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### **Fruits of Myopia**

Nobody need doubt president-elect Reagan's benevolent intentions towards Israel. With his realistic understanding of the Soviet Union's expansionist aims, it is sheer common sense for him to see Israel as an integral component of a sane American global strategy.

Reagan inherits a daunting situation. For nearly two decades the USSR has been building up purposefully a potential for global domination. She has spanned the continents and the oceans. Combining an imperialist appetite nurtured over two centuries with an unwavering doctrinal determination to achieve the world-wide victory of socialism over capitalism, she has achieved a commanding posture in areas of major significance to the security of the West: the Middle East and Africa. The director of the Soviet Institute of Africa, Dr. Anatoly Gromyko, was not boasting altogether vainly when he wrote recently (in Moscow's *Asia and Africa Today*, July-August 1980):

"Lenin's cause lives and triumphs... The enemies of Leninism vainly try to confine it to certain geographical boundaries. There are no such boundaries. It was under the direct influence of the ideas of the great Lenin that the National Liberation Movement in Africa has scored its spectacular victories..."

The principle that has guided Soviet operations, says Gromyko, is Lenin's idea of "proletarian internationalism". It was active in Angola, in Ethiopia and other countries and, says Gromyko, it is "currently in action in Afghanistan".

Whether as a result of her own initiative or by grasping opportunities, the Soviet Union's far-flung and often predominant influence throughout Africa is creeping steadily towards her prime strategic target, the South African republic. Control of South African mineral resources and of the Cape sea-route — for transport of essential raw materials and oil to the West — would place the West at her mercy. Her thrust southward is comparable in strategic significance to her more spectacular progress in the Middle East.

Unlike President Carter, Reagan did not need the Soviet aggression in Afghanistan to wake him up to the realities of the Soviet purpose, nor to the grim implications of Moscow's bold military intervention outside of Europe. It is patent, moreover, that beyond Afghanistan, with the Iran "bastion" in shambles, the Middle East assumes more and more the aspect of a soft underbelly for Soviet infiltration and, if need be, aggression.

The Middle Eastern legacy now deposited in Reagan's hands has accumulated primarily and largely through the myopia of the West. Britain's precipitate abandonment of the area "east of Suez" at the end of the Sixties — leaving a vacuum — began the process; but it reflected in fact the growing political and moral flabbiness which has pervaded Western Europe ever since.

At this very moment, a distinct tendency is emerging among nation members of NATO in Western Europe to renege on undertakings given only some months ago to increase their defence outlays by 3 per cent.

These undertakings were given in response to the realization of the growing inferiority of NATO armament capacity compared with that of the Soviet Union. Such a perception of priorities, and of Western solidarity does not presage a happy beginning for Reagan's relations with Western Europe.

Europe, however, was for years given an unfortunate American lead and example. The grand design of "détente" with the USSR (seen by Moscow as a wonderful means of increasing her global military capacity) was largely of American manufacture. A meeting of experts on strategy and on Soviet policy in Brussels in September 1979, was privileged to hear a startling confession by détente's leading exponent. After describing the tremendous recent advance in Soviet strength and the consequent dangers to the West, he said:

"The amazing phenomenon about which historians will ponder is that all this happened without the US's attempting to make a significant effort to rectify that state of affairs. One reason was that it was not easy to rectify.

"But another reason was the growth of a school of thought to which I myself contributed... which considered that strategic stability was a military asset, and in which the amazing theory developed — that is, historically amazing — that vulnerability contributed to peace and invulnerability contributed to the risks of war... The strategic vulnerability of the United States was seen as a positive asset... It cannot have occurred often in history that it was considered an advantageous military doctrine to make your own country deliberately vulnerable".

The speaker was, of course, Prof. Henry Kissinger, the former Secretary of State.

It was not only the US and the West at large that became the victims of the consequences of this amazing doctrine. In its pursuit the Suez Canal was opened in 1975 — and thus tremendous impetus was given to the great Soviet leap forward into Africa, into the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf area, and to the overturn of the balance of power in the whole region.

To achieve the opening of the Suez Canal, Israel had to be pressed into retreating in Sinai; thus began the shrinking of Israel, and the contraction of her strategic reach.

The policy of shrinking Israel has in itself, however, been a function of US political doctrine in another area: the perceived need to please and appease the Arabs. It has been pursued vigorously and relentlessly, and it remains the *leitmotif* of Washington's policy to this day.

We are thus the witnesses to a paradox no less grotesque than that confessed by Kissinger. Israel, the only state in the area capable of serving as an effective deterrent to Soviet advance towards control of Middle East oil, is pressed to withdraw into the indefensible 1949 Armistice lines, where she would be reduced to concentrating on the defence of the bare bones of her security, where she would be of little value to the West; and the vacuum created in the heart of Eretz

Yisrael by her withdrawal would be filled by a Soviet or a Soviet-manipulated presence — all this on the very borders of Saudi Arabia.

This is not theoretical vision. It is not only European statesmen, obsessed by their thirst for oil and their hunger for petrodollars (and, some of them, activated by the germ of doctrinal anti-Zionism) who demand of Israel that she agree to this form of self-immolation. A close examination of State Department formulations, going back to 1948, will reveal the stark truth. They carry the same implication.

It is only fair to the European statesmen who recently offered “guarantees” to an Israel vulnerable and all but emasculated (if she were to accept their dictation to give up her own security belt) to recall that this chilling prospect, too, was first held out by an American statesman — Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, after the Yom Kippur War (on November 13, 1973).

If Reagan’s performance is to match his grasp of the Soviet challenge, he faces the formidable task of a considerable reassessment, even a reversal, of fundamental assumptions in American policy in the Middle East.

The vital need to the West of a strong Israel requires that she be not weakened but strengthened; and that means, first of all, the cessation of pressures for shrinking her territorially.

It is surely obvious moreover that in the geopolitical circumstances that have arisen the Arab striving to eliminate Israel (step by step or at one blow) conflicts with the interests of the Western nations determined to uphold their security and their civilization against the Soviet onslaught.

Far from permitting the continuance of Arab dictation of US policy towards Israel, a president committed to the revival of American power in the world and, more closely, to the containment of Soviet expansion, must make plain to the Saudis, and to their fellow-Arabs ostensibly committed to the Western cause, that the US will not countenance the further weakening of Israel.

This is no small part of the magnitude of the tasks facing Ronald Reagan as president. But he will no doubt discover — indeed he probably knows already — that he cannot overcome his problems unless he first corrects the blunders of his predecessors.