed earlier. It is a solution that the United States must join, not sabotage.

As of Jan. 26, a major policy statement by Russian President Vladimir Putin, statements by Larijani that Iran is open to the Russian proposal, and China's opposition to UN sanctions, and expressed interest in the Russian proposal, have turned the situation in a new direction.

On Jan. 25, speaking in Moscow, Larijani told his hosts that "Our view of this offer is positive, and we are trying to bring the positions of the sides closer." He suggested it would take time for all details to be hammered out. Larijani and Russian Security Council head Igor Ivanov issued a joint statement, saying the nuclear issue had to be solved diplomatically, through the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan welcomed the Russia-Iran talks, and expressed confidence that the Iran matter would not be rushed into the Security Council as Washington and London are insisting. IAEA chief Mohammed ElBaradei had told him, Annan said, that a report on Iran would be ready for the scheduled March 6 meeting.

Then, in China, where Larijani held talks with Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing and met State Councillor Tang Jiaxuan, he again welcomed the Russian proposal and said Iran wanted further discussions about it. After the meeting, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Kong Quan told a news conference, "We think the Russian proposal is a good attempt to break this stalemate," adding that "we oppose impulsively using sanctions or threats of sanctions to solve problems."

But the biggest development came from President Putin.

On Jan. 26, after the visit by Larijani, and signs that Iran was open to the Russian offer to set up a joint enrichment plant in Russia, Putin launched a new initiative, going beyond Iran.

In a statement circulated by the Kremlin press service, he said Russia considered security as a "multi-layered notion that requires a precisely verified comprehensive approach." He then declared Russia's intentions to expand security cooperation with the format of the Eurasian Economic Community (EuroAsEC), and the "promotion of the peaceful use of

atomic energy is one of the priorities in that area.” He cited deals with Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan as examples of benefits from such cooperation.

There is a growing demand for “reliable energy supplies,” Putin said. “It is important,” he went on, “to create a prototype of the global infrastructure that will ensure equal access to atomic energy for all the countries interested in it. I would like to stress in this connection that observance of nuclear non-proliferation regimes will be crucial in that sphere.

“Creation of a system of international centers providing nuclear fuel cycle services, including uranium enrichment, under strict control of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and offering non-discriminatory access, must be a key element of that infrastructure. Russia has made public its initiative in that field and is ready to build the first such center on its territory.

“Quite naturally, this will require innovative technologies for nuclear reactors and fuel cycles of a new generation. These problems can only be solved in the conditions of broad international cooperation, and we will offer precisely this approach to the Group of Eight Industrialized Nations during our terms of rotating presidency there, and to all our partners in the civilian use of atomic energy.”

Warnings of War Danger

But, no such sanity has yet come from Washington. Indeed, even as Iraq continued to be a bloody mess, with no end in sight, the controller of the entire Bush Administration—former Secretary of State George P. Shultz—issued a call for regime change in Iran, with draconian sanctions that would stop all foreign direct investment into Iran, a blockade of all crucial refined petroleum products, and a drive to put Iran’s two leaders on trial: Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei for torture and murder of his population, and President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad for violation of the Genocide Treaty in his call for the elimination of the state of Israel.

Joining him in this policy statement, issued through the reincarnated Cold War’s Committee on the Present Danger, were some of the worst neo-conservative fanatics, including James Woolsey, a member of Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld’s Defense Policy Board, and Frank Gaffney, a chickenhawk. It is the same crowd that called for “regime change” in Iraq in 1997, and hopes to do it again, this time in Iran.

But leading military intelligence sources are warning that any military action by the United States, Israel, or NATO, will bring disaster, and possible general war.

For example, Edward Atkeson, the former Deputy Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army in Europe, warned in an interview with the German newspaper *Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger* that a U.S. war against Iran would be a “deadly serious matter.” (Quotes are back-translated from the German.)

Asked about France’s threat to use atomic weapons against Iran, he dismissed this as political rhetoric. “But it

would be quite a different matter, if the United States were to make such a threat. That would be a deadly serious matter.”

An air attack on Iran would not succeed, he said. It could not destroy all sites relevant to nuclear weapons production. “We would simply create a tremendous uproar, and strengthen the opposition to U.S. policies in Iran, in the Middle East, and indeed in many parts of the world.” To supplement air strikes with special forces deployments would not increase the chances of success, but only increase the risks, he said. “Whoever wants to militarily keep Iran from gaining atomic weapons, will have to be prepared for a war. We are talking about a real, great war, not an intervention *à la* Kosovo.”

Although the first strike might be a surprise, a war would not be over in an hour. U.S. forces right across the border in Iraq and Afghanistan, “would be absolutely insufficient for a war against Iran. The U.S.A. would have to introduce the draft, since the forces would have to be secured not only for war against Iran, but also to guarantee the security of South Korea and Taiwan. NATO would not be of any great help to us. It might provide a bit of support for targeted attacks, but as long as Iran did not strike first, I do not see any readiness on the part of the Europeans to fight millions of Iranians in their own country.”

According to highly informed Washington experts on the Persian Gulf, if the United States bombs Iran’s nuclear installations in its campaign to stop Iran’s nuclear program, the result is likely to be a massive increase in U.S. fatalities in Iraq—as many as 1,000 Americans a week. The simple reason—the U.S. has depended almost entirely on the Iraqi Shi’ites to back its occupation, and to constitute the so-called “new Iraq Army,” and new Iraqi police forces. If the U.S. attacks Tehran, say these experts, the Iraqi Shi’ites will join the resistance against the United States.

Responses From Iran and Iraq’s Shi’ites

Whether this estimate is accurate or not, the fact is that Iraq’s Shi’ites say they will defend Iran. On Jan. 22, during a visit to Tehran, Iraq’s young firebrand Shi’ite cleric, Moqtada al-Sadr, told reporters that his Mahdi Army would support its neighbor, Iran, if it is attacked by any foreign force, i.e., the United States. Al-Sadr met top officials, including Larjani.

Adding to this war of words, is a series of terrorist bombings in the ethnically Arab Ahvaz province of Iran, the latest of which, on Jan. 25, killed eight people. President Ahmadinejad blamed Britain for the bombings. “The trace of Iraq’s occupiers in the Ahvaz crimes are clear,” he said.

Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki added: “We have information showing that British soldiers in Iraq equip these elements and draw up their missions. . . . It is not necessary to point out that the members of this group are based in London,” referring to the Popular Democratic Front of Ahvazi Arabs.