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Florian Peters

»Rette sich, wer kann!« Die wirtschaftlichen Reformanläufe der polnischen Kommunisten in den 1980er-Jahren

“Save yourself if you can!”: Reforming the economy in late socialist Poland

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Abstract

This essay traces the contradictory evolution of Polish communists' approaches to economic reform during the 1980s and situates them in the context of the turbulent social and political dynamics of the decade. More specifically, it analyses how reform debates, which had shared the common ground of market socialism in face of the challenge posed by Solidarity in 1980–1981, shifted towards the idea of transition to authoritarian capitalism in the second half of the 1980s. The aim here is to determine whether the promise of individual economic freedom was seen as a first step towards democracy, or rather as its substitute, and to assess how far Polish reform policies were rightly considered “socialist Thatcherism” by contemporary Soviet analysts. The analysis thus sheds light on the impact of the piecemeal economic reforms implemented by the last communist governments on the subsequent transition to capitalism and contributes to the growing body of research into the political and discursive preconditions of the 1989 shock therapy.

Über den Autor

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