**Belgium: The Succeses of Belgian Workers' Party**

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**The Belgian Workers' Party ( PTB) is a Belgian**[**Marxist**](https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E9%A9%AC%E5%85%8B%E6%80%9D%E4%B8%BB%E4%B9%89/239051?fromModule=lemma_inlink)**-communist political party. It is the largest undisputed radical left party**[**in Belgium .**](https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E6%AF%94%E5%88%A9%E6%97%B6/421128?fromModule=lemma_inlink)**It is one of the few political parties that operates nationwide in [Belgium , with most other parties operating only in the Dutch-speaking or French-speaking regions.](https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E6%AF%94%E5%88%A9%E6%97%B6/421128?fromModule=lemma_inlink" \t "_blank) The rise of the Belgian Workers' Party (BWP), as one important “phenomenon” of the rise of Western communist parties which reverses the current trend related to Western communist parties, is worth our consideration. Why is it that the Belgian Workers' Party, which is faced with similar external environment, and is far inferior to many traditional parties in the western communist movement in terms of historical inheritance, organizational scale and social foundation, has been able to rise to prominence in a short period of time? Throughout our article, we can find that the strategy and practice of combining “principle” and “flexibility” have played a key role in pushing the Workers' Party to make a historic leap forward. The success of the Workers' Party is obviously an important revelation to the Western communist parties, which are confronted with the confusion in their tactical choices. Taking the evolution of theoretical strategies as a clue, the Western communist parties in the past 30 years can basically be divided into two distinct development paths, namely, “traditional” and “modernized” paths.**

**The former is represented by some relatively radical communist parties, which have inherited more traditional socialist theories, with strong ideological coloring and chosen a prominent identity as the “left wing of the left wing political parties’ spectrum”.**

**The latter group, on the other hand, have made more new ideological and theoretical developments and changes, and their degree of transformation is more remarkable. However, looking to the practice of the past 30 years, “polarization”, between these two development paths by the communist parties have become more and more prominent and more and more problems have emerged. The number of communist parties trying to balance these two extreme paths seems to be quite small. The “traditional” type of communist parties are becoming more and more rigid, dogmatic and programmatic in their thinking, and their “adherence” to principles is tending to become more and more “stubborn”, sticking to traditional definitions and they detach themselves from reality, and in some matters concerning the future of the Party's development, there is a tendency for it to become more and more rigid and dogmatic. On some important issues concerning the future of the Party's development, this type of Communist Party is unable to make corresponding adjustments and changes in the light of changes in the environment of the times. On the other hand, the “modernized” communist party type is too flexible in terms of strategy and tactics, overemphasizing the practicality of theories, often compromising too much when making strategic and tactical adjustments, and not maintaining enough of its own characteristics, resulting in the weakening of some of the Party's original distinctive features. Judging from the results of the development of these two paths, the parties concerned have either found it difficult to break the “ceiling” of support, or have suffered a serious loss of traditional voters, with their power and influence shrinking, and the space for their survival in regional and national politics are becoming narrower and becoming more marginalized. If the Western Communist Party wants to get out of its predicament and make a difference, it must make new explorations and strive to realize new breakthroughs in its theoretical strategy. The practice of the Belgian Workers' Party in recent years has provided a new model for the Western Communist Party, which is faced with the perplexity of making strategic choices, to refer to and learn from. The combination of “principle” and “flexibility” advocated by the Belgium Labor Party is not a new idea or a new proposition, but has been practiced and successfully applied at different times and stages in the history of international communism and world socialism. The significance of the theory and practice of the Belgian Workers' Party is that it has taken a “new” way out of the dilemma of the “polarized” strategic choice of the Western communist movement. This “new” path of the Belgian Workers' Party is based on a profound summary of the lessons of its own development, a creative interpretation of “principledness” and “flexibility” in the light of the changing social environment, and the formulation of a series of effective strategies and tactics. Through the formulation of a series of effective strategies, it has effectively avoided the two extreme tendencies we see in the current Western communist movement, thus we can say that Belgian Workers' Party has realized a balance between adherence to principles and achieved the flexible application of tactics.**

**Development History of the Party**

The Belgian Workers' Party originated from the student movement in the late 1960s. Its members mainly came from radical students from the Catholic University of Louvain who were enthusiastic about the workers' movement. They believed that the Belgian Communist Party at that time had turned to revisionism politically and turned to the embrace of social democracy .

On October 5, 1970, a newspaper called "All Power to the Workers" (AMADA/TPO) was founded, and a new party with the same name was established. At the beginning of its establishment, AMADA/TPO tried to unite with Marxists in the student movement, actively carried out struggles to defend democratic rights, fight for the legal rights of new immigrants, and oppose the establishment of a professional army. It withstood the baptism of the Belgian strike struggles from 1970 to 1973. However, as a new political party, its immaturity was gradually exposed in the struggle, such as the organizational chaos and disorder caused by the student movement, the empty political propaganda, and the separation from the reality of daily life. Therefore, AMADA/TPO began to work hard to correct the party's sectarianism and dogmatism since 1976 , correct the wrong understanding of the traditional trade union "uselessness theory", carry out joint actions with trade unions on specific issues, build an alliance front, pay attention to environmental protection, actively support urban ecologicalization, and seek practical breakthroughs with a self-critical spirit.

On November 4, 1979, nearly 10 years after the formation of AMADA/TPO, the first congress was held and the party was officially renamed the Belgian Workers' Party (PTB/PVDA). The congress adopted the first party program of the Workers' Party, emphasizing socialism as the development goal, and formulated a minimum program for achieving social progress, democracy, peace and national independence.

At the Second National Congress of the Party held in 1983, the Workers' Party reaffirmed its political principles at the ideological and organizational levels, strengthened its organizational core, maintained its image as a "cadre party," and became more stringent in its requirements for party membership.

In 1988, the Third National Congress of the Workers' Party summarized the workers' struggles in the 1980s, actively supported trade unionism , and called for trade union unity. But overall, during this period, the Workers' Party failed to convert its appeal in the labor movement into effective electoral support. Its support rate in national elections has never exceeded 1%, and its influence at the institutional level is minimal.

In the critical period from 1989 to 1991, when the Belgian Workers' Party was facing dramatic changes in Eastern Europe and the disintegration of the Soviet Union, and when calls for self-dissolution were heard from within the party, the Workers' Party held its Fourth Party Congress in 1991. For the first time, it conducted an in-depth analysis of the dramatic changes in socialist countries and the subsequent new world order, and to a large extent corrected its negative evaluation of the Soviet Union. For a long time thereafter, the Workers' Party was even called an "uncritical defender of Soviet history."

In 1995, the Fifth Congress of the Workers’ Party attempted to reflect on past policies, calling on party cadres to have a greater sense of responsibility, make more political and strategic efforts, and correct the party’s bureaucratic tendencies to adapt to the new social reality. This congress focused more on the party itself. It did not analyze the political situation six years after the fall of the Berlin Wall , nor did it critically reflect on the new situation. Instead, it continued to "cut and paste" the operating principles of the past, did not form a new program based on the needs of the people, and did not re-formulate a new strategy to adapt to the new environment. The Workers’ Party’s self-evaluation of this situation was that "the thinking is not yet mature enough to develop new methods."

At the Sixth Party Congress in 1998, the Workers' Party continued to adhere to an inward-looking policy orientation, which led to a historic defeat in the 1999 general election nearly 30 years after its establishment. The party's support rate was only 0.6%, and the Workers' Party was on the brink of an internal crisis.

The Workers' Party leadership conducted a deep reflection on the defeat in the 1999 elections, believing that this was the result of the accumulation of wrong strategies over the past few decades. The Workers' Party conducted extensive research among its supporters, and the results showed that the party's strengths lie in its fighting spirit, ideals, commitment, and the distinctive characteristics of a working-class party. However, sectarianism, ideological rigidity, dogmatism, sloganeering, and a love of preaching still largely constrain the party's development.

Influenced by post-Marxists such as Negri and Hardt , the Workers' Party tended to fight against US aggression and was committed to organizing radical anti-war alliances, but paid little attention to issues of daily life. This strategy further plunged the Workers' Party into a development trough, and in the 2003 general election, the party's support rate hit a new low. This situation also led to a serious crisis for the party's leadership. The majority of party members who opposed the party's development strategy fiercely criticized the party's leadership for being "left-leaning", dogmatic, and lacking attention to material issues. Under such circumstances, the Workers' Party split, some supporters of the traditional line were expelled from the party, and a new leadership composed mainly of young cadres was formed. Since then, the party's line has gradually changed and began to turn to struggles around the needs of daily life, and the party's "renewal movement" has begun.

In 2005, the Workers' Party actively participated in the 100,000-person demonstration against pension reform in Belgium, regaining its reputation in the trade union movement. Hundreds of trade unionists joined the party, which greatly promoted the party's "renewal" movement. This was also seen as an important step for the Workers' Party to transform from a "cadre party" to a "member party." The change in course also enabled the Workers' Party to make some substantial progress in the 2006 municipal elections, and calls for the party to "reposition" became louder and louder within the party. In 2008, the Workers' Party held a "Renewal Congress" and formulated a new development route that combined "principles" with "flexibility." [2]

In the June 2010 general election, the Belgian Workers' Party made some progress in the electoral results. In the Dutch-speaking regions, it received 1.3% of the votes in the Chamber of Deputies and 1.4% in the Senate.

In the European Parliament elections held in May 2019, the Workers' Party's support rate quickly increased from 3.5% to 8.7%, and for the first time in history, it won a seat in the European Parliament, an eye-catching performance among the radical left-wing parties in Europe, whose performance in this election generally declined. In the Belgian regional parliamentary elections held in the same month, the Workers' Party won 6.6%, 12%, 13.5% support and 4, 11 and 10 seats in Flemish, Brussels and Wallonia respectively. In the Belgian national parliamentary elections, the Workers' Party won an unprecedented 12 seats in the Federal Parliament and 4 seats in the Senate. In this way, the number of seats of the Workers' Party has rapidly increased from 8 seats in 2014 to 41 seats, ranking fifth among the 12 political parties with elected representatives nationwide. [2]

**Theoretical Ideas**

The Belgian Workers' Party advocates adhering to Marxism, believing that Marxism is the foundation of the party, and emphasizes that the basic works of the founders of Marxism are very important, and that it is important to study, publicize and research the basic works of the founders of Marxism. To this end, the party has taken many practical measures to promote and implement the Marxist education plan at different levels, in multiple aspects and in multiple ways.

The Belgian Workers' Party clearly defines its nature as a working class party in its party constitution. In the struggle for and promoting social reform and change, the working class is the fundamental force, and there are different classes in the working class. The party emphasizes the need to focus on large industrial production lines and key sectors of the economy. These large production departments are not only a strong fortress for economic struggles, but also the key to economic struggles.

The Belgian Workers’ Party believes that socialism will not fall from the sky, but is the inevitable result of the long-term conflict between the bourgeoisie and the working class. The party believes that the realization of socialism requires two conditions: the working class must be prepared, and the situation must be mature. They believe that there is still a long way to go to achieve these two subjective and objective conditions. [1]

**Practical Achievments**

Throughout the 1980s, the Workers' Party actively participated in numerous protest movements, such as opposing the Belgian government's austerity policies, factory closures, and corporate layoffs, supporting the British coal miners ' strike in 1985 against Mrs. Thatcher's mine closures, and supporting the liberation struggles in southern countries such as Nicaragua , South Africa , and El Salvador , etc. This made the Workers' Party's influence in trade unions and social movements continue to rise.

From 1989 to 1999, in sharp contrast to the backwardness of ideological theory, the Workers' Party made steady progress in its practical struggles. From opposing the Iraq War and other series of new aggressive wars, actively supporting the peace movement, to opposing racial violence, protesting the rise of neo-fascist organizations, and launching a petition campaign with a "479,917 signatures target" that would automatically grant citizenship after five years of legal residence, which lasted for more than two years; from being the only political party in the country to oppose the restrictive provisions of the Maastricht Treaty , organizing the anti-Euro movement, to actively practicing the idea of ​​"going to the people", participating in protests against the government's neoliberal policies from all walks of life, and supporting the nationalism and revolutionary forces in Belgium's former colonies, the Workers' Party's social reputation has continued to rise.

During the 2008 financial crisis and the subsequent European debt crisis , the Workers' Party actively participated in anti-austerity street actions and launched a campaign to tax the rich. With the rise of right-wing populism and separatism , as a national party in Belgium, the Workers' Party actively supported the "Save Solidarity" movement; in 2014, it launched a campaign against "expensive energy" and pushed the government to cut the value-added tax on electricity bills; it launched the "Red is the New Green" movement to promote climate issues as an institutional issue. In addition, during the political turmoil in the Arab region after 2010, the Workers' Party was the only party in Belgium that opposed Western interference in Libya and Syria and launched a large-scale solidarity movement to support refugees. These struggles and actions have further expanded the party's social influence. [2]

In order to study, publicize and uphold Marxism, the Belgian Workers' Party has set up a permanent Marxist Institute in practice and continuously runs and publishes the magazine "Marxist Studies". The main publication of the party's Marxist Institute is the quarterly "Marxist Studies", which aims to analyze the contemporary world with Marxist methods. The Marxist Institute regularly offers Marxist courses, introduces Marxist classics, and uses Marxist methods to solve contemporary problems. At the same time, the party's "Solidarity" magazine and the party's website also play an important role in studying and publicizing Marxism.

Protecting workers' rights is an important manifestation of the nature of the Belgian Workers' Party as a working-class party. Since 2003, the Belgian Workers' Party has always emphasized factory workers as the basis of its political power. The strikes against fiscal austerity, such as the 100,000-strong nationwide strike in November 2014, the Brussels railway workers' strike in October 2015, and the national strike in October 2016, were all participated in and promoted by the Belgian Workers' Party.

The Belgian Workers' Party also has its own measures to continuously advance the realization of socialism. In recent years, the party has continuously held international communist seminars , which have become one of the major gatherings of communist parties around the world. One of the important missions of the seminar is to uphold Marxism and continuously advance the realization of socialism. [1]

The Workers' Party's campaign for a minimum pension of 1,500 euros, which it has launched on its parliamentary election platform since May 2019, has also demonstrated the party's influence to a great extent. The Workers' Party's goal is to propose a citizen initiative law around this issue. With the active mobilization of the Workers' Party, it attracted more than 100,000 signatures in just a few months. [2]

**International Relations and Maoism**

One of the original ideologies of the Belgian Workers' Party originated from Maoism , which makes the party naturally close and friendly to China. The party believes that socialism with Chinese characteristics is the application and development of Marxism in China. The party argues that: on the one hand, China adheres to Marxism, and on the other hand, it does not stick to Marxism but constantly develops and sinicizes Marxism, which is worthy of learning and reference by the Belgian Workers' Party. The party affirms China's ongoing construction and development of socialism with Chinese characteristics, and highly recognizes the tremendous political, economic and social achievements China has made since reform and opening up . At the same time, the party also believes that the Communist Party of China has always regarded socialism and communism as the ultimate goal of struggle as described by Marx and Engels , which is worthy of praise. [1]

**Youth Movement**

The Youth Movement (COMAC) is an activity carried out by the party among young people. The youth movement aims to attract young people to participate in the socialist movement, continuously learn the basic theories of Marxism, and gradually form and prepare the party's reserve forces. Other projects that reflect the socialist nature of the party include 11 people's medicine centers and 2 progressive law firms that provide free basic health care and legal services to the people.

Since 2010, the magazines "Solidarity" and "People's Medicine" have organized a grand festival party every year. This is the party's global festival activity with "solidarity" as the core. These activities have enhanced the appeal of the Belgian Workers' Party and promoted the socialist movement in Belgium. [1]

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