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*Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev invites U.S. President Richard Nixon to precede him to the podium as the Russian leader was welcomed to the White House in June of last year to begin their series of summit talks. Mr. Nixon had visited Moscow in May 1972, where a number of accords were signed that were designed, in the words of the President's report to Congress, to "turn away from the confrontations of the past quarter-century".*

up the greatest opportunities for man's physical and spiritual perfection". In the words of Punch, "you might call the situation Kafkaesque, except that the name of Franz Kafka does not officially exist . . .".

#### Origins of détente

What, then, is the balance between the intuitive pessimism of Giraudoux and the calculated optimism of contemporary statesmen about relations with the Soviet Union? *Détente* has its origins in fear and disarray — fear of the dreadful possibilities of modern war, fear of China, disarray in the Western alliance prompted partly by the recovery of Europe and the resurgence of Japan, and disarray in the East European alliance, which has been held together by virtue of two military invasions in the last 17 years. *Détente* is manifested in efforts to achieve a balanced reduction of military forces, in increased exchanges in the areas of science and culture and in the expansion of trade. The uncertain hopes embodied in these developments are at least better than an "uncertain trumpet", and it is no doubt necessary to persevere, not so much because there is great reason for hope as because there is little alternative to it.

*'Détente has its origins in fear and disarray...'*

Few people know, and least of all, the intricacies of the military calculus, but it seems reasonable to assume that the Soviet Union is unlikely to reduce its military strength substantially as best, as it has NATO on one flank and China on the other. If such a reduction does take place, it should be linked, in the Soviet view, with a guarantee of the *status quo* in Eastern Europe. The problem with any objective is that it is beyond the power of any group of statesmen, however well their agreement. If Vietnam has taught anything, it should be that "no army withstand the strength of an idea whose time has come". We may, if we wish, accede to Soviet demands for permanent boundaries that cannot be altered by means and, secure in that achievement, reduce the forces that are assembled against them. We shall not thereby have increased Soviet security, for its insecurity lies in the nature of its empire and not in the decision of its frontiers — just as, in the case of some, the insecurity of the West may lie in the decay of its moral and social fabric. All of which is not to say that we should refrain from doing our best in the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) and seeking with all ingenuity at our command a reduction of forces that might help to change attitudes in both societies in the talks being held in Vienna. It is simply to say that we should not delude ourselves into thinking that armed forces are the cause of the conflict and that stability will follow their reduction, however measured.

A second option is one to which the West attaches great importance — "freedom of movement". I hope I shall not be obtuse or facetious if I fail to view with assurance the manner in which the shipping of thousands of Americans to the Soviet Union and *vice versa* will be about "understanding". One could equally well argue, it would seem, that the opposite effect might be achieved. We are, it seems, imbued in North America with the notion that "to know us is to love us" and remain convinced that, if only we could get enough people in a position to report with accuracy in the Soviet Union, and they would be on the path to mutual respect. This seems to overlook the fact that Brezhnev put so well when he said "our world views are irreconcilable" — in short, fantasy. It is, nevertheless, a dream we must follow because it is one of the few we have and it might come true. Scientific, academic and cultural changes are in a different category and very important in so far as they contribute to the merging of those "opposing