

stage of negotiation free from the shadow of an ultimatum. While no substantive advance towards a settlement of the Berlin issue was made, the Soviet Government evidently considered that it would be in its interest to remove a sore spot in its relations with the Western nations.

In his appearance before the United Nations, Mr. Khrushchov brought forward sweeping proposals on disarmament. Time alone will serve to test the real significance of that much advertised presentation, which left many questions unanswered. It may, however, be of some importance that in subsequent public statements Mr. Khrushchov has sought to counteract the impression that the Soviet Government would not agree to a realistic system of control and inspection in the implementation of disarmament measures. Progress on disarmament cannot be anything but slow, but we should not disregard the fact that the U.S.S.R. has agreed to participate in a committee of ten nations, including Canada, which will begin, after the New Year, to examine the whole range of disarmament problems. More recently the Soviet Government has agreed to co-operate in technical studies of United States data on the problem of detecting underground nuclear tests.

Question of Motives

What is one to think of these developments in the field of disarmament? Perhaps the Soviet Government wants only to avoid being revealed as the stumbling-block in negotiations. But again, the Soviet leaders now have the opportunity to demonstrate in concrete terms their desire for progress towards a world disarmament system.

Another example of the new atmosphere is to be found in Premier Khrushchov's speech of October 31 reporting to the Supreme Soviet on foreign affairs. Compared with previous Soviet statements on foreign policy, it was remarkable for its moderation. Four times Mr. Khrushchov acknowledged the need for mutual concessions if any progress was to be made in solving international problems. Once he went so far as to state that the Western nations had themselves already made concessions to the U.S.S.R. This speech contained only commendation of President Eisenhower, Prime Minister Macmillan and President de Gaulle for their peaceful intentions. Even on Algeria, a favourite subject of Soviet vilification of France, Premier Khrushchov commented on the difficulties of the French position and spoke favourably of President de Gaulle's proposals for self-determination.

Again, it must be recalled that Premier Khrushchov has not weakened any position of Soviet power by making these statements. Past experience with the Soviet Union will warn us that we should not assume uncritically that these sentiments are proof of a change of heart among the Soviet leaders.

It is an open question in a totalitarian society such as the Soviet Union how much importance should be attached to public statements. Some people claim that such statements mean nothing because the Soviet leaders do not have to take account of public opinion. I believe that this is too superficial a view. Although public opinion in the Soviet Union does not have the powerful force it has in