

Recent moves on the international chess board may be the first steps in an effort to exploit to the full the weaknesses and divisions which, according to orthodox Communist theory, exist in the economic structure of free, democratic states.

It is not merely a slackening in rearmament that is hoped for, to be followed by reduced business activity in the countries of the West, with consequent political and social difficulties. These are indeed dangers for which Western governments must be prepared. But it is in the field of international trade and international relations generally that the richest prospects for disruption may be discovered and the West split asunder.

Josef Stalin stated the case for this theory plainly last October in an article in "Bolshevik". Noting the disastrous effects of the breakdown of the single all-embracing world market - that is, free multilateral trade - he confidently predicted - once again - that capitalist states would be forced in due course to pursue an independent economic path and would eventually make war among themselves. His successors have not yet repudiated these aims, even though they may have changed their tactical approach to their realization.

Such aims would be well served by a retrograde scuttling into the faulty and out-of-date shelters of a panicky protectionism induced by the insidious suggestion that we have something to fear from the reduction of armaments which should follow genuine peace; that it must bring recession and then depression. That is a craven attitude based on the nervous fluttering of stock market ticker tapes, and no citizen should have anything but scorn for it.

More trade on a wider, not less trade on a narrower basis, is the answer. In normal conditions this would include more trade also with the countries of the Soviet bloc. Our experiences, however, give us the right and the duty to enquire into the motives that may be behind trade overtures from those whose concept of international trade and international relations differs so greatly from our own.

It is highly significant that at the annual meeting of the Economic Commission for Europe in Geneva this year, the Soviet bloc countries set out to preach their own doctrine of more trade to the Western European countries. Their spokesmen argued that it was hopeless to try to achieve a fruitful international balance by increasing exports to the United States; that protectionist sentiment there was so strong that greater competition from abroad would not be permitted. Therefore, it was only by developing its trade with Eastern Europe and reducing its arms burden that Western Europe could save, let alone increase, its standard of living. At the most recent trade talks under the auspices of the Economic Commission for Europe, spokesmen from the same countries dangled attractive looking promises of trade in precisely those goods which the countries of Western Europe are having difficulty in selling in the United States market.