

policy would at least have the merit of being consistent.

What emerges from this debate in the West, which is being carried on as much in the general press as in specialized journals such as *Foreign Affairs*, *Orbis* and *Les Temps Modernes*, is the acceptance of the necessity of avoiding war between the two super-powers. The question is how to go about it. Between the two extremes discussed above, there are a number of observers, like George Kennan, who accept the existence of areas of incompatibility between the two systems but who also recognize certain areas of mutual interest of which they feel advantage should be taken. However, it is the areas of incompatibility that not only fuel the debate but determine the policies of the two super-powers.

For the Soviet Union, the differences are irreconcilable, and must be exploited to the advantage of the socialist camp. From the Soviet viewpoint, the real object of *détente* is to create a favourable climate for the growth of the socialist camp and the decline of those Moscow calls imperialists. Thus, any interference in the internal affairs of a socialist state is forbidden and no compromises, even if favourable to themselves, can be tolerated. Only in the fields of trade and the settlement of conflicts can the possibility of agreement with the West be admitted. Such is the Soviet policy of *détente*.

#### Unacceptable definition

In the West, on the other hand, the problem is not only to decide whether this policy is acceptable but, more important, to determine if *détente* can be defined in such a way. A one-way definition like that of the Soviet Union is hardly acceptable to Western thinking. As Raymond Aron said in his book on American foreign policy, *The Imperial Republic* (1973): "The economic and political aspects of the general purpose of American diplomacy are inseparable because this purpose is by definition freedom of access, a notion which encompasses the exchange of ideas, investments and goods." Rather than aggravate existing differences, a policy of *détente* must ensure a freedom of access. The American definition thus implies respect for the West on the part of the Commu-

nists and, in the final analysis, a degree of modification of Soviet policy — for the debate in the West hinges not only on the Soviet policy but also on the reasons for the Soviet refusal to accept the American definition. What many Western observers find is that the Soviets wish to benefit from exchanges of trade and technology only in order to be able to strengthen the Communist world and, eventually, overthrow the West. These observers are not convinced that, as some would have it, the economic and technological exchanges with the West resulting from the Soviet policy of *détente* are beneficial to the West or, in the long run, justify acceptance of that policy. They fear the advantages the Communist societies could derive from the West and the resultant consequences for the democratic system. Finally, they fear that this might lead to the eventual worsening of international relations.

There can be no doubt that neither the Soviets nor the Americans want to return to the status quo that prevailed before *détente*. The need for relations between the two sides is taken for granted.

That is the reason why the Soviets have adopted a policy of *détente* and why the Communist world is pursuing it determinedly. It is not surprising, then, that Brezhnev expressed his satisfaction with Soviet foreign policy in this period of *détente*, especially after the Communist victories in Indochina and Angola. The West, in contrast, is in the throes of a debate over *détente*, and it is not surprising, therefore, that President Ford has abandoned the word, even if only for campaign purposes. This, however, does nothing to settle the debate.

Notwithstanding the contradictory opinions, the debate in the West is really nothing but a reflex reaction to the continuing struggle between the two systems and a manifestation of the West's desire not to lose ground to the Communists. In order to succeed, however, Western policy must reflect the confidence the peoples of the West have in their own system and its ability not only to contain Soviet policy but to overcome it. In the final analysis, is that not what is at stake for the West in *détente*? Is it not the meaning of Alexander Solzhenitsyn's warning?

*Neither Soviets  
nor Americans  
want return  
to status quo*