> I see these men as the prisoners of many circumstances: prisoners of their own past and their country's past; prisoners of the antiquated ideology to which their extreme sense of orthodoxy binds them; prisoners of the rigid system of power that has given them their authority; but prisoners, too, of certain ingrained peculiarities of the Russian statesmanship of earlier ages — the congenital sense of insecurity, the lack of inner self-confidence, the distrust of the foreigner and the foreigner's world, the passion for secrecy, the neurotic fear of penetration by other powers into areas close to their borders, and a persistent tendency, resulting from all these other factors, to overdo the creation of military strength.[133]

Again and again, people in the West have assumed or hoped that the Soviet regime was about to liberalize. This happened during the New Economic Policy of the 1920s, during the Grand Alliance of World War II, and in the period following Stalin's death. These disappointments should serve as a vivid reminder of the need to avoid wishful thinking and of the value of healthy skepticism. Nonetheless, I would argue that recent developments within the Soviet Union do provide a sound basis for cautious optimism about the possible emergence of new approaches toward East-West relations within the Kremlin. In my view, Gorbachev's foreign policy pronouncements cannot be explained away as being nothing more than improved public relations. There is an historic process of change and ferment at work in the Soviet Union. A far-reaching and fundamental transformation of Soviet perspectives on East-West relations is certainly not inevitable, but neither is it impossible.

[133] George F. Kennan, *The Nuclear Delusion*, New York: Pantheon, 1983, p. 153.