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Die chinesischen Reformen unter Deng Xiaoping und ihre Auswirkungen auf die bulgarischen Wirtschaftsreformen in den 1980er-Jahren

The Chinese reforms under Deng Xiaoping and their impact on Bulgarian economic reforms in the 1980s

In: Jahrbuch für Historische Kommunismusforschung 2020. Berlin: Metropol Verlag, pp. 89–103

Abstract

The aim of this study is to verify the hypothesis that in the final years of Bulgarian state and party leader Todor Zhivkov, during the Soviet “perestroika” of Mikhail Gorbachev, he turned to the strategic advantages of the Chinese model of reforms conducted by Deng Xiaoping, trying to follow China as a more effective and successful model of reforms of the socialist system. According to this hypothesis this was the reason for the worsening of Bulgarian-Soviet relations and finally resulted in the overthrow of Zhivkov by a coup organized and supported by the Soviet Union. On the basis of unpublished documents from the Bulgarian State and Diplomatic archives the aim here is to address several questions: was there a real impact of Deng Xiaoping’s reforms in Bulgaria, and did they somehow influence the decisions and actions of the Bulgarian government in the 1980s? Is it true that Bulgaria drew on the Chinese model and the only reason for not continuing this trend was the overthrow of Todor Zhivkov? Is the implementation of the Chinese model in Bulgarian realities possible? Archival evidence shows that the Bulgarian reforms basically followed the general trends of the reforms in the whole Eastern bloc and especially those in the USSR. Similarities between Bulgarian and Chinese reforms are rather due to the similarities between Chinese and Soviet reforms than to direct Chinese influence on Bulgaria. Undoubtedly, Zhivkov and other Bulgarian officials in the 1980s were greatly impressed by the results of the Chinese reforms, and they hoped to benefit from the economic, scientific, and technological opportunities offered by the rapprochement with China. As a result, Bulgarian-Chinese bilateral relations improved at the end of the 1980s. But this does not mean there was a direct attempt to implement the “Chinese model” in Bulgaria. Zhivkov was happy that the actions of the Chinese leaders (especially Deng Xiaoping) largely coincided with his understanding of the main purpose of Bulgarian reforms.

Über den Autor

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