

Newsweek

21 RUE DE BERRI • PARIS 75008, FRANCE

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July 18, 1978

Dear Linc,

Many thanks for your Boston Globe clipping. Great stuff. Regretfully, however, I find myself unable to share some of your perceptions. Field work in Africa and the Mideast gives one a somewhat different perspective. Kosygin gave Ismelda Marcos a two-hour private audience last week. I sat next to her at dinner the night after her arrival in London from Moscow. She had seen K just before leaving and quoted from the conversation at great length. The key statement was that by the early 80s the Soviet Union and its allies would control, along with all the progressive forces of the world, most of our planet's land mass, the high seas and space. Her own perceptions, which crop up in almost every conversation I have with a Third World leader these days, is that Russia is winning by default and that they don't wish to be caught on the losing side. Whether these perceptions are justified or not is immaterial. It's what these characters believe -- and what they are told by Soviet leaders -- that really counts, especially as they see Jimmy Carter doing the work of two men -- Laurel & Hardy.

I was in Baghdad two weeks ago doing an interview with Saddam Hussein, the no. 2 who ~~is~~ really No. 1. In private asides, he asked me whether I thought Carter fully realized what was going on and to what degree the Soviets were playing for major geopolitical stakes in the next year or two. I answered I didn't think he did because someone like Vance, for example, does not believe -- and said so in a recent interview with Time -- that the Soviets are testing the U.S. in Africa and that Brezhnev and Carter basically shared the same aspirations when it came to arms limitation. He shook his head in utter disbelief. Siad Barre of Somalia, another Marxist leader who was privy to quite a few Soviets thoughts and plans in his area before they parted company last year, gave le Monde quite an interview last week, elaborating on what he had already told me last January. Don't forget that he had many long hours with Castro when he visited the area in March 77.

Saddam Hussein told me he found the naivete and complacency in Western ruling circles -- apart from the Elysee -- hard to comprehend.

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Few people are better informed on these matters than the head of the French service. He makes the Admiral in Washington seem like a boy scout. From everything he has heard in recent months, he is convinced there is both a Soviet-Cuban-East German grand design in Africa and the Mideast, ~~but also~~ and a timetable. The key to Kremlin thinking is what they perceive to be U.S. and West European paralysis, at least as long as Carter is in the White House and cannot really cope with Congress.

Perhaps the national interest is not going to be served by dusting off the old global box-score, but try to remember that the leaders I deal with are keeping score on the same old global box-score.

We look forward to seeing you early next year. By then, hopefully I will have finished a book -- media and geopolitics "faction" -- and we will be free at last to entertain you in our new apartment (the highest in Geneva, 6 Chemin de la Tourelle, between the Intercon and the airport) in the style to which you have occasionally become accustomed while in Geneva. The new phone number is 98 trois fois (98.98.98).

Much love to you both from Sandra &

Arnaud