

A master strategist's global

America," a Pakistani general said to me recently "plays poker while Russia plays chess." Sad and true. Washington reflects the "now" society of instant solutions and 30-second thoughts.

Because North Americans are almost totally ignorant of geography, history or military affairs, just getting them to understand the outside world, and Moscow's patient, long-term strategy to dominate it, is almost impossible.

America does, however, have one strategic grandmaster of its own who is every bit as skilful as Russia's experts. I met with him this past week in Washington.

Zbigniew Brzezinski has a name that only his Polish mother could love and enough energy to light up Cracow. Brzezinski started his career as a university professor, and served President Jimmy Carter as national security adviser during the turbulent years from 1977 to 1981.

Today, Brzezinski is again teaching at Columbia and is resident at Georgetown's highly respected Centre for Strategic Studies. I was frankly fascinated to meet this man who was, for a time, the second most powerful figure in Washington. Brzezinski's photos make him look rather withdrawn and donnish. But in person he exudes warmth, a razor-sharp intellect and the élan of one of Poland's legendary lancers.

Talking with Brzezinski and reading his latest book, *Game Plan*, made me alter my view of this much misunderstood man. Brzezinski had the bad luck to serve under Jimmy Carter, a well-meaning leader who was widely regarded as weak and indecisive — a view that I suspect will mellow as more years elapse.

Brzezinski and Carter both had the misfortune to

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assume office just when the corrupt, incompetent Iranian monarchy fell apart like a house of cards. The ensuing hostage crisis was used by the enemies of Carter and Brzezinski to beat them out of office.

At almost the same time, the USSR invaded Afghanistan and massed troops along the Iranian border. To Brzezinski, it appeared that Soviet forces might roll on southward to the West's oil lifeline, the Strait of Hormuz.

Brzezinski confirmed to me that during those tense days his National Security Council had actively considered the option of using tactical nuclear weapons to block the Zagros mountain passes through which advancing Soviet armor would have to pass on their way to the Gulf.

Today Brzezinski feels that the region of Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan, which he terms the West's "soft underbelly," remains a zone of maximum danger.

Is the 1980 Carter Doctrine that promised to defend Iran and Pakistan against Soviet invasion still operative today, I asked Brzezinski? Yes, he insisted, a policy strongly reaffirmed by the Reagan administration. Any Soviet attack on Iran or Pakistan would be met with intense U.S. opposition, including military force. Let the

game plan

Soviets invade Pakistan, he added, and Afghanistan would seem "minor" by comparison.

In *Game Plan*, Brzezinski neatly summarizes and categorizes the complex global rivalry between the U.S. and Soviet Union. I read a great many books on strategy and policy but none can compare in lucidity, organization and logic to Brzezinski's newest work. It is, quite simply, the best book on the subject of grand strategy that has been written in the U.S. since World War II. Almost singlehandedly, Brzezinski has restored the long-neglected study of geopolitics to its rightful intellectual place.

Game Plan offers a master strategy to deal with the Soviet Union — and a realistic method of looking at ourselves. The book's conclusions are frank, brutal and often disturbing — and long overdue in Washington where slogans and TV spots tend to replace clear thinking and knowledge.

The most important single point that comes out of this cornucopia of keen observations is that the U.S. and USSR are locked — and will remain so — in a grand historical contest between two "imperial systems." Summits and backslapping will not alter this reality. Moscow's only source of power comes from its military might. The West must continue the long, arduous task of checking Soviet military power, particularly in the world's key places like Germany, Korea and Pakistan.

Arms control, says Brzezinski, "should be viewed as part of — not a substitute for — American defence policy," and must also be tied to Soviet behavior on political issues.

Ronald Reagan made precisely these points in Iceland. I suspect he had *Game Plan* for bedtime reading.