

Gorbachev's dubious reform

The consensus in Western public opinion achieved by Mikhail Gorbachev and his domestic and international policies, since he entered the Kremlin as new CPSU General Secretary some three years ago, is astounding. And not only with the unanimous chorus of American liberals and the European Left — Marxist or otherwise — but also with the less predictable enthusiasm of Time magazine, and of “J. S. Mill” liberals and public figures such as Hans-Dietrich Genscher, Margaret Thatcher, Franz Joseph Strauss, and last but not least, Ronald Reagan, the former implacable enemy of the “Evil Empire”, who has today dramatically converted to a completely different view, with a naivety comparable to that of Carter’s “understanding the nature of the Soviet regime” after the Afghanistan invasion.

C. Castoriadis,
The Gorbachev
interlude

The entire nomenklatura of our Western societies — with the only notable exception of France — has hurried to applaud, as if it had to compensate for the coldness, not to say the hostility, with which the reforms have been received by their intended addressees: the nomenklatura and population of the Soviet Union. There, it is less a case of Gorbachev’s unpopularity — with the exception of the new measures which have made vodka more difficult to buy — than a case of indifference, hostility is strong only in those social groups directly implicated in his reforms. It is an extremely violent — though masked — conflict, between a caste of totalitarian bureaucrats and a leader who is attempting to save the Soviet system, through the introduction of a few marginal changes in a petrified power structure. And despite the consensus reached by Gorbachev’s plans in the European Left, and among Soviet dissidents completely devoid of power, there can not be much hope of his success, the kingpin of his strategy relying on military forces who support his reforms simply because

Giulietto Chiesa,
The second
revolution

Rudolf von Thadden

E₁ *History less than any other discipline...*

Rudolf VON THADDEN: The result is that historical studies in the two Republics today noticeably differ in their results, even though they can both go back to common points of reference in their academic past. However, it is highly significant that these differences do not simply parallel the history of the two German States, but - within certain limits - follow their own individual gradual process of development. Whilst the collective consciousness of the Germans from both East and West has remained united and intact far above and beyond the formation of the two separate States, and has only started to be affected with the advent of the present-day second postwar generation, historical studies on each side of the border have rapidly developed as separate, only to re-discover the same areas of discussion once again. As research on the Reformation, on the Prussian State, or on Bismarck's founding of the Reich shows, exchange of ideas is much easier and more profitable today than during the first decades after the creation of the two separate States.

E₁ *This looks somewhat paradoxical.*

Rudolf VON THADDEN: The paradox is only apparent, as one can see when the conditions of this development are observed more carefully. In its founding and reinforcement phases, the GDR was obliged for better or for worse to give its historiography a revolutionary approach, and refuse any aspect which might cast a shadow on the new historical quality of the "first worker and peasant State on German land", which was being constructed with such an all

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