Dismantling the Nuclear State

Primitivo Solis (David Watson)

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For too long we have gone on like sleepwalkers as the weapons of total extermination were manufactured and readied. Now it is becoming clear to even the most myopic that nuclear war threatens not only the present configurations of social and political relations, but all of life.

Such a war (which cannot even be described as a "war" if we are to maintain a sense of human proportion) would be an act of total, absolute destruction: destruction of human beings, destruction of human culture, destruction of the ecosphere. For all practical purposes nothing would survive the blast, the heat, the radiation and the destruction of the ozone layer, and all the intermingled secondary and tertiary effects of all-out nuclear confrontation.

Everything must pale before the fear and dread arising from the contemplation of such an event. It is unique in human history. There is nothing to which we can compare it. "The Bomb"—that phrase, employed almost affectionately to obscure the horror of the highly complex weapons system—has more power over us than the fact of its material destructive capacities. It is like a fetish which we have wrought and which now holds us in its mysterious and absolute power, godly and demonic. We are reminded of Robert Oppenheimer's utterance when he saw the first mushroom cloud wafting over the New Mexico desert, a verse from Hindu scripture, "I am Death, destroyer of worlds."

The power of this Thing—how do we confront it? It pervades all of life. How easy it would seem in comparison if there were one great "Doomsday Machine" which we could assault and defuse. But the nuclear war machinery seems all of a fabric, tied to every sphere of society. Where is the fuse to this Bomb? Where do we begin to challenge its power over our destiny?

Time is limited. Everyone feels the "inexorable drift" towards war. The generals are talking about it; the strategists are talking about it; the politicians are talking about it. It is planned every day in think-tanks and war rooms. Newer weapons are being developed at this very moment, weapons which lower the thresh-hold for war, bringing the machinery closer to conflagration. The weapons are being produced everywhere. And we continue to pay our taxes for them, to work in industries which directly or indirectly feed into this machinery, and to go about our daily lives trying to forget the imminence of detonation.

It appears as if an enormous tidal wave of circumstances, an inertia which is unstoppable, is sweeping over us. The enormity of the process has an almost paralyzing effect upon us. At any moment, an accident, a miscalculation, a new destabilizing technological development, or war rhetoric pushed a little too far, could sweep away the world like a house of cards in a nuclear gale. And yet no one person seems to be in control of what C. Wright Mills described as "the drift and thrust towards World War III," not even the President or the First Secretary. As Peter Sedgwick has remarked, "War is possible… as the final unforeseen link in a causal chain forged at each stage by the previous choice of some ruling class. World War Three could burst out as 'something that no one willed'; the resultant of competing configurations of social forces."

The problem, the contradiction between human responsibility and the tidal wave of circumstances which combine to create results unforeseen by anyone, has led many people on the one hand to comment on the "tragic dimensions" of the predicament, its fatedness, while on the other hand to indicate a generalized, universal responsibility

for it. Both viewpoints contain some truth, and both are inadequate. Both exist simultaneously within the same cultural position. The forces which shaped the mechanisms of war seem as inexorable as they are impersonal, beyond anyone's reach. But all are touched by them. The popular expression of our dilemma seems simple enough: We threaten to destroy ourselves. But when we start to consider the social atomization which pits each of us individually against the massive edifice of the technological society, with its enormous sum of working parts, rushed along by an automatism of its own, each part blindly doing its own isolated task unconscious of the total result, then the paralysis sets in once more.

Jonathan Schell, in a recent series for the *New Yorker* magazine, describes our predicament since the beginnings of "the Bomb" as a "strange double life" of forgetfulness and preparation for suicide. We deny reality:

> "we underwrite the military machine, and serve it in a myriad of ways, here training future technicians, there working on some small part for an aircraft carrier, there simply failing to do anything about it. Somewhere in the back of our minds we know what it will lead to. But we suppress this thought. He notes, "We don't want to face the fact that we are potential mass killers."

I would argue that if we want to break out of our paralysis, we must begin to distinguish the structural relations of this weapons system, its historical drive, and its cultural manifestation. It isn't fated; we are not an undifferentiated mass of lemmings heading for the sea. Political, technical and organizational decisions are being made. There is a structure, there is a mechanism, there is a leadership and a direction, no matter how blind. If we are to find our way out of this labyrinth, to stop the "drift and thrust towards World War III," we must begin by defining the structure of that mechanism.

Technology Implodes on Politics

"The immediate cause of World War III," as C. Wright Mills observed as far back as 1958, "is the preparation for it." Yet the appearance of this unprecedented problem emerges from the convergence of a long line of obscure political and technical developments which seem to have a self-augmenting inertia all their own. Fate does seem to play a role—the knowledge which makes nuclear weapons possible cannot after all be placed back into the Pandora's box whence it came. As Schell notes,

> "As long as that knowledge is in our possession, the atoms themselves, each one stocked with its prodigious supply of energy, are, in a manner of speaking, in a perilously advanced state of mobilization for nuclear hostilities, and any conflict anywhere in the world can become a nuclear one. To return to safety through technical measures alone, we would have to disarm matter itself, converting it back into its relatively safe, inert, non-explosive nineteenth-century Newtonian state—something that not even the physics of our time can teach us how to do."

An enlightening discussion of this problem can be found in physicist Werner Heisenberg's Physics and Beyond. In a chapter on the responsibility of the scientist, he tells of the day when he and other German scientists held captive by Allied troops heard about the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. "I had reluctantly to accept the fact," he recalls, "that the progress of atomic physics in which I had participated for twenty-five long years had now led to the death of more than a hundred thousand people." When one of his colleagues raised the question of their guilt, Heisenberg disagreed, replying,

> "If Einstein had not discovered relativity theory, it would have been discovered sooner or later by someone else, perhaps by Poincare or Lorentz. If Hahn had not discovered uranium fission, perhaps Fermi or Joliot would have hit upon it a few years later…For that very reason, the individual who makes a crucial discovery cannot be said to bear greater responsibility for its consequences than all the other individuals who might have made it. The pioneer has simply been placed in the right spot by history, and has done no more than perform the task he has been set."

Of course, we should keep in mind that these scientific discoveries did not take place in a political or moral vacuum, and that scientists, like everyone else, are moral beings, and hence responsible for their actions. They are pushed along, but they also push. They suffer from what has been called the "mental virus" of the "technological imperative," the mindless pursuit of innovation without regard to its implications. However, this technological imperative is deeply imbedded within our culture. As Schell points out, the scientist cannot really foresee the path of his work, nor can he determine it, for "while science is without doubt the most powerful revolutionary force in our world, no one directs that force…"

True, bureaucrats, administrators, scientists and politicians do in a sense direct that force. They make decisions to fund and organize the Manhattan Project, for example. But it is clear that they do not see where their activity is leading them. The thrust of a whole society, of a whole epoch, impels them. Their discoveries transform their politics. Technology, as British historian E.P. Thompson puts it, "implodes" on politics. Technology now shapes politics. It is no longer meaningful to assume that the steady increment of arms represents the decisions of political leaders acting more or less "rationally" in response to what they perceive as the moves of their opponents. "Weapons innovation," Thompson observes, "is self-generating. The impulse to 'modernize' and to experiment takes place independently of the ebb and flow of international diplomacy, although it is given an upward thrust by each crisis or by each innovation by the 'enemy.'" Planning takes place in long waves. Deborah Shapley has defined this incremental pressure as "technology creep" owing to its "gradual, inconspicuous, bureaucratic character."

For example, neutron bombs and cruise-type missiles have been talked about since the early 1960s, and were being developed long before anyone ever heard of the SS-20 missile, to which they are purportedly a response. Before they were developed, MAD (mutually assured destruction) wasn't a political/strategic policy but a military reality that had to be accepted. But technological innovation changed the rules of the game.

It was Henry Kissinger who came up with a model describing the three stages of military doctrine that a nuclear power goes through (the terms are his, not mine):

1) "Under-appreciation": a more efficient destructive agency but tied to conventional war concepts;

2) "Over-appreciation": total reliance on nuclear weapons; deterrence through the threat of massive retaliation to "punish" an aggressor;

3) "Flexibility": the possibility of a lower threshold, smaller weapons, so-called "limited" nuclear war.

These stages followed innovations in technology. The "new strategy" of "flexible response," "limited nuclear war," and "first strike"-which is nothing new at all, if one considers that military planners always seek ways to gain an advantage-is coming to the fore because of technological innovation which raises such possibilities to the military planners.

As Thompson points out,

> "Weapons, to be sure, are things. Their increment is not independent of political decisions. But politics itself may be militarized: and decisions about weaponry now impose the political choices of tomorrow. Weapons, it turns out, are political agents also … Weapons and weapons systems are never politically neutral … the refinement of nuclear weaponry has been steadily eroding the interval in which any 'political' option might be made. The replacement of liquid by solid fuel means that rockets may now stand in their silos, instantly ready. The time for delivery has contracted: in the mid-1970s the time required for the interhemispheric delivery of nuclear bombs had shrunk to about ten minutes, and now it is perhaps less. This hair-trigger situation, combined with 'increasing accuracy of missiles and automated electronic reaction systems has encouraged fantasies that a war might actually be launched with advantage to the aggressor ('taking out' every one of the enemy's ICBM's in their case-hardened silos), or that a 'limited' war might be fought in which only selected targets were 'taken out.'
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> "In such a hair-trigger situation, the vary notion of 'political' options becomes increasingly incredible. The persons who decide will not be a harassed President or First Secretary (perhaps not even available

> at the moment of emergency) but a small group of military technicians, whose whole training and rationale is that of war, and who can by no conceivable argument be said to represent the rational interests of any economic or political formation…"

As Nigel Calder says in the very first line of his book, *Nuclear Nightmares*, "Strategies for possible wars are already inscribed in the guidance mechanisms of the missiles." And Herbert York, a physicist who helped develop the atomic bomb and who was later Director of the Livermore Radiation Laboratory and a top official in the Defense Department under Eisenhower and Kennedy, warns in his book *Race to Oblivion*:

> "…the overall complexity of systems is already leading us to a situation in which the response to a hypothetical future attack will be so complicated and the time in which to decide what to do will be so short that it will be necessary to turn to automatic computing machines for the purpose. If we continue with the present style of technological approach to defense problems, the inclusion of human beings in the decision-making loop will seriously degrade the system. Thus, here, too, the power to make life-and-death decisions is passing from the hands of statesmen and politicians to lower-level officers and ultimately to computing machines and the technicians who program them."

(It may be unnecessary to note that what York fears is the removal of politicians from the "decision-making loop," and that the decision to annihilate millions of people will no longer be made by people like himself and those he serves but by technicians and machines.)

"The machinery had caught us," said Frank Oppenheimer about his and others' participation in the Manhattan Project even after Germany had been defeated and the nazi threat which had motivated many of the scientists had disappeared. Looking back, it seems that all of us are more enmeshed in the machinery than ever. If the military is trapped within its technological inertia, what does this say about the political autonomy of those of us for whom the decisions are being made? All of life is threatened by the possibility of a computer error, mistaken calculations, a break somewhere in the human or technical hierarchy of obliteration.

Rise of the Nuclear State

This "technology creep," and this undoing of societies and whole cultures, has its precedent, apart from the special circumstances of nuclear annihilation which we face today. It can be traced back to the explosion of invention which begins in the late Middle Ages and which culminates in the rise of industrial capitalism. In Lewis Mumford's words, "Whatever was lacking in the outlook of the seventeenth century, it was not lack of faith in the imminent presence, the speedy development, and the profound importance of the machine." A whole spectrum of activities, "seemingly inconsiderable perhaps in themselves"—the compulsive duty to invent, an uncritical desire to make use of the new creations, the rise of the money economy and bourgeois book-keeping, the exploration of new lands and the displacement of the tribal peoples who inhabited them—"had at last formed a complex social and ideological network…" Old forms of life and association were swept away as if by a bomb, and a world was undone—or rather, many worlds were undone.

The foundations for the "drift and thrust" of industrial technology were firmly laid. The technology was not simply an aggregate of machines and abstract knowledge, but a new social system, a social organization. Langdon Winner has observed, "Technologies are structures whose conditions of operation demand the restructuring of their environments." Of course, he is referring to the human environment. Every dimension of society is reshaped. Nothing is left unchanged.

Eighteenth century faith in progress flowed from science, that of the nineteenth century from mechanization. But mechanization finds its most prolific manifestation in warfare, and the dream of progress culminates in the slaughter of World War I. Mary Kaldor has written,

> "The concept of 'weapons system' can be said to have originated in the first prolonged period of high peacetime military spending, namely the Anglo-German naval arms race before World War I. Socially,

> the rise of the concept may be likened to the replacement of tools by machines: whereas formerly the weapon was the instrument of man, it now appears that man is the instrument of the weapon system: for a weapon system demands a rigid technical division of labour that admits of little variation in the social organization of the men operating it. Equally, the weapon system, like the machine, guarantees the existence of certain types of industrial capacity required for its manufacture."

Military organization and technics simply followed the pattern of all mechanization. The mechanization of war corresponded to the mechanization of labor and of all social life. As Mumford wrote in his classic, *The Myth of the Machine*,

> "Society, awed by its indisputable success in mechanization, had begun to obey its own automatic system, and every kind of activity was geared to an accelerated quantitative expansion of territory, the expansion of population, the expansion of mechanical facilities. the expansion of production rates, capital gains, incomes, profits, and consumable wealth. Behind all these subsidiary phenomena stood the expansion of scientific knowledge, the prime mover in this whole process. The 'Automation of Automation' had begun."

The state underwent this same process of "automation" as well. As Jacques Ellul observed in *The Technological Society*, "The whole edifice was constructed little by little, and all its individual techniques were improved by mutual interaction." But the "irrational" and uncooperative individual does not conform to the needs of the machine. "He rebels too easily. He requires an agency to constrain him, and the state had to play this role…" The state had to become "coherent" like the system which it administered and whose interests it defended. "Thus the techniques of the state—military, police, administrative, and political—made their appearance."

Mechanization Culminates in World War

As we have said, this period of mechanization and rationalization culminates in World War I. This war both destroys an old world and lays the basis for the new: from its devastation emerge the new totalitarian state machines of the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, as well as the penetration by technology of every sphere of life. And this period culminates in World War II, from which coalesces a new form of megatechnic state, and the energy form and the military form corresponding to that state: the nuclearization of power, physical and political power.

In the struggle by the allied nations against nazism we see a convergence of methods. Hitler, Stalin and Roosevelt actually represent three competing forms of the same megatechnic state system, in which the government apparatus, the military machine, the corporations and industrial organizations, and the scientific-technical establishments converge into an institution comparable only to, but far surpassing, the ancient centralized slave states of the Pyramid Age—bureaucratic, military machines led by powerful rulers and aided by scientific-priestly elites. They are all characterized by political absolutism (in the case of Roosevelt, the extraordinary war-powers of the presidency), military regimentation and mechanization. Such a force could only have emerged "under the fusion heat of war," in Mumford's words. From this fusion of different power centers, "the modernized megamachine, commanded by 'absolute' power of destruction, emerged."

This event was as significant as the creation of the cosmic weapon itself: the appearance of a new form of state. And in order to maintain its effective operation after the immediate military emergency had passed, "*a permanent state of war became the condition for its survival and further expansion*." Eisenhower warned in his farewell speech in January 1961, "We have been compelled to create a permanent armaments industry of vast proportion…Our toil, resources and livelihood are all involved; so is the very structure of our society." He warned against "the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex," and "the danger that public policy could itself become the captive of a scientific-technological elite."

Contrary to Eisenhower's formulation, however, this process represents much more than the domination of old centers of power by the technicians; rather, it is a fusion of political, economic and technical power unrivaled in history. Politicians, academics, military men and scientists now move back and forth between the different loci

of power within the megastate. Herbert York is an example; so is Alexander Haig, former NATO commander, then head of United Technologies, now Secretary of State. The Herman Kahns and the Henry Kissingers of the think-tanks all move freely between government jobs and "private" consulting firms. The government apparatus itself is no more than one administrative arm of one sector of the machine. In reality, the corporations, the military and the government function as a unitary whole. The political and electoral system, already an illusion which serves only to incorporate real or potential democratic and liberatory forces into the expanded control of the state, becomes, along with the mass media and the many local rackets for dependency and patronage, a propaganda system to mystify the real relations of power: the power of the megamachine and its weapons system.

The weapons system and its corresponding institutions—laboratories, bureaucracies, universities, think-tanks, industries, lobbyists, public relations (or rather propaganda) organizations, are, in Thompson's words, "transformed into inertial forces within society, whether bureaucratic or private in expression." They are interlocked with the government administration and surrounded by an enormous, insular, protective security apparatus. The nuclear state is by definition a police state. And at its very center: this Thing, the Bomb, the "fat boy," "Little Joe," Armageddon, the Death of Death, the Shatterer of Worlds.

And perhaps it is necessary to add that this megamachine cannot be reduced to capitalist greed, though capitalist greed (and bureaucratic greed) certainly is an aggravating factor. But the megamachine isn't confined to the private capitalist West. It represents the same configuration of power—with certain variations—in the state capitalist East. What constitutes it—both in the superpowers and in the peripheral powers who race to join the megatechnic order—is the drive for technological development, nuclearism, the massification of life, the consolidation of bureaucratic state power, and the permanent war economy. Thompson has made the interesting comment that the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. do not so much have military-industrial complexes "as they are such complexes." In both, the military machine "stamps its priorities on the society as a whole."

Nuclearism Crowns a Social System

But we must be even more emphatic than this—the arms system flows from a certain social content and a vision (or lack of vision). It is the pinnacle of the society's creative and destructive powers, its skeletal frame, a model of its entirety, the incarnation of its spiritual self. Just as there is no longer any distinction between nuclear and conventional war, there is no longer any distinction between the military and non-military modes of the economy.

The nuclear weapons system is the crown of this social system. Nuclearism is a politics, a culture, and a paradigm for the relations of power and domination within that culture. As Mills wrote, "The accumulation of military power has become an ascendant end in itself," beyond any notion of "national interest." War is the structural center of the modern state. The military machine reflects the character of an entire society wired for destruction, its drive, and the direction of that drive. The Bomb is more than an inert Thing: it is a system of labor, of hierarchy, of production, of power. As Thompson writes,

> "There is an internal dynamic and reciprocal logic here which requires a new category for its analysis. If 'the hand-mill gives you society with the feudal lord; the steam-mill, the society with the industrial capitalist,' what are we given by those Satanic mills which are now at work, grinding out the means of human extermination? I have reached this point of thought more than once before, but have turned my head away in despair. Now, when I look at it directly, I know that the category which we need is that of 'exterminism.'"

No human purpose, not even the most evil, is served any longer by the military machine and the preparation for war. But the elites are trapped within their own procedural rationality, the concatenation of "practical next steps" which cannot see beyond its nose. The dirty business of military strategy has, like many other areas of human activity, become banalized and absurd by its own bureaucratization. With Mills, we have witnessed the rise of the cheerful robot, the technological idiot and the crackpot realist. "The atrocities of our time," wrote Mills in *The Causes of World War Three*, "are done by men as 'functions' of a social machinery—men possessed by an abstracted view that hides from them the human beings who are their victims, and as well, their own humanity. They are inhuman

acts because they are impersonal. They are not sadistic but merely businesslike; they are not aggressive but merely efficient; they are not emotional at all but technically clean cut."

Today strategy is another rationalized and computerized technique, organized along bureaucratic lines like all other technique—which is to say that it is corrupt, self-augmenting, and stupefying. It culminates in the computer rooms in which little radar blips signal the extinction of life, in which technicians control the fate of nations. They follow the military rationale which their machines have rendered obsolete. They have been trained to pull the levers of apocalypse. They are fascinated by it. It is their moment of truth.

Academic experts of the institutes and the military bureaucracies reflect this process of total banalization and stupefaction, this mediocrity of the spirit. Their precursor: Albert Speer; armaments, spectacle and stupidity. Moral stupidity. The "intellectual" planners of the strategic institutes—East and West—should ponder well the role that they actively play in the present drift and thrust towards extinction. Their banal ideas, void of creative strategies for survival of the human race and nurturing of the ecosphere, by playing the academic, think-tank roulette of "feasibility studies," come up with polity of the following stature:

From Colin Gray, present Director of National Security Studies at the Hudson Institute, and an adviser to Ronald Reagan, in an article entitled "Victory is Possible," in the Summer 1980 issue of *Foreign Policy*:

> "Strategists do not find the idea of nuclear war attractive. Instead, they believe that an ability to wage and survive war is vital for the effectiveness of deterrence…victory or defeat in nuclear war is possible, and such a war may have to be waged to that point; and the clearer the vision of successful war termination, the more likely war can be waged intelligently at earlier stages…"

And elsewhere he has written:

> "Any American president should know that the only kind of war his country can fight, and fight very well, is one where there is a clear concept of victory—analogically, the marines raising the flag on Mt. Suribachi is the way in which a president should think of American wars being terminated."

Another expert from the Office of Civil Defense wrote a few years ago that although it might "be verging on the macabre" to say so, "a nuclear war could alleviate some of the factors leading to today's ecological disturbances that are due to current high-population concentrations and heavy industrial production."

Nevertheless, even the so-called "rational" experts of what is blithely referred to as the "defense community," who presently argue against the "counterforce" or "first strike" strategies and for the policy of nuclear deterrence through MAD are only slightly less insane than the Colin Grays. Deterrence is not a stationary state but a degenerating one. Technology created the strategy of "flexible response" as it interacted with ideology and bureaucratic war gaming. Within such a context deterrence cannot remain a balance which insures peace—it can only momentarily postpone inevitable war.

To Confront the Megatechnic State

Perhaps we can now draw some conclusions from this regrettably long analysis:

1) There is a structure and a hierarchy to the military technical system which contradicts the common notion of generalized guilt and tragic fate. There is a decision-making process, a pyramid of power, a mechanism and a direction to it.

2) Yet this technological megamachine has grown out of elements within our culture that trace far back into our history. There is an automatism, an impelling, "synergistic" development which pulls the entire society along—different elements combine to create new unforeseen developments. This happens first gradually and later very rapidly. It happens to society as a whole, seeing its most startling, most far-reaching manifestations in the military sphere. "It is the past which imbues the arms race with its inner momentum" (Thompson). But it must be emphasized that it is systemic, shapes the entire society.

3) This development seems to have entered a terminal, exterminist stage, captured within its own bureaucratic procedural rationality in which it no longer acts in the interest of anyone, not even in the interest of the ruling elites. A long wave of technological revolution and social reorganization seems to be culminating in a holocaust, just as did the previous waves of development which we have outlined. But this is obviously a holocaust from which there will be no recovery.

It must be emphasized, however, that if the problem is systemic, this exterminist stage must be manifest in every sphere, which indeed, it is. The megamachine is more than its weapons system: the exterminist structure functions in our agriculture, our relation to the land, our technics. The weapons system is just the tip of the iceberg. The entire megamachine appears to be faltering under its own weight in an unprecedented ecological crisis. If there were no weapons system, we would still face the possibility of extinction. Our agriculture, for example, has come under the sway of massification and mechanization. Its modernization caused the disintegration of the cultures and communities of farming and laid the basis for future agricultural disaster. Our present abundance, based on chemical-and petroleum-based fertilizers and fuel, large technologies and bureaucratic market networks, borrows from the future, pays for its food by the loss of soil. As farmer-writer Wendell Berry has remarked, "Our success is a catastrophic demonstration of our failure." Our whole system is run along bureaucratic, stratified and compartmentalized lines—a system which results by its very nature in moral abdication and incompetence. The wrong blueprints inevitably get used, as they were at Diablo Canyon. A small error or the failure of an insignificant piece of equipment can lead to unparalleled destruction.

It is therefore not enough to cast moral blame on the technicians and the directors of the megamachine. We must prepare to abolish the structure, to lay the foundations for a new culture which is not dominated by a massified technological apparatus. Such a movement demands the ruthless destruction of the myth of technology and technological progress. The false promise of technology cannot remain intact if we are to dismantle the exterminist system which is its ultimate result. We must look at all of its sides with the same critical eye with which we have had to learn to see its atomic power system—from mass media to cybernetics to the automobile to mechanized agriculture to genetic engineering. Today's technological promise is tomorrow's nightmare.

4) The social structure of the machine is by definition a structure of domination. We must oppose it because it negates the possibility of human freedom and a human scale. The decision-making process is the same whether it results in the decision to demolish Poletown for more factories, to build a nuclear plant, to dump chemical wastes in a river, to destroy farmland for "development," to declare martial law in Poland, or to gamble fifty million lives in a war strategy. Taking on the war machine means taking on this technological-political apparatus in all its forms. It means renewing forms of autonomy and creating new ones, creating face-to-face, egalitarian forms of association, undermining absolute power by creating a momentum of autonomous community and solidarity with the desire and the power to destroy it. It means confronting the megatechnic state.

But we must have no illusions about this process of resistance and renewal. The exterminist structure will not unmake itself. It will not de-weaponize itself. The megamachine will not suddenly turn back from the abyss, either of nuclear war or of ecological collapse, and resolve the problem which its very existence poses. This will never happen because it is precisely at the top of the megamachine—in the superpowers and the secondary powers—where turning back is impossible. It is there where crackpot realism rules, where technology creep is in command. It is there where the bureaucracies compete for influence and power, where they plan mad strategies of extinction to further their careers in the lunatic hierarchy. It is there where cold war becomes a vested interest. It is there where the inertia is the strongest. A movement against this machine can only come from below, organizing itself not to pressure the leaders to change their course, but to overthrow them altogether, dismantle the machine from which they derive their authority.

We must start by redefining the enemy: the enemy is not the common people held captive by the opposing exterminist systems. The enemy is the exterminist system and its accomplices on both sides. We must develop a *planetary identity*, not a national one. And we must begin to resist the state in all of its manifestations, declare our own war on the corporations, the institutes, the government and the military.

5) Finally, because we are all in some way responsible—if not for their decisions, then to those who we love and to everything that we desire—we must confront the machine within ourselves. It means to cease to be the pawns of the leaders and the dupes of their propaganda machines. It means uncovering the connections in our own lives.

It means fighting the paralysis and the cynicism which make it possible for the slaughter to go on. For there is a reverse side to the crackpot realism of the masters of war, and that is the moral somnambulism, the false normality of business-as-usual, the daily reproduction of misery and passivity in our own lives as the command centers relay their messages and the targets are chosen.

Transforming life is much more difficult, much more complex than signing a petition or begging the leaders to grant us all survival out of the kindness of their hearts. It is more problematic than attending demonstrations. It is much more difficult to recognize that this civilization is reaching its nadir and that the time has come for us to dismantle it and to create a new culture and a new way of life. Yet our very survival depends on just such a recognition and on just such an undertaking. It will take more courage and more imagination than any task ever faced in our long history on the planet. It will take a tremendous solidarity, not only with our fellow human beings around the globe, but with the land itself, from which all culture must emerge. And it will take more than a little luck and good fortune. But this work must be commenced, in our communities and within ourselves. Perhaps the imminence of losing our world will inspire us to win it back from the jaws of death.

This article is based on a talk given at a conference against nuclear war, held at Detroit's Grinning Duck Club on March 5, 6, and 7, 1982. The following articles and books were quoted in it:

E.P. Thompson: "A Letter to America," in *Protest and Survive*, edited by Thompson and Dan Smith;

"End of the Line," in the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, January 1981;

"Notes on Exterminism, the Last Stage of Civilization" in *New Left Review*, May-June 1980;

Jonathan Schell: *The Fate of the Earth*;

Nigel Calder: *Nuclear Nightmares*;

Mary Kaldor, "The Significance of Military Technology," in Eide, A. and Thee, M., *Problems of Contemporary Militarism*;

C. Wright Mills, *The Causes of World War Three*;

Herbert York, *Race to Oblivion*;

C. Gray and K. Payne, "Victory is Possible," in *Foreign Policy*, Summer 1980;

Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society*;

Lewis Mumford, *Technics and Civilization; The Myth of the Machine*, see especially Vol. II, *The Pentagon of Power*, chapters 9, 10 and 11;

Langdon Winner, *Autonomous Technology: Technics-Out-Of-Control as a Theme in Political Thought*.

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