

Crisis of Socialism and Beginning of Democratic Movement in Central Europe

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ABSTRACT

To understand the political background of Central Europe, this article is being divided into two major parts. The first section will deal with the crisis and decline of socialist form of government and the second section will focus on the beginning and rise of democratic movement in Central Europe. The course and speed of events in Central and Eastern Europe, which have surprised everyone (including their protagonists), call for an unbearable reassessment of widely held theories and deeply felt ideologies of socialism, of the nature of democracy and social democracy and of the role of social movements in both. Moreover, both the economic causes and consequences of these socio-political processes merit more attention than has been usual in the excited reception of the 1989 revolution.

Key Words : Socialism, Socialist System and Democratic Movement in Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia (Czech and Slovak)

INTRODUCTION

Post-World War II period witnessed the establishment of Marxist-Leninist regimes over those areas of Central and Eastern Europe, which had been designated by the allied power as a part of Soviet sphere of influence. As a result, communist governments were established in Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland and Romania. Though, the democratic movements in these countries did not occur in a systematic process, it happened through the process of several reformist movements till disintegration of Soviet Union. People were dissatisfied with the existing communist governments, and therefore revolts and protests against the rule, broke out in several countries. However, after the death of Stalin in 1953 and Khrushchev's secret speech in 1956¹, the dissatisfaction among the masses in these countries gained stimulus and ideas of reform began to gain ground.²

Instances of mass political protests occurring during this period include the Berlin uprising of June 1953,³ a small scale worker's revolt in Pilsen, Czechoslovakia in June 1953; worker's strikes in Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria; the Poznan uprising of June 1956 in Poland⁴; and the dramatic revolution in Hungary in Oct-Nov 1956. Apart from these, such political events as the political crisis and the student's revolt in Poland in March 1968; the Czechoslovak reform movement the same year; and two waves of workers unrest in Poland 1970 and 1976 might also be included in the first historical cluster.⁵