

A WELCOME MOVE

THERE IS MUCH to welcome in the statement of the Soviet government on relations with the People's Democracies of Eastern Europe.

The U.S.S.R. is now ready to discuss the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Poland, Hungary and Rumania and Soviet advisers from all of the People's Democracies.

In announcing this far-reaching change, the Soviet government is compelled to admit that "in the process of the establishment of the new regimes and the deep revolutionary transformation in social relations (in Eastern Europe after the war) 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."

The Soviet government also declares that the mistakes in relations among the Socialist states were "resolutely condemned" at the 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party, and speaks of the upheaval by the Hungarian people for democratization as a "just and progressive movement of the working people."

The tragedy has been the slowness to carry out any change of policy since the 20th Congress—not to mention the lapses back into the old Stalinist relations as in the ill-fated Rokossovsky affair in Poland and the events in Hungary. For while the Communist leaders in Poland evidently got hold of the situation in time, events in Hungary ended in the shedding of blood of the Hungarian people, grave threats to the existence of socialism there, and heavy blows to the prestige of the Soviet Union.

It is unfortunate that the Soviet government did not take the needed steps before recent events—if it had, the serious set-back to the cause of socialism might have been avoided. It is to be hoped that the discussions of the 20th Congress—which were only a beginning at de-Stalinization—will now be gone into much more deeply in the Soviet Union and the necessary conclusions drawn without delay.

This is needed to give full substance to the declaration of principles in the Soviet government's statement: "United by the common ideal of building a Socialist society and the principles of proletarian internationalism, the countries of the great commonwealth of Socialist nations can build their relations only on the principle of full equality, respect of territorial integrity, state independence and sovereignty and non-interference in the domestic affairs of one another."

Meanwhile, the latest development has considerable meaning for the American people. The presence of American troops all over Europe and the continued arming of West Germany has been explained away as made necessary by the presence of Soviet troops in Eastern Europe—despite repeated and rejected Soviet proposals for the withdrawal of ALL foreign troops from Europe. But with the departure of the Soviet troops now in sight, what possible excuse can there be for continuing American bases throughout Europe—not to mention bases around the world? What reason can there be now for not reaching an agreement with the Soviet Union, as Walter Lippmann and others have urged, on a neutralized Germany, removing all foreign troops from both parts of that country and eliminating this source of war danger in Central Europe?