

FOR PRESS:

STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER
SOVIET UNION'S DISARMAMENT PROPOSAL

Since in the free world we all wish to see the end of war, Mr. Krushchev's speech was beyond question brilliantly clever. But what we have to consider is its concrete significance.

The existence of armaments in the world is not the cause of international tension; international tension is the cause of armaments. Had it not been for the Soviet Union's post-war activities in respect of Poland, East Germany, Hungary and other Middle European countries, it is very doubtful whether the weight of armaments in the United States or in British countries would have been more than a fraction of what it is.

There is something rather ironical in the Russian dictator offering disarmament now that he has achieved so much conquest and made so many millions of people his slaves. Another odd feature of this latest pronouncement is that it comes after a long series of discussions in the Disarmament Commission of the United Nations in which the Soviet Union has steadily refused an adequate system of international inspection to see to the observation of any programme of reduced armaments. What system of inspection is now offered? Here again we come to a matter which should prevent us from being too naive about this offer. For in Democracies, the existence of armed forces and of weapons is and must be a matter of public knowledge. In a vast country which has no democracy, in which the press is muzzled, in which people are allowed to listen only to the views of the Government and in which communications with the outside world operate completely according to orders, inspection behind a disarmament programme is not easy.

The world will want to know a lot more of the practical aspects of Mr. Krushchev's offer and will need to have some very large guarantees of good faith before it will give three hearty cheers on this occasion. For example, what is Mr. Krushchev proposing to do about Berlin or East Germany? So long as such matters of acute difference remain, Mr. Krushchev is dealing merely with the symptoms and not with the **disease**.

ADELAIDE, 20th Sept. 1959