

The Real Bomb

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YEARS AGO I disclosed one of the biggest secrets about Iran: Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was an agent of the Mossad.

Suddenly, all the curious details of his behavior made sense. His public fantasies about the disappearance of Israel. His denial of the Holocaust, which until then had been typical only of a lunatic fringe. His boasting about Iran's nuclear capabilities.

Cui bono? Who had an interest in all this nonsense?

There is only one sensible answer: Israel.

His posturing depicted Iran as a state which was both ridiculous and sinister. It justified Israel's refusal to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty or to ratify the Chemical Weapons Convention. It diverted attention from Israel's refusal to discuss the occupation of the Palestinian territories or hold meaningful peace negotiations.

ANY DOUBT that I may have felt about this international scoop has evaporated now.

Our political and military leaders almost openly bemoan the demise of Ahmadinejad.

Obviously, the Supreme Guide, Ali Khamenei, decided that I was right and has quietly disposed of this clown.

Worse, he has reaffirmed his deadly enmity to the Zionist Entity by pushing forward a person like Hassan Rouhani.

Rouhani is the very opposite of his predecessor. If the Mossad had been asked to sketch the worst possible Iranian leader Israel could imagine, they would have come up with someone like him.

An Iranian who recognizes and condemns the Holocaust! An Iranian man who offers sweetness and light! An Iranian who wishes peace and friendship on all nations—even hinting that Israel could be included, if only we give up the occupied Palestinian territories!

Could you imagine anything worse?

I AM not joking. This is deadly serious!

Even before Rouhani could open his mouth after his election, he was condemned outright by Binyamin Netanyahu.

A wolf in sheep's clothing! A real anti-Semite! A cheat out to deceive the whole world! A devious politician whose devilish aim is to drive a wedge between Israel and the naive Americans!

This is the real Iranian bomb, far more threatening than the nuclear one that will be built behind the smokescreen of Rouhani's sweet talk!

A nuclear bomb can be deterred by another nuclear bomb. But how do you deter a Rouhani?

Yuval Steinitz, our failed former Minister of Finance and at present responsible for our "*strategic thinking*" (yes, really!) exclaimed in despair that the world wants to be deceived by Iran. Binyamin Netanyahu called it a "*honey trap*". Commentators who are hand-fed by "official circles" (i.e. the Prime Minister's Office) proclaim that he is an existential threat.

All this before he had uttered a word.

WHEN ROUHANI at long last made his Grand Speech at the UN General Assembly, all the dire forebodings were confirmed.

Where Ahmadinejad had set off a stampede of delegates from the hall, Rouhani packed them in. Diplomats from all over the world were curious about the man. They could have read the speech a few minutes later, but they wanted to see and hear for themselves. Even the US sent officials to be present. No one left.

No one, that is, except the Israelis.

The Israeli diplomats were instructed by Netanyahu to leave the hall demonstratively when the Iranian started to speak.

That was a stupid gesture. As rational and as effective as a little boy's tantrum when his favorite toy is taken away.

Stupid, because it painted Israel as a spoiler, at a time when the entire world is seized by an attack of optimism after the recent events in Damascus and Tehran.

Stupid, because it proclaims the fact that Israel is at present totally isolated.

BY THE way, did anyone notice that Rouhani was constantly wiping his brow during his half-hour speech? The man was obviously suffering. Did another Mossad agent sneak into the UN maintenance room and shut down the air-conditioning? Or was it just the heavy robes?

I never became a priest, not only because I am an atheist (in common with many priests, I suspect) but also because of this obligation to wear the heavy clothes which all creeds demand. Same goes for diplomats.

After all, priests and diplomats are human beings, too! (Many of them, at least.)

ONLY ONE Israeli cabinet member dared to criticize the Israeli exit openly. Ya'ir Lapid. What has come over him? Well, polls show that the rising star is not rising any more. As Minister of Finance he has been compelled to take very unpopular steps. Since he does not speak about things like the occupation and peace, he is considered shallow. He has almost been pushed aside. His blunt criticism of Netanyahu may bring him back into the center.

However, he has put his finger on a central fact: that Netanyahu and his crew behave exactly as the Arab diplomats used to do a generation ago. Meaning, they are stuck in the past. They don't live in the present.

Living in the present needs something politicians are loath to do: thinking again.

Things are changing. Slowly, very slowly, but perceptibly.

It is far too early to say much about the Decline of the American Empire, but one does not need a seismograph to perceive some movement in that direction.

The Syrian affair was a good example. Vladimir Putin likes to be photographed in judo poses. In judo, one exploits the momentum of one's opponent to bring him down. That is exactly what Putin did.

President Obama has painted himself into a corner. He mouthed belligerent threats and could not retreat, though the US public is in no belligerent mood. Putin released him from the dilemma. For a price.

I don't know if Putin is such an agile player that he pounced on a side remark by John Kerry about Bashar Assad's chance of relinquishing his chemical weapons. I rather suspect that it was all arranged in advance. Either way, Obama got off the hook and Putin was in the game again.

I have very mixed feelings about Putin. He has done to his Chechen citizens very much what Assad is doing to his Sunni citizens. His treatment of dissidents, such as the Pussy Riot band, is abominable.

But on the international stage, Putin is now the peacemaker. He has taken the sting out of the chemical weapons' crisis, and may quite possibly take the initiative in providing a political settlement for that dreadful civil war.

The next step could well be to play a similar role in the Iranian crisis. If Khamenei has come to the conclusion that his nuclear program may not be worth the economic misery of the sanctions, he may well sell it to the US. In this case, Putin can play a vital role, mediating between two tough traders who have a lot to trade.¹

HOW DO we fit into this changing scene?

First of all, we must start thinking, much as we would prefer to avoid it. New circumstances demand new thoughts.

In his own US speech, Obama made a clear connection between the Iranian bomb and the Israeli occupation. This linkage cannot be unlinked. Let's grasp it.

The US is today a bit less important than it was yesterday. Russia is a bit more important than it was. As its futile attack on Capitol Hill during the Syrian crisis shows, AIPAC is also less powerful.

Let's think again about Iran. It's too early to conclude how far Tehran is moving, if at all. But we need to try. Walking out of rooms is not a policy. Entering rooms is.

If we could restore some of our former relationship with Tehran, or even just take the sting out of the present one, that would be a huge gain for Israel. Combining this with a real peace initiative vis-a-vis the Palestinians would be even better.

Our present course is leading towards disaster. The present changes in the international and the regional scenes can make a change of course possible.

Let's help President Obama change American policy, instead of using AIPAC to terrorize Congress into blindly supporting an outdated policy towards Iran and Palestine. Let's extend cautious feelers towards Russia. Let's change our public stance, as the leaders of Iran are doing with such success.

Are they more clever than us?

¹Unless, of course, Obama behaves like the American who bought a carpet in a Persian bazaar. The seller asked for 1000 dollars, and the American paid up without haggling. When told that the carpet was worth no more than a hundred dollars, he answered: "I know, but I wanted to punish him. Now he won't be able to sleep, cursing himself for not asking 5000 dollars."