**Party: The Basic Values ​​of the Democratic Socialist Party**

Zhou Yuyun

June 2014

The author is deputy director of the Research Office of the International Department of the CPC Central Committee

**Journal of** [**Contemporary World**](http://cpc.people.com.cn/GB/68742/187710/index.html)

The values ​​of a political party are the spiritual glue that brings its members together, and are also the political and cultural identity that distinguishes a party from other political parties. As a political party with a long history, the Socialist Party pays special attention to the refinement and elaboration of its own values. The Socialist Party argues that democratic socialism, as a social, political and economic model, is based on basic values ​​such as "freedom, justice, solidarity and mutual assistance". In the view of the Socialist Party, any economic system, whether it is capitalist or socialist, will degenerate into a system of privilege and exploitation if it is not constantly guarded by moral force. Therefore, basic values ​​are needed to regulate, correct and guide the individual and collective behavior of members of society.

**The Connotation of the Socialist Party's Basic Values**

The Socialist Party argues that the realization of socialism does not lie in its "historical inevitability" but in its "moral inevitability". Therefore, the basic values ​​of the Socialist Party are based on ethical and moral foundations, including freedom, justice, solidarity and mutual assistance. The "Frankfurt Declaration" adopted when the Socialist International was rebuilt in 1951 declared that the common goal of socialists is to fight for a system of social justice, good life, freedom and world peace. The purpose of socialists is to expand personal freedom on the basis of achieving economic development and social security, but at that time they had not yet been raised to the level of basic values.

The German Social Democratic Party was the first to advocate the theory of basic values. As a party that is good at theoretical thinking, it was the first to raise the issue of basic values ​​in the democratic socialist movement.

In November 1959, the German Social Democratic Party adopted its first post-war program, the Godesberg Program, which clearly stated for the first time: "Freedom, justice, mutual assistance and the mutual obligations arising from common union are the basic values ​​of socialist intentions." [1] The Godesberg Program was revised twice, and the basic value theory was further elaborated. In the Economic and Political Outline for 1975-1985, the German Social Democratic Party proposed that democratic socialism is rooted in common basic values, which are freedom, justice and mutual assistance. The basic political and social requirements of democratic socialism are generated and developed from the decision to support the above basic values.

The introduction of the theory of basic values ​​has had a profound impact not only on the German Social Democratic Party, but also on the Socialist International and its member parties. The Swedish Social Democratic Party, the Austrian Socialist Party and others have successively recognized the content of basic values. In 1986, the Socialist International also pointed out in the "Lima Mandate" that socialists should "realize the basic values ​​of freedom, justice and solidarity through the process of democratization."

In the "Declaration of Principles" issued by the Socialist International in Stockholm in June 1989, basic values ​​were systematically elaborated in a separate section as the "principles" of the democratic socialist movement for the first time, pointing out that "democratic socialism is an international movement to achieve freedom, social justice and solidarity. Its goal is to win a peaceful world where these basic values ​​can be promoted, individuals can live a meaningful life, their personality and talents can be fully developed, and human rights and civil rights are guaranteed in the basic structure of a democratic society."

Freedom, justice (equality) and solidarity and mutual assistance are the basic values ​​that have been universally recognized by socialist parties in various countries. Socialists have made rich and detailed expositions on freedom, justice, solidarity and mutual assistance.

1. **Freedom.**

In the democratic socialist ideology, freedom is usually used in two senses: one is normative freedom, that is, freedom in the sense of a philosophical category; the other is operational freedom at the political level, which is one of the contents of democratic political construction. As for the former, freedom means human dignity, means getting rid of any dependence that undermines human dignity, and everyone has the right to be free from political coercion, enjoy the greatest opportunity and ability to act in pursuit of personal goals and to realize personal potential, and freely develop their own personality. As for the latter, freedom mainly refers to the citizens' right to free choice - universal and equal suffrage, freedom of thought and belief, freedom of speech and freedom of association. "Socialist freedom is centered on effective choice: a free person should have many choices. However, these choices must be substantive rather than formal." [2] In the minds of socialists, freedom is of vital importance. It is both a means and an end.

1. **Justice.**

Socialists often link justice and equality together. In their view, justice and equality are two aspects of the same value. In some cases, justice is equality; in other cases, justice and equality guarantee each other and are mutually dependent. Without justice, there is no equality, and without equality, there is no justice. "Justice means ending all discrimination against individuals and equal rights and opportunities. Justice requires compensation for physical, intellectual and social inequalities, and requires the realization of freedom from dependence on both the owners of the means of production and those in political power." "Equality is the expression of the equal value of all human beings and the prerequisite for the free development of human personality. Basic economic, social and cultural equality is essential for human diversity and social progress." [3] Of course, equality does not mean assimilation and egalitarianism.

1. **Solidarity and mutual assistance.**

The Socialist Party argues that the spirit of solidarity and mutual assistance is the basic condition for human coexistence and an irreplaceable driving force for opposing injustice. Solidarity and mutual assistance have played a decisive role in the history of the development of the Socialist Party. It has created and inspired the workers' movement for freedom and equality. Solidarity and mutual assistance is a humane attitude. It requires the whole society to take responsibility for those who are in distress. Citizens have the right to get help from society. It is absolutely not allowed to push social risks onto individuals and personalize basic life risks. The Socialist Party argues that human society, as a social organism, is interdependent, and personal happiness is no exception.

It is in the cooperation between people rather than in struggle that common happiness and even personal happiness can be created. Solidarity and mutual assistance require opposition to the indifference and ruthlessness of industrial society, express common humanity and sympathy for victims of injustice, and require understanding to replace suspicion, friendship and mutual assistance to replace indifference and hatred, and cooperation to replace struggle. This is not only the requirement of the basic values ​​of democratic socialism, but also the requirement for the common survival and development of human society in today's era.

**How do we view the relationship between basic values ​​such as freedom, justice, solidarity and mutual assistance?**

Socialists believe that freedom, justice, solidarity and mutual assistance are mutually conditional, interdependent and complementary, and together constitute the basic value theory system of democratic socialism:

(1) Since freedom is the direct embodiment of human dignity, it is a more basic value, so it constitutes the ideological basis of the entire value system and is ranked first among basic values. Of course, freedom is also limited - the freedom of others is the limit and condition of personal freedom.

(2) Justice is the means and way to achieve freedom. Freedom and justice are not contradictory, but mutually conditional. Justice means equal freedom. Without social equality, freedom will degenerate into privilege. Without the free play of the individual self, the implementation of justice and equality will end in coercion and inequality. The first step towards inequality is also the first step towards unfreedom. Only those who have equal rights in politics, economy and society are free people.

(3) Solidarity and mutual assistance are necessary conditions for the formation of justice and the realization of freedom. They are “the link between freedom and justice”;

[4] because only through mutual obligations of assistance can the greatest possible justice be reconciled with the greatest possible individual freedom.

In practice, socialists emphasize the overall values ​​of freedom, justice, and solidarity, believing that these principles are interdependent and mutually necessary and should be given equal importance. “Only by fully realizing these values ​​can we guarantee that all people, regardless of gender, nationality, class, religious belief or race, can live a fulfilling life in peace and freedom.”

[5] In the eyes of socialists, neglecting any of these values ​​will lead to deviation from the track of democratic socialism. Liberals and conservatives only emphasize individual freedom and ignore social justice and solidarity. Communists claim to have achieved equality but ignore individual freedom. Only socialists value both freedom and justice and solidarity.

**Fundamental values ​​are the “ethical pillars of the Socialist Party’s policies” and “the moral driving force of its actions”**

Socialists believe that basic values ​​such as freedom, justice, solidarity and mutual assistance together constitute the ethical foundation of the democratic socialist ideological system, and only democratic socialism can realize these basic values. The modern bourgeois revolution awakened rather than realized freedom, equality and fraternity.

**As regarding themselves as the descendants of the Enlightenment, democratic socialists want to hold high the banner of "freedom, justice (equality), mutual assistance (fraternity)" to realize these ideals of the bourgeois revolution.**

The Socialist Party argues that the reason why human society has gone astray in the process of development is that there has been a deviation in the understanding of basic values, ignoring the equal importance of the three basic values. On the contrary, the Socialist Party attaches importance to the overall value and internal connection of the three, and uses this as a standard to judge political reality and design a blueprint for the future society. As Brandt, former chairman of the Socialist International, said, socialists should "take basic values ​​as a necessary basis and 'practical', that is, timely and politically possible guidance in the formulation of the party's specific goals.

**Basic values ​​have become the starting point and return point of democratic socialism.**

**Firstly,** **the logical unity of the three basic values ​​constitutes the ethical basis of the democratic socialist ideological system and is also the basis for the consistency of all socialists.** **The Socialist Party is not a political party that is united by ideology and belief.**

Socialists publicly declare that their cultural backgrounds, philosophical concepts, ideologies, and religious beliefs are different. What can unite them is the common basic values ​​and the political goals formed on the basis of basic values.

The Socialist International pointed out in the "Lima Mandate": **Democratic socialism is a profound pluralistic movement. It does not have a single basic value concept and basic ideas in politics, economy and social rights. Although there are differences in ideology among socialists, freedom, justice and solidarity and mutual assistance will become the bond for socialists to transcend such differences and cooperate. People from different social classes may have different motivations and starting points for joining the Socialist Party, but they may come together to pursue beautiful moral goals. As long as this point is the same, then everyone can join hands, form a political group, and strive for a common value from different perspectives, according to their own understanding, and in different ways!**

**Secondly, basic values ​​are the basic principles of socialists’ survival and political practice, and are the criteria and driving force for transforming the real human society.**

In the eyes of socialists, “ethics are the basic principles of our survival and transformation of political practice. We engage in political struggles because we believe in the values ​​of freedom, equality and mutual assistance.” Basic values ​​are not only the basis for the unity within the party, but also the supreme thing for the entire human society. As a kind of value in people’s minds, its role and significance far exceed the existing social, political and economic relations. This is because: first, value is eternal, while the existing political and economic relations are temporary; second, value can form the criteria and driving force for human society to transform the world, which is active, while the existing political and economic relations are passive. In other words, values ​​such as freedom, justice, solidarity and mutual assistance are beautiful. As long as people generally establish these values, they can form the driving force for changing the existing social, political and economic relations, and promote the whole society to continuously develop in a better direction.

**Thirdly, basic values ​​are the criteria for the Socialist Party to judge political reality and the yardstick for measuring new and better social systems.**

At the same time, they are also the guide for every socialist to act. As the standard for evaluating political reality, socialists believe that all political, economic, social and cultural systems and actions must be judged by basic values. As long as they conform to basic values, they should be affirmed and promoted; otherwise, they should be criticized or criticized, and improvements and reforms should be sought. It is in this sense that socialists believe that they oppose capitalism not only because it causes economic waste, nor because it prevents the masses from enjoying material rights, but mainly because it violates the sense of justice of socialists; socialists oppose any form of totalitarianism because it violates human dignity. As a yardstick for measuring the new and better system of the future, socialists believe that the future social form is difficult to predict, and it does not matter what type of social system it is. As long as it conforms to the basic values ​​of freedom, justice, solidarity and mutual assistance, it is a good society worth fighting for tod

ay. The socialist parties of various countries have described and designed their understanding of socialism and the future society from different perspectives, whether from the essence, content, framework, and goals of socialism, or from the perspectives of abolishing political autocracy, limiting economic monopoly, and eliminating social privileges. All of them are based on the values ​​of freedom, justice, solidarity, and mutual assistance. As the direction of socialist action, the socialist party regards the recognition of basic values ​​as the only criterion for measuring socialists. As long as this requirement is met, every citizen can join the ranks of the socialist party. Similarly, only by maintaining these basic values ​​and determining the direction of one's own actions can one survive in the ranks of the socialist party. Otherwise, one cannot be a member of the socialist party.

It is worth noting that since the 1990s, the Socialist Party has also realized that basic values ​​must adapt to the changes of the times. "Today's democratic socialism is still based on the values ​​of the time when it was formed. However, these values ​​must be critically expounded, absorbing past experience and looking to the future." [6]

"It adapts its traditional values ​​of social justice and democracy to the new challenges brought about by globalization." [7]

To this end, the Socialist Party has combined basic values ​​with the new concept of global governance, extended the connotation and scope of application of basic values ​​from domestic political and economic life to modern international relations, and emphasized the role of "freedom, justice, solidarity and mutual assistance" in establishing a new international political and economic order. Socialists believe that in modern international relations, freedom means that all nations and countries have the right to decide their own affairs without external coercion or interference, and all countries must be equal.

Only by forming fair international cooperation on a voluntary basis can the global threat to human survival be eliminated. They call on the international community to work together to strive for a fair distribution of the earth's resources and promote free and fair trade. As for mutual assistance, socialists demand that rich countries use 0.7% of their gross national product for official development assistance, support poor countries, reduce poverty in the affluent world, and implement a "global harmony policy" by restructuring the debts of developing countries to promote the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals. In the eyes of socialists, the human world today has reached a crossroads. The world order characterized by unilateralism, contempt for human rights, social injustice and unbalanced development has come to an end. It is necessary to manage and coordinate the unjust, unreasonable and inhumane world order and international relations on the basis of freedom, justice and solidarity.

[1] Central Party School Scientific Socialism Teaching and Research Group. Selection of Important Socialist Party Documents [M]. Central Party School Research Office, 1985: 149.

[2] Saul Estrin and Julian Le Grand. Market Socialism[M]. Beijing: Economic Daily Press, 1993: 35.

[3] Selected Important Documents of the Socialist International [M]. Beijing: Contemporary World Press, 2005: 6.

[4] Brandt et al. Social Democracy and the Future[M]. Chongqing: Chongqing Publishing House, 1990: 102.

[5] Document Editing Center of the International Liaison Department of the CPC Central Committee. Selected Important Documents of the Socialist International and the Socialist Party [M]. Beijing: Central Party School Press, 1993: 437-438.

[6] Selected Important Documents of the Socialist International [M]. Beijing: Contemporary World Press, 2005: 14.

[7] Selected Important Documents of the Socialist International [M]. Beijing: Contemporary World Press, 2005: 270.

    Journal of [Contemporary World](http://cpc.people.com.cn/GB/68742/187710/index.html)