

NORMALIZATION

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In the present contribution, "normalization" is defined, using the example of the ČSSR of the early seventies, as a mechanism which stabilizes party rule and centrally-planned economy in soviet-type systems after the end of a reform phase. Once ideology has been discredited, within the newly consolidated casing of party rule social politics and consumer orientation gain crucial importance for the silencing of whatever grudges the population may bear. The appearance of repression is altered, with open terror being no longer the norm and "lower-key" and at the same time more efficient forms of control becoming more widespread instead. "Normalization" is one of several forms of final-stage socialist rule, a case in point among the "normalization" regimes being the "real socialism" of the GDR during Honecker's tenure. Early on, normalization is quite successful as a rule, since the requirements of safeguarding power coincide with the material interests of large strata of the population. In the end, however, it fails because it simply cannot deliver all the promises that had been linked to it. This is especially true for the consumer aspect, since most of the desires raised are never satisfied.