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DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM IN EUROPE AND
EURO-AMERICAN RELATIONS

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Main Extracts

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1. The scope of this analysis encompasses all the Socialist and Social Democrat parties as well as those trade unions which keep more or less explicitly defined ties with them as regards questions of doctrine or common action programmes in the economic and social areas.

These Socialist and Social Democrat parties have for me one point in common, despite a broad range of differences as to their economic thinking, their organisation, their leadership and their relations with other leftwing parties, especially the Communist parties. This is their profession that the ultimate legitimacy of power rests with popular will as expressed by periodically held general and Free elections which marks them out from other radical left or Communist parties.

This does not preclude that on occasions they will try to influence events through extra parliamentary methods (for example, through the use of direct action) but they do not intend to overthrow traditional parliamentary democracy by introducing various kinds of direct democracy, either social or economic.

But they reject the view that parliamentary democracy is just a fake democracy, that democracy is more than a matter of arithmetic, or the view of post-stalinist Communism or extreme leftism that the constitutional freedoms of opinion, speech and free assembly are just "formal liberties" as opposed to the "real" ones which arise from the "masses" without undue interference from what Lenin once called "parliamentary cretinism". Quite the contrary, for they stand as a matter of principle for parliamentary democracy based in a general and free vote since the beginning of their struggle against capitalism.

2. Now, although the extreme non Communist left and the Communist parties lump Socialist and Social democrat parties together; labelling or branding -- according to circumstances -- them both as "social democrats" they see themselves as being different in essence. When my friend Mario SOARES refutes the contention that the Portuguese Socialist party is a "social democrat party", he is not just inspired by tactical considerations. For all the Socialist parties which are embarked upon a collision course (Portuguese case) or are engaged in an conflicting and uneasy partnership with the Communists (French case) are anxious to dismiss the view that they are "social democrat parties" "à l'Allemande" or

They know that the Communists, even in a period of tactical "détente" with them, view social democracy as a disease that should be cured by persuasion and peaceful competition, or in periods of strife or even overt war, as a treacherous conspiracy against workers which can only strengthen capitalism.

Nobody should forget that in the early days of Hitlerism, the "social traitors" or the "social fascists" were as evil to the Communists as were the Nazis.

But even parties which are not faced with that kind of challenge are also prone to see themselves as "Socialists" and to shun the label "social democrat". Not so much because of any differences in substance -- which exist, but are sometimes not easy to depict and to account for -- but because the "Socialists" question the purity of the Socialist convictions of the Social Democrats, whereas the latter claim that they are adapting socialist tenets to the inescapable realities of the neocapitalist regime.

3. This leads me to another point which focuses on the subject-matter of the present conference. The question is raised : "Is Europe going left?". Now, I do not think that question stems from any misgivings because Helmut SCHMIDT has said, "I do not think that Europe is going left" which and perhaps still do today, that the good old days of the

great Christian democrats, like Konrad ADENAUER or Alcide DE GASPERI, will eventually come back. But I gather that few will recoil in horror at the idea that the present socialist or social democrat leadership in Europe could continue indefinitely.

Is it not that prospect which lies behind the question. What explains the anxiety is the fear that the democratic left in Europe would become less and less "social democrat" and more and more "socialist", even to the point of partnerships with Communist parties each time the deep reforms the democratic left wants to bring about in the economic regime of Europe require it.

So the issue at hand is really as follows : will the democratic left in Europe become the national party of government in Western Europe from ^{now} on, either alone or with the cooperation of Communist parties? Will it, under the pressure of economic circumstances or political upheaval in some countries, try to alter fundamentally its present ties, economic and political, with the United States?

4. This leads me to a further point, which is so obvious that it needs indeed to be stressed because it could be overlooked by our American friends. Euro-Us relations are not a one-way process. The Europeans, and for the purpose of this paper, European democratic socialists, are not the only ones instrumental in the whole set-up of Euro-Us relations. They reflect not only their own doctrine but also the economic and political facts they are living with. They also respond to the influence of US policy towards Europe and outside Europe. More specifically, European democratic socialist thinking is bound to be influenced by détente, by the new pattern of relations between US and USSR and its repercussions in Europe (mainly in the field of defence) and also by the US attitude towards Socialism.

5. One last point : while I want to concentrate on the Socialist and Social democrat parties of the EEC countries, other parties which have close connections with some of the latter could be ignored. There is, for instance, a similarity of views among Austrian, German and Swedish social democrats.

To take another example, Socialist parties of the Southern part of Europe have endeavoured to harmonize their ideas about political future, as evidenced by the Summer meeting in France of the leaders of Socialist parties of France, Portugal, Spain, Italy. Finally, the EEC Socialist and Social democrat parties are in no way commensurate to the evolution of the present Europe "soft belly" (Greece and Turkey, Spain and Portugal).

6. Thus, to assess the prospects of "Europe going left" because of a changing democratic socialism, and also in order to weigh the implications of this for Euro-american relations, I shall have to analyze successively :

- a) the strength of democratic socialism, today and tomorrow (an exacting task, if ever there was one !);
- b) the economic thinking of the main parties which stand for, as right, the democratic socialist "vision" of the society;
- c) the relations they have (or do not have) with the Communist parties, and the prospects there are for the establishment of "popular front" governments;
- d) the repercussions of US foreign policy towards the USSR;

stands for.

From all this, a tentative conclusion has to be drawn regarding:

- a) the reality of the prospect of Western Europe "going left" ;
- b) the impact this might have on the set-up of US-Euro relations.

Regarding the first question, one can observe that Western Europe has already gone left as far as Socialist and Social democrat parties' share in the total vote and participation in government are concerned. This trend could even be extended to countries where the Socialist parties were either non-existent, at least, formally (Spain and Portugal) or weak (France). And this has not triggered off any upheaval in the US-Euro relations.

It would be unfair to suspect European Socialists and Social Democrats of wanting to steer a course systematically hostile to the United States. For they could, and will, sometimes not see eye to eye with the US administration. But it may be assumed that it will not imperil the consensus on the need to safeguard reasonably cooperative relations with the United States. It would be unfair not to credit with a satisfactory record in relation to the fight against inflation. This is especially true for Germany, Sweden and Austria. Other countries led by Socialist or Social Democrat governments have recently step in that direction. A high rate

of unemployment - according to european standards at least - has been the price paid for this, indeed. But anyway, raging inflation can also be held responsible for it. But obviously most socialist countries are convinced that this stage of the economic development of the Western world will call for fundamental changes in the structure of income and wealth and in the exercise of economic power. However, there should be a caveat that deep and sustained economic crises are not necessarily beneficial to the parties of the left.

But this again does not imply a drift to economic disorder and political upheaval that should automatically generate governments of "popular front". Certainly not in the countries of the "Solid North".