

RELEASE IN PART
B6

From: sbwhoep [redacted]
Sent: Friday, January 1, 2010 3:34 PM
To: H
Subject: Re: Happy New Year!

B6

I gather that writer is a little known left wing freelance Irish reporter without an attachment to a newspaper or publication based in NYC and promoting the paperback edition of a campaign book on Obama published only in Ireland. Doesn't represent any trend, it's a one off.

My son Max's piece on "Obama: The Fallen Messiah," urging his most fervent supporters to look in the mirror to find a source of Obama's current troubles, was widely posted on major websites, including the Huffington Post, Talking Points Memo, Open Democracy (UK) and others, and has attracted a lot of attention:



Max Blumenthal

Author, "Republican Gomorrah: Inside The Movement That Shattered The Party"
 Posted: December 28, 2009 11:40 AM

Obama, the Fallen Messiah

During a time of economic decline, persistent cultural strife, deepening American involvement in far-off military conflicts, and rapid environmental deterioration, is there any wonder that so many Americans believe in salvation fantasies promising them both a transcendent, everlasting future and violent retribution against perceived evildoers? A 2002 CNN [poll](#) found that 59% of Americans believed that the prophecies in the Book of Revelations would come true. The startling number reflected the still-fresh trauma of the 9/11 attacks, but I suspect that it has held steady, if not risen. Indeed, mainstream American culture is permeated by apocalyptic beliefs and the yearning for messianic deliverance; the success of the movie *2012* and the forthcoming schlockbuster *Legacy* are just two recent examples.

I spent several chapters in my book, *Republican Gomorrah: Inside The Movement That Shattered The Party*, following the Christian right's ascent to the mountain top with George W. Bush's re-election; detailing how the movement shrouded science and reason in the shadow of the cross; then observing it as it swiftly imploded during the Terri Schiavo charade. Because I completed my book just days after Barack Obama's inauguration, I was only able to foreshadow the right's plan to undermine the new president without much analysis of what Obama would do, or how the movement that propelled his success would behave.

The Obama phenomenon is impossible to analyze or understand without considering the deep levels of anxiety and desperation that progressives suffered during the radical presidency of George W. Bush. When the Democratic primary began, some progressives seemed to embrace a secular version of the Christian right's salvation fantasy. They ached for a secular messiah to descend from the political heavens, reverse Bush's disastrous legacy and save the country from itself. A mere politician, even with solid progressive credentials, would have been unacceptable to them.

Many progressives believed they had discovered their savior in Barack Obama, a gifted orator and writer who proclaimed in his book, *The Audacity of Hope*, "I serve as a blank screen on which people of vastly different political stripes project their own views." As Obama's primary battle against Hillary Clinton intensified, his rhetoric and the language of his supporters grew increasingly messianic. At a rally in South Carolina, Oprah Winfrey referred to Obama as "The One," a fusion of Jesus and Neo from *The Matrix*. Then, when Obama defeated Clinton in Iowa, he quoted from a Hopi Indian End Times prophecy that had become popular among New Agers: "We are the ones we've been waiting for." Moved to the point of ecstasy by Obama's victory speech, Ezra Klein [declared](#) the candidate, "not the Word made flesh, but the triumph of the word over flesh... Obama is, at his best, able to call us back to our higher selves."

How did this...

Though he is a social conservative who [briefly](#) flirted with involvement in the Republican Party, it is worth noting that Louis Farrakhan, who had consistently ordered his followers to boycott elections and who attacked black politicians from Harold Washington to Jesse Jackson as tools of the white power structure, [declared](#) in a dramatic address to his followers that

Obama was the Messiah. Farrakhan's prophecy years before of the coming of a black savior (along with a Japanese-built UFO his mentor Elijah Muhammad called the "mother plane") was, in his view, fulfilled at last through the rise of Obama. Now that some of Obama's most zealous supporters are beginning to express grave doubts about his ability to deliver the transcendent change he promised, they should consider their role in contributing to the problems Obama faces with both his Democratic base and his opponents on the right. Many of Obama's harshest progressive critics embraced a secular salvation fantasy that Obama cleverly channeled and cultivated to excite them and distract from his lack of progressive accomplishments. In the end, Obama's messianization created false expectations while establishing political space for the right to undermine and delegitimize him.

...enable this?

To be sure, the salvation fantasy Obama offered stood in stark contrast to the dualistic, malignant Rapture visions of the Christian right. Obama did not play to his supporters' dark sides by promising them holy retribution against their perceived enemies. Instead, he repudiated partisan rancor, declaring that there was no "conservative America" where people rejected science, demonized gays and assailed minority and women's rights. In the words of Andrew Sullivan, a disaffected conservative who fervently supported Obama, Obama was destined to be "a liberal Reagan who can reunite America." Throughout the campaign, Obama and many of his supporters seemed to believe a Messiah could deliver them without having to confront the Devil first.

In my book, I detailed a series of experiments by a group of political psychologists seeking to provide evidence that the profound fear of death inspired extreme conservative beliefs. Their studies were inspired by the theory of famed cultural anthropologist Ernest Becker: "The idea of death, the fear of it, haunts the human animal like nothing else; it is a mainspring of human activity -- designed largely to avoid the fatality of death, to overcome it by denying in some way that it is the final destiny of man." The professors discovered that time and again, their study subjects would register more conservative responses to questions if they were first reminded of their own deaths. (See John Judis' excellent article, "Death Grip" on the studies for more).

The use of mortality reminders came in to play as soon as Obama was inaugurated, when the right attempted to delegitimize him by reversing the phenomenon he relied on to win: While Obama attempted to provide a blank screen for Americans to project their aspirations upon, conservatives projected their most fearsome inner demons onto him instead. The tactic was born during the October McCain-Palin rallies, when Sarah Palin and far-right surrogates like Joe the Plumber began to attack Obama as a nebulous Other, a strange outsider who did not share mainstream American values. Their intention was to make him as unfamiliar and frightening as possible, and in doing so, to scare off wavering independent voters. By this time, it was too late in the campaign for the tactic to take effect, so it extended into this year and peaked with the Fall Teabagger rallies and town hall disruptions.

During the 9.12 Tea Party rally on the National Mall, thousands of far-right activists carried signs depicted images of Stalin *and* Hitler transposed onto Obama's face. (The Teabagger propaganda bore a disturbing resemblance to the signs waved by right-wing Jewish settlers during rallies against Yitzhak Rabin that depicted the soon to be assassinated Israeli PM in Nazi SS garb *and* as the collaborator Marshall Petain, two seemingly incongruous images). Obama was a Muslim; Obama was a commie pinko; Obama was a cosmopolitan globalist; Obama was a black nationalist. It did not matter who Obama really was. The right simply wanted to portray him as culturally alien and insidious.

As cynical as the right's tactic was, it succeeded in tainting Obama's post-partisan veneer not only because he had insisted he could bridge the partisan divide, but because he had offered himself up as "a blank screen," defining himself as he thought different audiences wished to see him, and therefore not establishing a very clear identity at all. Thus the liberal left's messianization of Obama enabled and even encouraged his otherization by the radical right.

The right complemented its anti-Obama propaganda with false rumors designed to inject the language of death into the healthcare debate. The single most damaging rumor, adopted from the cult of Lyndon LaRouche, refined by former New York State Lt. Governor Betsy McCaughey, and mainstreamed by Palin, was that Obama's health care reform proposal included a plan to implement "death panels." While the president pleaded for compromise and reason, the right repeated the baseless charge over and over, insisting that the president had a secret plan to pull the plug on grandma, euthanize the severely handicapped, and kill the sick. Though healthcare reform appears certain to pass, albeit in a severely diluted form, Obama never recovered from the damage the right's mortality reminders did to his political standing.

When Obama announced his plan to escalate the war in Afghanistan and appeared to stand by passively as the public option and Medicare buy-in proposals were scrapped to mollify Joseph Lieberman, the progressive left went into contortions. Former Obama zealots now openly attack him as everything from a warmonger to a tool of Wall Streeters like Rahm Emanuel and Robert Rubin. "Kill the bill!" has become the battle cry of a major sector of the progressive movement, including Moveon.org, a group that endorsed Obama even though he had just voted to condemn them for attacking General David Petraeus.

The liberal left has become so disgruntled that a leading conservative talk radio host asked me recently if progressives were considering a primary challenge to Obama. I laughed and stated my belief that despite his troubles, Obama would win a second term. Whether or not that happens, those former Obama fanatics experiencing a crisis in faith should look in the mirror. They demanded a secular salvation fantasy and participated in the messianization of the candidate who delivered it to them. They now know that Obama is just a politician. What they have refused to acknowledge is that he would not have fallen so hard had they not lifted him so high.



Books By Max Blumenthal



B6

-----Original Message-----

From: H <HDR22@clintonemail.com>

To:

Sent: Fri, Jan 1, 2010 3:02 pm

Subject: Re: Happy New Year!

Thx--that's exactly what I think and will try to argue inside the Admin.

Also, there was a quite nasty piece in the Guardian by Nial someone (not Ferguson). Do you know him and why are they beating an imaginary dead horse on the first day of a new year?

----- Original Message -----

From:

To: H

Sent: Fri Jan 01 12:44:22 2010

Subject: Re: Happy New Year!

Krugman, in case you haven't seen:

The New York Times <<http://www.nytimes.com/>>

<<http://graphics8.nytimes.com/ads/spacer.gif>> Printer Friendly Format Sponsored

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January 1, 2010

Op-Ed Columnist

Chinese New Year

By PAUL KRUGMAN

<http://topics.nytimes.com/top/opinion/editorialsandoped/oped/columnists/paulkrugman/index.html?inline=nyt-per>

It's the season when pundits traditionally make predictions about the year ahead. Mine concerns international economics: I predict that 2010 will be the year of China. And not in a good way.

Actually, the biggest problems with China involve climate change. But today I want to focus on currency policy.

China has become a major financial and trade power. But it doesn't act like other big economies. Instead, it follows a mercantilist policy, keeping its trade surplus artificially high. And in today's depressed world, that policy is, to put it bluntly, predatory.

Here's how it works: Unlike the dollar, the euro or the yen, whose values fluctuate freely, China's currency is pegged by official policy at about 6.8 yuan to the dollar. At this exchange rate, Chinese manufacturing has a large cost advantage over its rivals, leading to huge trade surpluses.

Under normal circumstances, the inflow of dollars from those surpluses would push up the value of China's currency, unless it was offset by private investors heading the other way. And private investors are trying to get into China, not out of it. But China's government restricts capital inflows, even as it buys up dollars and parks them abroad, adding to a \$2 trillion-plus hoard of foreign exchange reserves.

This policy is good for China's export-oriented state-industrial complex, not so good for Chinese consumers. But what about the rest of us?

In the past, China's accumulation of foreign reserves, many of which were invested in American bonds, was arguably doing us a favor by keeping interest rates low - although what we did with those low interest rates was mainly to inflate a housing bubble. But right now the world is awash in cheap money, looking for someplace to go. Short-term interest rates are close to zero; long-term interest rates are higher, but only because investors expect the zero-rate policy to end some day. China's bond purchases make little or no difference.

Meanwhile, that trade surplus drains much-needed demand away from a depressed world economy. My back-of-the-envelope calculations suggest that for the next couple of years Chinese mercantilism may end up reducing U.S. employment by around 1.4 million jobs.

The Chinese refuse to acknowledge the problem. Recently Wen Jiabao, the prime minister, dismissed foreign complaints: "On one hand, you are asking for the yuan to appreciate, and on the other hand, you are taking all kinds of protectionist measures." Indeed: other countries are taking (modest) protectionist measures precisely because China refuses to let its currency rise. And more such measures are entirely appropriate.

Or are they? I usually hear two reasons for not confronting China over its policies. Neither holds water.

First, there's the claim that we can't confront the Chinese because they would wreak havoc with the U.S. economy by dumping their hoard of dollars. This is all wrong, and not just because in so doing the Chinese would inflict large losses on themselves. The larger point is that the same forces that make Chinese mercantilism so damaging right now also mean that China has little or no financial leverage.

Again, right now the world is awash in cheap money. So if China were to start selling dollars, there's no reason to think it would significantly raise U.S. interest rates. It would probably weaken the dollar against other currencies - but that would be good, not bad, for U.S. competitiveness and employment. So if the Chinese do dump dollars, we should send them a thank-you note.

Second, there's the claim that protectionism is always a bad thing, in any circumstances. If that's what you believe, however, you learned Econ 101 from the wrong people – because when unemployment is high and the government can't restore full employment, the usual rules don't apply.

Let me quote from a classic paper by the late Paul Samuelson, who more or less created modern economics: "With employment less than full ... all the debunked mercantilistic arguments" – that is, claims that nations who subsidize their exports effectively steal jobs from other countries – "turn out to be valid." He then went on to argue that persistently misaligned exchange rates create "genuine problems for free-trade apologetics." The best answer to these problems is getting exchange rates back to where they ought to be. But that's exactly what China is refusing to let happen.

The bottom line is that Chinese mercantilism is a growing problem, and the victims of that mercantilism have little to lose from a trade confrontation. So I'd urge China's government to reconsider its stubbornness. Otherwise, the very mild protectionism it's currently complaining about will be the start of something much bigger.

-----Original Message-----

From: H <HDR22@clintonemail.com>

To:

Sent: Fri, Jan 1, 2010 12:08 pm

Subject: Happy New Year!

B6

Thx for sending the emails about the Nigerian. We are working on all of the issues raised.

I hope you, Jackie and the boys (men??) have a happy, healthy, prosperous 2010.

I will look forward to seeing more of you in the upcoming months.

All the best, H