

Abstracts

Ole Nørgaard

Gorbachev's Strategy of Reform

The on-going reforms in the Soviet Union have to be conceptualized on the basis of the problems in the economic, political and social structure which characterized the country from the mid-1970s. To solve these problems Gorbachev has propagated ideological revisions which reflect his basic intentions of reform. These intentions consist of: decentralization, an increased participation in decision-making processes on the local level and a more open information structure (glasnost). The gap which can be observed between the ideological provisions and the initiated reforms has to be perceived in political terms. To fight the opponents and to create a constituency of reform, Gorbachev has formulated a strategy directed against three distinct dimensions of the political systems: the elite, the institutionalized opposition and broad societal groups. An analysis of the relative strength of opponents and proponents of reform shows that reforms have to be incremental and can be implemented only in conjunction with changes in the structure of power and basic changes in the dominant values of major social groups.

Clemens Stubbe Østergaard

The Political Dimensions of the Process of Reform in China

The Chinese reforms have been introduced within a context of administrative decentralization and an internal and external legitimacy crisis of the Communist Party. Many barriers to policy-implementation residing in interests and attitudes of elites, institutions and social groups have been surmounted by means of reform-strategies involving structural and personnel manipulation, conducted by Deng Xiaoping. Chinese media reveal that implementing enterprise autonomy remains a key problem, making local, particularly county, interest - and inertia-based administrative intervention the most important reform barrier at present. Solutions include moderate recentralization to core cities, as well as political reform. The political impact of reform includes extensive institutional change, possible progress towards «civil society», changes in important functions of the political system as well as the central political process being characterized by bureaucratic politics and the local political process moving towards greater variation.

Märta-Lisa Magnusson

The Creative Intelligentsia and the Reform Process

The creative intelligentsia (the artists) do not belong to the central political and economic groups in Soviet society. Nevertheless, Gorbachev has found it very important to activate this group in fight for the reform programme. This stems from the status which the artists have as moral leaders in the public. Gorbachev needs them in his efforts to mobilize the people for «perestrojka». An alliance between the party and critical artists helps to restore the prestige and legitimacy of the party.

The party needs a more efficient information system in which the creative intelligentsia plays an important role as reliable producers of information. Gorbachev needs the accumulated knowledge and the critical-analytical potential found in the creative intelligentsia. The party also needs correct information, partly to be able to pursue a policy corresponding to the complexity of modern society, partly to prevent the party from a legitimacy crisis.

Søren Clausen

China: The Intellectuals and the Policy of Reform

Since 1978, China's intellectuals have experienced improved social status and standards of living, as well as greater safety from political persecution and improved opportunities for presenting their views to the political leadership. Today, the intellectuals appear to be the social group that most enthusiastically supports the economic and political post-Mao-reforms. However, a century-old conflict between opposing ideas on the role of intellectuals in China's transition to the modern world has reemerged in the 1980s. In a general sense, after a century of turmoil, China's intellectuals have won back their traditional role as the moral and political elite in society, but not in a stable and lasting form, and, paradoxically, without being able to secure for themselves privileges comparable to those of their Eastern European and Soviet colleagues.

Carl Lankowski

Comparative National Responses to International Economic Challenges: A Review of Some Recent American Literature.

The five works under review have a dual commitment to policy relevance and comparison, and from this arises the defining object of analysis of the authors: the *strategies* actually deployed or available to national policymakers in advanced capitalist countries as they adjusted to the international economic turbulence of the 1970s. The authors share a commitment to offering a political explanation – as opposed to the one based on a transhistorical technical-rational logic of adjustment to impenetrable «economic realities».

Despite the many merits of the books, they are not completely free from a technocratic perspective, the concrete analyses have to a certain degree reified the national «cases», and the authors have yet to embrace a theory of societal dynamics which can offer an explanation of the kind of constraints policymakers must come to terms with.

Henrik S. Jensen

Structuralism and Humanism

For many years, structuralism has had a considerable influence on Western European social theory, representing among other things an attempt to settle with the so-called humanism. The kind of structuralistic criticism levelled against humanism by Althusser (and aimed more or less at another French philosopher, Jean-Paul Sartre) has proved a failure measured by Althusser's own standards. Both the early Althusser's main argument against humanism: that it is based on the as-