

We have been told officially that Mr. Khrushchov resigned his high posts because of illness and age. If his resignation had been voluntary, one would have expected it to be accompanied by paeans of praise and some preparation of the Soviet public for such a momentous event. Moreover, a short time after it occurred, we began to hear assertions from Moscow denouncing Mr. Khrushchov, without naming him directly, for various shortcomings, including what was alleged to be the very personal and arbitrary character of his diplomacy and decisions.

It is easy to surmise that there must have been disagreements within the Soviet leadership on certain important policy issues, but whether these related mainly to domestic affairs or to relations with the Communist countries of Eastern Europe or to relations with China or to relations with the free world is not yet clear. There are, of course, great problems for the Soviet Union in all of these areas which remain to be resolved.

In the domestic field there have been, notably within the past few years, deep-rooted differences within the Soviet leadership regarding the allocation of resources and priorities. I regard it as significant that, only a few weeks ago, Mr. Khrushchov once again vigorously defended his policies and views on these matters at an important meeting in Moscow widely attended by officials from all parts of the country. On that occasion, Mr. Khrushchov asserted that the needs of heavy industry had by now been largely met and that priority should henceforth be given to the well-being of the people and to the production of consumer goods. This public appeal over the heads of his colleagues may have seriously disturbed several members of the Soviet Party Presidium and of the Soviet defence establishment. It is an illuminating commentary on the Soviet system that an appeal of this kind, which was bound to evoke a welcoming echo among an overwhelming majority of the Soviet people, did not, in spite of the great popularity he enjoyed among the Soviet people, save Mr. Khrushchov from the censure of the Presidium. Under their system, a power struggle need have nothing to do with the contenders' ratings on any kind of Gallup Poll.

Mr. Khrushchov's policy towards Germany and its implications for Soviet relations with Poland, Czechoslovakia, and other East European countries, for the basic Soviet defence posture and for Soviet policy towards the West seem to me to have been another possible area of disagreement within the Soviet leadership. As a result of the Cuban crisis, Mr. Khrushchov, I think, realized that the achievement of expansionist Soviet aims in Germany and Berlin by a policy of confrontation with the West had become too dangerous a course to pursue. It is possible, therefore, that his desire to visit Bonn and to meet with Chancellor Erhard reflected a new and potentially significant departure in the Soviet attitude towards Germany. If that is an accurate reading of what lay behind Mr. Khrushchov's plans, more substantial adjustments in the course of Soviet policy towards Germany might have loomed on the more distant horizon. It can be assumed that such a prospect would have been far more disturbing to many of Mr. Khrushchov's colleagues than the policy which he had followed towards Germany in the past.