



# EUROPE'S NEW DEMOCRACIES

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*The following is the second of two articles by Mr. Sokolov on international concepts of democracy. The first appeared in the December 4 issue of NEW MASSES. Both are from "New Times."*

PROPOSERS of the Western conception of democracy assert that what liberated countries in Eastern Europe actually have is "a dictatorship of the Communist Party." They declare that all other parties are only a sort of democratic stage scenery since their leaders consist of specially delegated and carefully disguised Communists. The only semblance of evidence adduced in support of this assertion, which is as malicious as it is absurd, is that many of the democratic parties replaced their old leaders by new ones. At a recent congress of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary, for instance, its former leader, Peyer, who refused to cooperate with the Communists and the other democratic parties, received an insignificant number of votes. The congress elected new leaders, headed by Szakasics. The analogous processes are to be observed in some of the other liberated countries. In Rumania, the old leaders of the National Tsarunist and National Liberal parties, Maniu and Bratianu, have long been generals without armies. The bulk of their former followers have given their allegiance to other political leaders, among them old ones like the liberal Tatarescu. In Yugoslavia, Machek, the former leader of the Croatian Peasant Party, who cooperated with the German invaders and with their agent Pavelich, is hated by the Croatian peasants. New men have come forward to lead the Peasant Party. The same thing is going on in some of the democratic parties of Poland and other countries.

Under these circumstances, devotees of Western democracy assume the pose of irate clerics, and shaking monitory fingers at the Continental peoples say, "follow your old leaders or we will excommunicate you from the democratic church!" But what has this demand in common with true democracy in home and foreign affairs? Who will deny that one of the elementary democratic rights is the right of every party freely to select its leaders and if necessary replace them by others? After all, leadership in a party, if it is really democratic, cannot

be regarded as a lifelong privilege. In the period of the great upheavals, Maniu, Bratianu and Machek and their kind lost their political capital. By the support they gave to fascism and to the German invaders, by their treacherous attitude towards the national liberation struggle of the masses and by their frank speculation on differences arising among the great powers, these bankrupt politicians earned the contempt of their peoples.

Whoever attempts at this time to foist such leaders on the liberated peoples only sets himself down as one who uses the banner of democracy as a cloak for anti-democratic policy, which implies anything but respect for the will of the people or for the sovereignty of other countries.

At the same time let it be remarked that the achievements of democracy in the liberated Eastern European countries don't imply "Sovietization" of these countries, as the most unscrupulous of reactionary calumniators claim. As we know, these countries retain their former social and economic systems, which are based on private ownership of the means of production. Neither the agrarian reforms nor the measures taken against the black market nor the nationalization of a number of factories or even of certain branches of large-scale industry indicate a departure from the social and economic system existing in these countries. As we know, the nationalization of a number of branches of heavy industry is being discussed in England, while in France feudal estates were broken up 150 years ago.

In the Soviet Union there is nothing to warrant the existence of several parties, inasmuch as classes with radically differing interests no longer exist. But the situation is different in the liberated countries in Eastern Europe, where such classes do exist. And there we actually do find several different parties. But who can forbid their joining forces in fulfilling the will of the masses, who regard unity as the cardinal condition for rebuilding their political life on more reliable lines?

It should be remarked that an astonishing confusion of ideas is sometimes betrayed in this discussion of democracy. In illustration we might cite an article which recently appeared in

connection with the World Trade Union Congress in the French weekly *Volontes*, organ of one of the groups of the Resistance movement known as *les de la Resistance*. The author of the article is prepared to admit that the Soviet economic system has a number of definite advantages. He writes: "When we turn to Soviet Russia we find a planned economy where private ownership of the means of production does not exist. This system of production was put to the test during the war and proved its effectiveness. Now when the war is over and when the Anglo-Saxon world is threatened with the horrors of unemployment, Russia on the contrary is marching forward to realize a new five-year plan."

IN THIS acknowledgement of the incontestable advantages of the Soviet Union's economic system, we find a reflection of the fact that millions of people all over the world ardently wish the economic system of their countries, like the planned socialist economy of the Soviet Union, to be exempt from unemployment crises and similar miseries. But while granting the advantages of the Soviet planned economy, the author of the article blindly parrots the long-discredited libels of the Soviet Union's enemies to the effect that "liberty and democracy" do not exist in the USSR. After weighing all the pros and cons the article expresses the modest desire to "find the synthesis which would combine the economic regime of the Soviet Union with the political democracy of Anglo-Saxon countries." This reminds us of Gogol's Agafya Tikhonova, who sighed for a lover who would have the lips of one of her suitors and the nose of another.

Evidently the author of this article fails to realize that "the economic regime" and political system of the Soviet Union constitute an integral and inseparable whole. For the Soviet political system, which is anchored in the economic achievements of socialism, not only formally recognizes the democratic rights of the citizens but also assures them the material possibility of enjoying these rights by guaranteeing the right to work, freedom from exploitation and from national and racial in-

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