

People's Democracies Seek Greater Independence

By JOSEPH CLARK

THE IDEA of "peoples democracy" or "new democracy" was one of the major concepts born of the war against Hitlerism. It involved socialist content in a multi-party system. Politically it was based on a peoples front type of alliance in which Socialists were united with Communists as well as with liberal democratic forces.

The evolution of this "peoples democracy" concept is a vital part of Eastern Europe's post-war history. Its development throws considerable light on present events in Poland and Hungary.

Seven countries of Eastern Europe are involved — Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Yugoslavia. All of these — with the notable exception of Czechoslovakia — were underdeveloped, mainly agrarian countries, ruled by fascist-type dictatorships before the war. All were occupied or controlled by the Nazis during the war and were freed in large part as a result of the Soviet victories over Hitler.

ALBANIA, with an area of something over 10,000 square miles, and a population of little more than 1,000,000 is one of the smallest countries of Europe. Ruled by tyrannical King Zog before the war it was seized by German and Italian forces in 1939. Albanian patriots, led mainly by the Communists, conducted a heroic partisan struggle and played an important part in their country's emancipation.

Bulgaria fought on Germany's side in both world wars. Its area of 40,000 square miles has a population of about 7,000,000. King Boris was a bulwark for the political dictators who formed the ministries under him before the war.

Czechoslovakia, alone of these seven countries, was a highly industrialized nation before the war. About the size of New York state, with a population of some 12,350,000, it had a liberal bourgeois democratic regime. Several Czech divisions were formed which fought with the Soviet armies to liberate the country.

Hungary suffered under the dictatorship of Admiral Horthy ever since the suppression of the communist revolution (a peaceful one in which Michael Karolyi handed over the government to Bela Kun) of 1919. It covers an area of 36,000 square miles and has a population of 9,250,000.

Poland is the largest of these countries, with some 120,000 square miles (about the same as New Mexico) and 25,000,000 population. It was ruled by dictators such as Pilsudski and Marshal Edward Rydz-Smigly. Persecution of national minorities and a vicious anti-Semitism was rampant in Poland as it was also in pre-war Hungary. There was a strong anti-Hitler underground resistance as organized Polish divisions fought with both the USSR and the Western allies.

Romania's King Carol was a royal sponsor of ministerial dictators such as Bratianu and Tataresu. The country is 91,500 square miles and has some 16,000,000 people.

Yugoslavia's regents and premiers under King Peter ran as brutal a totalitarian regime as any in Europe. Its 16,800,000 people occupy an area of 95,500 square miles. The strongest anti-Nazi resistance struggle of any East European country, and for that matter of any of the occupied countries, East or West, took place in Yugoslavia. As many as 17 German divisions were bogged down by the fighting in Yugoslavia led by Marshal Tito.

THERE were varying degrees of feudal remnants in the economy of some of these countries. Landlordism was prominent in Poland, Romania, and Hungary.

The kind of political system established after liberation from Hitlerism in 1945, in all of these countries, roughly followed a pattern

described by Wladyslaw Gomulka in a speech at the end of 1946. It was made at a meeting of Socialists and Communists who later merged into the Polish United Workers Party. Gomulka said:

"On the basis of unity of action of both workers parties, with close cooperation with other democratic parties, the Polish Workers Party established the conception of the Polish way of development toward socialism. This conception is significant because it does not include the necessity of a violent, revolutionary political upheaval in the development of Poland and eliminates the necessity of a dictatorship of the proletariat as a form of government in the most difficult period of transition. On the basis of realistic views we have established the possibility of development toward socialism through the system of peoples democracy in which the bloc of democratic parties exercises the power of government. . . ."

"Some people repeat constantly that the Polish Workers Party is aiming at the dictatorship of the proletariat and wants to establish socialism in Poland by following the same road as the Soviet Union."

Such people, Gomulka said, "do not understand Marxism at all" and "do not know how to draw conclusions from the differences between historical epochs and concrete historical situations. . . ."

CONDITIONS and forms of government varied from country to country. In Czechoslovakia, for example, the Communist Party received the largest vote of any party in the free 1946 elections, somewhat more than 38 percent. The Socialists received a little over 12 percent, so between them, the workers parties had an absolute majority. The liberal bourgeois parties split the rest of the parliamentary seats. Eduard Benes, pre-war liberal was President and the Communist Klement Gottwald the Prime Minister.

In Hungary democratic elections were held in November, 1945 and the Communists received 797,000 votes, about 18 percent; the Social Democrats got 819,000 and the Smallholders, a peasant party, took first place with 2,687,000. All three parties formed a peoples front coalition similar to the coalition set up in all of these countries.

IN 1947 and 1948 certain trends set in which changed the character of the Peoples Democracies from the types of alliances described above. For example, Mathias Rakosi, a hero of the Hungarian workers struggle against Hungarian fascism, who served over 15 years in fascist prisons, imbibed some of the most negative influences of Stalin's bureaucratic and repressive methods. Instead of seeking to enhance the prestige and influence of the Communists by persuasion

among their allies, Rakosi resorted to brute force to secure a "majority" for the Communists. Rakosi himself referred to his methods as the "salami" tactic, whereby he cut off one slice after another of the non-Communist groups. Thus, the leaders of the Smallholders Party were imprisoned, and the party liquidated for all serious intents and purposes.

This process was climaxed by the events surrounding the expulsion of the Yugoslav Communists from the Communist Information Bureau in 1948. It reflected not only the ascendancy of anti-democratic trends within the east European countries but the outright imposition of Soviet (really Stalin) control and the Soviet (Stalinist) political system on countries which had been developing their own specific paths to socialism under peoples democracy.

THE actual expulsion of the Yugoslav took place at a meeting of the Cominform during the latter part of June, 1948.

The Cominform resolution expelling the Yugoslavs said the latter carried out "an undignified policy of defaming Soviet military experts and discrediting the Soviet Union." It said that in Yugoslavia the C.P. was breaking with Marxism. The resolution accused the Yugoslavs of upholding "the opportunist tenet that the class struggle does not become sharper during the period of transition from capitalism to socialism, as Marxism-Leninism teaches, but dies down, as was affirmed by opportunists of the Bukharin type, who propagated the theory of the peaceful grow-

ing over of capitalism into socialism."

The 1948 Cominform resolution also said that the Yugoslavs were violating Marxist principles because "the Peoples Front, and not the Communist Party, is considered to be the main leading force in the country."

To the first charge the Yugoslav Communists replied that progress toward socialism, and eliminating class differences would lessen, not intensify the class struggle. They affirmed this much more clearly in the years after the 1948 break. Concerning the second charge the Yugoslavs said that the party must not be the ruler of the country but must seek to lead by persuasion and that peoples rule must rest on a peoples coalition.

THE COMINFORM charges of lack of democracy in the Yugoslav party had considerable validity because all the Communist parties at that time were influenced by the Stalinist methods of work which substituted centralism, and rule of a few or a single individual, for rule by the working people.

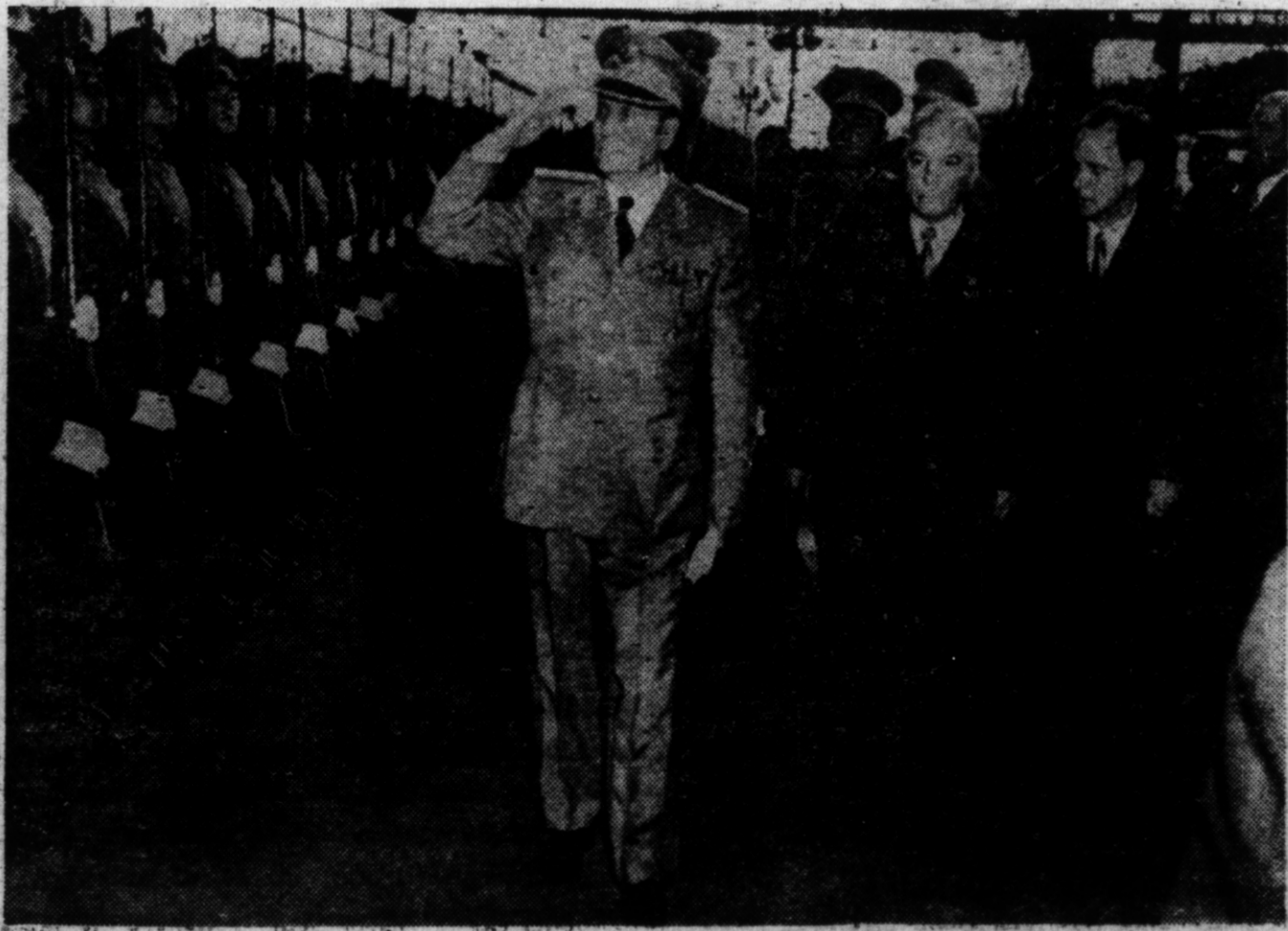
In reply to the Cominform charges that the Yugoslav party had established "a disgraceful, purely Turkish, terrorist regime," the Yugoslavs began to democratize their party to a considerable extent while the opposite tendency developed in the other socialist countries till Stalin's death in 1953.

Under Stalin's influence Communists everywhere conducted a campaign against Yugoslavia as a "fascist" regime. The most tragic aspect of this campaign was that Communists in various east Euro-



"Whatever road we take, we must never leave them behind."

PRESIDENT TITO of Yugoslavia receiving the salute of a Soviet honor guard on a recent trip to Moscow. U. S. S. R. officials accompany him.



(From the London Daily Worker)

pean countries were charged with treason as "Titoists," framed-up and in many cases executed. Examples of such frame-ups included the Rajk trials and executions in Hungary, the execution of Kostov and his comrades in Bulgaria, Slansky, Clemenis and other in Czechoslovakia. In Poland Gomulka was jailed for four years.

Almost immediately after the death of Stalin in March, 1953, the Soviet government began to improve and normalize relations with Yugoslavia. This was climaxed by the dramatic trip to Belgrade by Khrushchev, Bulganin and Mikoyan at the end of May and beginning of June, 1955. A Joint Declaration was issued on behalf of the Soviet and Yugoslav governments which in effect renounced the Stalinist methods of repression and of rude interference in the affairs of other socialist countries. It affirmed the Leninist principle of national equality.

The visit of President Tito to Moscow a year later, in June of this year underlined the basic factors involved in the reconciliation. The Joint Declaration between the Soviet C.P. and the Yugoslav Communist League said they were placing "relations between the two socialist countries on a healthy footing."

The Declaration said it was "guided by the internationalist principles of Marxism-Leninism." It affirmed that cooperation was all the stronger because they are "parties which share the common aim of building a complete socialist society in their countries."

Emphasizing the difference of various paths to socialism the Declaration said "that the multiplicity of forms of socialist development tends to strengthen socialism."

MEANWHILE a process, developing at different speeds and in different ways, aimed at greater democratization was taking place in the various peoples democracies. In Poland this proceeded much more swiftly than in the other countries. In Hungary, although the Rajk frame-up was finally denounced, and Rakosi removed as leader of the party, Stalinist type of leaders such as Erno Gero remained in top posts.

Democratization was accelerated by the 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party which met in February of this year. But still there was a tendency to hold back on "de-Stalinization" even after the revelations of Khrushchev's report to the closed session of the 20th Congress.

This dual development was reflected in different ways by the recent Polish and Hungarian events. Whereas in the former the return of Gomulka to leadership found the Communists taking leadership of the popular protest movement against repression and for complete national sovereignty, in

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Hungary there was vacillation which enabled reactionaries to influence the situation. In both cases Soviet intervention reflected certain Stalinist influences which still persisted.

This was recognized by the Soviet Communist leaders themselves in their declaration of Oct. 30 about relations with the peoples democracies. The Soviet leaders said:

"In the process of the establishment of the new regimes and the deep revolutionary transformation in social relations there were not a few difficulties, unsolved problems and downright mistakes, including those in the relations between the Socialist states, violations and mistakes which infringed the principles of equality in relations between Socialist states."

In political, economic and military spheres there had arisen grievances and inequalities. So the Soviet declaration of Oct. 30 stated:

"As recent events have shown, the need has arisen for an appropriate declaration to be made on the position of the Soviet Union in the mutual relations between the USSR and other Socialist countries, primarily in the economic and military spheres."

The Soviet government declared its readiness to discuss measures "to remove any possibilities of violating the principle of national sovereignty and mutual advantage and equality in economic relations."

The Soviet government also indicated its readiness to discuss withdrawal of troops from Hungary.

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HOWEVER, a speech delivered by Tito on Nov. 15, indicated that there was a continuing struggle going on between two trends in the Communist movements. Tito said in that speech that he considered it a shortcoming of the Soviet analysis which blamed all

evils under Stalin merely on the cult of Stalin. This "cult," Tito said "is in fact the product of a system."

"They (the Soviet leaders)" Tito said, "have not launched a struggle against that system, or, if they have, they have done it more in silence, saying that the whole everything was good but that in his late life, since he was old, Stalin began going a little mad and to make various mistakes."

From the beginning, Tito said, he argued that it was necessary to get at the roots of what had produced the "cult of the personality."

"Where are these roots?" Tito asked. "In the bureaucratic apparatus, in the methods of leadership and the so-called one-man rule, in the disregard for the role and tendencies of the working masses. . ."

Tito said the struggle between the two tendencies is going on in the Soviet C.P. and added:

"There were still possibilities that within the Soviet leadership those elements would win through internal solution which stand for stronger and more rapid development in the direction of democratization, abandonment of all Stalinist methods. . ."

The Soviet newspaper Pravda replied sharply to Tito's speech. Pravda said Tito was violating the principle that there are many paths to socialism and was trying to impose his particular course on others.

"One cannot fail to see," Pravda wrote, "that such assertions by Tito are definitely linked with those articles in the Yugoslav press in which the idea comes through more and more frequently that Yugoslavia's road to socialism is the only true course, and even the only possible way for socialist development in almost all countries."

One thing seemed clear from these events: that a long and difficult struggle was going on between two trends in Communist Parties everywhere.