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Original article



Political and Philosophical Aspect of the Ideological Self-determination of the “Left” Parties in the 1990s (Using the Example of Russia, Germany and Poland)

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Annotation

Introduction. The work consists of the methodological part of the analysis of party documents and conclusions. The study examines the practices of legitimization, orientation and political socialization of the Left in Russia and the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Party systems of the former socialist states are being structured to this day.

Materials and methods. The main hypothesis of the study is the assumption that the party discourse of the Left in the countries of the former socialist camp (Russia, Poland and the former German Democratic Republic) appeals to the concept of social justice and the revision of market reforms. To analyze this problem, it is necessary to refer to the methods of content analysis and discourse analysis. Post-communist forces used different discursive strategies.

Results. Self-identification in the party system of modern Russia in the Communist Party of the Russian Federation took place in the conditions of the paternalistic ideas use, a reference in political rhetoric to a strong state and patriotic ideas. The Polish Left used the ideology of socialist past abandoning. The success of the Social Democratic Labor Party and Democratic Left Alliance was dictated by the split within the “Solidarity” Trade Union. The union lost a significant number of supporters in the early 1990s. Despite the presence of strong anti-communist sentiments, only the Polish Left managed to become the ruling political force in the country. Dissatisfaction with ill-conceived liberal reforms became the main factor bringing the Polish and Russian Left closer together. The Party of Democratic Socialism was an alien element for the political system of Germany, but it was this very party which managed to become the only representative of the interests of the former GDR inhabitants during the period under study.

Discussion and conclusion. After analyzing the parties’ programs, key documents and speeches of party members, it was concluded that left-wing political forces experienced a serious crisis in terms of losing legitimacy and electoral support. Each party had to look for a communicative strategy to convince voters in their rightness.

Keywords: “left” parties, socialism, communism, social democracy, history of the left movement, political discourse, Communist Party of the Russian Federation, Russian Social Democratic Labor Party, Democratic Left Alliance (Poland), Party of Democratic Socialism (Germany)

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Политико-философский аспект идеологического самоопределения «левых» партий в 1990-е гг. (на примере России, ФРГ и Польши)

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Аннотация

Введение. Данная работа состоит из методологической части анализа партийных документов и выводов. В рамках исследования рассматриваются практики легитимизации, ориентации и политической социализации левых сил в России и странах Центральной и Восточной Европы. По нынешний день происходит структурирование партийных систем бывших социалистических государств.

Материалы и методы. В качестве основной гипотезы исследования выдвигается предположение о том, что партийный дискурс левых сил в странах бывшего социалистического лагеря (Россия, Польша и бывшая ГДР) апеллирует к концепции социальной справедливости и пересмотру рыночных реформ. Для анализа данной проблемы необходимо обратиться к методам контент-анализа и анализа дискурса. Посткоммунистические силы использовали разные дискурсивные стратегии.

Результаты исследования. Самоидентификация в партийной системе современной России у КПРФ проходила в условиях использования патерналистских идей, отсылке в политической риторике к сильному государству и патриотическим идеям. Польские левые использовали идеологию отката от социалистического прошлого. Успех СДРП и СДЛС был продиктован расколом внутри блока сил «Солидарности», профсоюз потерял значительное число сторонников в начале 1990-х гг. Несмотря на наличие сильных антикоммунистических настроений, только лишь польским левым удалось стать правящей политической силой в стране. Недовольство непродуманными либеральными реформами становилось главным фактором, сближающим польских и российских левых. Партия демократического социализма же была чужеродным элементом для политической системы ФРГ, однако именно ей удалось стать единственным выразителем интересов жителей бывшей ГДР в исследуемый период.

Обсуждение и заключение. Проанализировав программы партий, ключевые документы и выступления членов партии, сделан вывод, что левые политические силы испытали серьезный кризис с точки зрения потери легитимности и электоральной поддержки. Каждой партии пришлось искать коммуникативную стратегию по убеждению в своей правоте избирателей.

Ключевые слова: «левые» партии, социализм, коммунизм, социал-демократия, история левого движения, политический дискурс, КПРФ, СДРП, СДЛС, ПДС

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Introduction. The determinant of political communication is discourse. In modern science, it is understood as a coherent sequence of statements, the condition for creation of which is the episteme, characteristic of the discursive formation within which these statements are generated [1]. The problem of studying sources on the history of our time today is associated with the use, including interdisciplinary approaches that combine both linguistic and textual methods. Researchers of political speech and political language distinguish the following functions of discourse: persuasive, informative, argumentative, delimitative (highlighting differences in the dichotomy of "friend or foe"), persuasive-functional (formation of the worldview) [2, p. 7].

E.I. Sheigal focuses on the instrumental function of the political language, which includes: social control and legitimization of power, reproduction of power and political orientation, solidarization and differentiation, agonal (protest) and actional functions [2, p. 7]. Orientational genres of political discourse (documents that have become historical sources of an informational-prescriptive nature) are the main subject of this study. We relate party programs, reporting reports, agreements to such genres.

First of all, the left political forces became the formal and real heirs of the previous communist parties. The major problem for them was maintaining legitimacy and finding best ways to incorporate into the new political system. In a sense, these political parties sought political rebranding, "finding themselves" in manifestos and key political speeches.

The next most important for the left parties is, of course, the implementation of the electoral function. Its political image depends on the political image of the party, and therefore the number of voters ready to vote for these political forces.

We consider the left political forces to be the parties that inherit the communist ideology: for the Russian Federation such a party is the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, for Poland — the Union of Democratic Left Forces of the Republic of Poland, for Germany — the Party of Democratic Socialism. We chose the period from 1991 to 1999 as the chronological period, that is the era of political systems formation in these countries.

Materials and methods. This study is based on the corpus of published party documents related to the activities of left-wing parties in the post-Soviet period. The use of historical-linguistic methods on the corpus of modern history sources is a frequently used practice. Content analysis and the method of compiling concordance are used quite often in modern science.

Results. Comparing three different communication strategies provides an opportunity to make the following conclusion. The choice of communicative and discursive strategies of political parties was influenced by different socio-political contexts. It can be said that the left forces experiencing a serious crisis of self-identification have found their place in new political systems. They were greatly influenced by the Soviet discursive formation (classical Marxism), the ideology of the “new Left”, as well as national ideas (to a lesser extent in the Party of Democratic Socialism, to a greater extent in the Communist Party of the Russian Federation and the Democratic Left Alliance).

Each of the parties made a unique contribution to the development of theory and practice of modern left-wing ideologies. In the 1990s it was the Communist Party of the Russian Federation that was structured as the strongest and most consistent opposition party in Russia, and the party leader G. A. Zyuganov was the main rival of the President of the Russian Federation, B.N. Yeltsin. Thanks to the convincing program and miscalculations of financial policy by the Minister of Finance L. Baltserovich, the Polish Social Democrats were able to “implement” the left-wing project in the country from a practical point of view. The leader of the left forces, A. Kwasniewski, was the president of the country from 1995 to 2005. In terms of a new ideological platform formation, the leaders of the Party of Democratic Socialism were largely ahead of their domestic and Polish like-minded people (12 theses by G. Gysi). This was largely due to the need to disassociate themselves from strong competitors (the German Social Democrats).

Discussion and conclusion. Communist Party: the formation of the language of political opposition in the conditions of modern Russia. The first stage of party construction of the Russian communists was associated with dissociation and conflict between the Union of Communist Parties — Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Communist Party of the RSFSR. If the first political force prioritized the fight against the regime, the return to the moral ideals of late Soviet communism, the Communist Party of Russia, on the contrary, saw its main goal in adapting to the existing changes taking place in the country’s political system.

One of the most important components of the party self-identification of communist forces in the Russian Federation was the use of identification tactics in political speech and discourse. This technique is characterized by active instrumentalization of references to collective unity, saturates the political language with mobilization potential. Any political force during the electoral cycles of the 1990s sought to build the most promising model for its own identification. For example, the leader of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, G. A. Zyuganov, emphasized that the Communist Party relies on popular patriotic forces consolidated around the Communists. “We will be able to form a government of popular trust tomorrow...”, [2, p. 45] the leader of the Russian Communists declared, using the pronoun “we”, which allowed the politician to state the presence of a large community of party supporters.

At the same time, one of the problems associated with the tactics of identification among the Communists was the problem of a “narrow image”. The Communist Party, despite the idea of progress shared by the Communists, had closed rhetorical techniques in the past, sent citizens to the Soviet political experience.

Speaking about the collapse of the USSR, G. A. Zyuganov noted that “the main destroyers have been still sitting in government structures” [2, p. 59]. Frequent repetition of negative assessment lexemes is regularly found in the speech of the Communists.

The party was also characterized by ideological discussions especially with supporters of an alternative reading of communist ideas (All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, etc.). Contradictions arose within the party itself. The position of the political opposition explained the need for serious preparations for the political campaign. In October 1993, the party held discussions about the possibility of participating in the first Duma elections, although part of the communist forces did not support the idea of elections after the October events of 1993.

In 1994, at the All-Russian Conference of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, issues related to the adoption of a new political program were considered. The result of the conference was the formation of program theses “From crisis to sustainable development, democracy and socialism”.

Analysis of the Communist Party program adopted at the III Party Congress on June 22, 1995 [3] allows us to draw conclusions about the discursive-ideological content of the main document. The method of compiling a concordance of words was used as a methodological tool. Concordance is a list of all uses of a particular language expression or word to determine the features of discourse. Of course, in the first place in terms of frequency of use there is the name of the party itself, which indicates the need to assert itself as the main party of the left political spectrum.

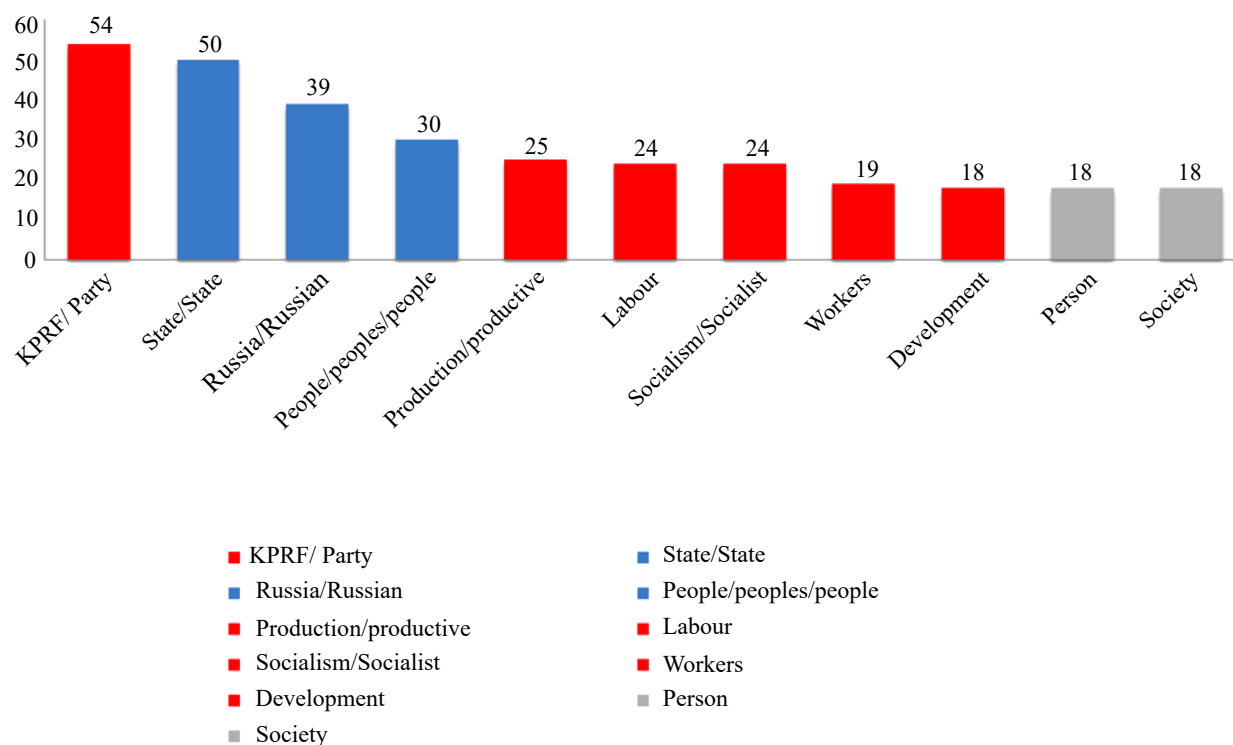


Fig. 1. Frequency of the words use in the Communist Party program 1995

Lexemes expressing traditionally left-wing political concepts, such as “labor”, “development”, “socialism”, fade into the background in the public representation of the party. Much more often, vocabulary is used that focuses voters on national-patriotic ideas. The concepts of “man” and “society” forming universal human values are in the third place.

Pro-communist forces received about half of the votes in the second State Duma. The total number of the Communist Party, the Agrarian Group and the “People’s Power” group amounted to approximately 220 deputies. The Communist Party won a landslide victory in the elections due to the open retreat of liberal forces and the weakness of the pro-presidential coalition: the liberal wing declared its neutral position in order to build support for the centrists and weaken the polarization of parliament. The popularity of the Communist Party was explained by the unwillingness of the population to support the ongoing course of economic reforms. Voters saw communist ideas as an alternative to a massive decline in the standard of living of the population.

Communists in Parliament developed issues of constitutional and institutional design. The intransigent attitude to the presidential course was expressed in the fact that on June 21, 1995, they voted no confidence in the Government, and there was also an attempt to increase monitoring powers of parliament. Thus, the desire of the Communist Party to change the republican political model towards the parliamentary republic should be noted.

The positioning of the Communist Party as a party uniting left-wing ideas and values of a strong state allowed it to successfully establish itself as an opposition to the presidential course in the 1990s.

Polish Left in the 1990s: political success in the face of the communist past criticism. Polish post-communists initially created the Social Democracy of the Republic of Poland Party, and then to attract more left-wing forces from the former Polish United Workers’ Party created a wide front of supporters — Democratic Left Alliance.

In 1993, preparations for the next elections in Poland began. L. Valensa proposed the creation of “Nonpartisan Bloc for Support of Reforms”. He was opposed by the eft, post-communists and radicals from the “Self-Defense” group of

A. Lepper. The process of consolidating the Polish communists was accompanied by the question of attitude towards the past. If new leaders of Poland renounced the legacy of Poland, then the leaders of the post-communists took the more balanced position in relation to the past. “I would not use the term “heavy line”, because I focus neither on dissection of history nor on detaching individual stages from it, but on continuity, continuation”, [4, p. 3] the leader of the Polish Social Democrats, A. Kwasniewski, admitted. The Polish heirs of the Polish United Workers’ Party perceived economic reforms (shock therapy, etc.) extremely negatively, recorded the problem of impoverishment of the population against the background of ongoing reforms.

At the same time, the Polish Left during the election campaign used the slogan “Choose the Future”, which referred to the prospects for the development of Polish society and to a lesser extent concentrated on attitudes to the past.

From the point of view of political ideology, the Democratic Left Alliance became a successor of the left movement traditions of pre-war Poland, Poland and the international left movement. The desire to unite different ideological platforms of the left is the main goal of the Democratic Left Alliance. The peculiarity of the Polish model of socialism of the 1990s was associated with criticism of the last stage (the period of Poland), as well as with the exploitation of the idea of nostalgia for the Soviet period of history.

The Polish Left declared: “Poland needs a way to minimize costs and increase the chances of economic growth” [5, pp. 11–15.]. The Polish Left secured the main credo — economic issues are above political ones: everything should correspond to “socio-economic efficiency, not doctrinal approaches. The measure of the economic system efficiency should be the degree of the interests’ realization of the entire company, and not a small group of owners” [6, p. 32].

Within the framework of the Second Congress of the Social Democratic Labor Party (in March 1993), the program was adopted that approved the party’s desire to “protect the interests of workers in a new, historically unprecedented environment» while using the experience “of the struggle for freedom and social justice, which dates back more than 100 years of the history of the socialist movement in Poland” [5, pp. 11–15].

The Polish Left proclaimed the transition to the socially oriented market economy as their main goal: “We consider that the principles of a social market economy can and should be connected... with equitable distribution of benefits, equality of opportunities and general social security” [5, pp. 11–15].

The most frequent words in use in the program of the Polish Social Democrats were the words “democracy/democratic”, “Poland”, “national”, which testifies, on the one hand, to the rejection of the ideas of the Polish United Workers’ Party, and on the other, to the attempt to find support in national identity. The constant appeal to the concept of “democracy” allows us to explain the reluctance of Polish socialists to associate themselves with the previous era.

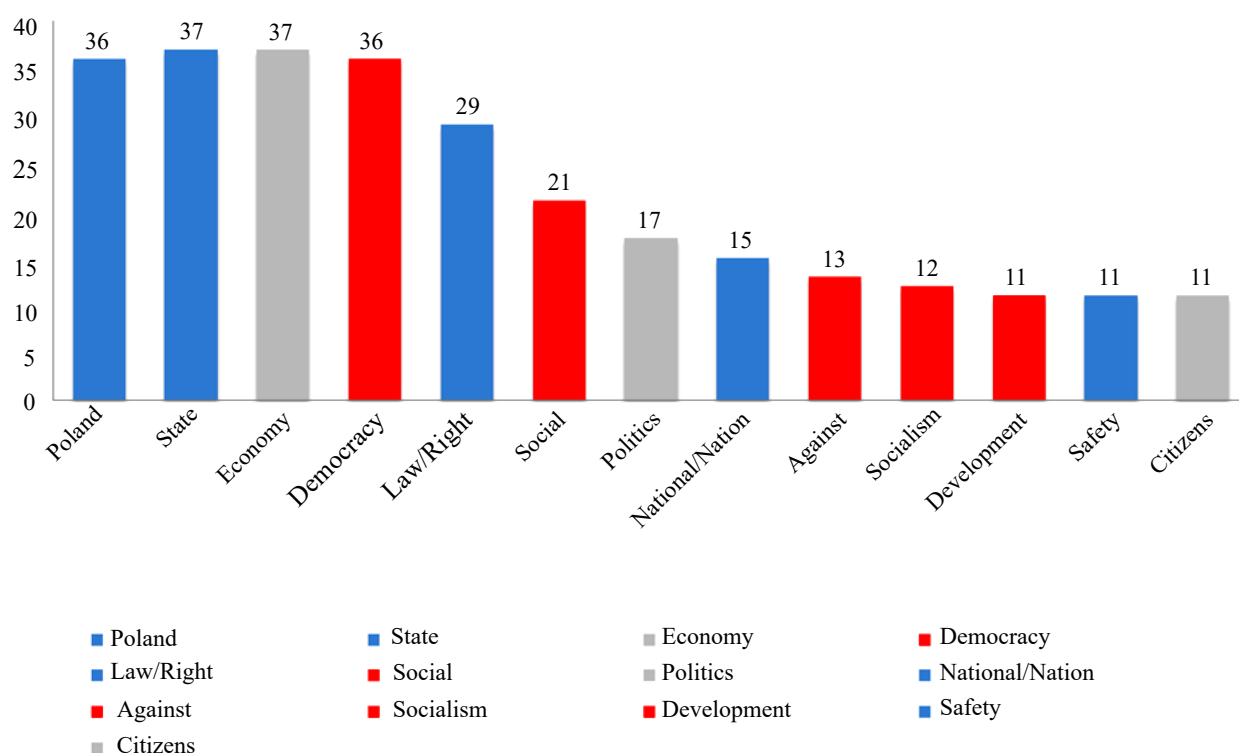


Fig. 2. Frequency of word use in the program of Social Democratic Labor Party, 1993

Attempts of the Social Democrats to become a left-wing party for the Poles were successful. This allowed the post-Communists to stay in power until 2003. The idea of a strong state that preserve and increase social obligations through reforms became meaningful for the Polish Left.

Party of Democratic Socialism: finding itself in the conditions of the political system of Germany. The Party of Democratic Socialism became the heiress of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany. In the 1998 election program, the party paid much attention to the opposition of the Party of Democratic Socialism to other parties. The Party of Democratic Socialism presented itself as a real parliamentary alternative. The main competitors in the new federal states were the Social Democratic Party of Germany and "The Greens". They were accused of following neoliberal attitudes, adaptability and partial approval of the government course [7, pp. 118–139]. In its program, the Party of Democratic Socialism raised the issue of the need to focus on the environment in practical activities, the rejection of the atomic energy use and the transition to alternative energy sources. This party pointed out that the peculiarity of its environmental policy is the active participation of the state in it. Some program provisions also met the requirements of the "Alliance 90", "The Greens" (simplifying the procedure for obtaining citizenship, guaranteeing the rights of people subjected to persecution for political reasons in the political system). The party also advocated the abolition of criminal liability for the actions of passive resistance in the form of demonstrations, blockades, acts of defiance, political strikes, which the Party of Democratic Socialism wanted to constitutionally legitimize. In fact, the party proposed the introduction of a progressive tax scale. Activists helped reduce the length of the working day, reducing the retirement age to 55 years for workers. The party proposed solving employment issues with the help of the state job creation.

In the 1998 federal election, more than 2.5 million voters voted for the Party of Democratic Socialism. More than 2 million (2,054,773) were residents of eastern lands, which accounted for 21.6 % of eastern voters. This party received the status of a parliamentary faction which provided the party with additional funding. The status of "Fraktionsstärke" also gave political leaders more time to speak at parliamentary debates, as well as representation in parliamentary commissions. In some federal states, the party managed to enter into a coalition with the Social Democrats.

The successes of the Party of Democratic Socialism in the 1998 elections are largely due to the names of the party leaders: Gregor Gysi, Lothar Bisky, André Brie.

Discussions at party conferences in the mid-1990s were mainly concentrated around the programs of these leaders.

Between 1994 and 1998, the party sought to protect the interests of East Germans by ensuring the protection of officials working in the public sector of the GDR, equal recognition of teachers' qualifications from East and West Germany, amnesty to citizens who once collaborated with the Stasi [8, pp. 153–160]. Lothar Bisky said: "We continue to fight for fair recognition of Eastern German biographies" and "PDS demands the end of the political isolation of the inhabitants of the East" [9, p. 11]. The result of the 1998 elections was to overcome 5 % of the barrier, achieve 5.1 % of the vote and, as a result, get into the Bundestag. In the new federal states, the party managed to increase the votes of its voters by 1.8 %, while taking the votes from the Social Democratic Party of Germany and the Christian Democratic Union of Germany [10, c. 127]. In the western lands, the results remained almost unchanged (0.2 % of the votes was added).

The internal problem of the party, expressed in the confrontation between traditionalists and reformists, continued to remain unresolved. Another conflict was provoked by G. Gysi's "Twelve Theses for the Policy of Modern Socialism", published in August 1999. In this text, Gysi did not proceed from an anti-capitalist position. He talked about the collapse of state socialism, and tried to find a new modern form of socialist politics. Gysi insisted on revision the foundations of the neoliberal course pursued by the government. These statements caused rejection from the traditionalist wing of the party.

The theses represented democratic socialism as a teaching separate from social-democracy. The recognition of the changed conjuncture was new, so the party abandoned its revolutionary experience. Gysi separately criticized liberalism and its approaches [11].

The prospects for the party development in united Germany seemed doubtful. The inhabitants of West Germany did not accept the party, it seemed marginal, associated with the communist past. Nevertheless, it was its support in the eastern lands that subsequently allowed the Party of Democratic Socialism to take a stable position and by the mid-1990s become one of the three leading parties in Germany. As the country's East integrated into Germany's general political space, the party faced new challenges. In the first half of the 90s we observe that in the context of attitudes transformation towards traditional values, which was manifested in a decrease in the interest of European states citizens in such basic foundations of society as family, religion, etc., the interest in party-state structures is going down. The influence of political parties on society is gradually decreasing. The fall in the electoral activity of citizens, the difficulties that parties face in forming the electoral field, as well as the blurring of borders in the programmatic principles of parties allow us

to talk about the crisis of party and political structures. The crisis was expressed in the decrease in the number of party members [12], aging staff of parties, general disappointment of voters in politicians and political parties (a process that in modern German historiography was called *Politikverdrossenheit*). The important feature of this process was the erasure of many programmatic foundations between parties, as well as the decrease in the ability to influence decisions made in the government due to the fact that the decision-making process was actually usurped by the ruling party circles (as evidenced by the policy of the cabinets of H. Kohl and G. Schröder).

In such political conditions, the Party of Democratic Socialism managed to turn from an “alien” element of German public policy into a political structure that plays a prominent role in the party-political landscape of modern Germany.

The party’s assessments are contradictory and ambiguous both in terms of journalistic assessments and in terms of professional political science literature and historiography.

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