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**More of Bush? It Could be Worse.**

**Left Margin**

**By Carl Bloice**

**BlackCommentator.com Editorial Board**

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It's not clear whether or how long the Republicans can maintain this pretense. Stretching this stage-managed ABC-TV "interview" over four episodes will not hide the fact that the Republican Vice-Presidential candidate is best kept away from microphones and tough questions about government policy. Still, one never knows – the way the major U.S. mass media seems to go along so willing with the charade takes one's breath away. As one British correspondent put it "the format was more akin to a celebrity interview than a forensic analysis of a vice-presidential candidate 55 days before an election." But, never mind that. The Charles Gibson interview with Alaska Governor Sarah Palin, on the seventh anniversary of the Sept. 11th, had a lot of substance. And it was scary.

"Sarah Palin shows hawkish streak in first interview," ran the headline in the British newspaper *The Guardian*.

Palin didn't just threaten Russia with war in her first interview; she echoed her running mate's call for "victory in the war" in Iraq. She linked the war in Iraq with the Sept. 11th terrorist attacks, something the Bush administration no longer does. Palin backs military action in Pakistan even without the support of that country's government. And, she's come close to endorsing an Israeli bombing attack on Iran.

Palin spoke strongly in favor of talking Georgia into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and indicated that the U.S. would have to become involved should that county become embroiled in a military conflict with Russia. "There are numerous problems with this statement," wrote Ilan Goldenberg in *The Guardian*, "the most

important element is that it sends a very dangerous and extreme signal to the world - especially other nuclear powers. This type of dangerous talk reinforces the militaristic saber-rattling of the McCain campaign. From joking about bombing Iran, to talking about invading Iraq, Iran and Syria weeks after 9/11 to the misguided "we are all Georgians now," the McCain campaign is sending all kinds of horrifying signals to the world about the types of wars it would fight. Leaders in other capitals are paying attention and words matter."

The consequence of Governor Palin's woeful lack of knowledge and experience is that her pronouncements are not nuanced as Senator McCain's but they do represent the tenor of the ticket. As a clearer picture emerges of what the foreign policies of a McCain-Palin Administration would look like, it has prompted nervousness and concern elsewhere on the planet. One of the reasons for Obama's popular support over much of the rest of world is that the substance of the McCain-Palin campaign is scaring the bejesus out of people.

Much has been made of Palin's apparent lack of knowledge about the "Bush Doctrine," but that might not carry the weight with the public some observers think it might. Most people don't actually know what the term means and pliant Big Media can hardly be said to have spelled it out clearly when it mattered, before the invasion of Iraq.

After she arrived in St. Paul and before she was nominated, she met behind closed doors with officials of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), the powerful lobby group tied to the Israeli rightwing and supporters of the occupation. Big Media didn't tell us much about that huddle although there is not a chance in the world that it was not highly significant. In her interview, Palin said she would not second guess how Israel should respond to a nuclear Iran and that the U.S. doesn't "have to stand for that."

If any more indication were needed that the neo-conservative hawks have embraced the Republican Presidential ticket, one only had to watch the neocons go into rapture after Palin's nomination. They have not been happy campers in the post-Cold War world. The "war on terror" is a bit nebulous and its execution can cause the kind of conflict the chieftains of the oil industry don't want to have with the autocratic governments of the Middle East. Better a real international enemy: Russia.

"And we've got to keep an eye on Russia," Palin told Gibson. "For Russia to have exerted such pressure in terms of invading a smaller democratic country, unprovoked, is unacceptable," she told Gibson. Of course, Russia invaded Georgia after the latter attacked South Ossetia.

Palin was evidently unmoved by the ridicule already visited on the notion that she somehow knows how to deal with Russia because she lives so close to it. She has insights into U.S. relations with Moscow, she said, because "they're our next-door neighbors, and you can actually see Russia from land here in Alaska ... from an island in Alaska."

About Palin's discussion of going to war, the British commentator Goldenberg noted that "there is a nominee for the vice presidency of the United States who may one day have her hand on the button and she is casually talking about potential catastrophic nuclear war."

"Saber rattling matters," wrote Goldenberg. "Words matter. We've learned that from the past eight years. When George Bush said 'With us or against us,' it mattered. When he referred to a 'crusade' it mattered. When McCain jokes about war with Iran, calls our

allies 'vacuous and posturing', says that Iraq is building a weapons assembly line for al Qaeda, it matters.

"And when Sarah Palin, a first term governor with no national security experience or expertise, talks about hypothetical nuclear war it really matters. It reflects badly on her and her readiness. It reflects even worse on John McCain who thought that she was qualified to be Commander in Chief."

Qualification aside, what has many observers outside the U.S. greatly disturbed is the content of the recent pronouncements coming from both spots on the Republican ticket. Speaking in Hamburg last week, Michael Schaefer, Germany's ambassador to China, drew attention to the increasingly bellicose rhetoric emerging in the US presidential campaign. According to the *Financial Times*, he cited the McCain's candidate's proposal to line up the US with other governments in a quasi-institutional framework to oppose countries like China and Russia. "That would be ... a very dangerous course within the transatlantic alliance," he told a Europe-China conference.

Referring to "the muck being hurled by the McCain campaign is preventing a debate on real issues - on whether the country really wants, for example, to continue the economic policies of the last eight years," wrote *New York Times* columnist Paul Krugman last week. He went on to suggest "the Obama campaign is wrong to suggest that a McCain-Palin administration would just be a continuation of Bush-Cheney. If the way John McCain and Sarah Palin are campaigning is any indication, it would be much, much worse." It sounds like a lot of people abroad are concluding this might also be true in the area of foreign affairs.

"Americans have been warned," wrote Jacob Heilbrunn on the *Huffington Post* the day the Palin interview aired. "If John McCain and Sarah Palin are elected, they will make the Bush administration look like a dress rehearsal for what's coming. McCain and Palin aren't as bad as Bush. They're worse. By treating Russia like an enemy, they will turn it into one. An American attack on Iran, which McCain is thirsting for, could lead to a wider conflict with Russia that has incalculable consequences."

The U.S. has had eight years of a government that has held views similar to those expressed by Palin, wrote Goldenberg. "The result has been to put ideological and emotional distance between it and large parts of Europe, Asia and Latin America. Apart from isolationist Republicans, this is bad news both for America and the rest of us. America needs a friendlier world to do economic and political business. The world needs an America more in tune with its natural friends and allies."

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