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European social-democratic party: history and prospects of development

European politics has been of great interest for researchers for a long time. At the turn of the XX-XXI centuries Europe is again in the center of our attention because of its supranational statehood formation, strengthening of economic and political clout in the world, spread of its democratic values.

Social democracy is aimed at building up socialism as the moral compass of social justice, freedom and solidarity, it is believed to be available for all social strata and applied to all spheres of social and private life. The official doctrine of most socialist and social-democratic parties of the world is the doctrine of “democratic socialism”. This conception is based on revolutionary way of social classes cooperation, desire to reform capitalism to make free society of social justice and people’s power.

First social-democrats shared Marx’s ideas of the governing role of economics and class essence of state and law. The guidelines of modern European social-democracy were formed in the last quarter of the 19th - beginning of the 20th century under the influence of E. Bernshtein who had formulated the theory of class struggle fading, negated dictatorship of proletariat and explained the necessity of capitalism reforming and all social classes cooperation. At this stage of European social-democracy formation social-democratic (socialist) parties of working class appeared in Germany, Switzerland, Portugal, Denmark, Spain, Norway, Austria, Sweden, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Netherlands, Finland, UK and France.

After the victory of October revolution in Russia reformed socialism supporters condemned Bolsheviks for economics militarization, fomenting of class struggle and antidemocracy. In 20-30-s of the XX century appeared the conception that treated social-democracy as the “third way” of social development, the way between capitalism and state socialism of Marxian-Bolshevik type. The founders of this conception were: the leader of Socialist Party of France L. Blum and the leader of the Socialist-democratic Party of Austria K. Brenner. The rift of social

movement with its division into a revolutionary and a reforming wing led to the birth of International (Comintern).

When World War II was over conception of the “third way” was formalized in Declaration “Aims and targets of democratic socialism”. It was adopted in 1951 in Frankfurt by The First Congress of Socialist International. This document declared the wish to overcome capitalism by creating the form of government where “interests of all are over the interests of profit”. “Democratic socialism” was announced as official doctrine of social-democracy. Provisions of Frankfurt declaration paved the way to further programs of social-democratic parties, first of all the program of Social-democratic Party of Austria (1958), Social-democratic party of Switzerland (1959), Belgian Socialist Party (1959), Godesberg program of Social-democratic Party of Germany (1959), Social-democratic worker’s party of Sweden (1960), Social-democratic party of Denmark (1961). Ideologists – social-democrats declared their parties left “people’s” parties, representing interests of wage and salary workers of “middle strata”.

The 70-s of the XX century signalized the beginning of a new stage of social-democratic development, characterized by strengthening of ecology requirements and sexual equality questions in ideology of social-democrats. These items made them close in some ways to political views of environmental groups (“green”).

Following at the end of the 80-s collapse of state-bureaucratic model of socialism in countries of Central and Eastern Europe, orientation of “young” European countries to “democratic” socialism and return to national democratic traditions led to final loss by Marxism of serious influence on European working people movement and on further political theory and practice. In manifestos of European social-democratic parties in the 80-s there were provisions covering the ideas that scientific and technical progress had to turn to social and mental development of human beings and necessity of thinking over arising globalization contradictions. The Stockholm Declaration of principles of Socialist International (1989) showed that profound changes in the world of the 50-80-s of the XX century were thoroughly analyzed.

In 1993 after signing of Maastricht agreements the party of European socialists was created. It integrated social-democratic movement in European Union. Social-democrats played a crucial part in ideology and practical appliance of Euro-integration.

The next stage of social-democracy conceptualization refers to the end of the 90-s of the XX – beginning of the XXI century. In 1999 the leader of Social-democratic Party of Germany G. Schroeder and the Leader of Labor Party of UK T. Blair worked out the document called “Europe: the third way, new center” (The third way \ Die Neue Mitte), where they tried to fix the strategy of European social-democracy development in the current context. They suggested state expenses reduction, tax cutting and imposing of flexible labor market. This document wasn’t widely supported by European social-democrats.

As the result of specific character of social-economic and political development of European countries and existence of social-democrats

disagreements on party provisions a few modern models of social democracy were formed.

Followers of the German model try to build so called “society of participation” where not only holders but wage and salary workers, local communities, consumers, other interested groups and organizations have posts in administration bodies and took active part in making decisions.

The main feature of German model of social-democracy is a more integral role of government in all spheres of social life than British Labor members believe. German model also contains the following features: single-minded industrial policy, focused on the use of country’s financial resources in the interests of nation’s economy; security of business competition and restrictions on monopolies; focused state policy of redistribution in the interests of less secured strata and groups of people (subsection “Our main values” section 2 of Hamburg program of German Social-democratic Party); close links of party structures and trade unions; EU as a political answer to globalization (section 1,3.1 and 3.2 of Hamburg program of German Social-democratic Party).

German social-democrats pay special attention to questions of full employment which are based on four items: 1) maximum and high-quality growth of innovative products, their advantages; special dynamic development in service industry employment that leads to abundant supply of working places; 2) support of people with the help of coordinated employment policy at labor market, education policy and policy of equal rights, with the help of family. These items are believed to be able to help people surmount repercussions of changing jobs and interruptions in service and keep their ability to work; 3) special offers of labor valuable to community 4) modern working time policy which with the help of working time reduction gives more people opportunity to be employed.

Austrian, Swiss, Czech and Hungarian social-democrats are strongly attracted by German model. For example, in section 8 of Czech Social-democratic Party program (26 February 1993) there is suggestion of using money-lending institution of national financial economy as in Austria, additional payments for products friendly to environment as in Bavaria.

Anglo-Saxon model of social-democracy is based on:

- individualism and negation of collectivism. According to this model the alternative to collectivism is a new link between an individual and territorial communities and groups, “one goal groups” (charity organizations, self-help groups, ecological groups, consumers);
- decisive and unconditional support of globalization and transnational systems of administration. Globalization makes countries be more sensitive to signals coming from the top and the bottom which means “double democracy”;
- use of EU as “strategic government for realizing policy of social-democracy” first of all in questions of taxation and ecology.

Anglo-Saxon model is widely supported by Swedish and Danish social-democrats.

Some national social-democracies speak about independent models. Supporters of independent Swedish (Scandinavian) model of social-democracy

(Karlsson I., Lindgren A.) point to the following ideas: 1) democracy of broad participation; 2) society is believed to be “people’s house”; 3) combination of equal rights and economic efficiency; 4) market economy must be society-oriented and controlled by society as well; 5) “strong society” as indispensable condition of freedom of individual. Section II.5 of Austrian Social-democracy Party program (30 October 1998) says about the existence of the Austrian model of social partnership that offers policy of talks with the participation of representatives of government, trade unions and businessmen groups; fair distribution of work, education, profit and fortunes; integrative policy of generations directed to build up “society of longevity” and social solidarity; there are ideas about the creation of a special alliance of social-democrats and trade unions in order to secure rights of workers and to improve their life conditions.

Swiss social-democrats suggest two strategies of overcoming capitalism: 1) means of production must be placed under social control, workers must share the capital of plants and factories; 2) there must be democratic administration based on conditions worked out by people. Section 20 of Swiss Social-democratic party program gives three ways of democratization of economy: a) workers participation in factory or plant administration; b) sharing by workers the factory or plant capital and redistribution of profit; c) development of producers’ cooperatives and self-rule groups.

National peculiarities among social-democracies in Europe can be explained by different level of production, differences of working movement development, political and cultural traditions.

Social-democratic ideology has always played an important part in life of people. Social-democrats managed to create a social state with 8-hour working day, independent trade unions, collective agreements, paid holiday and sick leave, elements of democracy were applied to productive relations. Healthcare, child institutions, elderly people care have become available to everybody. Social-democrats have managed to introduce proportional electoral system, equal rights to get education. Thanks to social-democrats women got the right to vote, both sexes have equal rights in marriage and family life.

In future ideology and programs of social-democratic parties in EU countries will get closer. It is explained by strengthening of all-European social and economic policy coordination pursued by European Union, activation of social-democratic structures in political institutions of Europe (socialist groups in European Parliament, Council of regional departments, Parliamentary Assemblies in Council of Europe and OBCE), attempts to nominate a united (single) candidate, activities of members of European socialist parties to work out cooperative manifestos for elections into European Parliament. Meanwhile it is not impossible that national social-democratic parties will keep their own personal points of view on the number of questions such as: attitude to conscription, use of biotechnologies, genetic engineering, civil partnership status, abortions, cannabis legalization, right to have a death lethal injection.

Manifestos of European social-democratic parties are likely to contain the following challenges of social life: development of European social union,

necessity to work out devices to protect EU citizens rights in other parts of the world and necessity to fix protection of these guarantees; all-European legal basis creation that will regulate tariff talks and collective agreements, regional peculiarities of common policy in questions of ecology, energy and immigration; distribution of powers in European Union, EU participation in realizing international distribution of powers and international security strengthening; criticism of European bureaucracy; questions of relations between church and state; new forms of party work and parties cooperation with civil institutions.