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Ideological and Philosophical Aspects of the New Thinking Concept in Mass Political Literature of 1988–91

Abstract

The article analyses ideological and philosophical development of M. S. Gorbachev's "New Thinking" policy, which came into conflict with the late Soviet ideology. The following methods have been used in its study: narrative and historical-genetic. The source base includes materials of mass political literature printed in the publishing houses Znanie and Lenizdat. The chronological framework covers the period from 1988 to 1991. Emphasis is placed on the formation of four ideological and philosophical theses of the new thinking postulated by Gorbachev in his book "Perestroika and New Thinking for Our Country and the World." The first thesis represented philosophical aspect of the new thinking policy and postulated the use of dialectical laws as its main method. Subsequent theses contained an ideological component. The second thesis described relationship between class, national-state, and universal interests. The third thesis proposed an idea of freedom of choice of socio-economic development for all states, excluding pressure from the USSR and the USA. The fourth thesis put forward the concept of a "pan-European home," which hypothetically was to put an end to political division in Europe. All four theses received some interpretation in the mainstream political literature with creative addition of specific provisions. Thus, the first thesis used the principle of the "union of opposites," which implied union of capitalist and socialist elements in the basis and superstructure of society. The idea itself was quite controversial, as it contradicted the dogma of Marxism-Leninism. The second thesis favoured universal values over class and nation-state ones, excluding all previous Soviet foreign policy line. The third thesis applied to developing countries and did not contradict official Soviet ideology, developing the doctrine of internationalism in a changed environment. The fourth thesis promoted the idea of a common European home, prompting close integration with economic and political alliances of Western Europe. However, it ignored the plight of the OIA and the Soviet Union, which were losing political power and becoming increasingly irrelevant actors in international relations. Thus, most provisions of the new thinking were at odds with official Soviet ideology, leaving out fundamental interests of the state. The basis of the study is mass political literature published in the USSR in 1988–91. The methods of historical analysis have been applied in its study: narrative and historical-genetic. The relevance of the topic is conditioned by study of the evolution of main ideas of the new thinking doctrine in a philosophical-ideological key. The novelty is related to the fact that the study expands historical knowledge on dynamics of the new thinking policy formation on the basis of mass sources. The main purpose of the article is to consider the ideological development of the new thinking policy, challenging significance of the former conservative ideology.

Keywords

Sources, new thinking policy, Perestroika, mass political literature, M. S. Gorbachev, ideology.

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