

The Reagan administration felt little inclination to deal with the Soviet Union short of war. "What disturbs American policymakers is not that the northern hemisphere would be charred in a missile exchange," Adam Smith wrote at the time, "It's that the Soviets might win without even fighting a war." President Reagan responded to the mass demonstrations of the worldwide Nuclear Freeze and to European resistance against deploying American missiles on their soil that they were "diseased" with "pacifism and neutrality" and inferred they were duped by communism. Yet he had to make a play at resuming negotiations and instituted clumsy doubletalk in changing the talks from SALT to START (Strategic Arms Reduction Talks, with emphasis upon "Reduction") and seized the first opportunity, his stance against martial law in Poland, to indefinitely postpone them. "It would be a brief whirl if the superpowers really wanted to start cutting back their superweaponry in Europe," *The Nation* commented. "Both want to emerge from Geneva with the blame for the extra click of the ratchet of destruction fixed on the other side."

In the absence of any substantial treaty a "Call To Halt the Nuclear Arms Race" sponsored by a coalition of religious and secular peace groups expressed in common sense terms the basis for the long public (and obviously nongovernmental) opposition to nuclear armaments:

"The United States and the Soviet Union should immediately and jointly stop the nuclear arms race. Specifically they should adopt an immediate, mutual freeze on all further testing, production and deployment of nuclear weapons and of missiles and new aircraft designed primarily to deliver nuclear weapons. This is the single most useful step that can be taken now to reduce the likelihood of nuclear war and to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons to other countries."

The "Call To Halt the Nuclear Arms Race" had six major provisions:

- ~ Underground nuclear tests should be suspended pending final agreement on a comprehensive test ban treaty.
- ~ There should be a freeze on testing, production and deployment of all missiles and new aircraft that may have nuclear weapons as their sole or main payload.
- ~ The number of land- and submarine-launched tubes for nuclear missiles should be frozen.
- ~ No further MIRVing or other changes to existing missiles should be permitted.
- ~ Production of fissionable material (enriched uranium and plutonium) for weapons purposes should be halted.
- ~ Production of additional nuclear weapons should be halted.

The SALT treaties, flawed as they were, were the first substantial arms control agreements between the two superpowers. Worthless in themselves, as are all treaties because there is no accountability for nations short of war — treaties exist only as long as they are convenient to their signers and have been used more often as justification for warfare than for peace — their success was in reaching any agreement at all. They were obviously unable to either counter or keep up with the incredible pace of nuclear weapons design or production, but even if they did not curb soaring military budgets or limit the destructiveness of nuclear weapons, SALT and other negotiations and treaties over the span of the Cold War did at least reduce the risks of nuclear war between the superpowers for nearly half a century and eventually helped achieve détente and the end of the Cold War.

Although SALT 3 was never negotiated, its intended provisions were more or less acted upon until the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the USSR.

Ironically, neither treaties nor the apprehensive secretiveness of the superpowers prevented international proliferation of nuclear technology. Secrecy removed public participation from the issue and made it a process of the very few, who in the United States manipulated national defense as a slogan for corporate profit and as a screen to obscure the immense fortunes fabricated from a war economy fueled and made self-perpetuating with public money without the public having much say about it.

Citizens of both superpowers were hostage to the fears and oppressive secrecy the nuclear arms race invoked and diverted hundreds of billions of dollars from essential social needs. Not only did the nuclear arms race grossly blot the private fortunes of U.S. munitions makers as well as put

them outside public scrutiny and accountability, it provided them tremendous political power which was primarily conservative and anti-democratic in nature.

The American economy's reliance on military spending created an interlocking Mafia of corporations involved in designing and constructing nuclear warheads and developing systems for transporting, arming and launching the weapons. Estimated annual costs during the Cold War for maintaining as well as expanding the U.S. nuclear arsenal was an estimated \$50 billion, with that figure nearly doubled when both nuclear and concomitant conventional military systems were considered. More millions of dollars were funneled to hundreds of universities and colleges in the form of nuclear weapons research grants.

The Bush administration, which last year unilaterally revoked the 1972 ABM Treaty, is about to reopen the nuclear arms race by ratcheting up the development of so-called "low-yield" nuclear weapons and roll back virtually every nuclear arms agreement made during the Cold War. The White House has held secret meetings of the military-industrial complex to rewrite U.S. nuclear doctrine to nullify non-test treaties and produce a new generation of nuclear weapons, such as ship-fired cruise missiles with nuclear warheads and nuclear armed "bunker busters" for use against enemy troops. No members of Congress have been invited to these meetings.

Bush displays a recklessness with his nuclear inheritance that surpasses Reagan's notion of winnable nuclear war. The Bush concept seems to be that any other nation's nuclear arms are "weapons of mass destruction" while the world obliterating U.S. arsenal is a "nuclear deterrent." This doublethink resonates throughout current American foreign policy, which is

nothing less than regression to nuclear blackmail: be damned if you possess or develop nuclear weapons; be damned if you don't.

The new improved *Pax Americana* for the Millennium: 'Star Wars' (if it ever works) to dominate near outerspace with satellites, laser-beams — and the nuclear trump of missiles capable of targeting any place on the planet that disputes U.S. suzerainty; missiles that seem to have as many varieties, sizes, shapes and subspecies as dinosaurs. Imperious China be warned! Militant Islam, accept Jesus as your Savior!

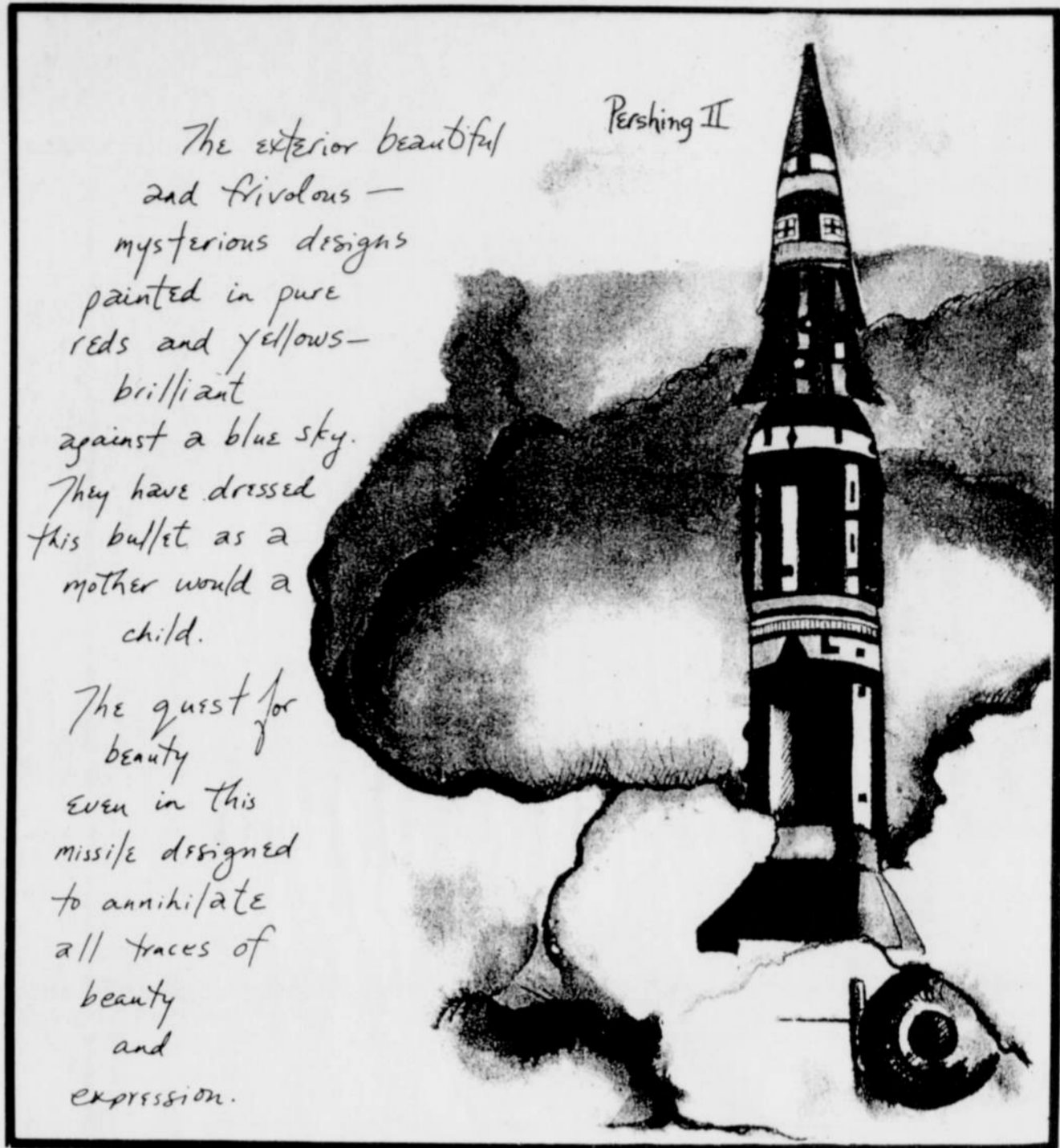
"No government at the moment has anything remotely resembling a policy for peace," Kenneth Boulding said during the era of SALT. "All of them have a policy for defense, but that is something quite different. If the peace research community (could inquire) as to what a policy for peace would look like, even on the part of a single government, we might be able to lift ourselves out of this slough of sterility and impotence into which we have fallen."

Jonathan Schell wrote in *The Fate of the Earth*, that "if a council were to be empowered by the people of the earth to do whatever was necessary to save humanity from extinction by nuclear arms, it might well decide that a good first step would be to order the destruction of all the nuclear weapons in the world." Yet that would not be enough, nor would demolishing factories that produce them, nor destroying blueprints of how to make them — the real question is how do we erase the knowledge of nuclear weapons from the human mind?

"To return to safety through technical measures, we would have to disarm matter itself," Schell wrote, "something not even the physics of our time can teach us how to do."

We should consider Matthew (5:13):

Ye are the salt of the earth. But if the salt hath lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted?



The exterior beautiful
and frivolous —
mysterious designs
painted in pure
reds and yellows —
brilliant
against a blue sky.
They have dressed
this bullet as a
mother would a
child.
The quest for
beauty
even in this
missile designed
to annihilate
all traces of
beauty
and
expression.

TEACHING ABOUT NUCLEAR WAR

Although schoolchildren conducted "Duck & Cover" drills throughout the Cold War, Americans have been reluctant to teach their children about nuclear war while building ever more grotesque weapons. An example is an attempt by Oregon to establish a curriculum pertaining to nuclear war in the state's public elementary and high schools during the height of the Cold War. The idea was to develop a program of the history of the Nuclear Age and the arms race that so quickly developed between the superpowers, the consequences of the use of nuclear weapons, the effects upon national economies and ambitions, and alternate forms of resolving conflict short of war in general.

The issue caused intense and heated debate. Supporters (mostly Democrats) said teaching children about war would be an important step toward averting holocaust. Opponents (mostly Republicans) said it would create fear in children and weaken the nation's resolve to defend itself. Essentially, the people who didn't want kids to know about nuclear war were those whose policies encouraged it.

Clatsop County Democrat Tom Hanlon said, "Children are concerned about life in the nuclear age and should have their concerns addressed in the classroom." Eugene Representative Carl Hosticka said giving children the opportunity to learn about nuclear war was the legislature's first concrete step toward preventing nuclear disaster.

One who disagreed was Gold Beach Representative Al Schroeder, a Republican, who compared nuclear education to sex education, which he said produced more pregnancies, abortions and homosexuals than before it was taught. He said children were not taught to distinguish between good and evil and that education about nuclear war would only brainwash them and dissolve their will in the struggle against the Evil Empire.

His opinions represented the far right but were not substantially different from more moderate Republicans such

as John Minnis from Portland, a former policeman and still a member of the state legislature in 2003, who thought teaching about nuclear war would coerce children into accepting what he called a global philosophy that would countenance global government.

Minnis said educating children about nuclear weapons would undermine their national allegiance and indoctrinate them in extremist politics, and that schools were inadequate to teach about nuclear war. His opinion was children should be taught how to think and grasp fundamentals before such dramatic and complex issues as the nuclear arms race were put before them, and he said elementary children in particular were too young to understand and too prone to anxieties and nightmares about what the courses might reveal to them.

Minnis, then and now an ardent supporter of Star Wars (which he claimed would end the nuclear arms race with more certainty than a nuclear freeze) said that arguments about nuclear weapons were more volatile than the weapons themselves. He felt antinuclear groups would use the schools to manipulate children into opposing nuclear weapons.

The major flaw in the argument that parents should be responsible for teaching their children about nuclear war, not the schools, was that most adults then and now do want to know or think about it themselves.

A 10 year old girl wrote a letter to an Oregon newspaper during the nuclear school debate. She had just watched a TV movie about nuclear war (*The Final Day*) and she was afraid for her future. "I don't want war to happen," she wrote. "If a bomb does explode now, I think I'd rather die than live. Now when I think of my future I think of nothing. I hope a war will never happen."

Was she afraid because she knew so little or too much about the consequences of a nuclear war?

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