



Behind the Nixon, Brezhnev Talks

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IF you want to know what we have come to, consider the painful dilemma of the British Broadcasting Corporation last week. The BBC can make only one television transmission at a time via the satellite. It then seemed likely that the boss of the Soviet Union, Leonid Brezhnev, would reach the White House, and John Dean would appear before the Senate Watergate investigating committee, at one and the same time. To which to show the British people?

Fortunately the senate committee changed its all-important schedule: So the BBC was let off the hook. The fact remains that all sorts of excuses are being offered for the singular priorities that now prevail, so well presented by the foregoing piece of nonsense. Yet the inwardness of the Brezhnev visit shows that these priorities are inexcusable.

To begin with, the great unspoken, unmentionable item on the Nixon-Brezhnev agenda is a truly awe-inspiring question. Will the world we have all been living in since the end of World War II, come to an effective end as the result of a Soviet preventive attack on China?

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FOR various reasons, such as the dramatic promotion of Marshall Andrei Grechko to the ruling Soviet Politburo, the chance of a Soviet attack on China is now being rated rather higher, too.

The Soviet threat to China was what made possible the whole complex development of President Nixon's Sino-Soviet diplomacy. The aims of that diplomacy are also, first, to deter the Soviet attack; and second, to build a new structure of world power relationships based on a Soviet-American-Chinese great power triangle.

Brezhnev is in fact being pushed two

ways. The Soviet economy has finally reached a stage of crisis demanding dramatic action of one novel kind or another. One kind of possible action is massive importation of western technology, capital and goods, resulting from a genuine detente. The other kind of possible action is to gamble on exploitation of Soviet military superiority.

President Nixon's short term purpose is to do everything he can to strengthen the Kremlin's opponents of the military gamble, by making a genuine Soviet-western detente look as attractive as possible.

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HERE, however, the President is greatly hampered in two ways. Politically, he is already half-crippled by the Watergate horror. As a negotiator, he is also impeded by the amendment of Senator Henry M. Jackson of Washington, humanely aimed to free Soviet Jews of all passport restrictions. Yet the Jackson amendment would deny the Soviets the kind of trade relationships they need to do major business with the U.S.

It is an awe-inspiring responsibility that Senator Jackson is taking. You may cite the chance of a future Soviet attack on China as low as 10 per cent. No sane man aware of the facts can put the chance lower at present. You may further say that the Jackson Amendment will only raise the chance to 15 per cent. All the same, raising the chance of something like the end of the world from 10 per cent to 15 per cent is a remarkable grave step for any man to take.

It is graver still, however, if it has become hard to decide whether Leonid Brezhnev is more important than John Dean.