

What did I gain by my visit? For one thing, a better understanding of the great gap of ignorance and misunderstanding which divides the Communist world from ourselves.

This ignorance and misunderstanding is not, of course, all on one side. But on their side it is colossal; almost pathetic, and certainly dangerous.

Western --- and especially American -- policy and purpose is judged on the basis of cabled newspapers stories which give only one side and the most lurid side of life in free countries.

It seems quite impossible to convince Soviet leaders --- who seem to base their alleged fear of us on such information -- that these stories are distorted and unrepresentative.

I told Mr. Khrushchev that we found the truth out of the clash of varying opinions -- all of which could and must be expressed. It didn't make sense to him.

Similarly when I argued (he had been talking about the threat from American bases) that a Communist party in any country was a source of fear as a Russian base, his immediate and natural reaction was that this was a purely domestic matter; that if we didn't deal effectively with what we considered to be a menace -- as they would certainly do in Russia -- then that was our affair. That a group should have the right to express views detested by the vast majority was quite beyond his comprehension -- as it would be to any communist leader.

In the face of all this, what should we do? We should stand firm against tactics of divide, weaken and destroy -- through threat or through blandishment. But equally, we should do nothing -- by provocative word or policy -- to increase that fear of the west as a threat to peace -- which they claim, genuinely or not, to feel.

We should also remember that to the Soviet rulers, peaceful co-existence means competitive co-existence -- and that in this competition, which they expect to win, they are bound only by their own rules.

That is why I was ready to believe Mr. Khrushchev and the others when they told me, as they often did, that they wanted peace, or, if you like, a peaceful interlude.

In addition to the compelling reason that the alternative of war may be universal destruction -- and these men are not suicidal Hitlers -- there is their conviction -- as Mr. Khrushchev has candidly admitted -- that in a more peaceful international climate the free peoples will lose the competition, because they will not accept the sacrifices that prolonged defence preparations involve. Their coalitions -- particularly NATO -- will therefore fall apart. Communists, I was assured, could stand up better to sacrifices than we could -- are tougher, more disciplined, and more patient in the long pull than we are. Communist society would therefore be superior to our capitalist society, in peaceful but competitive co-existence.