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"Russia Counts On Refusal To Sacrifice"

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Editorial Climax? Beautiful and timely choice of this study of the true meaning of democracy.

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This packs a real wallop - esp. if you don't know the last sentence where he's writing from!

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Tuesday, February 5, 1980

Russia Counts On Refusal To Sacrifice

By JACOBO TIMERMAN

TEL AVIV — The world we want seems unreachable. The world the Soviet rulers want to impose is intolerable. The world proposed by the irrational beings who come and go — from Idi Amin to Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini — is unacceptable.

It is hard to define the world we live in. Such a definition seemed possible when President Carter submitted SALT 2 to Congress for ratification. At that point, the world looked like a place where the rules of the game that define life and death would be the outcome of wise coexistence between superpowers. In spite of Khomeini and the Prague trials, one could count one's blessings in Fidel Castro's freeing of prisoners and the slow but positive advancement of the Egyptian-Israeli peace agreements.

AFTER AFGHANISTAN, however, who would dare mention the world of wise coexistence?

The United States would like, or at least wanted, a certain legal order, a certain harmony, a certain common development. The Soviet Union seemed to admit this possibility. Afghanistan proves not only that Moscow does not accept a shared world; it proves also that the Russians have not given up the will to rule the world and that if they do not

strike more often it is because of their exemplary, almost perfect, sense of timing.

It had looked as if the Soviet Union had given up certain ideas and some dubious tactics. It appears now that it has renounced nothing. It still believes in the ultimate success of the world revolution, in the power of its system, and is as convinced as ever of the weakness and corruption of the democratic countries.

The Soviet Union is ready to cut down the wheat consumption of its people and is firmly convinced that the democratic world will never agree to reduce its oil consumption. This is its big asset. Is it wrong? No

Even though America may aspire to a world political order based on the elementary principles of respect for human beings, is it in any way certain that the other democratic countries of importance want anything other than the orderly supply and consumption of raw materials?

If the democratic countries are ready to undertake the necessary sacrifices, confrontation with the Soviet Union would become unavoidable. But if they are not willing to sacrifice, another definition or description of present events must be found, and an elaborate dialectic or new symbols or comparisons will become necessary once it be-

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comes certain that the Soviet Union will not go back, and an acceptable explanation has to be offered to provide some comfort.

This is what Willy Brandt attempted to do in adhering to Carter's line. The leader of West German socialism stated that events in Afghanistan constituted the most serious crisis since World War II and that a return of the Cold War must be avoided. Pious words! For, if the truth be told, the Soviet intervention, at a time when world politics turned detente around, is far more serious than any event during the Cold War.

If henceforth no doubt is possible about Moscow's ultimate aims. World War II was child's play as compared to what will be required from now on to set limits to Soviet hegemonic ideology.

Brandt's statement was not the only pious declaration. Millions of pious words have been said and printed. However, all this verbal outpouring does not suffice to define the real world. Even worse, it hides the description of this world, and it is far from soothing. Rather than a crisis, what has tak-

en place is a cave-in.

Whatever solution is found, we shall have to start all over again. It is not a matter of going back to 1945, at the end of World War II, or to 1948, at the start of the Cold War, as postulated by Brandt. We shall have to go back much further in time. We may be reliving the events of the '30s, though perhaps in a more hazardous version.

Considering the worldwide hegemonic decision of one country, we should know that this time this is not the result of the hallucinatory ravings of some irrational brains but a strategy patiently, painstakingly developed. Rather than a strategy, it is as if history was being rewritten.

IF THE RUSSIANS are indeed rewriting history — not past but future history — is it logical to wait until they are through in order to read the definitive text? The Russians seem convinced that the democratic countries will display ever more patience as long as their level of consumption and production is not endangered, and that the United States, ever more isolated, will have to start bargaining. Once again. The message, romantic and coming from far, may be worth repeating: Here in Israel everybody is ready to fight.