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US ELECTIONS

1. THE SOVIET MEDIA HAVE AS YET SCARCELY GONE BEYOND GIVING THE BARE NEWS OF REAGAN'S VICTORY, ALTHOUGH, WITH A NICE TOUCH, MOSCOW RADIO SAID ONE OF THE REASONS CARTER LOST WAS BECAUSE OF HIS HOSTILE COURSE TOWARDS THE SOVIET UNION.

2. I DO NOT IN FACT EXPECT EARLY SUBSTANTIVE REACTION. WITH TWO-AND-A-HALF MONTHS OF THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION STILL TO RUN, IT MAKES SENSE FOR THE RUSSIANS TO KEEP THEIR POLICY OPTIONS OPEN. THEY DO NOT NEED TO MAKE A MOVE AT THIS STAGE, AND CAN LEAVE IT TO REAGAN TO SHOW HIS HAND FIRST. THEY HAVE YET TO FORM ANY CLEAR IDEA OF WHAT A REAGAN ADMINISTRATION IN PRACTICE PORTENDS. LIKE THE REST OF US THEY WILL BE WATCHING FIRST TO SEE WHOM HE CHOOSES AS HIS ADVISERS (PARTICULARLY ON NATIONAL SECURITY) WHAT HIS FREEDOM OF MANOEUVRE IN RELATION TO CONGRESS WILL BE, AND THEN HOW POLICY BEGINS TO BE EXPRESSED. THEY CAN HOWEVER SCARCELY FAIL TO SEE REAGAN'S VICTORY AS A SHARP MOVE TO THE RIGHT, TENDING TO HARDEN THE POLARISATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE WHICH WAS ALREADY REFLECTED IN THE WESTERN REACTION TO SS20 AND TO AFGHANISTAN. IN SOME WAYS IT IS CONVENIENT FOR THEM TO HAVE AN OPPONENT WHO MAY SEEM TO FALL MORE CLOSELY THAN CARTER INTO THEIR OWN IDEOLOGICAL IMAGE OF AMERICAN POLICY AND THEY MAY HOPE, IN PROPAGANDA TERMS AT LEAST, TO BENEFIT FROM THIS. THEY WILL NO DOUBT EXPECT THAT HIS POLICIES WILL NOT MATCH IN ALL RESPECTS HIS CAMPAIGN STATEMENTS, BUT THEY MAY SEE A CHANCE THAT A CLOSER IDENTIFICATION WITH ISRAEL WILL BENEFIT THEM WITH THE ARABS; THAT THE NEW ADMINISTRATION MAY MAKE ITSELF UNPOPULAR WITH THE THIRD WORLD; AND THAT THE SOVIET UNION MAY BE ABLE TO UNDO A LITTLE OF THE DAMAGE TO ITS INTERNATIONAL STANDING WHICH RESULTED FROM AFGHANISTAN. THEY MAY ALSO CALCULATE THAT IF REAGAN DOES WHAT HE HAS SAID HE WILL DO THE STRAINS IN AMERICAN RELATIONS WITH WESTERN EUROPE MAY INCREASE AND TO THIS END THEY MAY PUT RENEWED STRESS ON EUROPEAN DETENTE AND DISARMAMENT:

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3. I WOULD NOT BE SURPRISED IF THEY START TO PREPARE FOR SOME OF THESE LINES FAIRLY SOON, BUT IT WILL BE VERY MUCH A MATTER FOR TACTICAL MANOEUVRE. WHAT REALLY MATTERS TO THEM IS THE CENTRAL STRATEGIC RELATIONSHIP AND HERE THEY ARE IN A DILEMMA. THEY CANNOT RELISH THE PROSPECT OF TRYING TO MATCH A GREATER AMERICAN DEFENCE EFFORT AND THEY MUST KNOW THAT THEY HAVE AT LEAST AS GREAT AN INTEREST AS THE AMERICANS IN REACHING AN ACCOMMODATION ON ARMS CONTROL. THE STAKES ARE HIGHER THAN IN 1978 AND 1979. BUT IT IS HARD TO SEE HOW THEY CAN HAVE ANY HOPE OF SALT II BEING REVIVED. THEY WOULD REGARD ITS DEMISE AFTER THE SIGNATURE IN VIENNA LAST YEAR AS A MAJOR BREACH OF FAITH ON THE PART OF THE US WHICH SHOULD NOT LIGHTLY BE FORGOTTEN PARTICULARLY IN VIEW OF BREZHNEV'S PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT. IT WOULD BE WHOLLY OUT OF CHARACTER FOR THEM TO RENEGOTIATE SUCH AN AGREEMENT JUST BECAUSE THE OTHER SIDE WANTED A BETTER DEAL AND IT IS DIFFICULT TO IMAGINE ANY ROOM FOR MANOEUVRE UNLESS THE US WERE WILLING TO MAKE IT LOOK LIKE A BALANCED EXCHANGE BY CATERING TO SOVIET INTERESTS WITH AN EXTENSION OF THE PROTOCOL IN SOME FORM OR ANOTHER. OTHERWISE IT WOULD BE A MATTER OF A NEW TREATY TO TAKE ACCOUNT OF NEW CIRCUMSTANCES ONCE THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP WAS SATISFIED THAT IT HAD A VALID NEGOTIATING PARTNER. MEANWHILE THE TNF/FBS TALKS IN GENEVA WILL BE SEEN BY THE RUSSIANS AS A BRIDGE: AS A MEANS OF TESTING AMERICAN INTENTIONS; AND POSSIBLY IF ALL WENT REMARKABLY WELL, AS THE STARTING POINT FOR A SALT REPLACEMENT.

4. WHILE AWAITING THE INAUGURATION AND THE POLICIES THAT WILL FOLLOW IT, THE RUSSIANS CAN BE EXPECTED TO DEPLOY THE POLICY LINE OF BREZHNEV'S ALMA ATA SPEECH "ATTEMPTS AT BURYING DETENTE AND PLUNGING THE WORLD INTO ANOTHER COLD WAR PROVED OF NO BENEFIT TO THEIR INITIATORS NONE OF THE NOW EXISTING SERIOUS PROBLEMS IN THE WORLD IS AMENABLE TO A SOLUTION FROM A POSITION OF STRENGTH, BY SABRE RATTLING. ONE SHOULD BELIEVE THAT SOONER OR LATER THE US LEADERS TOO WILL AGAIN COME TO SUCH A CONCLUSION. THE SOONER THE BETTER".

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