In the last few years Australians have paid much more attention than they once did to international affairs. There are many reasons for this, but the chief of them is probably the result of modern scientific discovery which has caused the whole world to shrink in size. Once it was possible for different countries to live their lives in isolation from other countries. This is no longer possible; people of different countries will destroy themselves or survive as one people belonging to one world.

The last six weeks have been particularly interesting ones because Mr. Krushchev, the Soviet Leader, has apparently shown a great willingness to try and get along with the West. The starting point in this change could be said to be his visit to the United States and President Eisenhower, and more specifically his speech to the United Nations concerning disarmament. Mr. Krushchev's speech on this occasion differed in one or two important respects from his previous statements. Earlier he had centred on nuclear disarmament leaving the question and problem relating to disarmament of conventional weapons until last. This would have helped the Russians because of their vastly superior manpower resources; even today their conventional weapons and arms are much greater than those of the West.

The essence of Mr. Krushchev's statement provided that over a period of four years all military establishments of every kind, both conventional and nuclear, should be abolished; that individual countries should keep under their own control only such forces as are necessary for their internal security and although he did not say it, he implied that the United Nations should be armed so that it would be able to make sure that no one country would be able to violate the general disarmament. The plan, as stated by Mr. Krushchev, seems to be a comprehensive one but he only spoke in generalities, and he left many problems and details unsolved in people's minds.

The actual proposals that he put forward are not unlike those for which Britain has been patiently working for a very long time. Such is the force of Mr. Krushchev's propaganda that few people realise that the British Foreign Minister put forward almost identical proposals six weeks earlier, but there was a significant
difference. The British proposals stress the need for inspection and supervision. On this question of disarmament we cannot leave it to the rulers of the different countries to say "we have disarmed - we have done what we should do." There must be strict supervision so that there is no possibility of any evasion. When we consider that half a dozen nuclear bombs do not take a great deal of room and could be relatively easily hidden, and when we consider the damage that these bombs could do, we must realise how difficult adequate supervision will be.

If anyone is prepared to look through the history of the problem of disarmament since the war they will find that time and time again proposals for disarmament have foundered on this question of supervision; supervision which hitherto the Soviet countries have been completely unwilling to accept. Despite this it is vital that the United Nations Ten Member Disarmament Committee examine Mr. Krushchev's proposals sincerely and thoroughly.

There is some evidence to think that Russia may now be more prepared to be reasonable on the question of supervision than she has been in the past. Russia quite clearly wishes to remain the leader of all the Communist countries; she does not want to be challenged by Communist China. Already in the last few months we have seen China going her own aggressive way in a manner that has done much to destroy the effect of Russia's peace offensive.

I am sure it was no part of Mr. Krushchev's plans that China should choose this particular time to antagonise India and suppress Tibet's independence. Indeed, Russia has spent decades trying to impress upon the Indians how friendly the Russians are, and in a matter of weeks the Chinese have undone everything that Russia had tried to do. I would not be at all surprised if Russia would like to see the world an ordered and peaceful place where the danger of large scale war has been ruled out before China builds up the industrial strength to challenge Russia's own power. There is no doubt that as time passes China, with 600 million people increasing at the rate of 15 million a year, would be able to overwhelm Russia's 200 million.

Russia may well be forced to come to an agreement with the
West on disarmament on terms that are satisfactory and that
give safeguards to our freedom while she herself can still
dominate China. If the fear of large scale war can be
abolished then there is no excuse for the Chinese to continue
building up her own arms and forces at the present rate. It
is a strange paradox that Russia's fear of her own Communist
partner should drive her into agreement with the West on some
outstanding issues, but this may well prove to be the fact
if the West can find the initiative and the intelligence to
exploit Russia's fear.