

A Lesson from Lyndon LaRouche and Ronald Reagan: How To Eliminate the Threat of Nuclear War!

by Harley Schlanger

March 25—In a press briefing delivered on March 23 just before President Joe Biden left for his war council sessions with NATO, the European Union, and the G7 in Europe, National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan delivered a message which should have set off flashing lights and alarm bells. After accusing President Putin of threatening to use nuclear weapons by placing the Russian nuclear arsenal on alert, Sullivan announced that nuclear war is no longer unthinkable.

Regarding the possibility that the use of nuclear weapons will be discussed during the summits, Sullivan said,

It is something that we do have to be concerned about. Based on our current analysis, we have not changed our nuclear posture to date. But we are constantly monitoring for that potential contingency. And of course, we take it as seriously as one could possibly take it. We will be consulting with Allies and partners on that potential contingency, among a range of others, and discussing what our potential responses are.

That Biden's National Security Adviser calmly described the use of nuclear weapons as a "potential contingency" ought to have been a chilling reminder of how out of control the U.S. and NATO officials have been in their conduct towards Russia. Instead, it seems to have passed largely unnoticed, as the media instead focused on the narrative of "NATO unity" in the face of Russian "barbarism," reporting without question charges by Biden that Russia may be preparing to use biological and chemical weapons—"I think it's a real threat," he said—and on his backing of Secretary of State Antony Blinken's statement that Russian leaders should face tribunals for the "war crimes" U.S. intelligence agencies allegedly have been monitoring.

And instead of putting forward proposals for de-escalation, perhaps even acknowledging that Putin's demands for security guarantees have some merit—which they rejected from the start as "off the table"—the summits proceeded to escalate the provocations against Russia. These include providing more weapons, intelligence, and logistical support; more funds; more troops on NATO's eastern flanks bordering Russia; and more sanctions, designed to "devastate" the Russian economy and prepare for their ultimate goal, regime change in Russia.

It was this process of anti-Russian escalation, in



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Between 1977 and President Reagan's 1983 SDI announcement, Lyndon LaRouche drafted numerous articles and memos in support of a missile defense system based on "new physical principles." Here, LaRouche is speaking with Reagan during a presidential candidates' debate in Concord, New Hampshire, 1980.

which Ukraine and its people are being sacrificed as a battering ram against Russia, which led to Putin's initial decision to place his nuclear forces on alert status. Not surprisingly, as the threat of nuclear war was being raised, there was no mention of the pledge made by Biden and Putin at their summit on June 16, 2021, that "nuclear war cannot be won, and must not be fought."

Reagan and the SDI

It is ironic that Sullivan referred to the use of nuclear weapons as a "potential contingency" on the same date that, thirty-nine years ago—March 23, 1983—U.S.

President Ronald Reagan shocked the world by announcing his commitment to develop new anti-ballistic missile technologies, called the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI). Reagan spoke of this at the end of a nationally televised address, at a moment of heightened tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union over the U.S. deployment of nuclear weapons in close proximity to the USSR in Europe. The U.S. placement of Pershing 2 missiles in West Germany to counter the Soviet deployment of SS-20s in East Germany, which locked the two Cold War blocs into a permanent “launch-on-warning” status, had been met by a growing anti-war movement, which called for a “Nuclear Freeze.”

Reagan, who was known as a staunch anti-Communist, had attacked the nuclear freeze movement in a speech just two weeks earlier, on March 8, in which he warned against ignoring “the facts of history and the aggressive impulses of an evil empire,” saying that to do so is to “remove yourself from the struggle between right and wrong and good and evil.” Given this stance, his call for replacing the nuclear deterrence doctrine of Mutual and Assured Destruction (MAD)—which he called a “suicide pact”—with a defensive system, seemed out of character.

In his address, Reagan asked,

What if free people could live secure in the knowledge that their security did not rest upon the threat of instant U.S. retaliation to deter a Soviet attack, that we could intercept and destroy strategic ballistic missiles before they reached our own soil or that of our allies? [Why not] break out of a future that relies solely on offensive retaliation for our security, [by developing a technology which relies on measures which are] defensive?

He called—

upon the scientific community in our country, those who gave us nuclear weapons, to turn their great talents now to the cause of mankind and world peace, to give us the means of rendering these nuclear weapons impotent and obsolete.

What made it more shocking was that then-Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger conveyed to Moscow an

offer: Reagan intended that the United States and USSR develop this new technology together, and deploy the new strategic-ballistic missile defense system jointly, so that neither side would gain an advantage over the other—what one might call a “win-win” solution to the threat of nuclear war.

LaRouche and the SDI

As a “gang-counter-gang” side show was underway over the Pershing 2 and SS-20 deployments in Europe, pitting anti-Soviet war hawk militants against the Nuclear Freeze peaceniks, Lyndon LaRouche had been organizing scientists and intelligence officials in the Reagan administration, and the general public, to support the SDI concept, which he first publicized in July 1977 in a mass-distribution pamphlet, “Sputnik of the ’70s—The Science Behind the Soviets’ Beam Weapon.” While LaRouche organizers mobilized support for a missile defense system based on “new physical principles,” which was one of the keys to his proposal, LaRouche was taking part in meetings and discussions with Reagan Administration officials and advisers. He was eventually asked by them, in December 1981, to engage in “back channel” discussions on this concept with Soviet officials.

During the period between 1977 and Reagan’s 1983 announcement, LaRouche drafted numerous articles and memos which approached this, not merely as an issue for military strategists, but one related to the economic policies which were heightening tensions between the NATO nations and the Soviet bloc’s Warsaw Pact nations. In one memo in March 1982, “Only Beam-Weapons Could Bring to an End the Kissingerian Age of Mutual Thermonuclear Terror: A Proposed Modern Military Policy of the United States,” LaRouche presented his proposal from an economic-scientific, as well as strategic standpoint. He identified the opposition to this perspective as coming from Malthusian networks, typified by British intelligence circles such as the International Institute of Strategic Studies, as well as from historic enemies of LaRouche and the American System of physical economy, such as Henry Kissinger and British Prime Minister Thatcher.

His conception of the SDI, LaRouche wrote, was based on the development of “relativistic plasma-beam anti-missile systems.” The opposition from leading anti-growth fanatics, like Kissinger, was to the



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Lyndon LaRouche addressing a “Beam the Bomb” conference in Washington, D.C., April 13, 1983.

implications of LaRouche’s conception, as it “implied both an escalation of NASA programs, and also a NASA-like crash program in areas subsuming fusion energy research and development.” Such a commitment “would mean an automatic end to the drift of the West toward the utopian goals of a ‘technotronic’ variety of ‘post-industrial society’.”

The day after Reagan’s address, LaRouche wrote of the “Earth-shaking impact” of Reagan’s address. “With those words, the President has changed the course of modern history,” though LaRouche acknowledged there would be “ferocious and stubborn resistance to the President’s policy ... both from Moscow and from the nuclear freeze advocates in Europe and the United States.”

The SDI proposal drafted by LaRouche and endorsed by Ronald Reagan was unfortunately sabotaged. In October 1982, before Reagan’s public announcement, Henry Kissinger and other members of

the President’s Foreign Policy Advisory Board had contacted FBI Director William Webster to demand that LaRouche be silenced. The subsequent formation of a “Get LaRouche” task force ran a campaign of dirty tricks and slander against him, which eventually put him unjustly in prison. As for the Soviets, they rejected the proposal, which led to LaRouche’s forecast that the Soviet Union would collapse within five years.

It actually took six years to collapse, vindicating LaRouche’s forecast.

[For a thorough review of LaRouche’s role in developing the concept behind the SDI, see Paul Gallagher’s [speech](#) published in *EIR*, Vol. 46, No. 5, July 5, 2019, pp. 20-31. —ed.]

A Policy of Development

The fact that Lyndon LaRouche, from his first published pamphlet for anti-missile defense in 1977, defined it as the development of “relativistic beam technologies”—lasers of new types and capabilities, particle and microwave beams, plasma technologies—made clear that he always saw what he was organizing as an economic development policy. These technologies were the basis for what LaRouche called a “laser-industrial revolution,” which could emerge from scientific research to solve a threat of unsurvivable war, but also spread to industrialize the developing-sector nations on an advanced technological platform. He steadily fought for *this* approach to creating anti-missile defenses, as opposed to what were claimed by the military-industrial complex to be “off-the-shelf” kinetic systems—anti-missile missiles—which were simply not capable of ever giving the defense the advantage in nuclear war.

So it was that when President Reagan called out in March 1983 for scientists to create new means of rendering nuclear missiles obsolete, clearly meaning not “off the shelf” but revolutionary technologies, he was calling forth the policy of LaRouche, and that of Dr. Edward Teller. Reagan made it even clearer by proposing to the Soviet Union, including in letters from the White House, that these breakthroughs be worked on jointly as a peace policy. LaRouche himself had been calling his movement’s campaign for beam-weapon anti-missile defenses a “higher peace movement” (in contradistinction to the anti-nuclear and broadly anti-industrial Nuclear Freeze peace movement of the early 1980s).



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At left: 10,000 demonstrators marched through the nation's capital in a Schiller Institute rally on Martin Luther King Day, Jan. 16, 1989 to demand economic and political justice. Below: A 1985 Schiller Institute rally in Washington paired a program for feeding Africa with a technology-driver for the U.S. and Soviet Union: cooperation on the SDI.

The entirety of the years of reckoning for adoption of LaRouche's beam-weapons strategy, until the March 23, 1983 surprise from President Reagan, were years of a palpable and increasing threat of nuclear war, due to both Moscow and the European capitals seeing missiles deployed on and near their borders with flight times of just a few minutes.

To identify the way out of such a grim and growing crisis as being a policy of worldwide economic development, requiring superpower cooperation, marks Lyndon LaRouche's policy of durable peace in the 1980s, and the mobilization led by Helga Zepp-LaRouche for a new architecture of peace and development right now—the same concept.



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Lessons for Today

The networks which opposed and ultimately sabotaged the SDI, centered in the City of London and in the U.S. controllers of the Military-Industrial-Complex, declared the collapse of the USSR as the beginning of a new world order, a Unipolar order, dominated by neoliberal economics and finance dictated by the City and Wall Street, and a strategic order enforced by U.S. military power and NATO. It is in defense of this order that Putin's demand for security guarantees, which had been promised at the end of the Cold War, and has been raised by him repeatedly since 2007, has been declared unacceptable.

As a result, we now have talk of the destruction of Russia and the possibility of nuclear war coming from the networks whose policies have caused a collapse of the economic and strategic system they built.

There is an alternative, based on the scientific and strategic method employed by Lyndon LaRouche, which was at the heart of the SDI policy endorsed by Reagan, and which is still relevant today as a counter to the existential threat posed by the arrogant unipolarists. This will be a focus of the Schiller Institute's [Conference](#) on April 9. Join us, as we build a new security and financial architecture, to replace the bankrupt and dangerous status quo, which threatens the annihilation of mankind today.