

THE OPINION OF AN EXPERT

By Cde. Fidel Castro Ruz

If I were to be asked who best knows about Israeli thinking, I would answer that without question it is Jeffrey Goldberg. He is an indefatigable journalist, capable of having dozens of meetings to ascertain how some Israeli leader or intellectual may think.

He is not neutral, of course; he is pro-Israeli, no ands ifs or buts. When one of them does not agree with the policy of that country, that too is not done halfway.

For my aim, it is important to know the thinking that guides the main political and military leaders of that State.

I feel that I have the authority to have an opinion because I have never been anti-Semitic and I share with him a profound hatred of Nazi-Fascism and the genocide perpetrated against children, women and men, young or aged Jews against whom Hitler, the Gestapo and the Nazis took out their hatred against that people.

For the same reason, I abhor the crimes committed by the fascist government of Netanyahu which kills children, women and men, young and old in the Gaza Strip and on the West Bank.

In his illustrated article "The Point of No Return" that will be printed in The Atlantic journal in September 2010, now available on the Internet, Jeffrey Goldberg starts his more than 40-page paper; I am taking the essential ideas from it in order to enlighten the readers.

"It is possible that at some point

in the next 12 months, the imposition of devastating economic sanctions on the Islamic Republic of Iran will persuade its leaders to cease their pursuit of nuclear weapons. [...] It is possible, as well, that "foiling operations" conducted by the intelligence agencies of Israel, the United States, Great Britain, and other Western powers- [...] will have hindered Iran's progress in some significant way. It is also possible that President Obama, who has said on more than a few occasions that he finds the prospect of a nuclear Iran "unacceptable," will order a military strike against the country's main weapons and uranium-enrichment facilities."

"I am not engaging in a thought exercise, or a one-man war game, when I discuss the plausibility and potential consequences of an Israeli strike on Iran. Israel has twice before successfully attacked and destroyed an enemy's nuclear program. In 1981, Israeli warplanes bombed the Iraqi reactor at Osirak, halting-forever, as it turned out-Saddam Hussein's nuclear ambitions; and in 2007, Israeli planes destroyed a North Korean-built reactor in Syria. An attack on Iran, then, would be unprecedented only in scope and complexity."

"I have been exploring the possibility that such a strike will eventually occur for more than seven years. [...] In the months since then, I have interviewed roughly 40 current and past Israeli decision makers about a military strike, as well as many American and Arab officials. In most of these interviews, I



Comandante Fidel Castro Ruz

have asked a simple question: what is the percentage chance that Israel will attack the Iranian nuclear program in the near future? Not everyone would answer this question, but a consensus emerged that there is a better than 50 percent chance that Israel will launch a strike by next July. [...] But I tested the consensus by speaking to multiple sources both in and out of government, and of different political parties. Citing the extraordinary sensitivity of the subject, most spoke only reluctantly, and on condition of anonymity. [...] The reasoning offered by Israeli decision makers was uncomplicated: Iran is, at most, one to three years away from having a breakout nuclear capability [...] and the most crucial component of Israeli national-security doctrine, a tenet that dates back to the 1960s [...] is that no regional adversary should be allowed to achieve nuclear parity with the reborn and still-besieged Jewish state."

"In our conversation before his swearing-in, Netanyahu would not

frame the issue in terms of nuclear parity- [...] Instead, he framed the Iranian program as a threat not only to Israel but to all of Western civilization."

"When the wide-eyed believer gets hold of the reins of power and the weapons of mass death, then the world should start worrying, and that's what is happening in Iran."

"In our conversation, Netanyahu refused to discuss his timetable for action, or even whether he was considering military preemption of the Iranian nuclear program. [...] Netanyahu's belief is that Iran is not Israel's problem alone; it is the world's problem, and the world, led by the United States, is duty-bound to grapple with it. But Netanyahu does not place great faith in sanctions-not the relatively weak sanctions against Iran recently passed by the United Nations Security Council, nor the more rigorous ones being put in place by the U.S. and its European allies."

"But, based on my conversations with Israeli decision-makers, this period of forbearance, in which Netanyahu waits to see if the West's nonmilitary methods can stop Iran, will come to an end this December."

"The Netanyahu government is already intensifying its analytic efforts not just on Iran, but on a subject many Israelis have difficulty understanding: President Obama. The Israelis are struggling to answer what is for them the most pressing question: are

there any circumstances under which President Obama would deploy force to stop Iran from going nuclear? Everything depends on the answer."

"Iran demands the urgent attention of the entire international community, and in particular the United States, with its unparalleled ability to project military force. This is the position of many moderate Arab leaders as well. A few weeks ago, in uncommonly direct remarks, the ambassador of the United Arab Emirates to the United States, Yousef al-Otaiba, told me- [...] that his country would support a military strike on Iran's nuclear facilities. [...] he said. "Small, rich, vulnerable countries in the region do not want to be the ones who stick their finger in the big bully's eye, if nobody's going to come to their support."

"Several Arab leaders have suggested that America's standing in the Middle East depends on its willingness to confront Iran. They argue self-interestedly that an aerial attack on a handful of Iranian facilities would not be as complicated or as messy as, say, invading Iraq. "This is not a discussion about the invasion of Iran," one Arab foreign minister told me.

"We are hoping for the pinpoint striking of several dangerous facilities. America could do this very easily."

"Barack Obama has said any number of times that he would find a nuclear Iran "unacceptable." [...] A nuclear Iran would be a game-changing situation, not just in the Middle East, but around the world.

Whatever remains of our nuclear nonproliferation framework, I think, would begin to disintegrate. You would have countries in the Middle East who would see the potential need to also obtain nuclear weapons."

"But the Israelis are doubtful that a man who positioned himself as the antithesis of George W. Bush, author of invasions of both Afghanistan and Iraq, would launch a preemptive attack on a Muslim nation."

"We all watched his speech in Cairo," a senior Israeli official told me, referring to the June 2009 speech in which Obama attempted to reset relations with Muslims by stressing American cooperativeness and respect for Islam. "We don't believe that he is the sort of person who would launch a daring strike on Iran. We are afraid he would see a policy of containing a nuclear Iran rather than attacking it."

"Bush was two years ago, but the Iranian program was the same and the intent was the same," the Israeli official told me. "So I don't personally expect Obama to be more Bush than Bush."

"If the Israelis reach the firm conclusion that Obama will not, under any circumstances, launch a strike on Iran, then the countdown will begin for a unilateral Israeli attack.

"A strike on Iran, Israeli intelligence officials believe, could provoke all-out retaliation by Iran's

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Republic of Namibia

The President

State House, Windhoek

MESSAGE OF APPRECIATION

From His Excellency Hifikepunye Pohamba, President of the Republic of Namibia

On behalf of my family, and indeed, on my own behalf, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to all individuals and institutions that have sent messages of good wishes to me through the electronic and printed media as well as letters and cards that were delivered to my office on the occasion of my 75th Birthday Anniversary.

I view your words of good wishes and encouragement as a source of strength that I will draw on in carrying out the duties entrusted to me by the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia and in implementing the mandate reposed in me by the Namibian electorate. On this occasion, I reiterate my commitment to strengthening our Government's policy responses to the challenges facing our nation and to building a better future and a more prosperous society for all Namibians.

My Family and I thank you, one and all, for the good wishes extended to me on this special occasion.

Hifikepunye Pohamba
President



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



Media release

Address for State House, Auasblick

Members of the public are hereby informed that the Office of the President has relocated from the former State House on Robert Mugabe Avenue, to State House in the Auasblick Residential Area. Our address and contact details are as follows:

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