Revolution From Within: The Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party and the Collapse of Communism

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Abstract
O'Neil (Univ. of Puget Sound) finds that the collapse of the Hungarian regime in 1989 is best explained by a neo-Institutional analysis of the Hungarian Communist Party. Especially after the 1956 revolution, the party attempted to calm discontent and consolidate its power by coopting intellectuals and technocrats into its ranks. This "Kadarist" compromise was effective in the short term but undermined the Stalinist ideological and organizational unity of the party in the longer run. By the 1970s, younger, well-educated party members began to openly discuss economic change and democracy and formed reform circles within the party that paved the way for collapse. Further, the institutions overthrown still echo, and they created the "path-dependency" development of Hungary's current institutions. O'Neil argues that Hungary was unique in its overthrow of communism from within the party and little influenced by external factors, such as Gorbachev. Not all will be persuaded; some see Hungary as part of a central European pattern of longstanding split parties pushed over the edge by Gorbachev's instructions to reform. Originally a doctoral dissertation, the work is heavy with theories, details, and footnotes. It also provides a good review of the "New Institutionalism." Upper-division undergraduates, graduate students, and faculty.

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