

satellites (the seventh of which, carrying experiments from the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and East Germany, was launched on June 30), and the multinational steel complex being built in the Kursk-Belgorod region of the Urals. Over the past few months, however, a new trend has become apparent—the creation of specific organizations to deal with wide-ranging problems of interest to the entire COMECON bloc.

At the end of February this year for example, an agreement between the six leading COMECON countries resulted in the establishment of "Interatom-instrument", an organization to cover scientific, technological, production and trade cooperation between the member countries in equipment for nuclear research, atomic power engineering, and dosimetric and radiometric devices. The Russian *Ekonomicheskaya Gazeta* (No. 14, 1972) noted that this was the first multilateral international organization of the socialist bloc fully to unite scientific and technological activity with production, and marketing. "Interatom-instrument", in fact, seemed a precursor of a whole new range of COMECON scientific subsidiary organizations.

The Budapest conference of June 1972, attended by representatives of Bulgaria, Hungary, East Germany, Cuba, Mongolia, Poland, Rumania, Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union, discussed cooperation in space research. The Interkosmos programme was discussed, together with future plans for joint research in space physics, space communications (the proposed "Inter-sputnik" programme) and the biological, medical and meteorological possibilities of future space research.

The general secretary of COMECON, Nikolai Fadeev, writing in *Sotsialisticheskaya Industriya* (July 3, 1972), stressed that the International COMECON Investment bank is operating satisfactorily and that, for example, the credits it granted in 1971 represented an increase of some 40 per cent compared with 1970. The total transfer of funds between the member countries (some 40,000 roubles) was 10 per cent up on 1970. Full financial and economic integration of COMECON, begun in 1971, will take 15–20 years to complete. In the meantime, while carrying out its large-scale projects for the gradual economic unification of the socialist bloc, COMECON faces financial difficulties. Its chief aim, according to the agenda of the Moscow conference, is further economic and monetary integration—which on the technological front is represented by increased exploitation of Soviet raw materials and their distribution to the countries of the COMECON bloc.

The demand for raw materials is a pressing problem and Hungary, in

particular, has for some time been stressing the need for long term commitments on the part of the Soviet Union. To exploit the Soviet raw material resources, however, financial commitments by the COMECON bloc are demanded. It is rumoured that not only will Russia continue to move millions of her population to the developing areas of Siberia—the source of this potential wealth—but that she will also increasingly call on her COMECON partners to supply the necessary equipment, technicians and experts, irrespec-

tive of the home commitments of the countries concerned.

In *Sotsialisticheskaya Industriya*, Fadeev speaks of certain countries seeking cooperation with COMECON. The agenda of the Moscow conference, and the unofficial reports circulating in conjunction with it, would suggest that this "cooperation" should be interpreted as the need, at present, for Western capital, to support the technological developments upon which the new prosperity of the Eastern bloc is to be founded.

Prospects for Reykjavic

During the present World Chess Championship in Iceland, Nature will publish a weekly commentary on the games by Dr Jonathan Penrose, British Chess Champion for 1958–63 and 1966–69. His first article appears below.

The chess match between Boris Spassky (the reigning World Champion) and Robert Fischer (the official challenger) taking place in Iceland has fired the imagination of the public in a way that no chess match has done before. This is probably because for the first time since the war there seems to be a real threat to the dominance of the World Championship by Russian players. A further contributing factor has obviously been the unusual behaviour of the American challenger, which has led not only to a big increase in the stakes for the prize money but also to an embarrassing delay in the start of the match.

As a player, however, Fischer shows the hallmark of genius. His opening play is generally well prepared and deep, his middle-game play logical and forceful, his end-game play persistent and accurate. In addition he has an amazingly quick sight of the board and generally plays his moves at a speed well within the allotted time allowed for tournament or match games (forty moves to be completed by each player within 2½ hours). He is a superb "lightning chess" player and won a very strong tournament held for this form of chess in Yugoslavia in 1970 ahead of most of the strongest players in the world (although Spassky was not competing). His general tournament record over the past few years has also been very impressive, and his rise to the position of challenger has been achieved by some phenomenal match victories over such players as Taimanov, Larsen and Petrosyan. One of his distinctive characteristics

until now has been his intense desire to win his games at all costs.

Fischer's weaknesses probably stem from impulsiveness and over-confidence at times. This has occasionally resulted in unexpected defeats by players normally considered much weaker than him. Also, he has been on such a wave of success over the past few years that it is difficult to predict what his mental attitude would be if he were to find himself two or more games down in the present match.

In contrast to Fischer, Spassky's rise to the chess heights has been much less spectacular. During the 1960s, Spassky's development was continuous but slow. He has managed to temper a highly imaginative gift for the game with a fine degree of solidarity and tenacity that gives the impression of the complete professional player. His style is comparable to Fischer's (although his opening repertoire is more varied) and his successes in the "candidates" matches during the 1960s were almost as impressive as Fischer's recent run of victories.

Since winning the World Championship against Petrosyan in 1969, however, Spassky has shown a tendency to relax in important tournament games and has allowed many weaker opponents to escape with peaceful draws. Nevertheless, a possible signpost to the outcome of the present match may be found in the complicated game that Spassky played with Fischer at the Olympiad in 1970 when Spassky pulled out all the stops to win. Also, his record in individual games with Fischer is good. It may be that Spassky needs to be goaded to produce his best form, and if the match takes its course reasonably smoothly from now on, there is every indication that the quality of the chess could be tense and uncompromising.

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