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The Nazification of America's Weapons Program *Nuclear Refurbishment*

by NORMAN POLLACK

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Why Nazification? The retrofitting of America's nuclear arsenal, along with massive construction for the science, technology, and production of the next generation of this weaponry, in fact is to recapitulate Hitler's project of World Domination under liberal auspices, as the defense of freedom and democracy. Plain-spoken words, hardly extreme in the circumstances of today's revelations about how, under the mantle of arms control (more liberal sophistry, because from its inception the arms-control movement has been pushed by defense intellectuals, e.g., Rand Corporation and similar think tanks), the US has made a qualitative leap into the permanent business of death and destruction. Permanent, because the steps Obama is now taking binds subsequent administrations and indeed future generations to a course of action in which nuclear war, given the favorable political-cultural accommodation engineered to its acceptance, is made increasingly thinkable and, an American foreign policy centered on confrontation with Russia and China, therefore possible if not PROBABLE.

Radicals, time to wake up. For several decades we have understandably allowed a fragmentation of political consciousness to occur: there have been numerous issues and concerns to arouse anger and protest, from war, climate change, labor rights, ruling groups' intensification of power, degradation of the environment (simply to begin listing imperative and justifiable areas demanding social change is to recognize the grounds for societal reconstruction and transformation—and opposition to the existing order), but the NUCLEAR threat to human existence, all for the sake of perpetuating American power, capitalism, ideology, brings us up

short and demands acknowledgment. Our mistake has been, not that separable issues are not significant and worthy of attention, sacrifice, and social action, but that each and all must be also unified at least in thought and given a systemic foundation.

Only arrogance and sectarianism fuel the campaign focused on single-factored issues as of transcendent importance. They, in themselves, are all important, and respected as such, serve to generate a wider vision when once it's realized thwarted actions testify to a power structure inimical to other issues as well. That said, and sincerely meant, the present revelation about a regime dedicated to enhancement of nuclear weaponry as, budgetary figures alone, identifying it as, next to the actual conduct of war, the nation's priority number one. Social safety net? Don't make me laugh. Health, in its broadest scope? Ditto. Every aspect of social well-being, from preschool education to the protection and conservation of our natural surroundings, down the drain—all for the sake of astronomical sums bestowed on a nuclear stockpile and the means of its delivery to bludgeon the world's people into acceptance of US leadership.

The New York Times article, "U.S. Ramping Up Major Renewal in Nuclear Arms," (Sept. 21), by William Broad and David Sanger, illuminates, though not intentionally, the enormity of the nuclear threat and the reasoning to advance the program. We know The Times engages in self-censorship, its top national-affairs reporters, as these two, accepting the conditions (possibly even agreeing with the administration in any case) for gaining access to POTUS and key officials. Yes, mouthpieces for the party line. Yet that is not reason for ignoring NYT or its reporters; it is not hard to navigate through the verbiage to reach the news. White House and Cabinet-level access (here, Departments of Defense and Energy) is a two-edged sword. As now, tremendous information is generated through enjoying favoritism, which can be put to critical use; the interpretation however is safe, authoritative, bordering on mindless propaganda. Still, I find the account a feast in that revealing the underbelly of the US military posture and Obama's own terrifying dimensions as a war-zealot.

Broad-Sanger begin with an idyllic picture, antiseptic, a valley of death with spotted cows, so to speak: "A sprawling new plant here [Kansas City, MO] in a former soybean field makes the mechanical guts of America's warheads." Breath-catching, an American Pastoral (is that Henry David Thoreau I see strolling through the woods?). Insanely macabre: "Bigger than the Pentagon, full of futuristic gear and thousands of workers, the plant, dedicated last month, modernizes the aging weapons that the United States can fire from missiles, bombers and submarines." Fife and drum, too thrilling for words: "It is part of a nationwide wave of atomic revitalization that includes a new generation of weapons carriers." The whole, a tribute to sanitized modernity, from aging weapons to atomic revitalization—worth everything at twice the price: "A recent federal study put the collective price tag, over the next three decades, at up to a trillion dollars."

And it probably would be twice the price, in light of cost overruns the reporters bring out. But it is "next three decades" which catches one's eye, because, like the drone assassination program, Obama sets out to cover vast ground, practically impossible to undo (here, factory starts, new weapons in the pipeline), that is intended to bind future administrations—all in keeping with the

doctrine of permanent war. One reason the article is compelling is that nuclear rearmament (or if you prefer, atomic revitalization) is done outside the limelight of public scrutiny. Obama has been accused of despising transparency—but on most counts that would be chicken feed compared with what is going on now, not the dollar-value of the expenditures but what they buy: mega-death at the ready.

Actually, his despicement runs deeper, to scrutiny of his actions, for one, and with it, a fear of discovery of his fraudulent character as the man of peace, disarmament (which initially caught the attention of the Nobel Committee), social justice and respect for international law (tell the Guantanamo captives, denied their habeas corpus rights, or the victims of his drone assassinations), and for another, his expansion of the war-provoking tendencies of American foreign policy (confrontation/sanctions with respect to Russia and the Pacific-first strategy, China)—all of which bear directly on Obama’s nuclear-war propensities, as in the choice for weapons development configured to just such a course.

Laughably, Broad-Sanger would have him appear as a cross between Mohandas Gandhi and John Paul II, bitterly frustrated and disappointed when his plans for disarmament can’t for some reason be realized. The step-by-step mischaracterization: “This expansion comes under a president who campaigned for ‘a nuclear-free world’ and made disarmament a main goal of defense policy.” Then the arms-control phony-baloney, in which more becomes less through confidence-building: “The original idea was that modest rebuilding of the nation’s crumbling nuclear complex would speed arms refurbishment, raising confidence in the arsenal’s reliability and paving the way for new treaties that would significantly cut the number of war heads.” (Yet, even when the last is supposedly carried out—no sign of which here—it is understood that the remaining stock is to be more deadly: the blessings of nuclear modernization.)

The admission, still, the other guy, not Obama: “Instead, because of political deals [Congressmen want facilities and jobs in their districts] and geopolitical crises, the Obama administration is engaging in extensive atomic rebuilding while getting only modest arms reductions in return.” Poor Obama, left a tragic figure as the world sweeps on: “Supporters of arms control, as well as some of President Obama’s closest advisers, say their hopes for the president’s vision have turned to baffled disappointment as the modernization of nuclear capabilities has become an end unto itself.” To conclude the thought, a prime Democratic Cold-Warrior is brought in to confirm Obama’s immaculate (peace) conception: “‘A lot of it is hard to explain,’ said Sam Nunn, the former senator whose writings on nuclear disarmament deeply influenced Mr. Obama. ‘The president’s vision was a significant change in direction. But the process has preserved the status quo.’” Obama, in Churchillian splendor, resists the winds of change, to no avail.

Enough, or almost so. The Wounded Tiger, described here with the reporters’ own Cold War take, leads to an unblemished Prince of Peace: “With Russia on the warpath, China pressing its own territorial claims and Pakistan expanding its arsenal, the overall chances for Mr. Obama’s legacy of disarmament look increasingly dim, analysts say.” Congress wants the US to look “tough in Washington’s escalating confrontation with Moscow,” said without skipping a beat, and presumably an attitude not shared by Obama. Too, it’s all Putin’s fault. Gary Samore, former Obama nuclear adviser and now at Harvard: “‘The most fundamental game changer is Putin’s

invasion of Ukraine. That has made any measure to reduce the stockpile unilaterally politically impossible.” Obama never wanted reduction, except conceivably linked (as in Start II) with greater lethality, and no-one is asking for unilateral reduction, another fig leaf.

Start II was a numbers game, modest reductions, more destructive power through the proposed back alley making all such treaties obsolete: that of nuclear modernization. This would be his direction, but Republican opposition to the Treaty enabled Obama to save face (seemingly a step toward peace) by complying with the Republicans’ calls for “an aggressive rehabilitation of American nuclear forces and manufacturing sites” as though modernization were harmless cosmetics (to his peace groupies) while being in earnest—refurbishment, \$355B over ten years (CBO estimate) as “just the start.” Broad-Sanger: “The price tag will soar after 10 years as missiles, bombers and submarines made in the last century reach the end of their useful lives and replacements are built.” Ashton Carter, a former deputy secretary of defense: “That’s where all the big money is. By comparison, everything that we’re doing now is cheap.”

Our Peace POTUS is engrossed in the itemized allotments, missiles, bombers, submarines, breakfast food for the Cold warrior. Obama on a roll: “The money is flowing into a sprawling complex for making warheads that includes eight major plants and laboratories employing more than 40,000 people.” The term “refurbishment” sounds so nice and sweet—to brighten or freshen up, renovate (Webster’s)—when in reality there is much NEW production, not only plants but warheads themselves, and, since much of this comes under the Dept. of Energy, it is wonderful to see factories dedicated to death are energy efficient (like patching the roofs of crematoria, so gases do not leak out).

Thus, an old bomb plant in Kansas City, damaged by floods and having “tacky furniture,” voila, under the New Obama Dispensation, a sterilized death machine: “Its replacement, eight miles south, sits on higher ground. Its five buildings hold 2,700 employees—just like the old plant—but officials say it uses half the energy [hooray!], saving about \$150 million annually. Everything is bright and modern, from the sleek lobby and cafeteria to the fitness center. Clean rooms for delicate manufacturing have tighter dust standards than hospital operating rooms.” Not a glimmer of irony, bought by the administration (in spirit) hook, line, and sinker. Idyllic, even to the point of giving it a name so that it is everything but what it is—the study perchance of Liberal Arts, rather than the manufacture of death: “It is called the National Security Campus rather than a factory for weapons that can pound cities into radioactive dust.”

Maybe there is still hope for the reporters. Oops, premature, for the glitter of mega-death cannot be gainsaid. After all, this is Obama’s own high-tech world, where the “pilot” for a drone assassination sits comfortably in Las Vegas thousands of miles away from the individual or group he obliterates. Kansas City, one has the same eerie feeling about human depravity in assembling the wherewithal for doing in a fellow human being: “Their main job now is extending the life of a nearly 40-year-old submarine warhead called the W-76. Drawing on thousands of parts, they seek to make it last 60 years—three times as long as originally planned. The warhead’s new guts, a colorful assortment of electronic and mechanical parts, lay alongside a SHINY NOSE CONE on a metal table outside an assembly hall.” (caps., mine, the image too beautiful/poetic to pass up)

Kansas City, they report, “is the crown jewel of the modernization effort,” but “other projects are reminders of how many billions have yet to be spent, and how even facilities completed successfully can go awry.” Where are the fiscal conservatives? And where, the liberals, hungering for bigger and better (bombs)—if it means new facilities, new construction, new jobs? The record is a litany of WASTE, itself nothing compared to the purpose of the activity (which suggests complicity of the fiscal conservatives and liberals alike: war, intervention, civilian death, anything for patriotism... and the larder). E.g., Los Alamos National Laboratory: “plans for a new complex to shape plutonium fuel emerged a decade ago with a \$660 million price tag. But antinuclear groups kept publicizing embarrassing details, like the discovery of a geologic fault under the site. The estimated cost soared to \$5.8 billion, and in 2012, the Obama administration suspended the project.”

Or this, the Y-12 National Security Complex in Oak Ridge: \$550M for a “fortress... to safeguard the nation’s main supply of highly enriched uranium,” to which, “in 2012, an 82-year-old Roman Catholic nun, Megan Rice, and two accomplices cut through fences, splashed blood on the stronghold and sprayed its walls with peace slogans.” Her sentence, almost three years in prison Now prepared for “an even bigger upgrade—replacing buildings that process uranium—the [site’s] price tag soared from \$6.5 billion to \$19 billion,” the administration, amidst the lab’s hopes for going ahead, “scuttled the current plan.”

More broadly, “across the nation, 21 major upgrades have been approved and 36 more proposed,” this squarely under Obama and not to be chalked up to his predecessors. The GAO warned, “the managers of the atomic complex had repeatedly omitted and underestimated billions of dollars in costs, leaving the plan with ‘less funding than will be needed.’” Not surprisingly, the reporters state, “the Obama administration says it sees no contradiction between rebuilding the nation’s atomic complex and the president’s vow to make the world less dependent on nuclear arms.” They cite a deputy energy secretary about how “the improvements... have reassured allies. ‘It’s important to our extended deterrent,’” by which he meant “the American nuclear umbrella over nations in Asia and the Middle East, which has instilled a sense of military security and kept many from building their own arsenals.”

Perhaps that is what Obama means by making the world less dependent on nuclear arms; let the US nuclear umbrella cover the world, and everyone will be safe and secure. In any case, his wish-list is hard to square with professions of peace or a reduction of nuclear weapons: “The administration has told the Pentagon to plan for 12 new missile submarines, up to 100 new bombers and 400 land-based missiles, either new or refurbished.” Manufacturing costs are estimated to “peak between 2024 and 2029,” what I meant by his attempt to bind future administrations to his war-framework and policies. Estimated cost by the Monterey Institute of “the nuclear enterprise over the next three decades,” \$900B to \$1.1Trillion.

As one official said, “this [setting federal spending for 2016] is Obama’s legacy budget,” and we can all rest comfortably under the nuclear umbrella, except when it rains (renewed and further confrontation with Russia and China).

My New York Times Comment on the Broad-Sanger article, Sept. 22, follows (in what I take to be an act of censorship, it was never published—I wrote in protest to the Public Editor but obviously expect no explanation):

Back to the ‘Fifties: arms-control, then and now, was never a step toward reduction, let alone disarmament, but the sophisticated obfuscation signifying nuclear modernization via greater lethality and efficiency of production. By this program, Obama has indeed defined his legacy: Strangelove-Kissinger-Herman Kahn moral cipher, cementing for the foreseeable future a world having the means at hand for cosmic annihilation. The utter darkness of the vision, its gnawing dehumanization by placing the world at risk, is absolutely fitting for where we are at this time.

To wit, poised for confrontation with Russia and China as the cornerstone of American foreign policy. Drone assassination, Special Ops-CIA paramilitary operations, torture, mass surveillance at home to ensure such projects as the embarkation on a vastly enlarged nuclear war-machine, these are mere harbingers of the Obama Bloodlust for keeping America always striving for unilateral global dominance.

Despite the article’s constant hints of Obama the Nobelist champion of peace, who now reluctantly finds himself at odds with his ’08 campaign promises, the portrayal is utter falseness. Today’s Obama is ’08 Obama carefully groomed to appear differently. Hungering for acceptance, not only on Wall Street but also among the military-intelligence communities, he is far more dangerous (with the slick patina of liberalism) than Bush 2 ever was.

The trillion-dollar death trip. All aboard. Poverty at home be damned.