

well done, effectively extinguished by the appearance of a "tender vote" case. Someone came in who, according to our records, had already voted. And the tiresome rigmarole prescribed had to be gone through.

At one time in the morning it looked as if we would have a record turn out and we got the second ballot box ready. But as it grew hotter, the steady stream thinned to a trickle and for us, the respite was very welcome. After 2 P M business was brisk again. At first, it was mainly women who came. Their household chores done, they came over in groups; their chatter subsiding as (hey faced this strange and awesome task. An old lady insisted on her right to instruct her

daughter-in-law. "But I always tell her everything — even how much salt to put in the curry".

The end was anti-climatic. The rush subsided suddenly and in the last fifteen minutes we had only one voter. Afterwards came the jolt of preparing the various "accounts" lists and the "diary". All done and quite done in, I wanted the zonal officer to relieve me finally of my responsibilities. My colleague from the neighbouring booth looked in and said "It is over, thank God — until next time". Yes indeed, I am sure, everyone — candidates included — is thankful that "the fever and the fret" is over for another five years. We who did our bit for democracy are also thankful — only more so.

pointed out, for example that West Germany should not grant preferential treatment to U S, India or— Argentina at the cost of the Communist countries. To take another example, Czechoslovakia and West Germany while supplying machinery to under-developed countries are jockeying for political advantages. Again, according to a recent study, both East and West Germany have plans for granting foreign aid which have no relation to the needs of the recipients.

Contrary to general belief, East-West trade has increased in recent years very rapidly—by an average of 15 per cent a year. On the Western side, the trade with Eastern European countries is still a much smaller share of their total trade as compared with prewar years. Its importance, however, lies being among the most dynamic directions of trade. The expansion of East-West trade has benefited the countries in the socialist world. It provides them with important sources of supply for certain vital capital goods. Consequently, the rate of growth of expansion of investment and output of the consumers' goods sector has been greatly facilitated. Today, the Eastern bloc is in the process of becoming a homogeneous economic area. With the creation of the 'sixes and sevens' in Western Europe and the growth of the European Economic Community, there exists now the opportunity for the whole of Europe East and West — to benefit from a more rational division of labour through a rapidly expanding exchange of goods.

The fear is often expressed that state trading raises practical problems of commercial communication. But actually businessmen are not always influenced by political differences. Experience in many countries indicates that political adjustments are more difficult to make than economic ones. The crucial problem between the East and the West is not really economic. If we get accustomed to negotiation and not retaliation, to resolve political conflicts, there is no reason why in the economic sphere a spirit of friendly competition cannot be developed. The E C E has taken an important step towards this goal.

Letter from Geneva

Removing East-West Trade Barriers

Krishna Ahojja

THE Economic Commission for Europe (E C E) has made several attempts since the War to normalise trade relations between East and West. It tried to steer clear of the cold war influences which seeped through almost all U N organisations and agencies. The E C E provided a platform for regular contact between the representatives of Eastern and Western European Governments. Now it is launching one of the most significant projects in its history which will help to relax political tension and achieve economic stability. A set of recommendations is being drafted with the object of, eventually, evolving a code of good conduct to govern relations between planned and private enterprise economies. The impact of such a development will not be restricted to Europe as any coordination of trade policies in Europe is bound to influence not only America, but also Asia and Africa.

For several years the Soviet Union has been proposing the establishment of a machinery within the framework of the E C E to deal with "trade discriminations". About two years ago, the Executive Secretary of the E C E invited the comments from member Governments on this question. Since then discussions about the method and pro-

cedure of handling trade disputes have been going on at the highest level. It is believed that a concrete plan is almost ready and, according to reliable U N sources, a semi-legal administrative machinery will be set up by the end of this year, to deal with trade differences or grievances. This "code of consultation" is described as a sort of an "East-West GATT".

Separating Trade from Politics

On either side, there exists a feeling that the other is imposing unreasonable restrictions. Western European countries believe that the Eastern bloc is "dumping" goods at lower prices wherever and whenever there is an opportunity. In sophisticated circles this technique is referred to as "market disruption"¹. The recent conflict over supply of oil to India, it is alleged, is an example of such disruption. The West also alleges that the Eastern countries practise deliberate discrimination with regard to credit facilities and that patents are not properly protected in the Eastern hemisphere.

The Soviet Union and the Eastern countries, on the other hand, accuse the West of limiting their exports through quantitative restrictions. They feel that they are denied equal access to foreign markets. It is