

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 Canada and other Western countries, it cannot be denied that Premier Khrushchov is circumscribed by what he says in public.

When he publicly urged India and Communist China to settle their frontier differences, could the Communist leaders of China consider that they were being fully backed by the U.S.S.R.? And what must have been the Chinese reaction when, in Peking, Mr. Khrushchov seemed to imply the possibility of compromise with the United States as a long-term solution? One thing seems clear -- that these views reveal that the Soviet Union has vested interests which do not always coincide with those of Communist China.

One could speculate indefinitely on Soviet motives for desiring a relaxation of tension. It seems clear that one of Mr. Khrushchov's main concerns is to modernize Soviet society and to raise the standard of living of the Soviet people. To this end he no doubt requires the assurance of a long period of peace, with some relief from the burden of armaments production and with time to broaden and consolidate the Soviet economy.

Mr. Khrushchov is a realist. He knows that modern war is self-defeating and cannot be employed in the traditional way to back up the aims of foreign policy. The thought of nuclear war is no less appalling to Mr. Khrushchov than it is to the West. Perhaps too, he has discovered in his talks with President Eisenhower and Prime Minister Macmillan a reflection of the longing for peace which imbues the Western nations. In other words, it may have come home to Mr. Khrushchov as a result of his talks with Western leaders, that, despite long years of Soviet propaganda to the contrary, the launching of a war is not the intention of the West.