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Intra-Party Discussion on the Fourth Draft IV Program of the CPSU in 1991. Based on the materials of the meeting of the Permanent Ideological Commission and the Commission on Science, Education and Culture of July 12, 1991

Abstract

The study analyses the intra-party discussion on the fourth draft programme of the CPSU in 1991. The following methods were used to study the problem: narrative and historical-typological. The source base of the article was the "Transcript of the joint meeting of the ideological commission and the commission on science, education and culture of 12 July 1991" from the fund "The Commission of the CPSU Central Committee (1989-1991)" of the Russian state archive of modern history. By the early 1990s, the CPSU had lost its former unity as it entered a period of destructive factional fighting. M. S. Gorbachev realised that if the cause of the conflict was not addressed, the party would inevitably split. As a solution to the problem, he considered updating the CPSU programme, as the old concept did not meet the changed political situation and became the most important factor of confrontation between warring factions. At the XXVIII congress, a programme commission was elected. Its main purpose was to develop a draft document. By 12 July 1991, the programme commission presented the fourth version of the draft to a joint meeting of the standing ideological commission and the commission on science, education and culture for a final revision before the July plenum. In the course of analysing the discussion, it was possible to group the participants of the polemic according to their political views. The speakers were divided into conservatives, reformers and centrists. Participants of each faction had different views on the future of the CPSU programme. Thus, representatives of conservatives spoke quite harshly about the weakness and imperfection of the project. In their opinion, it did not provide for such essential elements of communist ideology as orientation towards the proletarian strata, reliance on a social state with a managed economy, and the strengthening of party structures to retain power. The conservatives were opposed by reformers with a liberal agenda. This included full acceptance of the spirit of the programme, insistence on radicalising market reforms and measures leading to a weakening of party hegemony. The last faction of centrists tried to reconcile the warring factions by creating a consolidating version of the programme. Their proposals contained compromise theses that could, in theory, satisfy each of the platforms. Nevertheless, it was not possible to reach an agreement, as the centrists did not find support from other factions and found themselves in the minority. Based on the sentiments of the speakers, most of them held

an orthodox position. The conservatives were confident of their victory and did not consider it necessary to concede, and neither did the reformers. Thus, the revealed irreconcilability and fierceness of the discussion showed that factions within the CPSU were unable to coexist constructively. The party was inevitably approaching a political split.

Keywords

Historical sources, perestroika, M. S. Gorbachev, CPSU programme, intra-party discussion, factions, party split.

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